

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2018



NEW OFFICE

The Oak Tree Housing Association Team have out-grown our present office space and will be on the move. We have tried to stay as close to the town centre as possible and consequently we have purchased the Registrars building and Offices at 40 West Stewart Street from Inverclyde Council. Plans are ongoing to relocate to these premises in early 2019-20.

The new office space will give us the opportunity to offer a wider range of services to all customers and we are talking to representatives from various community projects regarding the opportunity for them to co-locate.

We are keen to hear your view. What do you like about the current office, what do you not like and what improvements would you like to see in the new premises?

Consultations will be undertaken through our website, social media and face to face over the coming weeks and months.

Staff are very keen to hear your views and plans will be made available as the project develops.

I hope you all have a happy Christmas and New Year and remember if you need services during this time, Emergency Numbers are printed on page 5.

TAKE A LOOK INSIDE...

EMERGENCY NO'S
PAGE 5

SNOWMAN BISCUIT CHALLENGE
PAGE 12

UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE
PAGE 13

MY HOME PORTAL
PAGE 18

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR HOLIDAYS

Please note that Oak Tree Housing Association will close at 2pm on Monday 24th December 2018 and re-open on Friday 4th January 2019 at 9am.

Please refer to **Page 5** for Emergency Repair Numbers and Guidance

PLANNED AND CYCLICAL MAINTENANCE WORKS



The Association undertake maintenance works to ensure our properties remain in the best possible condition and meet/exceed the standards set by the Scottish Government.

We operate a comprehensive investment programme, where major elements (kitchens, bathrooms etc) are replaced at the end of their life cycle. Our current programme for replacement is based on full stock condition survey. However, OTHA will also carry out annual inspections to confirm that the works identified in the programme are in fact needed at that time.

The Association works to a rule of thumb on postponing works where our inspections show that less than 30% of the properties or common areas which we have inspected are in need of attention. For example, in a close comprising 8 properties, if 6 out of 8 kitchens (75%) are in good condition then we will postpone these works.

After considering these annual inspections we identified the programme of works for 2018/19. The bulk of these works are underway, the contracts have been awarded and the following progress has been achieved:

- Mitie Property Services (UK Ltd) ECO works (Lot 2) – external wall installation investigation works at Maple Road underway.
- Everwarm Group (Lot 3) window replacement works 63% complete.
- Mears Group installation of kitchens, central heating and bathrooms 35% complete.
- McDermott Contracts (Lot 9) landscaping of all estates is ongoing.
- J S McColl Decorators (Lot 10) commenced the external and close painter work in November.
- R F Watters commenced the gutter cleaning contract in November.

WHAT WE EXPECT FROM OUR CONTRACTORS

During the course of the works, the Association's Staff and Contractors should always adhere to the following behavioural principles when representing the Association: -

- Be polite, friendly, courteous and welcoming;
- Treat all customers with respect and dignity;
- Always show identification;
- Always ensure confidentiality and privacy;
- Adhere to the Association's equalities policy;
- Be sensitive, patient and understanding when dealing with customers; and
- Never use foul or abusive language.

WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU

The success of the planned maintenance programme not only depends on the Association but also on the cooperation of the residents whose homes will be having works carried out. As such, the Association believe that it's reasonable to expect our customers to: -

- Be polite, courteous, non-abusive and non-threatening at all times;
- Treat both staff and contractors with respect;
- Comply with all reasonable requests made by our staff;
- Refrain from smoking while staff members or contractors are in your home;
- Appreciate that from time to time, we may not be able to help, as some matters may be out-with our control;
- Understand that in the event of unacceptable behaviour towards our staff or contractors, service levels will be reduced; and
- Provide access when requested or make suitable alternative arrangements.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of the programme then please contact the Association's Senior Maintenance Officer, Christie Bain, on 01475 807000 or at info@oaktreeha.org.uk





OAK TREE HOUSING ASSOCIATION'S ADAPTATION SERVICE

The Association would like to remind its tenants of the adaptation service it provides to support the housing needs of people with disabilities.

We work closely with the Inverclyde Centre for Independent Living (ICIL) who have trained Occupational Therapists (OT's) who can assess the particular needs of individuals to determine what adaptations are best suited to allow them to continue living in their home in the degree of comfort they would normally expect from modern day living.

If you have a disability and believe you might benefit from the Association's adaptation service or you know of a family member or a friend who might also benefit from an adaptation then please contact the ICIL on 01475 714350 to arrange for an OT to visit and assess requirements. If the OT considers an adaptation will be of benefit then he or she will make the necessary referral to the Association. The Association will then review the request and if appropriate, ensure the work is added to its adaptations programme and have the work carried out as soon as practicably possible. Subject to available funding, adaptations will be categorised in accordance with the OT's recommendations.

