

PORTCALL



PORT OF LEITH
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

WINTER ISSUE 2017



MEET THE NEW COMMUNITY WORKS TEAM

Inside this issue:

- **Our first ever Doors Open Day**
- **We can help you with Universal Credit**
- **Enter our Christmas tree competition**



KEITH'S MESSAGE

We have lots to celebrate as 2017 draws to an end. I'm particularly proud of our joint development project with the City of Edinburgh Council to build 94 new affordable homes, 62 for mid market rent by our subsidiary, Persevere Developments, and 32 for social rent by The City of Edinburgh Council. I am thrilled that we were able to play a part in re-developing the historic Leith Fort site, which was officially opened on Halloween.



I'm also very excited about our new employability project, Community Works, which is providing one-to-one support to anyone over the age of 16 living in Leith or North Edinburgh to find ways into education, training or work. You can read more about how the service could help you or someone you know on p6.

Find out more about how you can prepare for Universal Credit as it gradually gets rolled out with further changes in June 2018.

With Christmas just around the corner, our staff members are getting into the festive spirit. I hope you're looking forward to a great Christmas.

Keith Anderson, Chief Executive



Swapping homes

Did you know that with agreement from your landlord, you can swap properties with another Port of Leith tenant or a tenant in another housing association or council property anywhere in the UK?

A mutual exchange with another council or housing association tenant can sometimes be a quicker way of finding an alternative suitable home. You can find a possible exchange partner by visiting the website www.houseexchange.org.uk which is free of charge and allows you to search for suitable properties.

When you find a suitable property, both you and your exchange partner will need to complete

application forms for a mutual exchange. These are available from our office. We will also ask for a reference from the other landlord. Please note that we may refuse if:

- Either tenant has rent arrears
- It will cause overcrowding or underoccupancy
- Either property has not been maintained by the tenant to an acceptable standard
- A Notice for Repossession of the property has been served on either tenant
- Either tenant has a history of antisocial behaviour

You will be asked to accept the property in the condition it is left by the other tenant so it is important that you are happy with the condition of the property before accepting the exchange.

You should not swap homes with another tenant without the written agreement from both landlords. To find out more about mutual exchanges, contact our customer advice team on 0131 554 0403.

Saving money on your food bills



Staff members Chelsea & Christine with our first set of welcome packs

We've been working with Changeworks, an environmental charity aiming to reduce carbon emissions, fuel poverty and waste.

Together we created welcome packs for our new tenants to help them reduce food waste and save money through Sainsbury's 'Waste Less, Save More' project. The packs include store cupboard items (such as tinned food, jars, pasta, oils and spices), measuring jugs for portion control, recipe booklets and an invitation to a workshop on preventing food waste. The first bags were given to new tenants over the summer.

Claire Ironside, Director of Customer Services at Port of Leith Housing Association, said: "We're really excited about working with Changeworks to help our tenants to save on their food shopping bills and to provide lots of inspiration on how to eat well, and cut down on food waste."

A big hello from our new recruits

We are pleased to welcome two new faces to Port of Leith Housing Association.



John Reid, Training Officer
Community Works team



Jonathan Smith, Project Officer
Assets team

New chapter starts for Leith Fort

It was a special Halloween for us this year as we held the opening ceremony for our Leith Fort development on 31 October.

Working in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council, 94 new colony-style homes have been created with 62 of them for mid market rent by our subsidiary Persevere Developments and 32 for social rent by The City of Edinburgh Council.

The properties, including a mix of one, two, three and four bedroom homes, are a modern take on the traditional Edinburgh colonies concept, each with its own garden.

Eighty people gathered to watch as Kevin Stewart MSP, Scottish Government Minister for Local Government and Housing, declared the development open.

Jakub Stojek, 37, who moved into one of our mid market rent homes at Leith Fort in July, gave a short speech at the ceremony. He said:

“I quickly became fascinated with the colourful history attached to the place. Originally built in 1780 as a military base to defend Leith against the American navy, in the second



Jakub Stojek, Leith Fort tenant



Kevin Stewart MSP is joined by other representatives to officially open the new Leith Fort development

half of the 20th century it made way for a housing estate.

“High quality, low cost and energy efficient housing is simply out of reach for many people in Edinburgh, so these mid market rent homes offer one solution to the problem.”

Margaret O'Connor, Chair of Port of Leith Housing Association, also spoke at the event. She said:

“It has been an honour for all partners to have played a role in delivering such a successful modern interpretation of the Edinburgh colonies. The history of the site plays an important part in the story of Edinburgh. We hope that a new community will flourish and write its own history here.”

