

TheChain

...linking people together

ISSUE 18 • SUMMER 2017



A fond farewell to Eveline and Rosie

We wish two of our longest-serving Scheme Managers a long, happy and healthy retirement

[Turn to page 3](#)



Green-fingered tenants in Inverurie

Tenants are transforming formerly disused grounds into a thriving community garden

[Turn to page 4](#)



Castlehill helps sheltered tenants get active

Fun, confidence-building social activity sessions for our Aberdeen sheltered tenants

[Turn to page 5](#)



New opportunity for Moray tenants

Moray tenants have a new way to get involved and have their say on our housing services

[Turn to page 7](#)



103rd birthday celebrations at Craigielea

Sunday 14th May saw a large gathering of residents and family celebrating the 103rd birthday of Jenny Inglis, a tenant at our very sheltered complex at Craigielea Gardens in Mannofield.

Everyone enjoyed a selection of sandwiches, cakes and treats, plenty rounds of tea and coffee, as well as a few celebratory beverages.

Amongst the music that was played, Jimmy Shand and The Bluebell Polka was especially popular, with the hands clapping and the feet tapping. Jenny added her own verse at the "Que Sera, Sera" interlude and the voices of Vera, Frankie and Ella Fitzgerald were also heard.

Hannah kindly gave her own time for a splendid display of Highland dancing with the swords. Many thanks to her.

Jenny was born in Dundee shortly before the First World War had begun, followed by childhood stints in Greenock and Perth, a nursing career in Edinburgh before marriage and raising a family in Fife and latterly St Andrews.

Jenny moved to Aberdeen in the 1980s after her husband passed away. She forged a new and active chapter in her life making many new friends and discovering the delights of Aberdeen and beyond. Now in her fifth year at Craigielea she is the oldest, sometimes the liveliest and certainly a dear friend to all. Happy Birthday Jenny!





Letter from our Chief Executive...

The recent horrific fire at the Grenfell tower block in London has brought the issue of fire safety into sharp focus and I'm sure everyone's thoughts have been with those affected by this tragic event. We have no tower block housing within Castlehill's stock, nor do we have any of the over-cladding in our properties that seems to have contributed to the rapid spread of the Grenfell fire.

Fire safety in our housing has always been a top priority for Castlehill and in the light of recent events we will be reviewing our fire safety measures further to identify any additional actions we can take to ensure that the Association remains compliant with safety legislation and our homes continue to be a safe place to live. Fire safety legislation requires that items such as smoke alarms, fire doors and other related equipment are maintained. The particular measures provided will vary, depending on the type of property you live in e.g. flat or house.

As well as action the Association can take, it is important that residents also play their part particularly by assisting us to keep common areas free from fire hazards or any items that could get in the way of an escape route should a fire occur. Within your own home, there are also actions you can take to minimise risk, such as having an escape plan in place, avoiding the use of candles or tea-lights and ensuring electrical appliances are in good working order and have the correct fuses.

Castlehill works closely with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service with regards to safety advice and their website is a useful resource you may wish to have a look at: www.firescotland.gov.uk

As well as providing valuable advice, the website also gives details of how to request a home fire safety visit.

David Lappin

Chief Executive



Results of our tenant satisfaction survey

Thank you to everyone who took part in our tenant satisfaction survey. We appreciate you taking the time to tell us your views on how we deliver our services.

We are pleased to report that 90% of tenants are satisfied with our overall service and 85% are satisfied with the quality of their home.

86% of tenants rate Castlehill as being good at keeping them informed. There has been a significant increase in tenants who are satisfied with opportunities to participate in decision-making (from 61% in 2014 to 72% in 2017) but we want to aim much higher. If you would like to find out more about getting involved at any level, please contact our Tenant Participation Officer on 01224 628109.

The next step is for each department to use the relevant results in their work plans, with action points addressing

specific areas for improvement. These work plans are updated quarterly and go to committee.

