

TheChain

...linking people together

ISSUE 30 • SPRING 2023



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Changes to Senior Management



Changes to the Senior Management team at Castlehill

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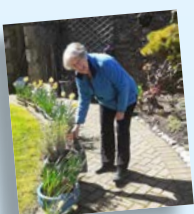
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CaRTO helps the gardeners



Tenant awarded a grant by CaRTO to buy plants and gardening tools

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Care & Repair new funding secured



Care & Repair is delighted that Aberdeen Health and Social Care has agreed to commission their services as part of a new partnership.

This is an exciting opportunity to relaunch the Care & Repair services throughout the city. This enables the team to continue to help older and disabled people with repairs and adaptations, enabling them to live in their own homes for longer.

Did you know that Care & Repair can help older tenants with repairs and adaptations which fall outwith their tenancy agreement? It is always worth a conversation with one of their qualified staff to see how they can help. They can carry out small repairs and minor adaptations at a great price, if you meet the criteria.



Letter from our Chief Executive...

The challenges of the cost-of-living crisis continue to have a huge impact. At Castlehill, we are acutely aware of the difficulties facing many of our tenants' households with rising bills and food costs. This issue of The Chain provides some information on help you may be able to access, and our Housing staff are also there to help you with any difficulties you may be having with your tenancy.

Of course, high inflation and rising costs also have a direct impact on businesses like Castlehill too. Costs from our contractors and suppliers and running costs for our buildings are rising at least in line with inflation when our rental income is not, as we try to maintain affordability for tenants. Rising interest rates on the loans we have for building and maintaining our properties mean money has to go towards this that we would rather be spending on services to directly benefit our tenants. All this means that our Management Committee has been facing difficult decisions on our spending priorities with an emphasis on tenant safety and complying with legal responsibilities such as gas safety and with some other works not being able to be delivered as quickly as we would have liked.

Affordability and feedback from tenants play an important part in the decision-making process and I would encourage people to get involved in this through our tenants organisation CaRTO, who do an excellent job in making tenant views heard.

Details on CaRTO are on the Castlehill website or speak to your Housing Officer, who will put you in touch.

David Lappin

Chief Executive



Naming a daffodil

We always are interested in good news or interesting stories from tenants. Our tenant Margaret Goodbrand of St Johns Court in Stonehaven shared with us about a daffodil she had named for her husband.

Narcissi's John Goodbrand

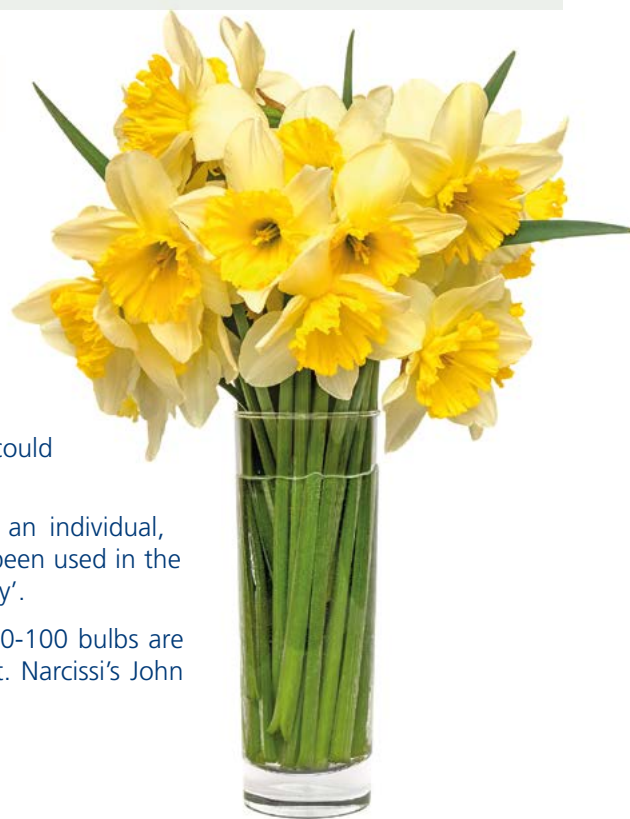
"My husband John died on Christmas day 2013. In 2018 my daughter, also called Margaret arranged to have a daffodil named after her dad. Margaret explains how Narcissi John Goodbrand was "born."

