



PORT OF LEITH
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

PORTCALL

Port of Leith Housing Association Newsletter

WINTER 2009

Tenant Participation in 2009



You came to our Tenants' Gathering ...

We held our 3rd annual Tenants' Gathering on 24th October at the Out of the Blue Drill Hall in Dalmeny Street. Those who attended told us that they enjoyed the event and the opportunity to meet other community service providers on the day. A lot of useful information was given out on what's happening in the community. The free taster sessions in Indian head massage, reflexology and shiatsu were a great hit as always. We are looking forward to next year's event already!

You told us what you think of us ...

We carried out a large scale tenant satisfaction survey this year – 800 tenants were interviewed by independent market researchers to give an accurate picture of what tenants think of the many services offered by us. We have included a separate summary of the findings with this issue of Port Call and hope you find this interesting.

We are very pleased that 93% of tenants are satisfied overall with us as a landlord, but as we know, there is always room for improvement. We are drawing up an Action Plan based on what we were told in the survey, with the aim of improving our services further - we will report back in future editions of Port Call on the action we have taken.

... and you worked alongside us!



For the first time, tenants worked alongside us to help review our complaints policy, reception, and initial enquiry service. A number of tenants carried out anonymous 'mystery shopping' to test our service and help us identify where improvements are needed. We have made changes to the way we deal with enquiries, based on tenant feedback and we hope that you will find our reception and enquiry service is improving.

Tenants are also working with us to review our standards for properties being relet and also for common areas. Tenants inspected empty flats with us and agreed with us what our standards should be - we will incorporate these into the review.

We will continue to test our service with mystery shopping and to involve tenants directly in reviewing our services. If you would like to be involved or to get further information, please contact our Tenant Participation Officer on **0131 553 8707**, or email wendy.chan@polha.co.uk.

A BIG THANKS to everyone who completed surveys or helped with the mystery shopping and tenant review groups. WE REALLY APPRECIATE YOUR INPUT!

Open Day at the Hub

The former YWCA Building on Restalrig Road South (now known as the Lochend Restalrig Hub) held an open day on 6th November to celebrate the centre's rescue from the threat of closure earlier this year. In April 2009, YWCA Scotland announced that they could no longer keep their local community centre open, and would have to close the building. Concerned about the loss of a valued community resource, Port of Leith Housing Association joined forces with Lothian Health Board, community groups and other users of the building to develop a rescue plan to ensure the building's survival as a centre for community activity.



With support from the North East Edinburgh Local Health Partnership, City of Edinburgh Council's Children & Families Department and Craightinny & Duddingston Neighbourhood Partnership's Fairer Scotland Fund, the building has now been saved and re-opened as the Lochend Restalrig Hub.

The centre provides a wide range of activities and services in health promotion, financial and employment advice and personal capacity building. Local mums run a toddlers' club once a week, while the Ripple Project also provides a varied range of opportunities for local young people. **For details about what is happening at the Hub, contact the Ripple office on 0131 554 0422.**



Citadel Youth Centre

The newly refurbished Citadel Youth Centre was unveiled on Friday 16 October 2009 to a gathering of funders, local community groups and other interested parties.

Art, drama and social spaces have been improved, a new entrance with disabled access has been built, and changing facilities have been upgraded. External repairs have been made to the stonework, roof and guttering, while the outside area has been landscaped. A plaque commemorating the event and featuring all the partners' logos was unveiled at the opening.

The keynote address was given by Councillor Marilyn MacLaren who highlighted the popularity of the centre with Leith residents over the years, and praised the involvement of all the partner organisations who made it possible.

The Citadel is the first building to be completed as part of the £9 million Leith Townscape Heritage Initiative. A total of £830,000 was spent refurbishing the B-listed building, which had been closed for a



year. This included £50,000 of Government Wider Role funding sourced from Port of Leith Housing Association.

You can find out more about the Citadel at citadelyouthcentre.org.uk or **0131 554 0510**.



Gas Servicing - better safe than sorry

Every year around 30 people die from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by gas appliances and flues that have not been properly maintained.

Gas Safety

Gas is a safe fuel if used correctly and treated with respect.

Faulty appliances can cause explosions and can also give off poisonous carbon monoxide fumes. These fumes are potentially lethal - we therefore have a legal duty to make sure all of our gas appliances are checked every year by properly qualified engineers.

Every year we will write to you to arrange an appointment to service your appliances. Please co-operate with your annual gas service check - it could save you and your family's life.

