

ISSUE 5



LINKHOUSING

housing news

The newsletter for Link tenants

Welcome to the autumn edition of Housing News



I hope you're all keeping safe and well.

I'd like to extend a very warm welcome to our new tenants from Weslo.

I'm pleased to report we're steadily returning to a more normal service. We have resumed all routine repairs, cleared the backlog that built up during lockdown and hope to reintroduce face-to-face housing officer visits with tenants sometime soon.

We will continue to keep our website up to date with the latest service information in line with Scottish Government guidance.

While many of our services will return to normal, some of the ways we adapted during the pandemic provide new and exciting ways of working. On Thursday 28 October, we will be holding our first ever virtual tenant festival. You can read more on page three to find out how to book your place.

As this is my last message as chief executive of Link Housing, I'd like to say it has been a pleasure to lead the organisation and witness first-hand the impact good housing and support services have in the communities we serve.

I'm confident my successor, David Mackenzie, will continue to value the incredible work of the tenants and staff who, together, make Link the leading organisation it is.

All the best for the future and thank you for all the support you've shown me.

June Green
Chief executive of Link Housing

Meet our new managing director

We're delighted to welcome David Mackenzie as Link Housing's new managing director. David brings a wealth of experience with him, having previously worked as chief executive officer of Craigdale Housing Association.

David said: "I am thrilled to be Link Housing's new managing director and look forward to joining the passionate team at Link during such an exciting period for the organisation.

"This is a fantastic opportunity to lead one of the country's leading housing and support teams during a time where our customers need us most.

"I look forward to progressing Link's vision and working with the team to deliver fantastic services to people and communities across Scotland."

David will join Link in September and will open the online tenant festival on 28 October. To book your place, please visit www.linkhousing.org.uk/linkfest.



Repairs – beating the backlog



During the last lockdown, Link Property had over 2,000 non-essential repairs that could not be carried out due to government restrictions.

Since the restrictions have eased, our repairs team has been contacting anyone that reported a repair to arrange an appointment to carry out the work. Due to the volume of repairs, some appointments were out-with our normal 10-day priority timescale.

Your patience was appreciated while the team worked through the backlog. We're delighted to announce most appointments have now taken place, although we still face challenges, including:

- Operatives being contacted by Test and Protect, meaning appointments may be cancelled at short notice due to self-isolation
- Appointments may be out with the normal 10-day routine repair target timescale
- We're working with our suppliers to ensure we have materials, however, due to a global shortage not all materials are readily available

Working together

- If your appointment needs cancelled, we will contact you on the number you provided. If your contact number or email address has changed, please let us know as soon as possible
- If you have reported a repair and have not yet been contacted, please let us know and we will arrange a suitable appointment. You can report a repair on the website www.linkhousing.org.uk/report-a-repair, through the MyLink app or by calling **03451 400 100 (option 1)**.

LINKFEST

Have your voice heard at our first ever virtual tenant event

Featuring... special celebrity guests, live entertainment, prize draws, interactive sessions and much more!



SCAN ME

Thursday 28 October 2021
6.30pm to 9.00pm

To find out more, visit www.linkhousing.org.uk/linkfest



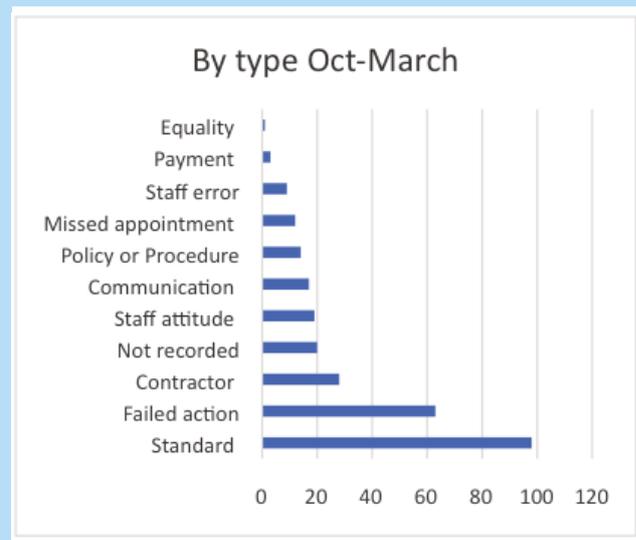
Valuing complaints and feedback update

If things go wrong, we want to put it right. Staff are encouraged to record all feedback, including dissatisfaction about service failure as part of the complaints process.