The following is a list of typical adaptations that can be undertaken to aid and assist individuals with their particular disabilities. This list is not exhaustive and other adaptations may be considered. It should however be noted that there are cases where it will not be appropriate for the Association to carry out or consent to an adaptation.

TYPICAL ADAPTATIONS WORK

Over bath showers

Level access showers

Wet floor areas

Handrails (internal and external)

Access ramps

Lever taps

LEGIONELLA: REDUCE YOUR RISK

The risk of contracting legionella in the domestic home is minimal and most protection from legionella has to be undertaken by people actually living in the home and using the water systems. There are some simple steps that you must take to help protect you and those in your home:

1. You have to turn your shower on and run it for a few minutes at least once a week, preferably more often than this, to flush out stale water.
2. You have to make sure that you dismantle, scrub and de-scale your showerheads and shower hoses at least once every 3 months or earlier if scaling is evident. This is easily done by removing the shower hose and head and leaving it soaking for half an hour in white vinegar then scrubbing off any deposits. You should then rinse it in warm water to wash off the vinegar.
3. If you have a spa type bath you have to make sure you clean it with appropriate approved chemicals at least once weekly.
4. You should make sure that you run water through all the hot and cold water taps throughout your home on at least a weekly basis.
5. If you have an electric hot water tank you should make sure that you are fully heating the water in it and then using the water immediately after at least 2-3 times per week. Temperatures above 60°C will kill Legionella bacteria so make sure that the temperature of the hot water in your boiler/cylinder is set at a minimum of 60°C. Beware of burns and scalding and take extra care if you have children. Legionella can survive in low temperatures, but thrive at temperatures between 20°C and 45°C.

These are very simple steps to help protect you in your home and minimise any exposure risk. These precautions are even more important if you are over 50 years of age or suffer from ill health. If you would like more advice on this matter please contact a member of staff at our office to discuss.

KEEP THESE NUMBERS HANDY:

Gas Leaks:	Scottish Gas Network: - 0800 111 999
Gas Heating / Fires:	James Frew (Gas Services) - 01294 468 113
All other Trades:	Novus Property Solutions - 01506 637643 (option 7)

Please note, if your property has recently been subject to planned maintenance works the contractor will notify you direct of the emergency contact number.

OTHER NUMBERS YOU MAY WISH TO NOTE ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Police:	101 for non-emergency or 999 if it's an emergency
Womens Aid:	01475 888505
Scottish Power:	0800 092 9290 (landline) OR 105
Victim Support:	01475 787300
Scottish Water Board:	0800 0778 778
Samaritans:	116123

WARM HOME DISCOUNT

You could get £140 off your electricity bill under the Warm Home Discount Scheme.

The money is not paid to you – it's a one-off discount on your electricity bill, between September and March.

You may be able to get the discount on your gas bill instead if your supplier provides you with both gas and electricity. Contact your supplier to find out.

The Warm Home Discount Scheme for winter 2017 to 2018 closed on 31 March 2018. The 2018 to 2019 scheme will start on 15 October 2018.

The discount will not affect your Cold Weather Payment or your Winter Fuel Payment.

There are 2 ways to qualify for the Warm Home Discount Scheme:

- You get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit – known as the 'core group'
- You're on a low income and meet your energy supplier's criteria for the scheme – known as the 'broader group'

Please contact your electricity supplier for further information.

GAS SERVICE

Aside from the day-to-day repairs to your home the Maintenance Section also looks after the gas service program.



This service is essential to ensuring all our properties with a gas heating appliance are checked on an annual basis to ensure it is operating safely. Smoke and Carbon monoxide detectors are also checked during this service.

Please ensure that you contact the service contractor, James Frew (Gas Sure) to allow access for this important safety check when they contact you, or arrange an alternative appointment if it is not suitable when they do contact you.

This check must be done within every 12 month period and the Association will take steps to force an entry if access is not given. The cost associated with this will also be recharged to you.

COLD WEATHER PAYMENT

You may get a Cold Weather Payment if you're getting certain benefits.

You'll get a payment if the average temperature in your area is recorded as, or forecast to be, zero degrees celsius or below for 7 consecutive days.

You'll get £25 for each 7 day period of very cold weather between 1 November and 31 March.

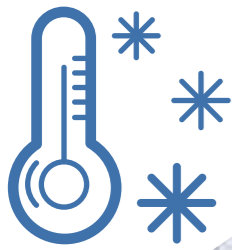
WINTER FUEL PAYMENTS

If you were born on or before 5 November 1953 you could get between £100 and £300 to help you pay your heating bills. This is known as a 'Winter Fuel Payment'.

You usually get a Winter Fuel Payment automatically if you are eligible and you get the State Pension or another social security benefit (not Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Child Benefit or Universal Credit).