Some of the statistics are used in our Annual Return on the Charter, and are also included in our annual performance report. Our Tenants Panel/Readers Group has a say as to which of the non-statutory statistics are included, so if this is something that interests you, please do get in touch.

If you asked that staff contact you regarding the survey, we will be in touch soon, once the research company pass on your details to us.

The reports will soon be available on our website. The Tenants Panel (CaRTO) and Readers Group have been provided with copies of the reports. If you would like to request a copy, please contact Catherine Coutts on 01224 628109 or catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk

Fond farewell to Eveline and Rosie

Earlier this year two long serving members of staff retired from their posts in Castlehill sheltered housing schemes.



At Craigievar Court in Aberdeen, Eveline MacLeod retired as Relief Manager after having worked there since December 1985 when the scheme was built. Eveline was initially employed as Scheme Warden, the post title for which was later changed to Scheme Manager. In October 2013 Eveline and Joyce Ness, who was at that time Relief Manager, swapped posts. Since 1985 Eveline and her husband John also lived in a house at Craigievar Court, raising their family there and only moving late last year to a Castlehill flat in another area in the city. On 23 March 2017 Eveline and John attended an afternoon tea event at the scheme hosted by the tenants when she received flowers, cards and gifts from them and Joyce Ness and also from Jim Anderson (Housing Manager – Sheltered) on behalf of Castlehill in appreciation of a long and dedicated service to provide support and friendship for residents at Craigievar Court past and present. All present wished a long and happy retirement to Eveline and John who are shown in the photograph with another photograph showing those present enjoying their afternoon tea.



On 12 May 2017 Rosie Robertson retired from her post as Scheme Manager at Nethermain's Court ECHT having worked there since January 2005. Tenants hosted a morning event in the common room to mark Rosie's departure when she received a card and a number of gifts from tenants at the scheme and a card and gift from Jim Anderson on behalf of Castlehill. All present thanked Rosie for her dedication and commitment in her post as Scheme Manager for the past 12 years and wished her a long and happy retirement. Rosie is shown in the centre of the attached photograph receiving her gift from Mrs Sadler with another tenant Mrs Harvey seated next to her.

Tenant evicted for refusing to clean up her dogs' mess

Langstane Housing Association have evicted an Aberdeenshire woman from her tenancy as a result of persistently allowing her dogs to foul the common areas of the development she lived in and not cleaning up after her pets.

It is an offence under the Dog Fouling(Scotland) Act 2003 to allow a dog to foul and not remove the faeces immediately. It is also a breach of tenants' tenancy conditions to allow a pet to cause a nuisance.

The Association first received complaints from neighbours in August 2014 about the dog fouling shortly after the woman moved into her address. Following warnings regarding the dog mess and following investigation, permission to keep her pets was withdrawn.

The tenant assured the Association that there would be no more issues with dog fouling and she was allowed to keep the pets. Unfortunately, complaints

about the dog fouling were again received from neighbours and again after investigation, permission to keep her pets was withdrawn a second time.

Despite the tenant being given a reasonable opportunity to find an alternative home for her pets, she refused to do so, leaving the Association no other option than to begin legal action to end her tenancy.

The Association's solicitor applied for an eviction order and at a hearing in December 2016 at Aberdeen Sheriff Court, the tenant admitted that she had persistently allowed her dogs to foul in the common areas and had not cleaned up after them.

The Association was pleased to have been supported in their action by the neighbours, one of whom was prepared to appear as a witness in court. The Association also worked closely with an Aberdeenshire Council Dog Warden.



Green-fingered tenants in Inverurie

A group of tenants in Aquhorthies Circle, Inverurie, have been making progress on transforming a formerly unused piece of ground at their scheme.

Tenants asked if they could use the ground as a community garden and have been busy making improvements. Castlehill have fitted a gate to the area, and tenants have been making in-roads by planting bulbs, sowing seeds and sprucing up the area.

There is a bug hotel for our smaller nature-lovers and several bird feeders to attract the local wildlife.

Some of the children who live at the development have been involved, and have received a certificate and packets of seeds to show our appreciation for all their hard work.