More improvements at St Nicholas Court

We have replaced the windows at St Nicholas Court sheltered housing complex to make them more user friendly for the residents. We also altered the colour of the new window frames to match the recent extension which added eight new flats, a guest suite for families and friends, and a light and airy new reading room.

Maureen Tait, Sheltered Housing Services Manager, said:

“The new windows at St Nicholas Court have made such a difference, not only to the appearance of the building but to the lives of our tenants. The windows are easier for our tenants to operate with handles to the bottom of the windows instead of higher up, and they allow a better flow of air into the properties. Tenants are over the moon.”



Our sheltered housing complex, St Nicholas Court, on Ferry Road

Opening our doors for Scottish Housing Day



Tenants taking part in a quiz during their visit to the office

We held our first Doors Open Day at our office on Constitution Street on 21 September to celebrate Scottish Housing Day. Tenants found out more about the work we do here at the Association and took part in a 'behind the scenes' guided tour of the office.

Keith Anderson, PoLHA's Chief Executive, and staff joined in by welcoming tenants and discussing PoLHA's work before enjoying lunch together.

One of the tenants commented:

"It was a very enjoyable tour and the staff were all very helpful and good at answering questions. I am very impressed with the work that PoLHA is doing and glad that community is a strong aspect of their function as it is very much needed."

Keith Anderson, Chief Executive at PoLHA, said:

"This was the first time we have held an event like this and I'm pleased the tenants had the opportunity to discover more about how everyone at PoLHA is working hard to make Leith the best place to be and to provide great places for people to call home."

Quay Community Improvements, which is our subsidiary company, has celebrated its first year of being in business with an impressive list of achievements under its belt.

In its first 12 months of operation, the new social enterprise has been delivering stair cleaning and estate management services. Quay's future profits will be ploughed back into regenerating Leith and surrounding neighbourhoods.

The busy team cleans 231 stairwells every week, which is the equivalent of climbing Ben Nevis every three days and Mount Everest every three weeks.

David Welsh, Chair of the Quay Community Improvements Board, said:

"It's fantastic to see that Quay is going from strength to strength and we're excited about the difference it will make to communities in Leith and North Edinburgh. In its first year alone, the team has grown from seven to 18 staff, creating good quality Scottish Living Wage jobs."

Happy 1st birthday to Quay!



Quay Board members and staff celebrate the organisation's first anniversary at Quay's offices, Admiral House



Here to help you find work and reach your goals

What is Community Works?

Community Works is a new employability project providing a one-to-one employment support service, including vocational training and the opportunity to learn more about employers.

Community Works can help you find ways into education, training or work. It can also help you to develop in the workplace if you already have a job. Some of its services include regular digital training courses and one-to-one sessions to help people who are looking for work access the internet and use Universal Jobmatch.

Who is it for?

Community Works is open to anyone over the age of 16 who lives in Leith or North Edinburgh.

You don't need to be a Port of Leith Housing Association tenant to use the service or to be unemployed. You can be working part time, studying or doing casual work.

Meet the Community Works team

All members of our Community Works team really want to help people reach their own potential.

This could involve helping someone to find part-time work after a period of illness, providing advice on how to improve interview skills or supporting someone to obtain the qualifications they need to secure a higher paid job with regular hours.





John Murray,
Employability
Manager

With over 12 years experience of helping unemployed people into work, Murray uses his knowledge and experience to make sure that our service fits the needs

of people living in Leith and North Edinburgh. He also seeks out funding opportunities to help us widen the service. If Murray looks familiar it's because you may have seen him running around Leith as he is a dedicated marathon runner.

Jane Whiting and Sharon Lawrie,
Employability
Officers

The one-to-one support provided by Jane (pictured right) and Sharon is at the heart of the Community Works service.



With almost 12 years of employability experience between them, you can be certain that you will get positive support and help with whatever you are looking to achieve next.

Their role is to help you have the confidence to take steps into work, to identify any gaps in your skills and to help you get the training or experience that is right for you. This could involve updating your CV, volunteering, attending Community Works courses, going to college, doing a short work placement or meeting employers through mock interviews and training sessions.

Jane and Sharon will help you find the way into work that best suits you.



John Reid,
Training Officer

With over 20 years experience in training design and delivery and two National Training Awards, John provides lively and effective training courses tailored to the individual. This

includes vocational certificated training on health and safety, interview skills and Universal Jobmatch. As someone who has performed in Phantom of the Opera in London's West End, John creates engaging, entertaining and informative training that can make a real difference to your career prospects.