The deadline for claiming payments for winter 2018 to 2019 is 31 March 2019. Most payments are made automatically between November and December. You should get your money by 14 January 2019.

If you do not get your payment, call the office that pays your benefits – their details are on any letters they sent you.



FROST ALERT

Follow this advice to reduce the risk of damage and disruption.

KEEP YOUR HOUSE WARM

- This will help to avoid burst pipes and damage to your home and your neighbours.
- Remember that the pipes in a flat may supply water to your neighbours.
- In very cold weather, keep the heating on overnight at a low temperature.

PROTECT YOUR HOME

- Report any leaks at taps or valves to us as soon as possible. Dripping water increases the risk of freezing.
- Reduce draughts by fitting draught excluders to your doors and windows.
- Make sure you have adequate contents insurance.
- Look out for your neighbours, especially the frail, elderly and vulnerable.
- Ask us if you don't know where your water mains stop valve is.

IF YOUR PIPES BECOME FROZEN

- Turn off the water at the main water stop valve.
- Open all cold taps to drain the system.
- Do not open the hot taps.
- Turn off the central heating or immersion heater.
- Collect water in the bath for washing and wc flushing.
- Contact the Association's Emergency Repairs Service.

IF YOU HAVE A BURST PIPE

- Turn off the water at the mains water stop valve.
- Switch off the electricity at the mains.
- Switch off any water heater.
- Turn off the central heating system.
- Open all taps to drain your system.
- Collect water in your bath for washing and wc flushing.
- Warn neighbours who may suffer damage.
- Contact the Association's Emergency Repairs Service.

HOW TO DEFROST A FROZEN CENTRAL HEATING CONDENSATE PIPE

In the very cold weather, some condensate pipes freeze and the boiler can stop working. If you feel sufficiently confident to know that your boiler condensate pipe has frozen, and you can reach it, you can defrost the pipe by wrapping hot towels or hot water bottles around the pipe. Contact us if you are unsure how to do this.

GOING ON HOLIDAY OVER THE WINTER PERIOD?

- Make sure you have someone who can regularly check your home for problems and consider giving a key to a neighbour for emergency use.
- Let us and your neighbours know your contact details.
- Ask us for advice on how to turn off your water supply.
- Let us know your mobile number so we can contact you and send you helpful text messages.

ENERGY ACTIVATORS – INVESTMENT IN INVERCLYDE

Energy Activators is an exciting new project that is working in your area to help you save energy, save money and reduce your carbon footprint.

Oak Tree Housing Association in partnership with Cloch Housing Association and Larkfield Housing Association, secured funding and the tender to work on the Association's behalf was won by the Wise Group who are now delivering this innovative project.

The project is offering a fantastic range of energy efficiency initiatives including free home energy advice visits, interactive workshops and training in your area, all designed to help you make savings on your household energy bills and reduce your carbon footprint.

The Energy Activators project has been made possible by funding from the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund.

Nick Jardine, Chief Executive Officer at Oak Tree said:

“We have managed to secure funding in the region of £250,000 to invest in helping local people reduce their bills and learn more about how they can help themselves and the environment. It is a big win for us, the local communities of Inverclyde and for the environment.”

The project will run for 2 years with an energy activator working out of each of the housing associations' offices.

The Energy Activators have now been working with Oak Tree Housing for several months. With the colder months on their way we are hoping to help as many residents as possible reduce their heating cost by implementing small changes to their habits when it comes to energy usage. To do this we will come to your house for FREE and give you advice relevant to you and your habits.

As part of the project we will also be doing upcycling workshops. Pictured here are some of the items that we will show you how to make, all stuff that will keep you cosy over the winter months.



If this is something that you would be interested in, please get in touch with us on 01475 807000





ESTATE MANAGEMENT POLICY REVIEW UPDATE

The Association recently reviewed its Estate Management Policy and as part of that review, we took the opportunity to consult with our tenants and staff.

We wanted to find out whether or not tenants were aware of the current timescales for completion of estate management complaints and to see if any changes were needed as a result.

We also wanted to know if there was a demand from tenants for close cleaning to be provided as an additional service and we asked if tenants had a view on whether or not the number of pets in a household should be restricted.

Finally we asked for suggestions or comments on what could be improved in the tenant's close or area that could improve its appearance.

Our tenant's opinions are key to us making sure that we are providing not only a good service but the right service and we try to take all comments into account when shaping our future service.

WE CONSULTED IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

- Online via the Association's website and Facebook page
- Funworld events held in July and August – this allowed us to speak to tenants in more detail and understand their concerns
- A letter and paper copy of the survey sent to all tenants
- Survey sent to Housing Services staff

We had an excellent response to the consultation – in total **163** surveys were completed.

