



PORT OF LEITH
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

PORTCALL

JANUARY 2021



Compare Port of Leith Housing Association to other landlords



Place your Leith Chooses vote



You told us why you love to live in Leith

A thousand food hampers delivered



We're part of Leith Gives, the new collaboration helping local communities



Happy New Year from all of us at Port of Leith Housing Association

HEATHER'S MESSAGE



I hope you had an enjoyable time over the festive season despite the coronavirus restrictions, and I would like to wish you a happy new year.

While the introduction of stay-at-home regulations was not the best of starts to 2021, I'd like to reassure you that we will continue to do everything in our power to support you during these difficult times and to provide essential services to you.

I'm proud to say that we have also been supporting members of the wider community across Leith and north Edinburgh through the Leith Gives campaign which you can read about on p6.

As we plan and respond to whatever 2021 has in store for us, keeping our tenants, other customers, staff and community members safe will continue to be our priority.

Please do follow our service updates online at polha.co.uk/coronavirus or get in touch by emailing propertyadmin@polha.co.uk.

In the event of an emergency, please call us on 0131 554 0403.

Thank for your continued patience.

Please do keep on looking out for each other and staying safe.

HEATHER KITELEY
Chief Executive

Say hello to our new staff

A warm welcome to our new recruits



Jackie Wilson-Tagoe

Money Advice Worker



Richard Smit

Project Manager



Adrian Boylan

Finance Team Leader



Andrew Harrison

ICT Systems Administrator

NEWS FLASH

The latest news from Port of Leith Housing Association

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Cover image: Leith Gives food hamper packing

COVID: What you need to know about our services

We will be delivering essential services in January in line with Scottish Government guidance issued on 4 January 2021. These include safety checks and repairs and maintenance that would otherwise threaten the household's health and safety.

We'd like to thank all our customers for their ongoing patience and understanding as staff continue to work remotely to deliver services. Not all services are available at this time and we may take slightly longer than usual to respond to queries. Please visit polha.co.uk/coronavirus for all our service updates.

With more of us working from home we must all be mindful of our neighbours and more tolerant of each other at this time. A neighbour may not be aware they are causing you any disruption and a polite conversation is often all it takes to resolve minor issues.

Changes to our Housing Team

We have restructured the Housing Team, removed the assistant housing officer role and now have a team

of housing officers. From February, each housing officer will have their own smaller patch, which will allow them to get to know you better. We will write to you nearer the time with the name of your Housing Officer.

Your rent in 2021

Thanks to all who took part in our rent increase consultation in autumn. We can confirm that the rent increase preferred by the majority of tenants is 1.5% from 1 April 2021. You will, as usual, receive a letter at the end of February confirming your new rent and service charge from April.

Tenant Advice

Our Tenant Advice Service (previously the Tenant Support Service) can help you if you have welfare benefit issues, debt and budgeting problems or need some practical assistance to move into or manage your tenancy. Please contact the office on 0131 554 0403 for more information.

Scottish Child Payment

A reminder that Scottish Child Payment is now open for applications. This is a new

payment for families on tax credits or certain benefits to help towards the cost of looking after a child. The payment is £40 every four weeks for each child under the age of six.

The payment starts on Monday 15 February 2021 with first payments being made from the end of February onwards. You can apply if your child will be under six on 15 February 2021.

To apply, go to mygov.scot/scottish-child-payment or call Social Security Scotland on 0800 182 2222.

Helping Leithers stay connected during lockdown

Chromebooks have been helping to reduce loneliness and boost confidence for many

In the summer of 2020, the Scottish Government observed that many shielding and vulnerable adults were digitally excluded and cut off from many of the online services and ways of staying in touch with friends and family that so many of us are used to. To help address this divide, funding was channelled through the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) to charities in the third sector including Port of Leith Housing Association.



Derek with his new Chromebook.

confidence to use them independently. us both a boost to see how we could work together.”

Chromebook recipients included a number of tenants accessing our Tenant Advice Service, some Community Works clients, and sheltered housing tenants. We identified 15 individuals and distributed the remaining Chromebooks to Pilmeny Development Group for older adults, and the Action Group for adults with additional support requirements.

