

SPRING 2019

Happy to help you



A - Z of customer
engagement



Community Works
is working for our
customers



Enter our latest
photo competition


**KEITH'S
MESSAGE**

Welcome to the spring edition of Portcall

It's great to see spring arrive and to enjoy longer, brighter days ahead. There is a lot to look forward to here at Port of Leith Housing Association.

In this issue of Portcall you can find out about an opportunity to join the Scottish Housing Regulator's national panel which is an important way for people living in social rented homes to give feedback directly to our regulator. The regulator is also giving people who participate the chance to win £50.

You can also read about our plans to develop our customer advice services and discover how you can get involved with us, ensuring that you have a voice and an opportunity to influence the decisions made by the Association.

We're always keen to hear your views about Portcall, so please do get in touch with us if you have any story ideas by emailing info@polha.co.uk or calling 0131 554 0403.

KEITH ANDERSON
Chief Executive

Safe storage of mobility scooters

We take fire safety in our properties and communal areas very seriously. This means that we cannot allow anything to be stored in communal areas, such as landings or stairwells. This includes mobility scooters, which are considered a possible fire hazard by the fire service.

If you already have a mobility scooter or are thinking about acquiring one, please speak to your housing officer. We will carry out a risk assessment, consider where the scooter could be safely stored and will discuss this with you. For example, we are planning to provide 'pods' for storing and charging scooters where we are able to do this.



Moving on from your property?

We would like to thank you for being a great tenant

Before you go

We really appreciate it when our social rent tenants look after their homes and we want to encourage more tenants to work with us when they are planning to leave a tenancy. We want to reward those who act responsibly to make sure their home is left in good condition for the next tenant.

A little thank you from Port of Leith

From 1 April, if you are a social rent tenant and meet all eight of the conditions below you could be eligible for a one-off payment of **£150**.

How do I qualify?

- Give us 28 days' notice in writing, as stated in your tenancy agreement
- Allow access for our Voids Officer to inspect your home as soon as possible
- Allow access for our contractor to carry out repairs for which we are responsible
- Carry out agreed works and any decoration for which you are responsible
- Allow access to the property for the end of tenancy inspection and key collection before noon on or before the agreed termination date
- Provide us with your full forwarding address
- Give us your final meter readings
- Leave the property (and garden if applicable) clean, in good decorative order and cleared of any belongings

Please note:

a) If you owe the Association any money (rent arrears or repairs recharges), this will be deducted from the award amount.

b) This does not apply to those who are doing a mutual exchange. In this case, it is up to you to ensure that the property you are moving to is in acceptable condition.

How will I be paid?

We will make a payment to your bank account within 20 working days of your tenancy end date, less any money you owe to the Association.

We wish you well in your next home.



Say hello to our new faces

A warm welcome to our latest recruits, including Gillian Wales, Customer Advisor

Lucie Rae,
Assistant
Housing Officer



Barbara Seel,
Development
Officer



Monique
Lansdown,
Finance
Assistant



Emmanuelle
Le Coz,
Employability
Officer



Rachel Fraser,
Development
Officer



Iain McLean,
Project Officer



Steph Scott,
who has
moved to
a new role
as Assistant
Housing Officer



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE
Scottish Charity Number: SC027945

If you would like to receive Portcall in a different format or language, please contact us on 0131 554 0403 or email info@polha.co.uk

Keeping people safe from domestic abuse

Being on the other end of an abusive relationship or watching someone you know, or care about, receive abuse on a regular or long-term basis, is a traumatic experience.

Acknowledging it, and doing something about it, can be difficult and complicated. In many situations people may not recognise the extent of abuse or may not have the confidence to take it further due to intimidation, constant criticism or controlling behaviour.

Police Scotland have launched a national campaign to keep people safe from domestic abuse called the Right to Ask.

The Right to Ask scheme aims to prevent domestic abuse by empowering both men and women with the right to ask about the background of their partner, potential partner or someone who is in a relationship with someone they know, if there is any concern that the individual may be abusive. It enables potential victims to make an informed choice



on whether to continue the relationship and provides further help and support to assist the potential victim when making that choice.