You are asked to:

- Co-operate with the annual gas service
- Report any problem at all with POLHA gas appliances to us
- Report any gas leaks to **TRANSCO on 0800 111 999**
- Always have second hand appliances checked before you buy
- Get written permission from POLHA first if you wish to install new appliances or replace any existing gas appliance. This forms part of your tenancy conditions
- Not block any ventilation to gas appliances
- Not block gas flues or chimneys taking away any poisonous fumes from gas appliances

Please don't ever carry out any DIY work to repair gas appliances - leave it to the experts. Apart from being very dangerous, you could also be breaking the law.

A Word From Our New Chief Executive

I am delighted to be taking over from Mohanjit Singh as the new Chief Executive of the Association. His will be a hard act to follow but I have been very struck by the commitment shown by both the Committee and the Staff here to ensure the good work continues.

My first few months here have been taken up just getting to know as many people as possible including residents - understanding the things that concern you most, and how we can continue to improve the way we do things. So I was very pleased to meet and talk with many of you at the recent Tenants' Gathering.

Having been brought up myself in the 1960s in Edinburgh I remember all too well just how run down Leith had become. But having worked with local

housing associations for many years in Scotland and England, I know just how important Port of Leith has been to improving the area since then.

Providing more affordable housing for local people and ensuring that you enjoy living in your home are the main things that matter to us. There is a lot more to do - and we will continue to build more affordable homes in Leith and in the new waterfront areas as well as other community projects such as TOiL which supports young people into jobs.

I want to be guided by what you think about the Association and what is important to you. So you need to tell us, and together we can continue to deliver the services you need.

Keith Anderson

Photo: Smith Scott Mullan



More Affordable Homes to Rent

We have recently completed a new development on Elliot Street, (pictured) providing an additional 9 flats for rent in Leith. The official opening was carried out by Malcolm Chisholm MSP and the event was well attended with representation from the Scottish Government, local councillors, community councils and residents. We would like to take this opportunity to wish tenants all the best in settling into their new home.

Our site at Buchanan Street was also completed in November 2009 and provides a further 14 flats for social rent in a central location.

At Western Harbour, we are still on target to complete over 100 new homes by next summer, with the first blocks being occupied in early 2010. Scaffolding has recently been lowered to unveil the façade of this building, which is the first of two major developments Port of Leith are planning for this area.

2010 will be another busy year for our development department, who are aiming to have another two new developments starting on site, in Coburg Street and West Granton Road. On top of this, we are progressing several large land acquisitions in and around the Leith area, which we will develop for affordable housing as quickly as we can over the coming years.

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Changes in Income Support – an Update from our Money Advice Worker



From November, lone parents with older children will no longer be entitled to income support. Currently, a lone parent with a child aged under 16 can claim income support, but this is to change so that only those with a child under 12 will be entitled to it.

A lone parent with a child aged 12 or over will be expected to claim Jobseeker's Allowance instead, so will have to prove that they are actively seeking work.

Existing claimants will gradually be moved from

income support from early 2009, whereas lone parents making a new or repeat claim for income support from November this year will be expected to comply with the new rules.

The age limit will drop again to ten and then seven so that by October 2010, lone parents with children aged seven or over will not be entitled to income support.

The Department of Work and Pensions is currently sending letters to existing claimants to advise of these changes. If you would like more information or advice, contact our Money Advice Worker, Fiona Neilson on **0131 553 8745**.

TOiL Shortlisted at UK Awards



The TOiL Programme team – finalists in the Chartered Institute of Housing National Awards Chief Executive Keith Anderson and TOiL Programme Manager Emma Salisbury (centre) with Susan Taylor (left) and Sharon Lawrie (right)

The Chartered Institute of Housing, the UK's professional association for housing, has recognised the TOiL programme for its work in creating local job and education opportunities for young people, by shortlisting it for a National Housing Award.

TOiL Programme Coordinator, Emma Salisbury said, "We are delighted and honoured to find that the TOiL programme had been shortlisted. Our focus is on skills training and finding jobs for young people in Leith and Edinburgh so it's fantastic to see these efforts register at a UK level."

The UK Housing Awards recognise excellence for outstanding achievement in housing in the UK - the TOiL programme is the only Scottish representative in the Housing and Education Category.

The TOiL Programme, funded by Skills Development Scotland, Capital City Partnership and Leith Neighbourhood Partnership offers six months paid work experience placements to young people leaving school with few or no qualifications. This is backed by in-house

training and on-placement support from the Port of Leith Housing Association. Work placements are arranged with local firms in a variety of trades to give trainees real experience and skills whilst also being paid a decent wage. Many TOiL trainees have gone on to secure apprenticeships or full time work after their placement.