We received some excellent feedback from Chromebook users about the difference connectivity is making to their lives. Emmanuelle, Employability Officer, said, “I had a very good session with one recipient on Friday, chatting about what he might like to look into. We are going to research college courses together but meanwhile I managed to get him to look at BBC Maths resources as he is worried about his level. It gave

Emmanuelle, working with another recipient also told us, “They have been shielding due to rheumatoid arthritis and they are also on antidepressants. He is very isolated, even more so since his mother died, as this has lessened contact with family. He hasn’t worked for 15 years due to his condition and mostly stays in the house. He is very grateful for the device as his eyesight is deteriorating and having a laptop will make it much easier for him to contact services and friends via email and Facebook.”

We have since been awarded a further eight laptops refurbished by The Remakery as part of the Leith Gives collaboration (read more about this on page 6). We will hand these over in January to tenants who came forward after the Chromebook offer.

We received some excellent feedback from Chromebook users about the difference connectivity is making to their lives.

We were provided with 20 Chromebooks with a generous 12-month Wi-Fi allowance to give to shielding tenants lacking digital confidence. A small number of our staff were able to provide support and guidance to recipients to get them started with their devices and build the

Tom’s Community Works story

Tom shares his story of how Community Works helped him at a crossroads in his life

“I was directed to PoLHA and to a team member called Jane Whiting at a real crossroads in my life.

After years of working in the same industry I knew I needed a little help finding a direction that would give me both satisfaction and joy in my life.

Jane facilitated this with help and a gentle push that reminded me and pointed out that I did in fact have skills, I had just forgotten how to see them.

I went to some workshops and a computer class, then began

to see that I was capable, and I could.

I was listened to. Becoming unemployed after 35 years of working was frightening. Redundancy is difficult and being of an age where technology is a challenge, PoLHA showed me that I really could, it was me holding myself back. They wanted to help, they wanted me to find the best in me.

Today I started work with HMRC and my next chapter is beginning. Without the Jobcentre and PoLHA I would never have tried.”

“I would put Community Works in every area of the city.”

To find out more about Community Works and how we could help you, go to polha.co.uk/community-works.

Freedom of Information one year on

Did you know you can make a Freedom of Information request with us?

Since 1 November 2019 Port of Leith Housing Association has been subject to the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. This means that:

1. We are obliged to publish certain information about our activities; and
2. Members of the public are entitled to request information from us.

We have provided information through our website in a section called ‘Guide to Information’. This is available at polha.co.uk/foi. If you are interested in us as a public body we would encourage you to visit this to find out more.

We are also open to Freedom of Information requests from the general public including our tenants. If you are interested in any information that we have, please get in touch by emailing

info@polha.co.uk and we will endeavour to provide you with any information you need.

In the last year we have dealt with eight Freedom of Information requests from different sources and we wish to inform you all that this service is available if you feel you would like to know more about us.

Stuart Anderson and Stevie Hynd preparing food hampers



Leith Gives a thousand food hampers

Local charities, businesses and volunteers come together to alleviate hardship in Leith over the winter months

Leith Gives is a collaboration of local charities, businesses and volunteers, including Port of Leith Housing Association, who have come together to alleviate hardship over winter.

Over the festive period, Leith Gives distributed around 1,000 food hampers with enough food to make 16,000 meals

at home. Food hampers were filled at Edinburgh Community Food's depot throughout December and distributed from the Citadel in Commercial Street by teams of volunteers.

In the midst of another strict lockdown, food isn't the only necessity. Being connected online is essential to the wellbeing of our communities during this challenging time, and Leith Gives has now distributed over 200 digital devices to households locally.

This is helping people connect with friends, family, schools and other essential services while staying at home during the pandemic. Wi-Fi devices

are also being distributed to ensure vulnerable recipients have everything they need to reduce isolation and loneliness during lockdown.

Over the festive period the collaboration made wishes come true with over 1,000 gifts delivered to children and those in isolation in December.

You may have seen Leith Gives on STV News just before Christmas and, if you want to find out more, you can follow @LeithGives on Twitter or visit www.leithgives.org.