The garden is a work in progress, but there is a marked improvement already and residents' plans are beginning to take shape.

If you live at Aquhorthies Circle and would like to be involved, even if you can only spare an hour now and again, you can contact Catherine on 01224 628109 or catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk, who will pass your details on to the group.



Castlehill helps Aberdeen sheltered tenants get active



Castlehill recently helped bring some of Aberdeen's sheltered and very sheltered tenants together for a day of light physical activity. We teamed up with Sport Aberdeen and Sanctuary Scotland to run fun, confidence-building sessions at Westburn Outdoor Centre.

Twenty-eight Castlehill and Sanctuary tenants took part in activities, including Chi Gung and Boccia. The event enabled people to socialise with other folk who they otherwise would not meet.

We are planning at least two more similar events, with one in October and one in March. All our Aberdeen sheltered and very sheltered tenants will be notified about the events nearer the time. Everything is taken care of, from transport there and back, to a light lunch, so why not come along and join in the fun?

Chair-based yoga at St Peter's Court

Tenants at St Peter's Court in Torry have been reaping the benefits of a chair-based yoga class, held in their residents' lounge.

Gentle seated yoga modifies yoga poses so that they can be done while sitting on a chair or in some cases, a wheelchair.

These modifications make yoga accessible to people who cannot stand for long periods or lack the mobility to undertake floor-based exercise. There is no need to have done any yoga before and it's never too late to start!

In addition to a good stretch, participants can also enjoy other health benefits associated with yoga, such as improved strength, confidence with balance, enhanced range of motion, better posture, stress relief and a sense of well-being.

Yoga sessions are held on Mondays from 10:30am – 11:30am and cost £2 per session. They are taking a break over summer but will start up again in August. Please call Hayley or Louise on 01224 522270 for more information.



TENANTS' NEWS...

Join our tenant-led Scrutiny Panel NOW

If you are interested in joining our Scrutiny Panel, now is the time to get in touch. Training will commence in September, with tenants deciding on which area they want to scrutinise by the end of the month.

Scrutiny is a highly effective way for tenants to get involved, investigate and make recommendations for a positive impact within Castlehill. Tenants decide which area to focus on and they work autonomously, supported by our Tenant Participation Officer and other staff at all levels.

To find out more, please contact Catherine on 01224 628109 or catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk



Changes to the Charter

The Scottish Social Housing Charter helps to improve the quality and value of services that social landlords provide. Following a consultation with tenants last year, the revised Charter was approved by Parliament and came into effect in April this year. The Charter contains 16 outcomes and standards. They describe the results that tenants and other customers expect social landlords to achieve, cover social landlords' housing activities and are monitored, assessed and reported upon by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Several members of our Tenants Panel (CaRTO) attended a Scottish Government information session at Marischal College in Aberdeen to find out more about these changes and to join in the discussion. Our Moray tenants had the option to go to the Inverness session.

These events showcased a variety of case studies and partnership initiatives that tenants and landlords across the country are taking to scrutinise performance across the Charter, to meet Charter outcomes and to deliver high quality housing services.

Two Castlehill tenants, Colin Stewart and Alan Morrison, took the lead in delivering an informative and engaging presentation, with support from our Tenant Participation Officer.

They covered their experiences with scrutiny, meeting the Charter, key things that worked well, challenges and the impact this has had on achieving positive change.

The Charter is available at www.gov.scot or you can contact Catherine on 01224 628109 if you prefer a paper version. Copies of the presentation are also available.



New Moray tenants group

Our Moray tenants have a new opportunity to get involved and have their say.

We have had an Aberdeen-based Tenants Panel for several years and we now have enough interest to set up a Moray-based group. The group is part of CaRTO (Castlehill Registered Tenants Organisation) and tenant-led, with support from our Tenant Participation Officer.

The focus is on tenants telling us their views, giving feedback and helping us to improve services and our performance as a landlord. Our tenants have been involved in projects such as completely redesigning and improving the content of our tenants' handbook, creating tenant information leaflets and selecting information to include in our performance report.

