

TheChain

...linking people together

ISSUE 22 • SPRING 2019



'Above and Beyond' Award



Alan Morrison
'Above and
Beyond' Award.

Turn to page 3

Join CaRTO Home Link today!



A quick and simple
online solution for
tenants who want to
be part of the group.

Turn to page 7

Silver City Surfers



The Silver City Surfers
teach over 55s how to
use modern technology.

Turn to page 8

Smoke detectors for tenants



New smoke
detectors for
Castlehill tenants.

Turn to page 10

Sleep out success story



A team of nine Castlehill employees and committee members raised more than £4360 for Social Bites' 'Sleep in the Park' last December. The initiative, which took place on a cold and wet night in Aberdeen's Duthie Park, encouraged people to brave the elements and sleep out to raise funds and awareness to combat homelessness and rough sleeping.



Our group joined 12,000 others sleeping out at four locations across Scotland, and the event raised more than £3.2 million through sponsorship and donations for the project. This money will go towards Social Bite's ongoing work on the Housing First Programme, which supports rough sleepers in gaining long-term tenancies. Earlier this year the charity committed to contributing £3 million, matched by the Scottish Government's contribution of £6.5 million, to fully fund the programme. This amazing total, means funding is fully secured to help 830 people off the streets and Castlehill is committed to helping where it can.

"Meeting people at the event, who have benefited from Social Bite and their fundraising was humbling. I would definitely do it again and would encourage anyone to give it a go." said Emma R. "I couldn't do it for more than one night, the aims of the project are terrific" added Nicola, who had organised this year's participation.

Castlehill is delighted to have raised so much money which has been donated to the Social Bite initiative and is currently planning its next fundraising activity.

Letter from our Chief Executive...



As you'll see from **another** article in this edition of The Chain, Castlehill had a team taking part in Sleep in the Park in December 2018, to raise money for Social Bite and their campaign to end homelessness and rough sleeping in Scotland. I had always been a bit sceptical about these "sleep out" events, thinking they were a bit patronising to the folk who were sleeping rough for real, but when it was announced that Aberdeen was to be one of the cities taking part and Castlehill decided to enter a team, I thought why not get involved and maybe challenge my own expectations.

There is a huge amount of organisation behind an event like this with security, warming up facilities, hot drinks and food available and a concert in the evening to keep everyone entertained before bedding down for the night. Given that all this was laid on, I can't imagine anyone taking part was under any illusion that what we were doing was anything like the real experience of being on the streets. For me, the most powerful thing that came across as to why these kinds of events need our support was the speakers who had been homeless and who had been helped to get back on their feet by support services that the funds raised have gone to. These real-life stories showed just what a complex issue it is and how easily things can spiral out of control.

We were lucky that it was a mild night, but around 5am heavy rain gave us a right soaking. We are fortunate that we could head to our nice warm homes to get dried out and warmed up.

I can't say that sleeping out was enjoyable, but I'm glad I did it. It's not like experiencing the real thing but it does make you think differently about the people who don't have any choice. It's a poor reflection on our society that everyone doesn't have a roof over their heads and anything that raises awareness, supports people to get off the streets and makes you think about what difference you can make must be a good thing.

David Lappin

Chief Executive

Have you?

All tenants received a letter from Castlehill at the end of February that detailed what your rent and services costs would be from the 1st April 2019. This is a quick reminder about the steps you need to take to ensure your rent is paid in full and on time. Your rent is due on the 1st of each month.

If you pay your rent by bank standing order you need to contact your bank to change the standing order to the new amount.

If you use online banking you can change your standing order by logging into your account.

Paying your rent with Universal Credit? You must log into your online journal and tell the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) about the change in your housing costs.

Are you on Housing Benefit? No action needed as the Association will advise Housing Benefit of the changes.

If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact your Housing Officer either by phone or email.



Phone: 01224 625822

Email: info@castlehillha.co.uk

Alan Morrison 'Above and Beyond' Award

A city centre tenant has been awarded with the Castlehill's very first Alan Morrison 'Above and Beyond' Award. The award was introduced to commemorate the life of Alan Morrison, who was a prominent figure in tenant participation in the North East.