For further information about the TOiL Programme, contact Sharon Lawrie on 0131 553 8746.

EverybodyOnline

Recognising the demand from tenants to learn more about computer technology, we have been working with Everybody Online to provide computing classes to our tenants. Everybody Online is a charity which helps communities overcome any barriers they may have to computers and the internet. The classes have been running at our office and Leith Library since September, and have proved extremely popular with

over 80 tenants attending. There has been a good deal of interest in future classes, as tenants told us at our recent Tenants' Gathering.

Congratulations and thank you to all the Computer Club learners who took part in the training so far - well done! Classes are now coming to an end and we will shortly evaluate how successful they have been, and whether we can do something similar in 2010.

Upgrading our Older Properties

Our programme of works to bring all properties to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard has been progressing well over the past few months. Over 170 properties have benefitted from the programme this year – with kitchen and bathroom improvements, electrical upgrades, door and window overhauls.

Mr Gibson from Balfour St said that the work was "done very professionally, all the workmen were very polite".



Before



After

In 2010, a similar number of properties will be funded – tenants affected will be contacted nearer the time to agree the work required.

We are also continuing our extensive programme of cyclical work throughout 2010 (e.g. exterior and stairwell painting, rhone maintenance). Despite the tough economic times, we are always aiming to improve the quality of the work we carry out, and we hope that you will benefit from this over the coming months and years. For more information on our maintenance programme, contact the Property department on **0808 100 0403** (free from most landlines).

Callpay

You can now pay your rent over the phone - just call your Housing Officer on **0131 554 0403** with your card details (debit/credit, AllPay), tell us how much you want to pay and we will do the rest!

Home Contents Insurance

We would like to remind tenants of the benefits of home contents insurance. As your landlord, we have insured the structure of your home, but not its contents. We all hope that it is never needed, but accidents do happen – a basic home contents policy is a lot cheaper than replacing your furniture, just a few pounds a month for basic cover.

We can provide you with information good value schemes from The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, and Royal & Sun Alliance – if you would like details, give us a call on 0131 554 0403. Alternatively, have a look on a price comparison website to compare a range of providers.

Complaints Policy

We recently asked for your thoughts on our revised Complaints policy, and the accompanying leaflet. There was a great response, so thank you to everyone who took part. All replies were entered into a prize draw for £25 shopping vouchers - the lucky winners are:

*Lee-Anne Galbraith
James Gray*

*Anthony Stephens
Agnes Cairns*

The vast majority of feedback was very positive, and we were pleased to see a number of comments and suggestions in your replies – we have taken these all into consideration, and have made appropriate changes in response.

Helping you into Work

Our partnership with Working Links is continuing to provide advice on work, training and employment. We have now widened the access to all people in the local area.

The consultants from Working Links can help you:

- write your CV and complete applications
- develop interview skills
- find the right job for you

If you think the service could be helpful, call us on **0131 554 0403** to arrange an appointment.



From all of us at
Port of Leith Housing Association,
we would like to wish you a
very happy Christmas,
and all the best for 2010!

Christmas Closure The office will close for Christmas at
3.45pm on Thursday 24th December, and reopen at 10.00am on Tuesday 5th January
Any repairs or maintenance issues during this period should be reported to the
Bield 24 hour response line 0800 783 7937

Useful Phone Numbers

Property department direct	0808 1000 403
Bield Response (out-of-hours maintenance)	0800 783 7937
TRANSCO (gas emergency)	0800 111 999
Scottish Water	0845 600 8855
Scottish Power	0845 272 7999
Citizens Advice (Leith)	0131 554 8144

Useful Phone Numbers

Noise complaints	0131 311 3131
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
City of Edinburgh Council:	
- Main switchboard	200 2000
- Council tax & benefits	469 5000
- Pest control	666 2623
- Special uplift	529 3030



PORT OF LEITH
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Port of Leith Housing Association Limited, 108 Constitution Street, Leith, Edinburgh EH6 6AZ
Email info@polha.co.uk Website www.polha.co.uk
Scottish Charity Number SC 027945

Opening Hours*: 8.45am - 5pm Mon, Wed, Thur
10.00am - 5pm Tues
8.45am - 3.45pm Fri

Free phone for repair calls: 0808 100 0403
General enquiries: 0131 554 0403
Fax: 0131 555 1504

*For Out of Hours Emergency No: 0800 783 7937



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