It is important to remember that anyone can make an application to the police about an individual who is in a relationship with another person and there is concern that they may present a risk of harm to their partner.

The Police Scotland website (www.scotland.police.uk/righttoask) has more information about the scheme.

We want to do everything we can to tackle domestic abuse and make sure that everyone feels safe in their home. That's why we have signed up to the Make a Stand campaign which is being run by the Chartered Institute of Housing. We have pledged to support our customers and staff who may be affected by domestic abuse. As part of this, staff have received training about domestic abuse.

If you'd like more information about the Right to Ask scheme, call 101, drop in to a police station or speak to a member of the police on duty. If there is an immediate risk of harm to someone, or it is an emergency, always call 999.

Keep your energy supply fresh

Have you heard of Citrus Energy? It's a social enterprise that helps people save on gas and electricity costs. It can help people make savings by managing the process of switching energy suppliers and sharing its knowledge and experience on energy efficiency, benefits and schemes. Their domestic customers are already saving an average of £208 a year on combined energy and gas bills. A ten-minute,

free phone call (from a landline), with your electricity and gas bills handy, could save you over £200, with one of their experienced team of advisers managing the whole process for you. They will also automatically review your tariff every six months to continue to get the best deal on your energy and gas bills.

You can find out all about it online at www.bit.ly/citrusenergy or call 0800 221 8089

Community Works is working for our customers

One of our customers, John Collins, explains how Community Works has helped him to secure the job he was looking for:

"I first heard about Community Works from Leith Jobcentre. I was a bit surprised as I have been a Port of Leith Housing Association tenant for 10 years and had never heard of Community Works. It turns out that they are a new service. Having five years' experience of support work

with some good employers who trained me up, all I really needed from Community Works was help with my CV.

"Rachel helped me update and make a few changes to my CV, and she also booked me onto an Emergency First Aid at Work course delivered by Community Works' John Reid. We had a great laugh on the course which only lasted the one day, but I left with a recognised certificate.

"Community Works have been a major help.

They provided what I needed when I needed it. I now have a permanent job doing support work with Blackwood Housing Association. It's good to know that I can always go back to Community Works if things change and I want to get another job."

Another tenant who had been working irregular hours for a temporary recruitment agency was looking for permanent work.

She met with Community Works' Jane Whiting looking for one-to-one help to set up an email account and update her CV. She was looking for a permanent job because the irregular hours were affecting her health. Jane helped her to create an email account and gave her a few tips about how to manage her emails. Together they worked on her CV and decided to target the public sector for jobs. Our customer now has a full-time job working at a school and is "delighted".

Community Works can help Leithers or people who live in north Edinburgh to build and rediscover the skills to find their way into work, volunteering or into their dream job. Call 0131 554 0403 or email community.works@polha.co.uk to find out more about our free service.



Our customer John Collins is enjoying his new job

Meet our new Customer Advice Manager



Tina Bell (pictured right) started in our Customer Advice Manager role several months ago. Here, she takes time out to speak to Portcall about her plans to keep developing our service to customers

What did you do before joining our Customer Advice Team?

I've worked in housing for 20 years and for the last 10 years I worked for a large national housing association. My remit was very varied and included tenancy sustainment, customer involvement, and leading on regulatory and governance issues, including statistical returns and performance management.

What attracted you to the role?

I wanted to work for a more community-based housing organisation. Port of Leith Housing Association has a great reputation as a place to work and it's continually building more homes.

How can your team help customers?

In so many ways! On a daily basis the team answers around 150 calls, responds to lots of emails and helps people who call in to our reception. The team:

- answers rent queries
- logs antisocial behaviour complaints
- gives advice on applying for our social and mid market homes
- logs repairs
- takes rent, recharge and factoring payments
- takes referrals for our Tenancy Support Team and Community Works
- puts customers in touch with other organisations which can help them.

You have been here for six months, what are your goals for developing our customer advice service?

We are working together to look at ways we can ensure the Customer Advice Team is working efficiently and providing the best possible service to our customers. We are just about to start looking at how our team works and how the tasks we carry out daily can be delivered to meet the diverse needs of our customers. We're also going to look at other tasks we could possibly take on to help other departments.