The survey asked what type of property the tenant lived in. **116** lived in a flat, **42** in a house and **5** did not answer this question.

THE RESPONSES TO THE SURVEY WERE AS FOLLOWS:

Question	Yes	No	No response or N/A
Have you experienced anti-social behaviour (ASB) in your property?	52	107	4
Do you know how to report ASB?	126	35	2
Did you report your complaint to OTHA?	50	61	52
Are you aware of the current timescales for completion of complaints	61	99	3

Only **33%** of respondents had experienced ASB but **80%** know how to report it.

38% of tenants were aware of the current timescales for the completion of complaints and the following answers were given when we asked if they agreed with the timescales or not

Timescale	Agree	Disagree	No response
First or one off complaint – 1 month	112	39	12
More serious or repeated complaint – 2 months	98	52	13
Complex case – 6 months	90	48	25

We also asked tenants what they thought of the Association providing close cleaning and the tenants being recharged for this service. The survey showed that **83 tenants (56%)** agreed we should and **65 (44%)** disagreed that this service should be provided.

Although there was a higher percentage of tenants in favour, there wasn't a significant difference in opinion and no strong demand for the Association to provide a service. This is not a service that we intend to provide at the moment.

We asked if tenants thought we should restrict the number of pets in a household. **114 (72.7%)** agreed that households should restrict the number of pets whilst **35** disagreed.

The Association will take this feedback into account for the future. There are no immediate plans to restrict the number of pets but we got some very helpful comments and it has given us food for thought for the future.

In the meantime we will continue to do our best to ensure that tenants who have pets look after them properly and that we deal with any complaints about pets quickly and effectively.

We also asked what tenants thought needed improved in their close or area to enhance the appearance.

109 tenants gave their comments, **20** of them were positive comments that didn't include a suggestion for improvement and **89 tenants** gave comments on items that could be improved.

The comments were wide and varied but there were common themes. **23 tenants** who live in houses listed the following amongst the issues:-

- Dog fouling
- Lack of play parks
- Landscaping
- Fencing

65 tenants who live in flats listed the following amongst the issues raised:

- Landscaping
- Bins and bin areas
- Dog fouling
- Window cleaning
- Close doors
- Close flooring
- Parking

Thank you to everyone who took part in the Survey

We spoke to a number of our tenants and customers over the summer period. It was great for us to meet people and to find out what our customers think of the service we provide and to find out how we can improve it.

WEDNESDAY WALKABOUTS

This is now a regular feature of the Association's work and this year a member of the Maintenance section accompanied a member of the Housing Services team on visits to the larger estates (Branchton, Bow Farm, Garvald Street and Wren Road/Grieve Road)

A flyer was sent in advance and if the event was cancelled or postponed then a text was sent. The weather was kinder to us this year than in previous years and most walkabouts took place on the scheduled date. Staff spoke to tenants on their walkabouts and also took photos for the garden competition. A short survey was also taken.

We also spoke to tenants at the Funworld events and completed surveys with them. 44 questionnaires were completed in total and the same survey was used as previous years. This allowed us to see if feedback was improving or not.

The results were as follows for the percentage of tenants who gave the response "good" or "very good" to the question: "what do you think of the following in your estate?"

Item	2016	2017	2018
Grass cutting	90%	77%	93%
Shrubs	82%	61%	87%
Litter/Bulk Refuse	73%	86%	82%
Dog Fouling	55%	60%	61%
Overall appearance of estate	94%	95%	93%
Behaviour of Children	75%	79%	81%
Condition of fencing, paths etc	67%	83%	65%

It was great to see that mostly people thought that things had improved but we are taking on board the comments about the overall appearance of the estates and the fencing and paths.

Flyers were sent to residents to let them know the feedback in their particular estate and there was a general flyer that summarised the feedback that was included with the Estate Management Policy review information pack.



FUNWORLD SESSIONS

Following on from the success of the previous year, 6 sessions were arranged for tenants in July and August 2018. They were all well attended and unfortunately some dates were fully booked.

We used the time to have a chat with our customers and meet their families. We demonstrated our My Oak Tree Portal and signed some people up there and then. We also completed some surveys. We are aware that "Survey Fatigue" can set in but feedback really helps us improve our service and we take every comment (good or bad) very seriously.

Here are some photos of the sessions:



FUTURE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES OR EVENTS

We are in the middle of our Tenants Satisfaction Survey. It is being carried out by a company called Research Resource and it is being carried out jointly with Cloch and Larkfield Housing Associations.

We do this large survey every 3 years and in 2015 we surveyed 1000 of our tenants. This gives us lots of very valuable information and we are looking forward to the results. We should have the outcome in early 2019 and we will publish the results on our website and in a future newsletter.