'I telephoned Ron Scamp of Quality Daffodils in Cornwall. He said that he could help as he breeds daffodils.

Daffodils have been named for 250 years. Ron informed me that this is an individual, exclusive name and as long as anything sounding or looking like it has not been used in the last 250 years then it is likely to be accepted by the Royal Horticultural Society'.

From seed to bulb takes 4-5 years; Field trials take an additional 5 years. 50-100 bulbs are then tested and must be found to be hardy, garden worthy and consistent. Narcissi's John Goodbrand fulfilled all criteria and went on sale in 2018. "

What a lovely way to remember a loved one.



2022 Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results



820
INTERVIEWS

Oct 31 → Jan 24

Background to the survey

Research Resource were commissioned by Castlehill Housing Association to undertake their 2022 Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Tenants were asked how satisfied they were with their landlord and the services they provide. This is done to report back to the Scottish Housing Regulator and allows Castlehill Housing Association to improve their services for customers.

Overall service

75%



were satisfied with the **overall service** provided by Castlehill HA.

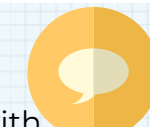
Information and participation

84%



said Castlehill HA was good at **keeping tenants informed** about services and decisions.

71%



were satisfied with the **opportunities to participate** in Castlehill's decision making process.

Communication

79%



are able to access the internet in some way.

Tenants prefer to be kept informed in the following ways:

- 1 Email
- 2 Letters
- 3 Telephone

Tenants with internet access were most likely to use a Castlehill app or web portal to report complaints (77%) or repairs (78%).



Quality of the home

79%



were very or fairly satisfied with the **quality of their home**.

50%



said it was very or fairly **easy to heat** their home.

78%



were satisfied with the **repairs service on the last occasion**.

Value for money

75%



said the rent for their home offered good **value for money**.

The neighbourhood

69%



were satisfied with Castlehill's contribution to the **management of the neighbourhood**

Thank you for taking part in the survey. If you have any questions regarding the tenant satisfaction survey please contact **Research Resource** on **0141 641 6410**

New Directors appointed

Since the last Chain there have been changes to the Senior Management team at Castlehill. We have returned to a four-person team with Matt MacAulay appointed as Director of Property Assets position. Matt has over 30 years' experience working in Social Housing and Construction. Matt will oversee the Property team, his remit includes delivery of the Association's Asset Management Strategy and Corporate Sustainability Strategy, including maximising compliance with targets on Net Zero.

Following the departure of Isla Gray, we have a new Director of Housing Services. We are pleased to confirm that Mhorag Ewen will take on this role having worked for Castlehill for over 10 years, latterly holding the position of Housing Services Manager. Mhorag will be responsible for ensuring that all services to tenants are delivered professionally and in line with regulatory requirements from the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Care Inspectorate and the SSSC and has responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Care & Repair services will also fall within the department.

These changes strengthen our Senior Management Team and ensure our ability to provide a high quality, modern service to our tenants. There have also been new staff changes to other departments across the Association.

We have recruited Jennifer Solely who takes over from Mhorag as Housing Services Manager. Jennifer joins us from a similar role in Angus and began her role in May.

Anna Craib has been appointed for the role of Housing Services Support Team Leader. Anna previously worked for many years in the NHS and brings with her extensive experience of customer service and administration.

There has been a restructure in the Property Services Team. Craig Fleming has been appointed Senior Property Services Officer for Compliance and Stewart King has been appointed Senior Property Services Officer for Reactive Repairs, including grounds maintenance contracts. Calan Henderson has been appointed to the role of full time Property Services Officer having previously worked in a similar role within Aberdeenshire Council. Another full time PSO will be appointed over the summer months.

Care and Repair is pleased to appoint Grzegorz Schab as a Technical Officer. This will ensure that Care and Repair can continue to provide their quality service as they enter their new partnership. Niall Chapman will be joining the team as Handyman, helping across the minor repairs and adaptations schemes.

Castlehill is also happy to welcome scheme staff who have transferred from Cornerstone across our city sheltered schemes. Most of these staff will be known to tenants but it is great to formally welcome them to the Castlehill team.