Alan was one of the founding members of Castlehill's Tenants Panel (CaRTO), and was the group's Chair. He was involved with the Scrutiny Panel, a key member of North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT) and a member of Castlehill's Management Committee. Alan devoted a considerable amount of time and energy to these groups and made a positive impact to tenant participation. The Alan Morrison 'Above and Beyond' Award reflects the compassionate person that Alan was, by celebrating the kindness, generosity and understanding that often goes unrecognised in our busy lives.

After much deliberation, CaRTO members and Alan's family chose a winner, Diana Koszolko. Roman Farian, a tenant in one of our city centre schemes, had nominated his neighbour, Diana for the 2018 award. Roman said,

"Diana is a very kind and positive person that serves as an example inspiring other neighbours towards meaningful lives and how to support one and other living in the same community".

He told us of a time when Diana helped her neighbours during a prolonged power cut. She checked on her neighbours, reassured them, called the energy provider on their behalf and waited with them until the fault was fixed. Diana also frequently helps out others in her building, whether it be small things like taking in parcels or reporting repairs, and always has a smile on her face.

Diana received a personalised trophy and a cheque for £100.00. Roman received a £50.00 cheque for making the winning nomination.

We would like to commend Diana for being such a good neighbour and Roman for taking the time to nominate her.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO NOMINATE SOMEONE FOR THIS YEAR'S AWARD?

You can apply online via www.castlehillha.co.uk. Paper forms are available on request by calling our office on 01224 625822. Sheltered and very sheltered schemes (with the exception of Richmondhill Court) have forms available in the common room. All entries must be received by Friday 28 June.

Pets and Fouling



Having a pet is a wonderful thing and can bring huge benefits to your life, however they are your responsibility and we need to make certain that your pets don't disturb your neighbours and that your property is suitable for one. For this reason, we ask that if you want to have a pet you remember to ask permission of the Association. Many of our properties are no pet schemes. Those with pets are reminded that they are your responsibility and you are reminded that those with dogs must not let them cause damage or foul within their property or scheme. Tenants with dogs should keep them on a

lead within the scheme and must ensure that pet waste is cleaned up immediately as if the Association must clean up dog mess, this cost will be recharged.



Service Charges

At our Rent Consultations in the Autumn, tenants told us that they wanted to know more about services charges.

What are service charges?

Firstly, Service Charges are different from your rent. We use service charges to pay for the services that we provide for you. The formal name is the "Services Equalisation Account" but we call it a "pot". The "pot" is also used to save up money for items that may need to be replaced in the future. Your service charges will be made up of different elements depending on where you live and if you live in general needs or supported housing. Here are some of the services that we provide for you which may be included in your monthly service charge:



- **Gardening and landscaping** – where this is either done by a contractor or by a gardener employed by Castlehill. We tender for our gardening services.
- **Common area cleaning** – where this is either done by a contractor or by a cleaner employed by Castlehill
- **Cleaning materials** – where we employ a cleaner directly, we purchase materials
- **Caretaker services** (Dee Court only)
- **Grit** – we contract to keep grit bins filled where the Local Authority has not adopted the roads and pavements.
- **Heating and Lighting of common areas** - relevant electricity, gas and other fuel costs
- **Laundry facilities** - allowance for repair of laundry equipment in communal laundries
- **Provisions** – we put aside money to allow us to replace items such as common area flooring, common area in sheltered housing and replacement of laundry machines where we provide this service. This money is held for use only within the scheme and is not spent in other schemes.
- **Garden Maintenance Fund** – in some larger schemes we put aside money to replace shrubs and large plants when required.
- **Admin** – we levy a 10% admin charge for administering the delivery of the services we provide to you.
- **Scheme Manager** – In Aberdeenshire and Moray sheltered schemes 20% of the cost of providing Scheme Managers comes from service charges and covers the non- housing support services that we provide e.g. repairs reporting, contractor liaison, housing management services, building security, health and safety related tasks such as fire safety.
- **Telephones** - covers the cost of office telephone and broadband connections in sheltered schemes where Castlehill staff are employed
- **Lifts** - In schemes with a passenger lift or stair-lift annual cost of servicing and maintaining the lift to operational standard
- **Television licence** - if there is a television in the communal lounge in sheltered housing the cost of purchasing an annual licence for this

Service charges are included in the total amount we charge you each month. This should be paid on the 1st of each month.