We try to make the most of our Portal, Website, Facebook and Twitter to keep our customers informed and up-to-date. It also allows our customers to contact us at a time and in a way that is convenient to them.

We are holding a New Tenant Event in our office on Friday 23 November 2018.

We will be arranging New Office Consultation events in early 2019. We are all very excited about moving to larger office premises and we are very keen that any change to our office doesn't affect our customer service. Larger premises may bring new opportunities for us to provide new or different services and we are very keen to hear from our customers about what they would like to see or what they need from the new office.

GARDEN COMPETITION 2018

This year we, once again, asked our staff to take photos of well-kept gardens during their "Wednesday Walkabouts" in June and July.

This year we had a very unexpected hot spell with little rain. This type of weather presents a challenge for gardens as – like us – grass and flowers need plenty of drinks in very hot weather!

Despite this we had a lot of lovely gardens to choose from. This made our job a difficult but pleasant task.

We shortlisted lots of gardens and we awarded 10 prizes. They were of equal value and all the tenants received a voucher for £20. Because the standard was so good, we also awarded 10 "commendations" and wrote to the tenants to congratulate them on their efforts.

It was lovely to see a number of gardens at our new build scheme at Garvald Street appearing in the shortlist. There is nothing nicer than seeing tenants making their new house a home and taking pride in its appearance.

Here are some of the prize winning gardens.



SNOWMAN BISCUITS



These biscuits look great fun to make and we are sure kids would love to get involved too.

Oak Tree staff have been issued with a challenge to make them and we will post pics of their efforts on Facebook.

We would love to see how yours turn out too. If you want to send us your picture we will upload it to our Facebook page.

Good luck!

For the biscuits:

- 200g/7oz self raising flour
- 100g/3½oz caster sugar
- 100g/3½oz butter, plus extra for greasing

- 1 large free-range egg, lightly beaten
 - 1 tsp vanilla extract
 - For the decorations
 - white and blue fondant icing
 - white and black writing icing
 - sprinkles
 - 48 small chocolate balls
- Method**
- Pre heat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4.
1. Mix the flour and sugar together in a bowl, then rub in the butter with your fingertips until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.
 2. Add the egg and vanilla essence and mix to form a soft dough.
 3. Roll out onto a well-floured work surface and cut into rounds. Place on greased baking sheets and bake for 10-12 minutes, or until golden brown.
 4. Cool on a wire rack. When completely cool decorate.
 5. Roll out the white fondant icing and cut out circles the same size as the biscuits, brush the backs of the circles with a little cooled boiled water and stick them to the biscuits, smoothing down the icing as you stick it on.
 6. Roll out the blue icing and cut out more circles, then cut these in half and using a little more water and stick on top of the white icing for the hats.
 7. Brush the hats with water in places where you want the sprinkles to stick and then sprinkle!
 8. Pipe decorations on the hat with the white writing icing, then pipe a small blob for the hat bobble and another for the nose – stick on the chocolate balls. Pipe black eyes and mouth then leave to set.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE



Universal Credit is continuing to make the headlines. We have nearly 450 tenants who are currently claiming this benefit. This number rises every month as new tenancies are created or circumstances change.

If you are not a pensioner and you have a change of circumstances then it's likely that you will move onto this benefit. A change of circumstances could be:-

- You move house
- Someone moves into your household or someone moves out
- You are working and you stop working or your hours reduce
- You were in receipt of ESA and are assessed as being fit for work

There have been a number of changes made to the Universal Credit recently and these have been positive. Examples are:-

- Waiting time reduced for new claims from 6 weeks to 5 weeks
- Higher advance payments available which are repayable over a longer period
- Additional Housing Benefit payments for 2 weeks in certain cases
- Claimants can request payments of Housing Costs are made direct to their landlord
- A higher work allowance for claimants in work

However, it is the intention of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) that everyone, apart from pensioners, will move onto this benefit within the next 5 years.

Inverclyde was one of the first areas to move to Universal Credit for new claims so it is likely that it will be one of the first areas to move claimants onto Universal Credit. This is called "Migration".

If you are going to be affected you will be given advance notice by DWP and our staff will be happy to help with advice on how you will be affected.

We are working hard to help tenants deal with the changes and there are a number of organisations that can assist you make a claim and maintain your claim.

If you move onto this benefit, you will be responsible for paying your rent from the monthly payment you receive and you must make sure that you let the DWP know that you have "Housing Costs". This is another name for your rent.

The Association charges rent in advance, so it is very important that we speak to you as soon as we know that you are going to be claiming Universal Credit to avoid arrears building up on your account.

We can make an agreement with you so that you can pay extra each month so that you do not fall into arrears and your account becomes in advance.

AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS UK & EIRE

Living with a problem drinker can often cause many problems for families.

Al-Anon Family Groups is here to support anyone whose life has been affected by someone else's drinking, regardless of whether that person is still drinking.

Al-Anon Family Groups has been offering help and support to families and friends of problem drinkers for over 60 years. There are over 700 groups throughout the UK and Eire; no appointment is required and there are no dues or fees for membership.

If you would like further information, please contact:

Al-Anon Family Groups, 57B Great Suffolk Street, SE1 0BB

**National Helpline:
0800 0086 811 (10am-10pm)**

website: www.al-anonuk.org.uk

email: enquiries@al-anonuk.org.uk



Activ8OurPlace is a newly set up project that focuses on community activity in the South West of Greenock.

The overall aim of the project is to encourage and support people to identify what would make a real difference in their community and ways in which they can play an active part in making this happen. The neighbourhoods covered are Bowfarm, Grieve Rd & Fancy Farm, Mallard, Pennyfern, Larkfield, Braeside and Branchton.

Project Workers have already been out introducing themselves to known groups in the area and are keen to contact individuals who have suggestions and ideas about what they know would make a difference.

Potential activities could include community food and health projects, community gardens and food growing, development of informal learning opportunities, expansion of community social enterprise activity and creation of a Compassionate Community, BUT ultimately it will be the community who determines what these projects will be.

Three workers are now in post.

Viv Hearton is the project leader. Viv has been working in Community Learning and Development for over 15 years, both as a volunteer and paid worker. Viv has great experience in supporting local groups to influence change and coordinating community events.

Lee Trotter is the project officer. Lee also has great experience in working with communities and will be responsible for engaging with people and community groups.

Jim Watson is the Social Media and Marketing officer. His role is to use technology to improve information flow between Southwest neighbourhoods/communities and what's happening locally, and to encourage people to become more involved with their wider community.

The project already has a website <http://www.activ8ourplace.co.uk>. Prizes are now available for people who sign up to our social media channels. Like our page on Facebook and share any post, follow us on twitter and retweet any post, or any entry to our **#Mad #Sad #Glad** (see our website for details!).

Winners will be selected at random from all entries and published on our website.

If you have an idea that you would like to develop or if you would like more information then please **contact Viv on 07785 511166 or 01475 638481**. Alternatively by email on viv.hearton@activ8ourplace.co.uk



Police Scotland have written to the Association to ask us to highlight attempts at Fraud that are taking place in communities all across Scotland and to give you some advice on what to do if this happens to you.

BANK FRAUD

This is when victims (usually elderly or vulnerable people) are contacted by phone by someone who pretends they are from their bank and persuades the person to transfer money from one account to another. The people who carry out these crimes can be very convincing and are skilled at persuading people to go along with the scam.

If you receive a phone call from someone who says they are calling from your bank and they say that there has been fraudulent activity on your account, you must be very wary and you must not agree to transfer money to a "safe account".

The fraudster will try to keep you on the telephone. This is to stop your real bank from contacting you to check if the transfer that is being made is suspicious.

The advice from the Police is to hang up immediately and contact your bank yourself to find out if the call was genuine.

As well as being aware of this yourself, please speak to your family, friends or neighbours to let them know about this scam and make sure they don't get caught by the fraudsters.

BOGUS CALLERS

Problems with bogus callers are long running and like the telephone fraudsters, the people who carry out these crimes are very skilful and manipulative.

Be very wary about letting anyone who you were not expecting into your home and always ask to see ID. All Oak Tree staff and contractors will have ID badges or a form of identification with them and if you are in any doubt, please telephone our office.

A common scam is when a "tradesman" calls and offers to carry out repairs to the house and asks for a deposit or money for materials in advance. They then never return to carry out the work or the work is done to a very poor standard. The costs charged will often be very inflated.

INVERCLYDE COMMON HOUSING REGISTER

The Inverclyde Common Housing Register (ICHR) team has gone through some changes in recent months. The Senior Officer (job share), Louise Carlin left to begin a new post with Cloch Housing Association and we have three members of staff in our team. Our team members are Tracey Dargan (Senior Officer), Ronnie Bennett (Housing Assistant) and Patricia Broom (Housing Assistant) and we all work on a part-time basis.