What problems have you or your team resolved that make you feel proud?

Every day there will be something which makes me feel proud of the team. When the Customer Advice Team deals with angry or frustrated customers, the professionalism and calm manner in which these calls or visits to reception are handled by the team is amazing. In my short time here, we've dealt with the handover and allocation of 51 new mid market rent properties as well as carrying out business as usual. Also, the team work brilliantly with other colleagues to make sure our gas servicing rates remains at 100%, keeping our tenants and their neighbours safe.

What do you love about Leith?

The sense of community, the people and the diversity.

Customers' top five questions answered

Here our Customer Advice Team shares the questions they are asked most often and the answers to them.

1. How do I apply for a social or mid market rent property?

The first step is to register with the City of Edinburgh Council's EdIndex scheme. Then you can apply for our social houses through the Key to Choice website. Our available properties are also advertised in our window at 108 Constitution Street. Our mid market rent homes are advertised on the Citylets website www.citylets.co.uk. Applicants can register to receive alerts when a property matching their search criteria becomes available.

2. How can I pay my rent?

The easiest way to pay your rent is by Direct Debit. Our customer advisors can help you set up a Direct Debit.

Rent payments can also be taken over the phone using Callpay, online using Allpay and by cheque or card at our office.

3. How do I report a repair?

If you call in to request a repair, one of our customer advisors will put you through to TB Mackays or speak to a specialist contractor eg if a lift engineer is required

4. Can I make an appointment to see my Housing Officer?

Our customer advisors can make appointments with Housing staff at the office between 10am and 12noon and between 2pm and 4pm. Other times may sometimes be available too. You will be asked what the reason is for your appointment request. The reason for this is to help the Housing Officer prepare for your appointment.

5. Can I see my rent statement?

We can provide customers with a statement or their balance if security questions are answered.



Did you know that you can view your rent statement, make payments and request repairs online using our tenant portal? If you'd like to access the online portal for the first time, please email info@polha.co.uk or call us on 0131 554 0403 to ask for your account to be set up.

We need you!

There is a wide range of ways Port of Leith Housing Association tenants can have a voice and an opportunity to influence the decisions made by the Association. We really want you to get involved, engage with us, share your feedback and get the information you need to feel informed.

We're always looking at how we can get better at involving our customers. Over the winter we held sessions with tenants who kindly gave up some of their time to share their views on where we're doing a good job of involving them and where there is room for improvement. Thank

you very much to those of you who participated and highlighted several ways we can improve, including:

- Ask us about local issues, like backcourt improvements, that are important to everyone, more often
- Involve us in discussions even if proposed changes are being dictated by legislation or fire safety standards
- Combine focus groups and engagement activities with social events to encourage more of us to get involved and use digital media to reach people who cannot

attend in person

- Ensure direct communication with housing officers is available
- Make sure customers know about all the ways they can get involved

We have taken all these suggestions on board and will incorporate them into the review of our customer engagement policy later this year.

There lots of ways that tenants can get involved with us on a regular, one-off or annual basis. Here is a quick (almost) A-Z guide on the ways you can engage with us.

A is for... association

Customers can join POLHA (for £1) to receive a copy of our annual report and an invitation to our annual general meeting (AGM)

B is for... board

Two customers currently sit on our Board of Management. They attend all our board meetings and receive regular training

Helen Phillips (left) is Chair of our Registered Tenants' Organisation and a lead tenant board member of PoLHA and Quay; Ruth McNeil (right) is a tenant and Vice Chair of the Quay Board

C is for... communications

We regularly share information and ideas, and have discussions with customers via Facebook, Twitter, email, this newsletter, the phone, letters and face to face. Customers involved in the Communications Review Group are invited to provide content for and feedback on this newsletter and other publications eg the annual report, the landlord performance report and information leaflets

E is for... events

Customers are welcome to attend and/or influence the development and delivery of events, including an annual Doors Open Day, Christmas pantomime and information sessions

F is for... focus groups

We host several focus groups a year where customers are invited to share their views on a wide range of issues from setting our strategic plan to policy reviews



G is for... groups

There are several Tenants and Residents' groups which we encourage customers to get involved with. We can provide support and advice to anyone interested in setting up a group

H is for... housing officers

Our housing officers provide a very important link between you and the Association. They can help you to exercise your right to have a say in the decisions that affect you

I is for... inspectors

Every year a group of customers come together as Tenant Inspectors and choose a service area they would like to review and suggest improvements for. Recommendations are presented to the Board and, once approved, they are put into action. Inspectors have identified lots of improvements, including making a real difference to how our repairs service works.