Welcome to former Weslo tenants and staff. We are working together to align complaints handling for all Link tenants.

October 2020 to March 2021 performance

- We received **77** compliments and positive feedback on our services
- We received **246** stage one complaints and **30** stage two complaints
- **25%** of frontline complaints were upheld and **49%** were resolved
- **94%** of frontline complaints were responded to in full within SPSO target of five days
- Stage one complaints were handled on average within three working days and stage two complaints within 17 days
- No Link complaints were upheld by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman



Covid-19 had an impact on complaints increasing over the winter months. Six lessons from complaints were recorded. These were related to procedure, communication and customer service themes. Lessons focus on action to repair the customer relationship, how to prevent it happening again and sharing learning with staff.

We are always looking for ways to improve with **72%** of tenants finding it easy to make a complaint, up from **66%**. **45%** were satisfied and **36%** dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled. **54%** of tenants stated they were dissatisfied with being kept informed about the process, and **73%** of tenants felt we didn't do what we said we would to resolve the complaint.

This feedback will be discussed with staff to agree improvement actions.

We want to work with you to resolve complaints and encourage you to give us full information to be able to do this.

We encourage those supporting vulnerable tenants to access the complaints process and speak to us about any communication or other support needs. There are lots we can do to support tenants to make a complaint, including providing a range of ways to do it (phone, email, MyLink app, Live Chat). We can also provide information in a range of formats on request.

We know talking about debt can be scary, but we're here to help

We're delighted to launch an initiative to support tenants in East Ayrshire, Glasgow, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire and West Lothian who have money worries, are in debt and/or who don't have the skills to use, or access, digital devices.

The Money and Wellbeing Project initiative will run remotely and has a dedicated debt assistant, self-help coach and money advice officer. People who use the service will be loaned a Chromebook and MiFi hub while they receive support.

The first point of contact is Link's debt assistant, who offers support to set up digital devices and provide budgeting, financial and capability support.

If people using the service have complex debt issues, they will be referred to Link's debt and money advice officer, who will support them to access formal debt solutions.

LinkLiving's self-help coach will be on hand for six one-to-one sessions, during which time they will teach techniques to manage anxiety and improve overall wellbeing.

The project is funded by the Scottish Legal Aid Board will run until 31 March 2023.

If you know someone who would benefit from this service, ask them to speak to their housing officer or contact **03451 400 100** or **csc@linkhaltd.co.uk**



Have you followed us on social media yet?

 [Facebook.com/LinkGroupLtd](https://www.facebook.com/LinkGroupLtd)

 [@Link_Group_Ltd](https://twitter.com/Link_Group_Ltd)



Get a LIFT to buy your own home



The Scottish Government's LIFT (Low-cost Initiative for First-Time Buyers) scheme helps first-time buyers, and other priority groups including those aged 60 and over, get onto the property ladder.

"At over 60, we thought our days of home owning were over, but thanks to the Scottish Government, they weren't! A fabulous opportunity which enabled us to buy a property in the area we wanted. The process was easy to navigate and fast. Apply for it!"
– Iain and Christine, LIFT scheme buyers

The Scottish Government contributes between 10% and 40% towards the property price and gets the same percentage back when it is sold. Alternatively, buyers can increase their share if they wish.

Buyers of any age can apply with a mortgage, but if you are 60 or over you can apply to LIFT without a mortgage if:

- You are living in a property that is too large and need to downsize, or

- You need to move closer to family or friends to receive care and support, or
- Your existing property is no longer suitable (e.g. due to stairs), or
- You are living in private rented accommodation.

You can purchase any size of property as long as you meet the financial criteria, and the property is large enough to avoid overcrowding. To be eligible, properties must be advertised for sale publicly (e.g. on a website), and priced within the maximum price threshold for the area.

LIFT example

A couple, who were both social tenants and aged over 60, bought a two-bedroom property in Aberdeenshire with the help of LIFT.

Property price: £95,000

Scottish Government contribution: £38,000

Buyer contribution: £57,000

In this example, the Scottish Government contributed 40% of the price and will get the same percentage back when the property is sold, unless the buyer decides to increase their share.