Target Area	Task Targets	Within Target Times (annual %)	January 2018 – March 2018	April 2018 – June 2018
Check new housing application, point and process	10 working days	100%	100% (average completion time 2 days)	100% (Average 2.2 days)
Time to wait for an appointment to see specific member of staff (within OTHA area or at office/Excludes Applicant Surgeries)	Same or next working day	95%	Survey carried out twice per month (rotating days) 100%	Survey carried out twice per month (rotating days) 100%
Appointments kept/attended on time	Within 15 minutes of agreed time	100%	Survey carried out twice per month (rotating days) 100%	Survey carried out twice per month (rotating days) 100%
Acknowledge or fully respond to a written enquiry	5 working days	95%	93.4%	92.3%
Behavioural code of Committee, Staff and Contractors/Agents	Adherence to Code	100%	100% based on complaints received via the complaints handling procedure.	100% based on complaints received via the complaints handling procedure.
Behavioural code of Customers	Adherence to Code	100%	1 incident – Unacceptable behavior, language and threatening manner on the telephone. Letter sent to tenant from Senior Maintenance Officer.	100% (no incidents)

THERE ARE ALSO REAL BENEFITS FOR YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS:

- You will protect the health of those around you by not exposing them to second-hand smoke, however careful you think you are being.
- You will reduce the chances of your children suffering from bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma attacks, meningitis and ear infections.

HOW QUICKLY WILL YOU NOTICE THE BENEFITS OF STOPPING?

- After 20 minutes: Pulse rate returns to normal.
- After 8 hours: Nicotine and carbon monoxide levels in blood reduce by more than half and oxygen levels return to normal.
- After 48 hours: Carbon monoxide will be eliminated from the body. Lungs start to clear out mucus and other smoking debris.
- After 48 hours: There is no nicotine in the body. Ability to taste and smell is improved.
- After 72 hours: Breathing becomes easier. Bronchial tubes begin to relax and energy levels increase.
- After 2-12 weeks: Your circulation improves.
- After 3-9 months: Coughs, wheezing and breathing problems improve as function.

Oak Tree Housing Association is proud to endorse ASH Scotland's charter for a tobacco-free generation by 2034, supporting six key principles that encourage discussion and enable organisations to examine how their own policy and practice can best contribute to the tobacco-free goal.

Over the next 12 months the Association has pledged to work towards a smoke free generation by:

- Publishing support for the charter.
- Including articles in our newsletter to focus attention on reducing families' exposure to second-hand smoke in the home.
- Continuing to provide resources and support for employees in line with the Smoke Free Policy.

Ever Considered Quitting Smoking?

Stopping smoking can make a dramatic improvement to your lifestyle and health in ways you might not expect. Once you stop smoking, some of the benefits are immediate and some are longer-term.

BENEFITS FOR YOU:

- You will save money – the average smoker has 13 cigarettes a day, which works out as 364 cigarettes a month. That's £141 a month and £1,696 a year that you could be saving by not smoking.
- Your sense of taste will return and you will enjoy the taste of food more.
- Your breathing and general fitness will improve.
- The appearance of your skin and teeth will improve.
- You'll be more confident in social situations because you won't smell of stale smoke any more.
- Your fertility levels will improve, along with your chances of having a healthy pregnancy and baby.

READY TO QUIT? YOU'RE UP TO FOUR TIMES MORE LIKELY TO QUIT WITH GOOD HELP.

Smokefree Support Sessions:

Boots, Oak Mall 43 Hamilton Way PA15 1RQ 01475 497147	Gourock Health Centre Shore Street PA19 1AQ 01475 501226
Greenock Health Centre 20 Duncan St PA15 4LY 01475 501226	Inverclyde Community Development Trust Port Glasgow 7 1/2 John Wood Street PA14 5HU 01475501226

For more information visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree

CUSTOMER CARE PRIZE DRAW WINNERS

Month	Name
July	E. McLaughlin
August	Name withheld
September	Name withheld



STAFFING UPDATE

Welcome to **Ellie Butcher**, Clerical Assistant/Receptionist who joined the Association in September.

WELL DONE TO ALL OUR WINNERS WHO WILL EACH RECEIVE A £10 TESCO VOUCHER!

MY HOME PORTAL

The Association is delighted with the success so far of the 'My Home' portal which was launched in June 2018.

By the end of October 2018, 327 tenants had registered.

You can register via our website www.oaktreeha.org.uk and by clicking on the blue 'Tenant Login' button.

You will need to have an email address and a note of your 6 digit tenant number. If you don't have this to hand, please contact us and we will help. We can also register you direct (provided we have details of your email address).



Additional items that you can benefit from are:

- Make changes to your contact details and household
- Join our paper free service to receive documents by email
- Apply to keep a pet
- Apply to make an alteration to your home
- Get advice and information on your tenancy
- Register a comment, complaint or compliment
- Register a neighbourhood complaint
- Participate in online surveys and consultations

We want to develop the Portal further and add on more forms, information and features as we go along. Any suggestions or feedback would be very welcome.