They also are invited to events throughout the year that we hope will



be of interest and relevant to tenants.

Meetings have been held in Cullen so far, but we will rotate venues to include Tomintoul and Aberlour, as we do appreciate that travel can be a barrier for some tenants.

Put simply, it is tenants and Castlehill

working in partnership to improve our performance as your landlord. There is nobody better placed to tell us where we can improve than our tenants!

If you are a Moray tenant and would like to find out more, please contact Catherine on 01224 628109 or catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk

Castlehill tenant finalist in national awards

A Castlehill tenant has received recognition for his voluntary work in tenant participation for Castlehill and beyond.

TIS stands for Tenant Information Service and the TIS National Excellence Awards recognise and honour landlords, tenants, residents, and community groups who are leading the way and making a difference within the Scottish social housing sector.

Colin Stewart was a finalist for the Frances Nelson MBE award, which was introduced in recognition of TIS's former Chair and celebrates the commitment and hard work of an individual who has made a real difference in their community or wider area.

Castlehill would like to thank Colin for his dedication and voluntary contributions he has made to tenant participation and look forward to continuing to work with him in the future.



Would you know what to do if...



Castlehill is generally responsible for the maintenance of your home but tenants also share some duties, and in emergency situations you should know how to cope to minimise potential damage and disruption.



YOU WERE FACED WITH A FLOOD OR SERIOUS LEAK?

You should know where the stopcock in your home is located, and in the case of a serious leak, how to shut off the water supply at the stopcock, prior to calling for help. Stopcocks are often located under the kitchen sink, in a kitchen cupboard or in a hall cupboard. To shut off the water supply the stopcock needs to be turned in a clockwise direction. If you do not know where your stopcock is located, please call your Maintenance Officer.



THERE IS A POWER CUT?

If your home suffers a complete loss of power firstly please check and see if your neighbours are the same. If they are, the problem will no doubt be to do with the mains power supply, and you can report to Scottish & Southern Energy on telephone number 0800 300 999.



However when only your lights go out or you suffer only a partial loss of power this usually means that the trip switches in your consumer unit or fuse box are working properly and a circuit has "tripped". You can then usually find out what caused the problem and sort it out quite easily.



Modern electric circuits are fitted with trip switches which activate and "break" the circuit when a problem is detected. A trip switch usually operates because:

- a light bulb blows
- there are too many appliances on a circuit causing overloading
- there is a faulty appliance.



In the case of a faulty appliance, often the last appliance being used prior the circuit tripping is faulty, for example, a kettle, toaster, or hair drier.



If you are unsure which appliance is faulty, you can find out if you switch off all appliances at the sockets, re-set the trip switches on the consumer unit, and then switch the appliances on again one by one until the consumer unit trips again. You should try this procedure before calling to report a repair.

Please note that the cost of any call-outs for repairs, where no fault is found, i.e. when there is only a faulty appliance, will usually be re-charged.



YOUR TOILET LEAKS?

If a toilet or cistern is leaking there is usually a separate shut-off valve which allows the water supply to the toilet to be isolated. Toilet shut off valves are often located close to the floor below the toilet.



YOUR TOILET WON'T FLUSH?

If you have a non flushing toilet Castlehill is responsible for dealing with its repair, but in the meantime please remember that a toilet can be effectively flushed by pouring a basin or bucket of water down the toilet pan (this may be handy to remember if you are "desperate"!).

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES PLEASE CALL THE MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT ON 01224 628104.

Your Right to Repair



Scottish secure tenants and short Scottish secure tenants have the right to have small urgent repairs carried out by their landlord within a given timescale. This is called the Right to Repair scheme. The scheme covers certain repairs up to the value of £350. These repairs are known as 'qualifying' repairs.

They include urgent repairs for such things as: unsafe electrical installations, loss of heating, loss of water supply, blocked drains, etc.