J is for... joined up

By telling us what you think and having your say in the decisions we make, we can make sure our services meet your needs

K is for... keep up the good work

We are very grateful to all our customers who spare the time to get involved with us and share their views

L is for... leadership

We want to follow our tenants lead on how we can improve satisfaction with our services

M is for... mystery shopping

Customers interested in testing out our service delivery are offered support and training to become a mystery shopper

N is for... no wrong answers

Everyone's views and experiences are very important, so please keep sharing them with us

O is for... organisation

A Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO) is a formal group that registers with us and has a constitution outlining how they will seek to represent members' views. Support and advice is available to customers seeking to establish a formal RTO, including training, grants and providing meeting spaces.

P is for... Portcall

Our customer newsletter Portcall is delivered to the door of all our customers three times a year, providing useful information and keeping them informed

R is for... reports

Annual reports and landlord performance reports are shared with customers (and developed in partnership with them)

S is for... surveys

These include our annual customer satisfaction survey, post repair satisfaction surveys and post allocation surveys

T is for... tenants

We wouldn't be here without you so please keep sharing your news and views with us



Tenants May Stevenson and Sheila Quinn enjoying our sheltered housing Doors Open Day with staff member Martin Hunter

W is for... walkabouts

With Estates walkabouts customers can meet with staff to inspect shared areas and work together to make improvements

Y is for... you

Because customer engagement is all about you and us (and how we can learn from each other)

If you have any ideas about how we can improve our customer engagement activities, please email charlotte.gray@polha.co.uk or call 0131 554 0403.

A-Z of customer engagement



Share a big lunch with your neighbours

Over the winter months we have been hosting Big Lunches for tenants living in and around Buchanan Street.

The idea behind it is to get people together in an informal way, to have a bit of fun, get to know each other better and bring a dish to share.

The lunches have been taking place at the Pilmeny Development Project on Buchanan Street as part of the Eden Project's Big Lunch initiative to encourage friendlier communities by bringing people together.

They have also been a good opportunity for people

to share experiences and stories of what's going on in their bit of the neighbourhood and discuss how they could work together to address any shared issues.

A problem shared is (usually) a problem halved, so these lunch sessions could potentially bring benefits to everyone.

If you're interested, come along and bring a dish or a treat to share for the potluck-style lunch. It can be shop-bought or homemade - from soup or sandwiches to cakes and biscuits - all contributions are welcome.

The date of the next Big Lunch will be shared on our Facebook page and advertised in the window of the Pilmeny Development Project. If you would like us to let you know the date of the next Big Lunch, please email our Communications & Customer Engagement Manager, Charlotte Gray at charlotte.Gray@polha.co.uk



We love Leith Festival

Summer might seem a long way away, but preparations are already underway for the annual Leith Festival, running from Saturday 8 June to Sunday 16 June. Leith Festival is one of the oldest festivals in Edinburgh. Having started in 1907 with a Pageant and Gala Day to raise funds for Leith Hospital (this was before the NHS), over a century later it's still going strong.

The structure of the festival remains the same, on the second Saturday of June (8 June this year) a colourful Pageant proceeds down Leith Walk to the Gala day on Leith Links. Gala day has traditionally been a day of community, where locals can catch up with the gossip and chat with stallholders from Leith businesses

and community groups. Look out for our stall too!

The festival continues for the following week, with a selection of performances around Leith, whether it be music, theatre, exhibitions or workshops - there is something for everyone.

Sounds fab, how can I get involved? Anyone from Leith and nearby can get involved. If you are part of a community group, you could run an event. Individuals who would like to get involved with Leith Festival, Gala day or Pageant, should get in touch with the Festival by calling **0131 629 1214** or emailing office@leithfestival.com.