Edinburgh Community Food distribution



Stevie Hynd, Warehouse Team Leader

Edinburgh Remakery refurbishing laptops



How well do you know us?

It's one of our New Year resolutions to make sure our tenants, other customers and people in Leith, north Edinburgh and beyond get to know us, and what we're all about, a little better in 2021

You might wonder why we're thinking about this right now, especially during the coronavirus pandemic. There are lots of reasons:

1. To make sure more people know about all the ways we can help

Although our name suggests otherwise, and being a housing association is a big part of what we do, it's not the full story. We also provide mid market rent homes, deliver training and employability support, provide a stair cleaning service to other organisations, support local community groups, and provide money, welfare and energy advice.

Maintenance and repairs company T.B. Mackay has joined our family too. We have big plans to do even more to support communities in Leith and north Edinburgh and now more than ever it's important that the people who most need our help know how we can support them during the coronavirus pandemic and beyond.

2. To share and reflect our new mission

Between now and 2025, everything we do will be aimed at meeting our new mission to make a positive impact on people's lives in Leith and north Edinburgh by providing affordable homes and services, and creating brilliant communities. We're looking into how we can increase awareness of how we support communities and deliver other services in addition to being a landlord.

3. To keep up to date

Our organisation has grown and adapted to lots of changes over time and there have been big changes in Leith and north Edinburgh too. We wish to stay relevant and keep connected with our communities, including making the most of opportunities presented by incorporating digital approaches alongside the more traditional ways of communicating.

Our research provided further evidence of just how much we all love Leith. Here's a small selection of the many brilliant things you had to say about why you love living in Leith:

"It's vibrant but not too busy. Historic but not run down. Very accessible for shops and buses."

"The community, humility and humour that is found within Leith."

"It's like living in a village in the heart of the city."

"Great location near the water and easy to reach the centre of Edinburgh or travel south to East Lothian."

"Leith has a great community feel. Lots of independent local shops. I also love being close to the port and the water."

"Big soup of characters and wonderful buildings."

We asked tenants, staff and members of the community what they think and know about us to figure out if there are any changes we could make. We are very grateful to the 536 people who shared their views with us. Here is what we learned from them:

1. People are keen to see some changes

The research shows that the majority of people are open to exploring how we could make improvements to everything and anything from our name to the look, feel and tone of the information we share to make sure it reflects our new

mission and make it clear what we do.

2. We all really do love Leith

There are lots of aspects of our current approaches which people would like us to keep. It's important for people that Leith continues to be a big feature in our name, look and feel even though our services extend beyond Leith.

3. We'd like to see more people and fewer nautical references

It came out loud and clear that you'd like to see a bigger

emphasis on the people, homes and communities of Leith and north Edinburgh, more so than nautical themes.

So what's next?

We're considering what improvements we might make and once we have some ideas to share, we'll ask you for some feedback. You can follow our progress on our website polha.co.uk/rebrand. If you have any questions, or would like to get involved, please contact our Communications & Customer Engagement Officer Eve Smith on 0131 376 2568 or email eve.smith@polha.co.uk.



"It's like living in a village in the heart of the city."

How did we do?

Our 2019-20 digital landlord performance report is now live. Take a look at our performance and compare how we did against our targets and the Scottish average.

We are pleased to report that we continued to perform well and have recorded improvements in several areas of our service delivery.

We have been meeting more of our customers' needs with overall satisfaction up, and are especially pleased to report

that we continue to achieve faster emergency repair response times than other Scottish social landlords.

We are always seeking to improve our performance and our services, and despite the challenges presented by the ongoing pandemic, we will strive to deliver the best

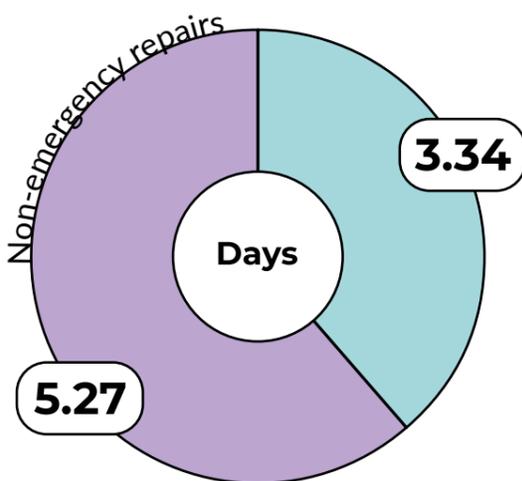
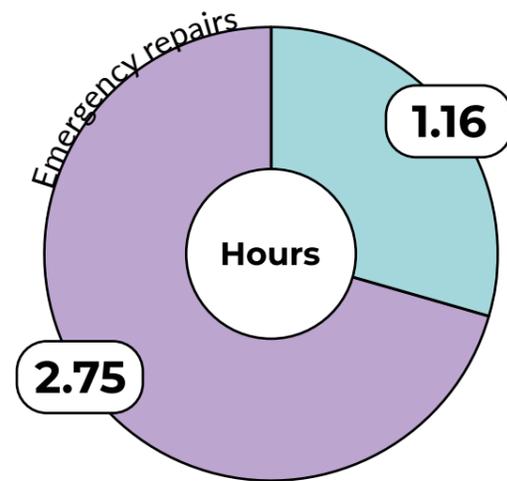
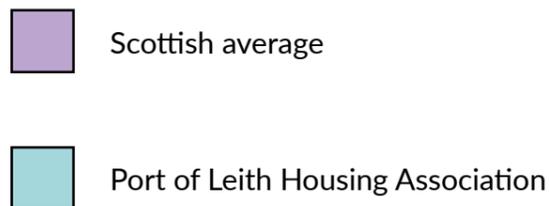
possible results in the coming year.

If you have any questions about our performance, please get in touch with us by calling **0131 554 0403** or emailing **info@polha.co.uk**.

We were quick to respond to repairs

Compared to the average performance of other Scottish housing associations, we were quicker to complete emergency and non-emergency repairs.

The pie charts on the right show the average length of time taken to complete repairs.



We beat our targets...

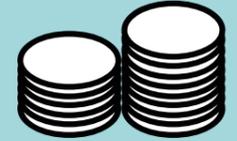
Every year we set service delivery targets which include repairs completion rate, antisocial behaviour resolutions, length of time to relet properties and more. Shown below are some of the targets we beat last year.



We exceeded our target of 95% new tenancies sustained for more than one year with 97.9%.



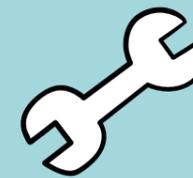
We relet properties more quickly than our target of 24 days. Our average time to relet a property was just 20.9 days.



We beat our target to minimise rent lost through properties being empty by 0.4%.



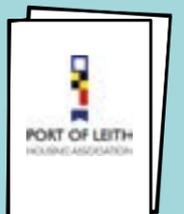
We aimed to resolve 80% of antisocial behaviour cases and achieved 87.26% resolutions within locally agreed timeframes.



We beat our target of 92% reactive repairs completed first time by completing 96.92% first time.

Read the full report online...

You can access the full report including a downloadable PDF version by visiting landlordreport.polha.co.uk.



How do we compare to other landlords?

In addition to our quicker than average repair response times, here are some other ways we compare to the Scottish average.

Tenants satisfied with overall service

Compared to tenants of other Scottish Housing Associations, Port of Leith Housing Association tenants were somewhat more satisfied with the overall service they received.



Did we keep tenants well informed?

Responses show that we are slightly below average at keeping our tenants informed about our services and decisions.

We look forward to working with you to understand how we can improve in this area.



Compare our performance...

You can our performance with other Scottish social landlords by visiting housingregulator.gov.scot/comparison-tool

Were we quick to relet?

We were quicker than the Scottish average to relet our properties. This meant we were able to make homes available to people more quickly.



Are our rents good value for money?

Similar to the Scottish average, the majority of our tenants feel the rent they pay for their home is good value for money.





Choose your favourite community project!