Matt MacAulay



Mhorag Ewen



Cost of Living Crisis

We are all only too aware that the UK is facing a cost-of-living crisis. Energy costs have been spiralling and this will mean that some people will be faced with making choices between heating and eating. If this is something that you are experiencing, we would encourage you to speak to your housing officer about it. Our staff are trained to help. They can point you to organisations which can offer help and advice. If you are experiencing issues paying your rent, please talk to us about it.

Cost of Living payments for those who qualify

If you are on benefits, remember that the first part of this year's cost of living payment will arrive in accounts of qualifying households between 25th April and 17th May. This £900 grant will be delivered in three separate payments. (and not always the same amounts), it is tax free and has no impact upon the existing benefits.

There are three cost of living payments available.

Low-income benefits - £900 paid from April

Certain disability benefits – will get an additional £150 paid in the summer

Above state pension age – if you are entitled to the winter fuel payment and above 66yrs old you will be getting a top up winter payment of £300 winter 2023/24

Remember, that if you qualify, these payments will be automatic and any requests to apply for them are a scam.



SCARF



If you are experiencing worry about the cost of energy there are places you can go. SCARF is a social enterprise which delivers free and impartial energy saving advice to help people lower their energy bills and make their homes more energy efficient.

Operating out of Cotton Street in Aberdeen their trained advisors can help online over the phone or in-person.

Castlehill's Care & Repair has been working with Smart Energy promoting the use of Smart meters, which can help clients keep an eye on their energy use. Their advisors can show you how the meter works and help you make easy adjustments to ensure that you keep costs down.



For some tenants there will be an issue with affording food. The cost of food went up 17% in February making the weekly shop far more expensive than before. For many, foodbanks are an important lifeline. Many people feel that there are other people more in need, so do not want to use them. One option you may not have considered is the Cfine Pantries.

There are four pantries in the northeast. These are here to help access affordable, healthy food, toiletries, baby products and household items at a low cost. Pantries work on a membership basis, currently £3 which entitles you to a visit once a week. The cost per week is £2.50 and this entitles you to 10 items. For more information about the CFINE Community Food Pantry and the Best Start and Smile Pantry please email pantry@cfine.org or call them on 01224 596156

Consider using the foodbank if you need to

Using a foodbank should you need to, is relatively simple. Speak to your Housing Officer and they can advise you. If you meet the criteria for a foodbank parcel they can give you a voucher and tell you where your nearest foodbank is.

The foodbank will give you enough food for about three days and the parcel can contain essential toiletries like toothpaste and deodorant. If you live remotely some foodbanks even deliver.

In some cases you can self refer.

Remember there will likely be limits to the number of times you can use the foodbank but the advisor can talk you through the best way they can help you.

Debt advice

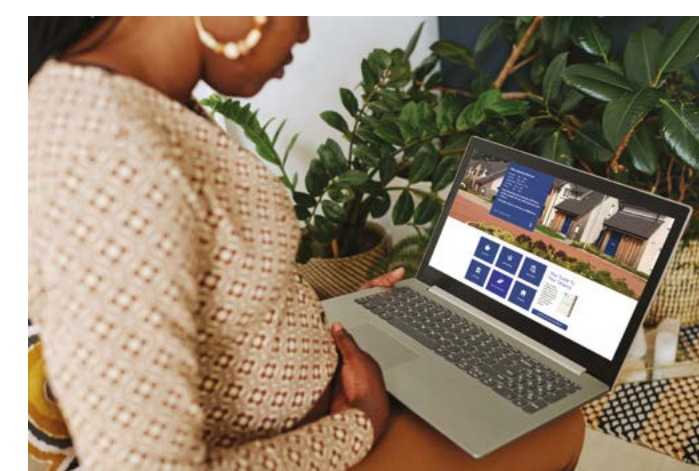
There are plenty of organisations across the region who can help with money and debt advice. It is important to make sure that if you are claiming benefits, you are getting the benefits you are entitled to. It may be useful to contact the Care & Repair team and one of their team can do a benefit check and see what you are entitled to. You could also check out the various organisations listed below who are adept at making sure you are receiving what you need and are there to ensure that you get the appropriate help.

The financial inclusion team – [Aberdeen City Council](#) operate out of Marischal College and aim to facilitate inclusion by ensuring that everyone has access to advice, advocacy, information, and representation in relation to benefits and tax credits.