In addition to those aged 60 and over, LIFT is open to:

- First-time buyers
- Social renters
- Members of the armed forces and veterans who have left the armed forces within the past two years
- Widows, widowers and other partners of service personnel whose partner has lost their life while serving in the armed forces within the last two years
- People aged over 60 who can demonstrate a housing need

For more information, visit www.linkhousing.org.uk/LIFT or text 'LIFT' to **66777**. Eligibility criteria apply. Always seek independent financial advice.

Retirement round-up / sheltered chatter

Comings and goings

We're delighted to welcome Frank McGowan to the sheltered team as Sheltered Housing Officer. Frank was formerly a Scottish international athlete who went on to a coaching role in the British Athletics team, so no problems in terms of hitting the ground running!



Frank comes to us with years of experience gained as a Senior Warden and Scheme Manager at Sheltered and Very Sheltered Housing services at Glasgow City Council. He is currently shadowing across our sheltered and retirement developments, but is already broadly familiar with our systems and routines.

Frank will cover periods of absence within the sheltered and retirement teams, ensuring tenants receive a consistent SHO/RHO presence on site. The timing is impeccable, as we're sadly about to lose Rachel Williams, who has been the Retirement Housing Officer at Castings House and Morar Court for the last four years.

Rachel will be missed by tenants and colleagues alike. For tenants, Rachel has been a reassuring daily point of contact during lockdown, always thinking on her feet to work around lockdown challenges for our most vulnerable tenants. Rachel is working closely with Frank to ensure a smooth transition.

As colleagues we are delighted for Rachel that she was successful in her securing her new role at Falkirk Council, but we will miss her! Rachel, we wish you every success in the future.

Ben Lui in bloom

The patio at Ben Lui Place has been transformed into a beautiful and tranquil space by one of our green-fingered residents.

Sunny Seymour worked his magic to create a space for tenants to relax and socially distance, following current government guidelines.

He has started a small vegetable patch in an unused part of our complex and this will provide some fresh potatoes and vegetables for our tenants.



We are hoping to utilise the services of Linkscape to clear some more space to increase the size of our growing area.

We will also seek funding for a greenhouse.





Go digital, get involved!

Communicating with you by email means we can get information to you quicker, while reducing the impact on the environment by cutting the amount of paper we use.

We can send the following digitally:

- Newsletters
- Annual report to tenants
- Consultations such as the annual rent consultation
- Invitations to tenant events
- Information about our armchair critics' panel

How do I sign up?

Please visit www.linkhousing.org.uk/digital and complete our short online form. Alternatively, contact our tenant engagement team on **03451 400 100** or getinvolved@linkhaltd.co.uk.



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Ways to pay your rent

There are a number of options available to make it easier to pay your rent:



Direct Debit To start paying your rent by direct debit, please contact our Customer Service Centre on **03451 400 100 – option 2** or ask your housing officer to make the arrangement with you.



Phone Call us Monday to Friday 9.30am - 4.30pm on **03451 400100, option 2**.



Online banking Set up online banking with your bank to make payments directly to us. Remember to quote your account number.

Bank of Scotland sort code: 804121

Account number: 00548273



allpay Call allpay on **0330 041 6497** or go online to **www.allpay.net** to pay by credit or debit card.

You can also download the allpay app (via Apple App Store, Windows Phone store and Google Play) onto your mobile phone to pay by credit or debit card.



Pay in person at any Post Office, or PayPoint terminal located in shops or supermarkets. You can make a payment in person by cash, cheque, credit or debit card. If you need an allpay card call the Customer Service Centre on **03451 400 100** to request one.

A reminder to our new tenants from Weslo - please continue using your existing methods of payment. If you have any problems, call us on 03451 400 100.

Emergency contact numbers when the office is closed

Gas boiler and heating repairs

- Call **03451 400 100**

Other emergency repairs

- Call **0800 783 7937** (out-of-hours service provided by Bield 24)
- Call **Lochaber HA** on **01397 702 530** if you live in **Fort William** or **Skye**. Call **Lochalsh HA** on **01478 612035** if you live in **Kyle of Lochalsh**. If you live in **Oban** call **West Highland Housing Association** on **01631 566451** or **Hanover** on **0300 323 1170**.