Rachel Hutton,
Employer
Engagement Officer

Rachel promotes Community Works to organisations who may wish to refer people to use the service and to employers who wish to provide opportunities. Rachel



can help you find out more about what it's like working in different sectors and industries. Job shadowing, meeting someone who is experienced in a specific field or a work placement can help you decide which sector you want to work in. With more than 10 years of experience working with people looking for work, Rachel can help you make an informed decision about your career.

How can I speak to someone about Community Works?

To get in touch, please call 0131 554 0403 and ask for a member of the Community Works team or email community.works@polha.co.uk



What you need to know

What is Universal Credit (UC)?

It is a benefit which will eventually replace six main working age benefits, including income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credits, Child Tax Credits, Income Support and Housing Benefit.

Will it affect me?

Yes, if you are receiving or applying for any of the above benefits and if you are of working age. If you are pension age but your spouse is not, you will still be affected by UC. The roll-out has already started in Edinburgh for single people and it is expected that the system will be fully rolled out for couples and families in Edinburgh in June 2018.

How do I apply?

You can only apply for UC online and this can take over an hour to complete. All communication between you and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) takes place through your online 'journal' so it is vital that you know how to use a computer or another device, such as a smart phone or tablet, and that you also have an e-mail address.

What will I need to apply?

To apply, you will need the following information:

- Your postcode
- National Insurance number (NI)

- Details of the bank, building society or Post Office account for UC payments to go into
- Tenancy agreement
- Details of savings
- Details of any income, including any other benefits
- Details of any other benefits you are receiving
- Your email address

What happens next?

You will have no entitlement to any benefits for the first seven days. You will not receive any payment for at least six weeks after your initial claim, with many claimants waiting longer than this.

UC is paid in arrears as a single monthly payment into your bank, building society or Post Office account and this will include your housing cost element. You will therefore need to budget carefully and make arrangements with Port of Leith Housing Association to





How we can help you apply for Universal Credit

Case study

One of our tenants (who wishes to remain anonymous) is of working age and needed to make a new application for benefits because she was no longer working. She attempted to apply online twice and then called the DWP. She was advised that her application was accepted and she would hear back in due course. Our tenant had provided all the requested documentation, including her tenancy agreement.

What happened next?

She did not hear back from the DWP, so she contacted us and was referred to our Welfare Rights Officer. At this point, our tenant had not received any money and was relying on food bank vouchers from the Tenancy Support Team.

Our Welfare Rights Officer was advised by the DWP that the tenancy agreement had not been attached to the claim. However this was incorrect.

The Welfare Rights Officer helped our tenant to successfully resubmit the claim and made a request to have her benefit backdated. However, it took four months and this intervention from our Welfare Rights Officer for her to receive any payments. Fortunately, she also received a backdated payment and a full council tax reduction.

Where can I get help?

If you are experiencing difficulties applying for UC, our Tenancy Support Team are here to help you. Get in touch with us on 0131 554 0403.



Members of our Tenancy Support Team

pay your rent on time. Please speak to your Housing Officer about this.

When UC is fully rolled out in Edinburgh (expected in June 2018), there will be the option for tenants to ask for their housing cost element to be paid directly to their landlord or to change to a fortnightly payment of UC instead of monthly.

Where can I get help?

We appreciate that this change may be difficult for some of our tenants and we want to help where possible. Our tenancy support team can help with:

- Setting up an e-mail address
- Opening a bank account
- Budgeting
- Applying for benefits

You can also check DWP's website at www.dwp.gov.uk

How you can help prevent fire

Fire safety has been in the news, and all our minds, since the tragic events at Grenfell Tower in London in June. We're working hard to keep you as safe as possible and are ready to take any action which may be required when findings are published of the public enquiry and the Scottish Government Working Group, which were both established after the Grenfell fire.

Communal fire detection systems

Many of our blocks are fitted with communal systems that help detect, prevent or fight fires, and we service these systems regularly to make sure they are in working order.

How you can help

Between service visits, you can help to prevent a fire breaking out by reporting any damage or faults to our communal fire detection systems as soon as you see them and familiarising yourself with our fire safety systems.

Smoke vents

These are automatic windows that open in the event of a fire to allow smoke to clear from the stairs so residents can get out safely (pictured right).

They are normally triggered by smoke detectors in the stairwell. The detectors will also pick up on individuals smoking in the stair, so please remember that smoking in the stair is not allowed.