Aberdeenshire Council has a similar system for those who live in Aberdeenshire, and they can be contacted using a [simple form](#) and can give money and welfare advice.

Moray Council also has a team which can offer help and they can be contacted via their [Financial Services page](#).

We also have plenty of information behind the [blue button on the Castlehill Website](#), which includes the monthly benefit bulletin which has been pulled together by financial advisors across the City and Shire and includes information on benefits and any changes to benefits and grants available. We would also suggest the work of [Money saving Expert](#) which offers up to date advice on many different topics.





Mould and mildew

There has been plenty in the press recently regarding the effects mould and mildew can have on your home. Our Property Assets department have been keeping a close eye on the subject and have ensured the [Castlehill Policy](#) is up to date. We also have a useful information leaflet about [Mould and Mildew](#) which can be accessed on the website here.

Remember the Association is not responsible for damage caused by Mould and Mildew unless it is because of a building defect. Moisture in the air is the most common cause of condensation and this cannot be helped. Opening a window and adequately heating your home can negate some of the moisture. Opening curtains and blinds and as we move into summer, opening the windows will really help, as will a good spring clean using a good quality cleaner. There are plenty of good quality cleaners available which can sort a mould issue should it occur. As ever if you are worried about anything please call your Property Services Officer and they should be able to advise you on the best course of action.

How to get rid of mould should it occur? It is Spring and a wonderful time for a deep clean of your property.

Bathroom

A cleaning solution is an excellent option for smooth bathroom surfaces such as sinks, tiles and bathtubs. Wear protective gloves, spray a cleaning solution onto the area affected with mould and use a sponge to wipe the mould away. For tighter spaces you can also use a toothbrush for trapped mould.



Kitchen

Mould on kitchen cabinets can be cleaned using a homemade solution with equal parts water and detergent in a spray bottle. You can also use a toothbrush or kitchen scrubbing brush to remove the mould.



Walls and Ceilings

You will usually need a paint scraper to remove the paint barrier and access the mould to remove it. Once paint or wallpaper is scrapped off, use mould removal spray and a firm sponge to remove the mould.



The Association has noted an increase in fly tipping and bulk items being left in communal bin stores. When items are left in communal areas or bin stores Housing Officers will do their best to try to identify who these items belong to so that those responsible can either arrange for items to be removed or be recharged directly for the cost of removing them.

Unfortunately, if the person responsible cannot be identified, the cost of uplifting and disposing of the items is charged to the Association and will be passed on through the Service Charges to the whole scheme.

Tenants can help the Association to keep these scheme costs down by ensuring that they arrange for the uplift of any bulk items. This can be done by contacting your local authority and is much cheaper than the cost that the Association must pay to have the items removed which is then passed on to all tenants through the service charge.

If you are arranging for the local authority to pick up an item but must leave it outside for collection, please contact your housing officer to let them know that everything is in hand and that no further action is required.

If you witness a neighbour or anyone fly tipping or leaving bulk items in the communal areas or bin store, please contact your housing officer to provide information so that your housing officer can follow this up with the responsible person directly.

Your Housing Officer can be contacted on 01224 625822 or by emailing housing.officers@castlehillha.co.uk

How to arrange a bulk item uplift from your local authority:

Aberdeen City Council

[Book a bulky uplift | Aberdeen City Council](#) or **Tel 03000 200 292**

Charges:

You must make your payment before a collection will be scheduled.

- £33 for 4 standard household items (certain items have an additional charge)
- £16.50 for 4 standard household items if you receive Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefits (you must provide your benefit reference number when booking)

Aberdeenshire Council

[Request a bulky waste uplift - Aberdeenshire Council](#) or **Tel 03456 081207**

Cost for bulky uplifts depend on the items being uplifted. No discount is given for an uplift of more than 8 items.

Item	Charge (not subject to VAT)	Discounted charges
Bulky uplift of up to 4 household items (for example sofas, chairs, cookers etc)	£31.47	£12.59
Bulky uplift of up to 8 household items	£62.94	£25.18
Bulky uplift of individual items (priced per item)	£40.42	

Moray Council Area

[Bulky Uplift - Moray Council](#) or **Tel 0300 123 4565**

We offer a Bulky Waste Collection Service for domestic properties. This service is provided at a cost of £28.80 per uplift for items which are in excess or too large for your wheeled bin.

Pets in schemes

We ask those tenants who have a dog to make sure that their dog does not disturb other people at their scheme. Some properties are not suitable for dogs or cats. At schemes that are suitable for dogs or cats, you must request permission prior to bringing your new pet home. This is a condition of your Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement.

Those with pets are reminded that they are your responsibility and that they must not cause damage or foul within your property or scheme.

Tenants with dogs should keep them on a lead within the scheme and ensure that they are exercised appropriately. Dogs should not be exercised within the communal areas and should not be allowed to foul in the communal areas and communal gardens. If a dog does foul within the scheme, owners must ensure that the pet waste is cleaned up immediately and disposed of appropriately. If the Association has to clean up dog mess, this cost may be recharged to the responsible tenant or scheme. It is an offence under the Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003 to allow a dog to foul and not remove the mess immediately.

If a tenant is found to break the conditions contained in the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement, it may result in the permission to keep being withdrawn. If you would like to know more about Castlehill's Pet Policy, it can be found [here on our website](#).



Could your scheme benefit from CaRTO (Castlehill Registered Tenants Organisation) funding?

Do you have an idea that would benefit people living at your scheme?

Do you need funding to put your ideas into action?



This could be the opportunity for you to make your project happen.

CaRTO have funding available as part of their participatory budgeting scheme. Any Castlehill tenant or group may apply, as long as your idea will benefit the people who live at your scheme.

Applications are taken throughout the year. CaRTO will consider each application and decide to award funding based on the information given. Remember to include how much funding you are applying for, specifics of where this money will be spent and how this will benefit people living at your scheme.



Successful applications have been made for benches, planters, bulbs, a communal storage unit and items for common rooms.

You can [apply online here](#) or call us on 01224 625822 to apply by phone.



It is so lovely to see all the gardens coming alive again, with the buds on the trees and all the spring flowers out – with a promise that summer is on the way.

Of course, all this beauty does not look after itself and quite a bit of maintenance is needed as one tenant at St Johns Court can testify. June who has lived at St Johns for 2 years has been helping in the garden for the past 18 months and has been doing an excellent job. June applied for and was awarded a grant by CaRTO (Castlehill Registered Tenants Organisation) to help her purchase plants, tools etc that were needed for the garden, and she can now often be seen outside beavering away in the borders.

June is not the only help we have; The official tidying up is done by the Roy Cowie's Garden Maintenance

team who do the gardening for many Castlehill properties and have been here cutting our grass and the overgrown bushes for us at St Johns. But we also have had help in the garden from clients of Aberdeen Supported living service Stonehaven who have helped with weeding and tidying etc. The talented folk at the Stonehaven men's shed gave our old garden chairs a new lease of life by mending them where needed and replacing the wood on the worn-out arms, then making them safe again by tightening all the screws before giving them a new lick of varnish for us.

We'd like to thank all these different organisations and people for their time and help – thanks to them we can all look forward to a nice cup of tea in the garden, now that the weather is starting to warm up a bit.

Scheme Inspections with CaRTO

Have you ever joined in a scheme inspection? Our housing and property services officers organise inspections roughly every 6 months, and tenants are encouraged to join them. These involve walking around your scheme and identifying any communal or external issues that might need to be tackled. This includes a wide range of issues such as repairs to grounds and communal areas, or incidents of fly tipping. Tenants can highlight improvements that could enhance your area and have an influence in any decisions made.

CaRTO will attend as many inspections as possible, so this would be a great chance for you to meet them and find out more about what they do.

Keep an eye out for an invitation to your next scheme inspection and we hope you can join us.



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Office Hours
Mon - Thurs 9am - 5pm
Wed - 10.30-5pm
Fri - 9am - 4pm

Quiz

Win £50 with our quick quiz! All the answers can be found within this newsletter.

Enter at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ChainSummer23>, scan the code or send your answers in to 4 Carden Place, Aberdeen, AB10 1UT. One lucky winner will be picked at random on Friday 7 July 2023.



Q.1 Who gave St John's Court's garden chairs a new lease of life?

Name:

Q.2 Who can tenants apply to for funding to help bring their projects to life at their schemes?

Address:

Q.3 What is the number to call in Aberdeenshire to request uplift of bulky items?

Tel
Email