Mystery Shopping update

Two Castlehill tenant volunteers took part in a mystery shopping training session organised by NETRALT in March. As you may remember, the first mystery shopping project spanning 10 landlords was a great success. However, there is always room for improvement and tenants decided that training was required to standardise tenant feedback and to ensure a level playing field for landlords.

Tenants decided no staff could attend, so that the concept of mystery shopping wasn't diluted by staff being involved in their approach and feeding it back to their colleagues.

Bespoke training was provided by Jacqueline Norwood of Full Circle Solving, who has over 35 years experience in housing, care, community and training.

A happy tenant volunteer remarked, "It was a lovely friendly and relaxed atmosphere which made learning easier. Lots of good ideas to help us approach the task with confidence!"

Another said, "Thoroughly enjoyable day. Styles of presentation were fantastic and illustrative. Trainers were very adaptable and changed style/form of training to better illustrate and inform the goals and objectives that we were seeking to

achieve. Felt much clearer about my role as a mystery shopper"

Our tenant volunteers will now start developing their framework for future mystery shopping exercises. We look forward to hearing all about it!



What has Mystery Shopping got to do with housing?

Mystery shopping is a form of tenant participation where tenants independently assess our service standards.

It gives Castlehill and other social landlords a better understanding of how tenants perceive the quality and level of service we provide. It complements satisfaction surveys by providing feedback about direct experiences with staff. It can be an effective form of tenant scrutiny.



Sheltered Magazine

This popular magazine relies on the contributions of our residents at our Sheltered and very Sheltered schemes. CaRTO has generously donated 2 x £50 scheme prizes for their favourite submissions. Tenants are encouraged to send in photos, articles, news, scheme updates, stories, poems, artwork, recipes – whatever you would like to contribute.

We are hoping for a publication date towards the autumn and would encourage tenants to contribute as the last edition was well received.

Please email your contributions to info@castlehillha.co.uk or send to Sheltered Magazine, Castlehill Housing Association, 4 Carden Place, Aberdeen, AB10 1UT



Internal restructure – many new faces



Castlehill has been through many internal changes in the last 12 months. Much of them have been connected to an internal restructure which should make the work we carry out for tenants more seamless.

As the number of properties grow so do the number of people we need to cover them. Housing management is delighted to have appointed four new members of staff in recent months. Two Senior staff members have been appointed. Alana Allison who will deal with the day to day running of the Housing Services and Susan Pirie who will be senior responsible for the Housing Support needs side of things. We also have two new part time Housing Officers, Susan Matson and Leisha Bishop will be job share partners for Sharon and Suzanne.

Castlehill will be taking delivery of more property - this means an increased workload for the Housing Property Services department. We also will be rolling out the usual planned maintenance of

kitchens and bathrooms and the upgrade of fire detection in all properties, which will make for a very busy year.

The renamed Property Services Department brings both Planned and Reactive maintenance together under one roof at Carden Place, enabling the staff to work together to provide the technical and maintenance our properties need. Staffing in this department has also grown with the appointment of Stewart King as Property Services Officer and Kirsten Buchanan as Customer Services assistant. Dave Jamieson has been appointed as Maintenance Joiner and Philip Nicol will be joining the Association as Property Services Manager, late April. The wealth of experience and expertise we now have under one roof should give tenants comprehensive maintenance cover.

Castlehill is committed to providing the best service it can for its tenants and by increasing our in-house expertise we will be able to provide this.

What is a PODCAST?