PolHA is looking forward to seeing you at Gala Day!

Have your voice heard by the Housing Regulator

The Scottish Housing Regulator is searching for members to join its national panel. The panel is one of the ways that the Regulator can get feedback directly from people living in social rented homes.

By joining the panel and sharing your views and experiences, not only would you help to improve social landlord services throughout Scotland, but you would also stand the chance of winning £50!

The panel is open to anyone who uses social landlord services, and already has over 400 members who occasionally receive surveys, information updates and take part in other similar feedback exercises.

If you were to join this panel, participation would always be optional. You would not be expected to complete every single exercise. However, your help would be greatly appreciated and would go a long way.

The Regulator is looking to include as many different voices on the panel as possible, so they can understand the experiences of social landlord tenants.

If you would like to join the panel, please get in touch with our Communications & Customer Engagement Manager, Charlotte Gray, by emailing charlotte.gray@polha.co.uk or calling 0131 554 0403.

Sheltered housing tenants become lifesavers

Thirty two tenants from our three sheltered housing developments have attended training sessions in resuscitation and defibrillator use delivered by our Training Officer John Reid.

Maureen Combe, our Sheltered Housing Services Manager, said:

"We will be fitting defibrillators in our three sheltered developments, so it was great to see our tenants being so keen to learn how to use them. We held an awards ceremony at Jameson Place for everyone who took part. It was a great moment seeing everyone receive their certificates. For one of our tenants it was the first certificate they had ever received!"

Mr and Mrs Tierney, Jameson Place sheltered housing tenants, said:

"We both really enjoyed the training and the awards ceremony, getting a certificate was really nice. It proves you're never too old to learn. You never know when a defibrillator is needed, two of my good friends passed away on the golf course at our club. Knowing we have these in the sheltered developments gives great peace of mind."

Another Jameson Place tenant, Alex Laidlaw said:

"Both Betty my wife and I got a certificate at the end of the training. It was amazing. It was my first certificate since leaving school."

Mrs Dinse, who lives at our Hermitage Court sheltered housing development, said:

"The training was good. I'm now confident in knowing how to use a defibrillator. Everyone enjoyed the awards ceremony. Tenants from all three developments also had lunch together and one by one we were presented with our certificates. There was a lovely atmosphere."



From top: sheltered housing tenants Alex Laidlaw and Jessie Tierney receive their First Aid training certificates from Sheltered Housing Manager Maureen Combe

LAST CALL

RECIPE

Irish Wheaten Bread recipe

Leanne McAndrew, our Assistant Housing Officer, has shared a simple recipe from her homeland across the Irish Sea

Ingredients:

- 340g wholemeal flour
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 250ml butter milk
- A drop of milk



Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 400F/200C/Gas 6
2. Tip the flour, salt and bicarbonate of soda into a large mixing bowl and stir
3. Make a well in the centre and pour in the buttermilk, mixing quickly with a large fork to form soft dough. Add milk if too dry – should be a sticky wet dough consistency
4. Turn onto a lightly floured surface and knead briefly.
5. Form into a round and flatten the dough slightly before placing on a lightly floured baking sheet – or put in a lightly floured bread tin.
6. Cut a cross on the top and bake for about 30/40 minutes or until the loaf sounds hollow when tapped. Cool on a wire rack and enjoy!

Competition:
How do you
read yours?



Forget about how you eat your creme egg, we want to know how you read your copy of Portcall. We'd love to see a photo of you reading this issue of Portcall and we're offering you a chance to win a £25 shopping voucher if you share one with us. For your chance to win, please email a photo of you with your copy of Portcall either at home or out and about around Leith. Send it to info@polha.co.uk or share it on our Facebook page.

Important reminder about holiday lets

With summer just around the corner, please remember that it is not permitted to sub-let your home on any basis, including short-term holiday lets such as Airbnb.

If you suspect that someone in your development may be subletting their home, please tell us.

Any information you give us will be treated in the strictest confidence and your identity will be protected. Please call us on 0131 554 0403.

Adding a splash of colour

If you're out and about around Buchanan Street, Elgin Street or Couperfield, keep an eye out for some spring blooms which have been planted by our staff to brighten up the areas.