When you report a repair to Castlehill you are sent a duplicate copy of the Works Order issued to the contractor for your information. On the order you will see some tick boxes near the bottom of the sheet indicating whether the order "Qualifies" or "Does Not Qualify" under the Right to Repair legislation. On occasions the "Does Not Qualify" box being ticked leads to confusion and you might think that this means the work will not be done, or that you will be responsible for paying, but please note this is not the case! Jobs that do not qualify are no less important to us. This just means that these orders are not covered by the Right to Repair scheme.

How long does Castlehill have to carry out a qualifying repair?

Repair times depend on the type of repair. For example if your toilet is not flushing, it should usually be repaired within one day, or a loose banister should be repaired within three working days, and a non working extractor fan should be repaired within seven working days. Times are set by law, not by Castlehill.

What happens if the work is not done in time?

If a qualifying repair is not started within the time limit set, you have the right to request another contractor from Castlehill's approved list of Contractors to carry out the repair. You cannot use a contractor who is not on Castlehill's list. The other contractor will then tell us that you have asked them to carry out the repair. We will then pay you £15 compensation for the inconvenience. If the second contractor also fails to complete the repair within the specified time limit you will be entitled to a further £3 for each working day until the repair is completed up to a maximum amount of £100 for any one repair.

A full explanatory leaflet on the Right to Repair is available in request – please call the Maintenance department on telephone number 01224 628104 if you would like one sent to you.

Service Charges

As you will be aware, in addition to rent charges, in most Castlehill properties monthly service charges are also collected. These are calculated every year to raise income for the 'communal running costs' in individual schemes on a non-profit basis.

The calculation of service charges takes place every year in January/February on a scheme by scheme basis. This is done by Castlehill's Administrative Officer and both Housing Managers who have access to a range of information. This includes relevant expenditure for the preceding financial year e.g. heating bills, contract costs for services such as cleaning and gardening, and where appropriate relevant staffing costs. Because service charges are calculated on a year by year basis account will also be taken of any credit or deficit balance on the scheme.

There are a number of individual elements included in the service charge which are called 'services', 'provisions' and 'Manager' costs (for sheltered housing schemes only). In addition some schemes also have a heating charge.

The items included in the 'services' element includes heating and lighting of communal areas, cleaning of these areas, gardening costs and in sheltered and very sheltered schemes maintenance of communal laundry equipment.

The 'provisions' element takes account of the requirement to build up funds for future replacement and upgrade of floor coverings, furniture and other



equipment in communal areas. The 'Manager' element only applies in sheltered housing and is charged to provide income for the provision of non Housing Support services.

The heating charges are calculated taking account of fuel costs met by Castlehill for communal heating plant and these costs can be subject to fluctuation from time to time although Castlehill always seeks to obtain best value in the provision of fuel.

When all relevant cost elements in an individual housing scheme have been calculated and totalled, this cost is divided taking account of the number of properties in the scheme and the service charge is set for the forthcoming financial year. All tenants will be notified of this before 1 April in a letter detailing rent and service charges and heating charges where appropriate.

So there it is, the inside story on service charges!

Contact us...



Castlehill Housing Association

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Aberdeen AB10 1UT
Tel: 01224 625822
Fax 01224 625830

Website: www.castlehillha.co.uk
Email: info@castlehillha.co.uk
Office hours are:

Mon – Fri 9.00am – 5.00pm



Wishing you a
great summer
from all the team
at Castlehill

Quiz

Q.1 How old was our featured Craigielea tenant on her birthday?

Name:

Q.2 What percentage of our tenants are satisfied with our overall service?

Address:

Q.3 What did a Langstane tenant get evicted for?

Tel/Email

Q.4 Which region is our new tenants' group in?

The winner of the Winter 2016 quiz was a lucky tenant from Spa Street in Aberdeen.

Q.5 What is the maintenance department's phone number?

Please send your entry by **31st August** to:

Catherine Coutts
4 Carden Place, Aberdeen. AB10 1UT
Or email catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk

