



## New Customer Service Strategy



Our new Customer Service Standards to deliver customer excellence to everyone. [Turn to page 2](#)

## New staff members



New staff members and existing staff moving to new roles.

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## Create a tenants group



Tenants' groups can have a significant positive impact.

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## Pipe band entertains scheme



Dufftown/Ballater Pipe band, entertained our tenants at Tomintoul.

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## Care & Repair can help



Find out how Care & Repair can help with energy savings and benefits.

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# Happy 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday



One of our tenants Kathleen Owen a resident at Dalvenie Gardens is the first tenant we know of to receive a card from the King to celebrate her 100th birthday.

Kathleen was born in Lancashire and married in 1948, she worked as a Land Girl during WWII and latterly worked as a civil servant until she retired in 1983. A keen gardener once retired, Kathleen and her husband loved the Chelsea Flower Show. An avid reader, Kathleen loves a crossword and watching telly in the common room. She joins other residents for lunch and dinner and is very independent wearing her lipstick when she leaves to meet up with them.

Congratulations Kathleen, we hope you had a very happy birthday.

## Letter from our Chief Executive...

As you may know, the work of Castlehill is overseen by a Management Committee made up of volunteers from the membership of the Association. The Committee has a crucial role in the governance of the Association, making sure that we meet all our regulatory duties and taking decisions that are in the best interests of both the Association and of our tenants and others who use our services. The Committee consists of people from many different backgrounds who bring a range of experience and skills to the role. Over the years, we have had a number of Castlehill tenants on the Committee and this has been really valuable in bringing that experience and perspective to the table. We are currently seeking to recruit new members to the Management Committee, and it would be great to have tenants of the Association "on-board"! If this is something that may interest you and you would like to know more about what's involved, please initially contact your Housing Officer or our Tenant Participation Officer, Catherine Coutts and we can give you more details.



To find out more about the work of the [Committee](#) please visit our [website](#).

*David Lappin*

Chief Executive

## Winter storms

We know many of our tenants will not be looking forward to the changeable weather which accompanies the Winter months.



In recent years our region has been battered by a series of storms which caused issues for several of our schemes, and we want to reassure tenants that we have learnt from previous experiences. Our Property Services teams have acquired several portable generators, and storm kits which can be deployed to schemes with power outages. The generators will help us keep power and heat to the common rooms of cut off schemes while emergency services carry out the work of reconnection.

It's worth remembering that Castlehill will follow the advice of the local emergency services and work with them to ensure schemes are kept running safely while not putting any of our team at unnecessary risk.

Should a storm hit – we will keep our website updated with what we are doing and signpost to useful information. If we work together, we should be able to weather whatever storm comes our way.

## Customer Service Standards

The Association is really pleased to be able to share with tenants our new Customer Service Standards which clearly sets out how we will communicate with customers and how you can communicate with us.

Castlehill Housing Association (CHA) strives to provide its tenants, applicants, and customers with excellent customer service. Our customers are all different with differing needs and circumstances, but our aim is to deliver customer excellence to everyone. Customers are at the heart of our services and decision making. Our customer service standards support CHA's strategic vision and is underpinned by our values of communication, customer service, respect, embracing change and accountability.





## Outdoor Electrical Safety

There are risks to life and property from using temporary electrical supplies.

Around 30 deaths, and thousands of injuries every year are caused by domestic electrical accidents, including fires.

Electricity plays such a big part in our lives that we can often take it for granted. It's so commonplace, it's easy to forget how potentially deadly electricity can be, if we don't take electrical safety seriously.

As a Landlord, Castlehill have a responsibility to ensure the electrical safety of your home, this is why we carry out electrical safety checks, in every home every 5 years. However, it is your own responsibility, to ensure you are using electricity safely, especially outdoors.

Extension cables, domestic appliances, lighting, etc. that are not certified for outdoor use, should never be used out



with the main building. Doing so can result in fire, electrocution, injury, and potentially death.

You must always seek the permission of Castlehill Housing Association before making any alterations to your home, including installations of any outdoor electrical equipment. This is to ensure that they are carried out safely by a qualified electrician, are completed to a high standard, and comply with current building standards, electrical standards, and current health and safety regulations.

If you have any questions, please contact your Housing or Property Services Officer.

## CHA external Audit into Safety – positive results



The Scottish Housing Regulator has been carrying out work on how Registered Social Landlord's approach Tenant Safety. As part of Castlehill's Health and Safety support service with EVH the Association had an external auditor review our whole approach to Health and Safety. The results of which were very positive, with no serious warnings or cause for concern. Castlehill takes Health and Safety very seriously and our Senior Management Team were very pleased with the way staff approach any issues.

## GRIT BIN reminders

With the weather drawing in and the temperatures dropping many of you may be concerned about icy paths around your scheme. If your scheme has a grit bin, our grounds maintenance contractor will top them up on their monthly site visit, our staff visiting the schemes will also check if they need topped up in between visits. We would also like you to let us know if the grit is running low so we can arrange for more grit to be delivered. Please grit your paths as you see fit.



## Cleaning Survey

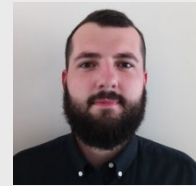


We rely on tenant feedback to let us know when something is not working well. Cleaning surveys are sent out once a quarter and the results of which help us to take appropriate steps to improve things that may not be working as well as we'd like. We'd be grateful if tenants would remember to return their cleaning survey information. Making informed decisions is important to how we want to operate as a business. The cleaning surveys are anonymous apart from the scheme. Tenants will be sent a letter with a QR link or information to the website. If you would rather return the letter a freepost address is provided.

## New staff members

Over the last six months Castlehill has had several new staff members and existing staff moving to new roles.

We have new additions to the Property Services Team. Gavin Tevendale and Liam Henderson have joined the team as Property Services Officers. Both have similar experience working within the Property side of business with Aberdeenshire Council and Camwater.

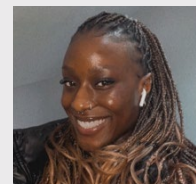


Gavin

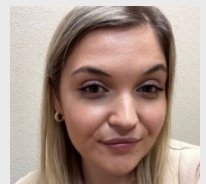


Liam

New to Castlehill in Customer Services is Kosi Ezeokafor. Kosi will be the first point of contact for tenants, assisting in reception and will be working the latter half of the week. Lauren Skene has moved to a new Customer Services role assisting in reception for part of the week. Lauren is a familiar face to those who make use of the Care & Repair Team and is very experienced.



Kosi



Lauren

Charlotte Mackintosh from Customer Services has moved into a new role within Corporate Services supporting the work of the committees as well as other corporate activity.

We also have several new members across our Independent Living Housing Schemes: Carrie Stuart, Bev Mayer, Donna Wood, Natasha Stark, and Catherine McDougall.



North East Tenants Residents  
and Landlords Together

## NETRALT Open Day

North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT) is a partnership comprised of Castlehill, Langstane, Osprey and Grampian Housing Associations, and Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, and Moray Councils. The aim of the group is to promote and support tenant participation by working together.

It has been a very busy year so far for NETRALT with lots of community engagement events. NETRALT volunteers were delighted to spread the word about tenant participation to the dozens of people who approached us. Lots of connections were made with third sector groups that we hope to work with in the future.

NETRALT had stalls at the Aberdeen City Community Gathering at the Cowdray Hall, the Granite City Gathering for older people, the MELA One World Day

festival, Inchgarth Community Centre, Powis Community Gala and Come and Network (CAN) Day.

We hope to get out and about in Aberdeenshire and Moray next year, so if you know of a local event, please let us know!



## NETRALT virtual session takes place.

Two tenant participation groups, North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT) and the newly established Northern Tenants Partnership (NTP), joined forces to host their first interactive virtual session centred around the theme of "Working in Partnership." The event targeted tenants, residents, community groups and staff across Scotland, bringing together a diverse range of voices and experiences.

The virtual gathering showcased good practice and insights on tenant and community involvement through a series of engaging presentations, videos, and discussions. The spirit of partnership echoed throughout the event, with tenants and staff both contributing to its success. Colin Stewart, a Castlehill tenant and NETRALT member, acted as the event's host and provided the technical know-how to provide a digital platform for the event to take place.

The event commenced with a keynote speech by George Walker, Chairperson of the Board of the Scottish Housing Regulator, setting the tone for the day. A selection of topics was covered during the session, including youth involvement, scrutiny, community growing initiatives, participatory budgeting, and Regional Networks.

With NETRALT 's membership covering Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, and Moray, and NTP spanning the Highlands & Islands, Orkney, Shetland, and the Hebrides, the collaboration provided attendees with insights from a wide array of tenants, community groups, and landlords.

The event concluded with an interactive online quiz, with a tenant delegate from Aberdeen City Council winning the star prize of £100 in vouchers.

Catherine Coutts, Co-Chair of NETRALT and Castlehill's Tenant Participation Officer, explained,

"We were thrilled to partner with Northern Tenants Partnership to share the amazing work taking place in our communities. This event provided a unique opportunity for tenants to inspire one another, furthering our aims of sharing good practice, creating a valuable support network, and promoting tenant engagement far and wide."

The success of this collaborative event highlights the commitment of tenant participation groups to foster meaningful partnerships, share knowledge and enhance the tenant experience across Scotland.

To find out more about both groups, visit [ntp.netralt.org.uk](http://ntp.netralt.org.uk)



Northern Tenants  
Partnership





## Double wins for Castlehill

We are thrilled that Castlehill tenant Colin Stewart won the coveted Alan Ferguson Tenant Champion of the Year award at the recent Tenant Participation Advisory Service National Good Practice award.

Colin has helped support Castlehill Registered Tenants Organisation (CaRTO) to get involved with scheme inspections and to support communities via CaRTO's funding scheme. He is always a friendly face when he meets tenants and can help with his knowledge and lived experience of being a social housing tenant.

Colin is also an active member of North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT) and is a well-kent face throughout not just the North East, but nationally, due to his role as Chair of North of Scotland Regional Network. He is also the only tenant member of the Housing to 2040 Strategic Board.

North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT) were the winners of the Best Practice in Developing Communities award for their groundbreaking work involving young people from across Aberdeen. NETRALT embarked upon an innovative city-wide project to engage and collaborate with young people via research aimed at exploring youth knowledge and aspirations.

## Learn more about creating a Tenants Group



Creating your own tenants' group could provide a platform for you to voice your opinions on your scheme and communicate that to Castlehill. It could be a chance to work towards common goals, to arrange social events, apply for funding – whatever the group decide.

A tenants' group can have a significant positive impact, but its success depends on active participation from tenants. Castlehill would love to support you to getting your group started but it would be YOUR group.

We can tell you about:

- The benefits of having your own tenant-led group
- Explore what you want to achieve from your group
- The pros and cons of an informal vs a formal group
- Advice on establishing objectives and/ adopting a constitution

- Advice on roles within a group – Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer
- How to communicate your activities to all tenants at your scheme
- Ensuring the group is fair and everyone has a say in decision-making
- How Castlehill can support you, but not be directly involved in or influence your group

Maybe you already have an informal group but would like support to create a constitution to help with fundraising applications?

We have recently been supporting tenants to set up their own groups at St Peters Court in Torry, and Craigielea Gardens in Mannofield. If you would like to find out about how to get started with creating a group, please contact our Tenant Participation Officer at [info@castlehillha.co.uk](mailto:info@castlehillha.co.uk) or 01224 625822.

## Heated Throws? - We can Help!

If you are struggling, we may be able to help you. Through the SFHA Fuel Fund we have a limited supply of heated throws, energy saving electrical items such as air fryers and food vouchers which can be issued to tenants experiencing hardship because of the cost-of-living crisis. We also have a Wellbeing Fund through Aberdeenshire Council which means we may be able to provide food vouchers to enable tenants to direct funds to their utility bills. By providing these items free of charge, this will allow tenants to reduce fuel usage and allow higher payments to be made to utility bills, supporting tenants to manage household bills. Preference will

be given to households who are in receipt of pension credits, who have a disability or health condition which limits their mobility. If you would benefit from this support and would like to apply, please email [info@castlehillha.co.uk](mailto:info@castlehillha.co.uk) or call us on 01224 625822.



## Summer Highlights at Castlehill

### Macmillan coffee morning St Peter's Court

Residents and visitors to St Peter's Court in Torry enjoyed a delicious afternoon tea to raise funds for cancer support charity Macmillan. An incredible £376.61 was raised from donations and a raffle.

Tenant Moira Strommen, who organised the fundraising event, said,

*"This is a cause that is very important to me as I sadly lost my husband to cancer and have had it 3 times myself. The afternoon was super and I am over the moon with the amount we raised".*



### Richmondhill BBQ

Richmondhill Court tenants held a barbeque to raise funds for their Christmas party and were blessed with a sunny day. They raised over £300 and are now busy making crafts for their upcoming sale. Well done to everyone involved.



### The Chase

Avid fans of ITV's quiz show The Chase will have spotted a Castlehill tenant taking part as a contestant on Friday 15 September. Sylvia Pearson lives in Aberdeenshire and is a retired police civilian. Sylvia thoroughly enjoyed the experience and was not daunted at all by her encounter with the formidable Anne Hegarty, known as The Governess.

Sylvia told us,

*"I'd recommend it to anybody because it was great fun, everyone was so helpful."*

She enjoyed the perks of TV stardom too, with an all-expenses-paid trip to London, two nights in a hotel and was chauffeur-driven to and from the studios.

We won't tell you who won The Chase as we don't want to spoil it for those who still plan on watching it. It is available to view on the free STV Player app.



### Tomintoul pipe bands

It is always really appreciated when local groups go out of their way to entertain our tenants. We were lucky that the Dufftown/Ballater Pipe band, entertained our tenants at Tomintoul after the local Highland games. They very kindly always try to play at the scheme after the games to entertain the residents.

All the tenants watched from their windows or the car park as the rain was very heavy minutes before these pictures were taken. Many thanks to our Housing Officer Mandy for taking the photographs.



## Cost of Living will affect everyone

Home heating advice team Scotland is available to tenants who have energy debt. If you call them on 0808 196 8646, they can discuss your options. Tenants can contact them directly to apply for the home heating fund, and this includes tenants who have heating arrears with CHA. Applications can also be submitted online. <https://homeheatingadvice.scot/>



The Warm Home Discount is a one-off payment to help those living on a low income or pension with the cost of energy during the winter. If your electricity supplier is part of the scheme, and you are part of the core qualifying group, (those who get guarantee pension credit), you'll get the payment automatically and it is applied directly to your bill.

If you or your partner are in receipt of a 'qualifying benefit' as listed here:

- Income Support
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Universal Credit, and earnings less than £1,418 per month
- Child Tax Credits, and earnings less than £17,005 per year and considered to have high energy costs, you'll have to apply for payment with your energy provider as soon as possible. Getting a Warm Home Discount will not affect your entitlement to Winter Fuel Payment, or the Cold Weather Payment should the temperatures drop significantly.

[You can check if you are eligible for the Discount here.](#) This page also holds many other energy help information and it may be worth checking out.

## Energy costs and savings

It is worth considering speaking to Care & Repair who offer help with arranging a smart meter which can help identify potential energy savings in energy consumption. It is also the time of year to break out those draft excluders and closing blinds and curtains at night to keep the heat in where you can.

Remember that washing clothes at 40 degrees can help save money and drying the wash outside can prevent extra cost from running a tumble dryer and avoids a build-up of condensation. Ventilation is important, so as the cold weather sets in and we close windows to keep the heat in, remember to open them if you are drying clothes or cooking with steam, this will avoid a build up of condensation and help prevent mold.

Little changes can go some way to help reduce cost and thus save you money. If you need to discuss further, you can contact our friends at SCARF for independent advice on 01224 213005 or [info@scarf.org.uk](mailto:info@scarf.org.uk)

## Advice about benefits

Care & Repair can offer advice on home safety and help with benefit checks. The department can also help with applying for attendance allowance benefit (related to health and not means tested) and disabled parking badges for their cars. Links to the eligibility for this can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance/eligibility> or <https://www.mygov.scot/apply-blue-badge/eligibility> Please call 01224 625822 to see if the support team can help you with home safety or a benefit check.

## Anti-Social Behaviour

Since the pandemic the Association has noted that there seems to have been an increase in complaints about Anti-social Behaviour.

Maybe you're dealing with noisy nights, constant partying, or other disturbances that are turning your peaceful home into a headache. Castlehill is here to help, so don't hesitate to let us know about these issues.

It's essential to recognise that sometimes, you might be quick to label something as anti-social. We've all had to adapt to working from home more. That means more video meetings, online classes,

and general online activity. So, if your neighbour's tapping away on their keyboard or chatting during a Zoom call, it's not necessarily anti-social behaviour. It's just the way we're all navigating this new work-from-home world.

We're spending more time at home, which means we're seeing and hearing things we might not have noticed before. So, that occasional dog barking or kids playing outside during the day? It's not anti-social; it's just life happening around us.

Moreover, we're more understanding of the need for a little peace and quiet during the day when we're all working and

studying from home. So, minor noise from neighbours during daytime hours usually falls under the "not anti-social" category.

Of course, it's still essential to communicate with your neighbours about any concerns. Friendly discussions can help us all navigate this new way of living together. In the end, it's about balance and understanding. Let's keep things harmonious by being considerate of each other's needs as we continue to adapt to our post-pandemic lives.

There is a [helpful information leaflet available on our website](#) – which helps you work out when to get in touch with us.

## January Direct Debits



If you pay your rent by direct debit, please note that your payment will come out of your bank account on **Wednesday 3rd January 2024**, instead of the usual 1st of the month. This is due to the banks being closed on the **2nd January**.

Please ensure that you have money in your account to allow your rent to be paid on **3rd January 2024**. **Thank you!**

## Contact us...

Castlehill Housing Association  
4 Carden Place,  
Aberdeen AB10 1UT  
Tel: 01224 625822  
Website: [www.castlehillha.co.uk](http://www.castlehillha.co.uk)  
Email: [info@castlehillha.co.uk](mailto:info@castlehillha.co.uk)

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

Please do not call direct dial numbers, staff work varying hours Monday to Friday and if on holiday may not be able access their voicemail for some time. If in doubt, please call reception or email [info@castlehillha.co.uk](mailto:info@castlehillha.co.uk).



The Management  
Committee and staff  
of Castlehill would  
like to wish you a very  
Merry Christmas and  
a Happy New Year.



## Christmas & New Year office closure

Our Office will close **Dec 22nd December at 12 pm** and will reopen on **3rd January 2024 at 9am**.

During the holidays, our emergency repairs service will operate. Please phone the main office number 01224 625822 for our emergency call-out details.

For gas heating: Heatcare Oil & Gas **01343 842042**

For central plant/air-source heating: Heat Care Oil & Gas **01343 842042**

For other emergencies (floods, leaks, loss of power, etc.): Camwater **01651 872929**

If you live in sheltered or very sheltered housing, please report any repairs to scheme staff as usual.

**Win £50 with our quick quiz!** All the answers can be found within this newsletter. Enter at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ChainWinter23>, scan the code or send your answers in to 4 Carden Place, Aberdeen, AB10 1UT. One lucky winner will be picked at random on 28 February 2024.



Q.1 Which TV show did a tenant recently appear on?

Q.2 What date does your direct debit for January rent come out?

Q.3 Which day does our office reopen after the festive break?

Q.4 Which charity did St Peter's Court tenants fundraise for?

Q.5 Where did the pipe band play?

Name:

Address:

Tel

Email