A podcast is a series of digital audio episodes, usually focused on a particular topic or theme. They are similar to a talk radio show, but you can download it and listen whenever suits you. You can subscribe to a show and listen to episodes on demand by downloading to your device. As a podcast is audio, not video, they are perfect for listening to in the car, at the gym or even whilst doing chores!

We are developing a series of housing and community podcast episodes and would love for lots of Castlehill tenants to take part, talking about a whole variety of different topics that are chosen by you.

If you would like to take part in a podcast, or have any ideas for content, please call Catherine on 01224 628109 or email catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk

Apply for funding from CaRTO

Do you need funding for a project that will make a difference to Castlehill tenants? CaRTO invite you to apply for their participatory budgeting scheme.

CaRTO have already allocated £250 to the Community Garden at Aquhorthies Circle in Inverurie, which may go towards gardening equipment, seating and plants.

For full details on eligibility, how to apply and how funding may be allocated should you be successful, please contact Catherine Coutts on 01224 625822 or at catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk



Join CaRTO Home Link today!



We have devised a way to make it even easier for tenants to have their say in Castlehill's decision-making process.

CaRTO Home Link is a quick and simple online solution for tenants who want to be part of the group, without the need to attend meetings. We know that there are barriers that make it hard to come along to meetings, especially for those who work 9 to 5, stay-at-home parents, rural tenants, people with medical or mobility issues to name a few, so we hope this new approach will appeal to lots of tenants.

CaRTO Home Link gives you a simple way to take part and have your say by giving us your feedback online, at a time that suits you. Email your name and address to catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk to become part of CaRTO Home Link.

Join us!

WE NEED PEOPLE WHO:

- Want to get involved in making important decisions about their homes and services
- Want to work in partnership with Castlehill
- Are willing to share ideas
- Like to meet new people
- Are willing to learn and develop new skills

Be part of our forward thinking, positive team and help make a difference!

There are lots of options to get involved at any level to suit you.

INTERESTED?

Please contact Catherine on **01224 628109**

or catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk for more info.



Silver City Surfers



The Silver City Surfers are a local independent charity who teach over 55s how to use modern technology. They run five weekly drop in sessions at various locations across the city to try to cater for everyone. The drop-ins are very informal, friendly and tailored to the learners' needs. Each learner is matched up with a volunteer tutor to discuss what they would like to learn. Our learners get a 30 minute session with the tutor and learners can attend as many or as few sessions as they wish.

The sessions are free and they always encourage learners to stay for a blether and a cuppa - the surfers view this to be just as valuable as the learning element of what they provide. Social isolation and loneliness is a real problem and the internet cafe model that the Silver City Surfers use helps to reduce this for many older people. New friendships are forged at the sessions, and people feel more connected both digitally and in person. For further information please; 07799 371329 or email us at silvercitysurfers@gmail.com

 MONDAY MICHIES CHEMIST 391 Union Street Aberdeen 2.30pm - 4pm	WEDNESDAY & FRIDAY THE CITADEL 28 Castle Street AB11 5BG 10am - 12pm	
THURSDAY COMMUNITY FLAT 122 Cummings Park Drive AB16 7BB 11am - 1pm	SATURDAY CENTRAL LIBRARY Rosemount Viaduct AB25 1GW 10am - 11.30am	
TECH TALKS 2nd Tuesday of each month at The Citadel 1.30pm - 3pm		
		 



Newsletter team recruiting now

We are looking for tenant volunteers to co-produce this newsletter. It is published twice a year and is issued to every Castlehill tenant. Your involvement could be as much or as little as you like. You could suggest what to highlight in the newsletter, help to edit, proof read and give feedback on the layout and design.

Everyone is welcome to take part, whether you have experience or not. Perhaps you want to strengthen your cv with voluntary experience, or are someone who wants to put their skills to good use.

Communication will usually take place online, to allow those who are busy during the day to take part in their own time. If you do not have access to the internet and want to take part, we will make other arrangements to suit you.