How you can help

It is really important that you do not operate these windows yourself as you might

accidentally leave them in a position where they would not open correctly in the event of a fire.

Smoke detectors

These (pictured below) detect smoke in your home or in communal areas and sound an alarm or trigger other systems that help if there is a fire. Alarm sounders, the door entry system and the smoke vent windows rely on the detectors in communal areas to respond correctly to a fire.



How you can help

If you notice a damaged smoke detector in a communal area, please report it to us immediately.

You can look after the smoke detectors inside your home by:

- Testing them once a week to make sure you can hear the alarm
- Not tampering with or removing the detector or batteries
- Keeping them clean and dust free by gently vacuuming the casing
- Not painting over the detector
- Covering the detector while doing anything in the property that may create a lot of dust or sawdust. You can do this with a plastic bag and elastic band, but please remember to remove it afterwards!

If there is a problem with any of the detectors in your home, please report it to us immediately.

Dry risers

These are empty pipes that the Fire Brigade can use to carry water to all floors of the building in the event of a fire. You will see inlet valves outside the block and outlet valves inside the stairwell.

How you can help

Please do not tamper with these valves or block them (for example by locking your bike



in front of them) as this could prevent the Fire Brigade from responding effectively to a fire.

Emergency lighting

Most stairwells have a number of light fittings that are backed up by battery packs to maintain lighting for long enough to help tenants escape if the power cuts out during a fire. If you notice any faults with the lighting in your stair, please let us know immediately.

Keeping stairwells clear

During a fire people will be leaving in a hurry and they may not be able to see clearly, so items in the stairwell could trip them up and put them in danger or catch fire.

How you can help

Please do not leave items in the stairwell. We have changed to a zero tolerance approach to items left in communal areas. Our Estates and Housing Officers are visiting developments to check these areas. You will hear from them if items are found. If we have to remove items, we may charge the tenants responsible or add the cost to your service charge.

The common stair is your only means of escape in the event of a fire.

Have you ever thought what you would do if fire were to break out in your stair? It may not necessarily be in your flat! A fire started in a common stair could kill you and your family. Even a small bag of rubbish can create enough smoke to fill a whole stair. Items left in a common stair are often deliberately set on fire.

Keep it clear

- Get rubbish, old furniture, etc out of the building
- Make sure storage areas are kept locked
- For advice on uplifting items contact your local Council

If fire does start

- Keep doors closed to prevent smoke filling your house
- Dial 999 and ask for the Fire and Rescue Service, giving as much information as you can

For free home fire safety advice
CALL 0800 0731 999
or visit our website at
www.firescotland.gov.uk



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
Working together for a safer Scotland



Congratulations to Lulek!

Lulek (pictured left) belongs to Anna Koczanowska and is the winner of our cutest pet competition. A £25 gift voucher to spend at Dofos is on its way for Lulek to enjoy!

A huge thank you to everyone who sent us a photo, we enjoyed seeing all your very cute pets.

WINTER COMPETITION

We are running a best decorated Christmas tree competition! To enter, please send us a photo of your Christmas tree to info@polha.co.uk or add it to our facebook page.

The lucky winner will receive a shopping voucher worth £25 - good luck!



Wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from all the staff at Port of Leith Housing Association!

CHRISTMAS CLOSING



Friday 22 December 2017:

PoLHA office closes at 1pm

Wednesday 3 January 2018:

PoLHA office re-opens at 8:45am

Any repairs or maintenance issues outwith office hours should be reported to:
24 hour Response Line 0800 783 7937

Cheap Energy Club could help you save money

With winter having arrived, higher energy bills feel inevitable but Cheap Energy Club might be able to help. It's free to join and it could save you up to £300 per year on your energy bills.

All you have to do is sign up to Cheap Energy Club and let them know what your current tariff is. They compare your tariff to all the other options available every month. If there is a better deal out there, they will help you switch.

You can find out more online by visiting www.moneysavingexpert.com/cheapenergyclub

Sign up to
**Neighbourhood
ALERT**

to receive FREE crime alerts and info about where you live

Feel safe in your community

If you're interested in receiving alerts about crime in your community, sign up to the free Neighbourhood Alert scheme from Neighbourhood Watch at www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk

If you need to receive Portcall in another format, please contact our Customer Advice Team on 0131 554 0403.

Port of Leith Housing Association Ltd,
108 Constitution Street, Leith,
Edinburgh EH6 6AZ