24 HOUR ON-LINE SERVICE

The portal is available online 24/7, 365 days a year and the following main services are available:

- View your rent account statement
- Make a rent payment
- View recent repairs
- Report a repair
- View the details we hold for you

RENT CONSULTATION 2019

Oak Tree HA's Management Committee meets on 18 February 2019 to decide what the rent increase will be from 1 April 2019.

Before the meeting, all tenants will be given the opportunity to be consulted on the proposed increase. This could be by completing surveys (either by post or on-line), by speaking to our staff or by attending events that we will be arranging in January or February 2019.

We are still working on our Budget and looking at the increase that we will consult on. We are also still deciding on what sort of events we will be arranging that will let us speak to as many people as possible.

If you have any ideas on events you would like to attend, or good ways of contacting tenants please let us know. We are always open to new ideas and the more people we meet and speak to, the more valuable the consultation is.

Please contact the office and ask to speak to Hazel Aitken, our Housing Manager.

CHANGES TO YOUR SCOTTISH SECURE TENANCY RIGHTS – HOUSING (SCOTLAND) ACT 2014

We sent a detailed letter to every tenant in October 2018. This letter gave details of the changes to the Scottish Secure Tenancies as a result of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.

It is very important that we have the correct details of who is living in your house. If you do not tell us in writing who is living with you (and you update us every time someone moves in or leaves) then you might find there are difficulties in the future if you want to add a joint tenant, assign your tenancy or someone wishes to succeed to your tenancy.

You can inform us of any changes by doing any of the following:

- By writing to us at:
Oak Tree Housing Association
41 High Street
Greenock
PA15 1NR
- By emailing us at:
info@oaktreeha.org.uk
- By calling into our office and speaking to a member of staff who will ask you to sign a written note.
- By contacting us via the My Oak Tree Portal and completing a change of household form.

If you are unsure of whether or not you have told us about anyone who has moved into your home you can contact us on **01475 807000** or check your household details on the My Oak Tree Portal.

If you are not already registered on the My Oak Tree Portal then you can do so from our website: www.oaktreeha.org.uk and clicking on "tenant login". You will need to have an email address and a note of your tenant number.



If you need to talk, we have the time to listen.

Chat to us over a cuppa at a local community venue:

Greenock Central Library **Mondays** **10.30am – 12.30pm**

Greenock Central Library **Thursdays** **1.30pm – 3.30pm**

We're here to support anyone affected by cancer including the individual with the diagnosis and their families, friends and carers.

Find out what's available to you in your area.

Our volunteers are fully trained and will help you find the right services in Inverclyde, including benefits advice services, carers services and physical activity classes. There is no need to make an appointment, just drop in.

For more information please call us on 01475 728628 or email enquiries @yourvoice.org.uk.
www.yourvoice.org.uk/macmillan

Organised in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support, registered charity in England and Wales (261017), Scotland (SC039907) and the Isle of Man (604). Also operating in Northern Ireland.

CONTACT US

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO CONTACT US

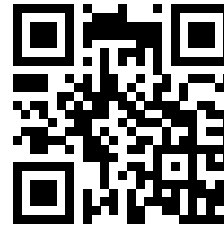
Phone No: 01475 807000 (General Enquiries)
01475 807001 (Repair Line)
Email: info@oaktreeha.org.uk
Website: www.oaktreeha.org.uk
Text: 07866 555 538
Twitter @OakTreeHA

Or call in to the office:
41 High Street, Greenock, PA15 1NR

OFFICE OPENING HOURS

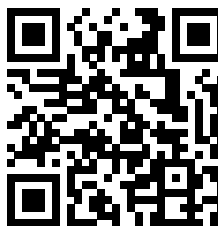
Monday 9:00am ~ 5:00pm
Tuesday 9:00am ~ 6:00pm
Wednesday 12noon ~ 5:00pm
Thursday 9:00am ~ 5:00pm
Friday 9:00am ~ 4:00pm

Website



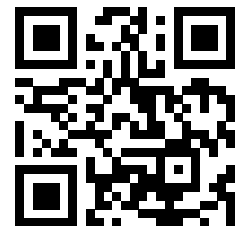
www.oaktreeha.org.uk

Facebook



OakTreeHA

Twitter



@OakTreeHA

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS 2019/2020

Please note the office will be closed
on the following dates:

Good Friday Easter Monday	Friday 19th April 2019 Monday 22nd April 2019
May Day	Monday 6th May 2019
Queen's Birthday Holiday May Weekend	Friday 24th May 2019 Monday 27th May 2019
Greenock Fair	Friday 28th June 2019 Monday 1st July 2019
September Weekend	Friday 6th September 2019 Monday 9th September 2019
Christmas	Wednesday 25th December 2019 Thursday 26th December 2019 Friday 27th December 2019
New Year	Wednesday 1st January 2020 Thursday 2nd January 2020 Friday 3rd January 2020