If this is something that interests you, please contact our Tenant Participation Officer, Catherine Coutts on 01224 628109 or catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk



Universal Credit

Did you know that when you move onto Universal Credit you can opt to have the housing portion paid directly to Castlehill? **Opting** to do this can ensure that you don't fall behind in rent payments.

Rolled out in the North East late 2018, Universal Credit replaces six of the benefits you might currently be receiving: Housing benefit; Child tax credit; Income support; Working tax credit; Income-based Job seekers Allowance and Income related Employment and Support Allowance.

You make your claim through an online application process and you will need to maintain it using an online journal. It's important to know that when you move onto Universal Credit it can take up to five weeks to receive your benefit from your initial claim. Payments will be paid to your bank account on the same date every month (or twice monthly if that is what you opt for) and will include the element for your rent, which should then be paid to Castlehill. You can choose to have this element paid directly to Castlehill if you so wish.

Universal Credit requires applicants to keep the DWP up to date using an online journal and you will be asked to



sign a claimant commitment, failure to do this could cause benefit loss.

The Local Authorities have produced a useful guide on Universal Credit and which include where to get additional help if required and places where you can access the internet for free. These

are available in reception at Carden Place. Please drop by and pick one up. If possible put or go online www.aberdeency.gov.uk/media/7704



Pass It On

Castlehill teamed up with Grampian Housing Association and Zero Waste Scotland to help Sheddocksley tenants declutter by holding an event for Pass it on Week.

Pass it on Week is a national call to action for people in Scotland to embrace the incredible potential of re-use. We live in an age where household budgets are stretched, yet belongings are often considered disposable and the first choice is nearly always to buy new. Pass it on Week is about encouraging people to see the value in the things they have, and reap the benefits of buying second-hand or swapping with friends. Some re-use behaviour is already mainstream, like buying a second-hand car, selling something on eBay or passing on a book once you've

read it. Pass it on Week aims to make buying a second-hand kitchen table as normal as reusing a carrier bag.

Although high winds and rain stopped us from putting our marquee up, Rona Place and Arran Avenue tenants were able to pass on any unwanted items that could be of use to others. Reusable items were donated to the charity organisation Somebody Cares, and non-reusable items were separated for recycling.

For more information on re-use, including ideas for swapping, donating, repairing, sharing and upcycling, please visit <https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk> or <http://www.recycleforscotland.com/re-use/passing-it>



Utilita Energy appointed following Our Power demise

When energy provider Our Power went into receivership in January, many Castlehill tenants were affected. Ofgem stepped in to protect customer credit and continuity of supply and have announced that Utilita Energy Ltd has been appointed to take over Our Power accounts.

Customer accounts will be moved across to Utilita and customers should be receiving a welcome pack which will answer any questions.

Castlehill tenants are reminded that they are free to switch their energy supplier if they should wish. Utilita can be contacted

on 03300 583 392 and information is available on the Utilita website. <https://utilita.co.uk/help/supply-transfer>



Smoke detectors for Castlehill tenants

Following the tragic Grenfell Tower fire, the Scottish Government announced plans for new standards for fire and smoke detection. All registered social landlords must comply by February 2021 with these new regulations and this will involve upgrading and minor installations in your property.

Castlehill will have to gain access to your property and carry out this vital work, and the Association will be in touch a minimum of two weeks prior to the work on your property starting. All work will be carried out by a Castlehill appointed contractor and will begin after April 2019. All our schemes will have to comply with the new regulations by 2021.

These new standards require that there is one smoke alarm installed in the room most frequently used, which is likely to be the living room and one alarm is required in every circulation space on each storey (hallway and landings). A separate heat alarm must

be installed in every kitchen/kitchen area if open plan. All the alarms should be ceiling mounted and interlinked, and there is also a requirement for carbon monoxide detectors to be fitted in each room where there are:

gas boilers, fires (including open fires, heaters and stoves) or a flue passes through. All homes must be covered by the new standard, and the Scottish Housing Regulator will be monitoring Castlehill's compliance with this.



Aberdeen Care and Repair

Have you heard about the Small Repairs Service offered by Care and Repair?