It's not long to go until the people of Leith will vote for their favourite community project to receive vital funding, so we caught up with Sally Millar from Leith Chooses to find out all about it and how you can cast your vote.



Would you like a helping hand to cast your vote?

If you need help to vote for your favourite community project, please get in touch with Anita Aggarwal, our Community Support Coordinator, on 07825 971 742 or email anita.aggarwal@polha.co.uk.

Q What is Leith Chooses?

A It's when people in the Leith community choose which community projects that they want to receive funding. It comes around every year.

The money comes from the Council's Community Grants Fund (mostly - there is also a bit of funding from the Trams to Newhaven this year). It gives YOU - local people - a voice about how money is spent locally. You choose the three or four projects you like best and want to support, and vote for them.

Please do join in - your community needs you!

Q How can people find out which community projects have applied for funding?

A The projects are all listed at www.leithchooses.net/projects. Usually we have a fun, live community event for everyone to find out about the groups and cast their vote but sadly it's all online this year to keep everyone safe owing to COVID.

Q How do I vote?

A Go to www.leithchooses.net/projects and look at all the projects and think about which ones you want to vote for. Then click on the link at the top or bottom of the page that says VOTE NOW. You will be taken to a different website and asked to sign in with your name and

Who can vote and when?

Anyone who lives, works, volunteers or studies in Leith can vote. Online voting opens on Monday 25 January and will stay open until the end of Sunday 31 January 2021.

postcode (and email address if you have one). You will be able to see the project summaries there too and by following the onscreen instructions you'll quickly get to a voting screen.

Click on that screen to place your first three votes. You must vote for three different projects, you can't vote two or

three times for the same project. If you change your mind mid-stream, click the vote you want to change (to un-vote it), and click again elsewhere to add a different vote.

Next you will be offered a fourth, extra, vote, called the 'Boost Vote' to be cast for one of a small number of projects that focus specifically on work with ethnic minority communities. This is to make things fairer for projects that in the past missed out on funding due to their minority status. Using your boost vote is optional. And that's it!

Q What should people do if they can't get online?

A If you don't have a mobile phone, tablet or computer with internet access, there are public computers connected to the internet in the McDonald Road Library that you can use free of charge. They do book up quickly though and may be affected by COVID restrictions.

Q When will we find out the results?

A The winning projects will be announced in early February 2021.

COMPETITION TIME!

Pets of Portcall



WIN!

Do you have a photogenic pet? Pets of Portcall is back and this time we're giving away a £25 supermarket voucher to whoever sends the winning pet picture.

Our judges are looking for pets big and small, from labradors to guinea pigs and everything in between. Bonus points if your pet is pictured with this copy of Portcall!

The winning picture will be displayed on our social media and in the next tenant newsletter. Good luck, and may the best pet win!

To enter: You may send as many pictures as you wish, remembering to include your name and address. The winning photo will be featured on our social media and in the next tenant newsletter. Please visit polha.co.uk/competition for full submission details and to send us your photo by Monday 1 March 2021.

WORDSEARCH

Can you find them all?

- | | | |
|----------|---------|-----------|
| ELEPHANT | MOVIE | BEACH |
| MAGICIAN | RHINO | GUITAR |
| BRIDGE | JUMPER | LAMPSHADE |
| CAMERA | SANDAL | FOREST |
| PIGLET | FROG | TRUMPET |
| JUICE | LEITH | BOULDER |
| KETTLE | CURTAIN | CLOUD |
| UMBRELLA | PASTA | DANCER |
| HAPPY | JIGSAW | COBBLE |
| TAXI | TYRE | TRAINER |
| SCHOOL | CACTUS | |



Community Alarm Service

If you have a City of Edinburgh Council community alarm (ATEC24) in your home, please remember to test your alarm monthly.

Formerly known as the Community Alarm Telecare Service, ATEC24 provides a wide range of home equipment to support older and vulnerable people to live independently.

If you have any questions about the service, are interested in finding out more or being assessed for appropriate help, please call the council on 0131 529 7114.



Do you require a different format?

Request Portcall in a different format by calling 0131 554 0403 or send an email to info@polha.co.uk.