If you are over 60 and living in Aberdeen you can take advantage of the services offered by Care and Repair. This Service can be accessed by anyone within Aberdeen City and they do not have to be a Castlehill tenant to use it. Charges for the service are set on an annual basis and offered for a reasonable

fee and offered at a reduced rate for those on qualifying benefits.

Care and Repair also offer free advice and assistance service for those over 60 or with long term health issues or disability. This invaluable service aims to help people repair and adapt their homes to help them live independently within the comfort of their own homes and communities.



White Goods safety warning

Did you know that fire crews were called to 327 white goods fires in Scotland last year?

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has launched a new campaign to highlight the dangers of such fires, with advice on what to do to stay safe.

SFRS Deputy Chief Officer David McGown said: "People may not associate white goods such as washing machines and tumble dryers with fire, but we responded to 327 white goods fires last year alone. 121 fires were caused by washing machines, 111 caused by tumble dryers, 53 by fridge-freezers and 33 caused by dishwashers.

"People are aware of the traditional causes of fire in the home, such as cooking, smoking and alcohol, but the risk of fire from white goods is also one which we all face. This campaign sets out to highlight not only the risk of fire but simple steps you can take to significantly reduce that risk to yourself, your family and all that is important to you."

There are simple steps everyone can take to avoid fires involving appliances such as tumble dryers, washing machines and dishwashers.

Follow this advice to help you stay safe:

- Don't leave appliances such as dishwashers, tumble dryers and washing machines running when you are sleeping
- If you're not in, make sure your appliances are switched off
- Don't overfill your washing machine or tumble dryer – it could help you avoid a fire
- Clean the lint trap on your tumble dryer after every use.

The SFRS message is clear. Use your white goods safely. Don't risk it.

"If you're out or asleep, it's just not on."



Keep everyone and everything important to you safe. Don't leave appliances such as dishwashers, tumble dryers and washing machines on when you're out or asleep.

- Register your white goods so you'll know if a safety issue is identified. Visit www.registermyappliance.org.uk
- Check for product recalls - visit www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/product-recalls/
- Get your free home fire safety visit. We'll help you sort out a fire escape plan and provide information about smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Call 0800 0731 999
- Text 'FIRE' to 80800
- visit firescotland.gov.uk

DOMESTIC APPLIANCE FIRES 2018

121 WASHING MACHINE FIRES 

111 TUMBLE DRYER FIRES 

53 FRIDGE FREEZER FIRES 

33 DISHWASHER FIRES 



Follow us



@SFRSYourSafety



Scottish Government
Riaghthas na h-Alba
gov.scot





Castlehill Housing Association will be closed for Easter Friday 19th and Monday 22nd April.

Emergency Numbers – out of hours

We've had a few requests for information concerning numbers to use when out of our normal working hours.

The emergency repairs – out of hours:

- **For gas heating please call, Kingdom Gas on 0800 3899463**
- **For central plant/air source/ground source heating call, Heat Care Oil & Gas on 01343 842042**
- **For other emergencies (floods, leaks, loss of power, etc.) call, Camwater on 01651 872929**

Should you need further information please phone the main office number 01224 625822 for our emergency call-out details. If you live in sheltered or very sheltered housing, please report any repairs to scheme staff as usual.



Contact us...

Castlehill Housing Association
4 Carden Place,
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

Email your name, address and answers to catherine.coutts@castlehillha.co.uk or post them to **Freepost CASTLEHILL** by the closing date of 31 May 2019. A winner will be drawn at random and notified directly. **Good luck!**



Thank you to all the people who entered last edition's competition. The lucky winner was a tenant from Mineralwell View in Stonehaven.



Quiz

Q.1 How much did we raise for 'Sleep in the Park'?

Name:

Q.2 What is the name of our new Property Services Manager?

Address:

Q.3 What does CaRTO stand for?

Q.4 Do you have to be a tenant to use Care and Repair?

Tel

Q.5 Where did we hold a Pass It On event?

Email