

# Newsletter Winter 2023



## Need a Helping Hand?

We know times are tough, but we may be able to help. We have been successful in obtaining grant funding for several schemes to help tenants with the cost-of-living crisis.



Please get in touch if you need assistance.  
We may be able to help you and your family.  
Don't struggle alone.

**Food Help** - We can make referrals to foodbanks and have supermarket vouchers we can offer direct in some circumstances.

**Energy Help** – This year we have been able to help some tenants through referrals to other agencies for fuel vouchers. We hope to be able to continue this over the Winter.

We have also been awarded £15,000 by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) to offer direct financial support to tenants struggling to meet energy costs. As the funds are limited, we will need to do a brief eligibility assessment but aim to make this as simple and quick as possible.



Phone: 01324 664966

[enquiries@paragonha.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@paragonha.org.uk)

Website: [www.paragonha.org.uk](http://www.paragonha.org.uk)

You can keep up to date with the latest Association news, get advice and information anytime from our Facebook Page or Web Site. Why not pay us a visit?

## Season's Greetings

Welcome to your  
Winter News 2023

Included in this issue:

- Need A Helping Hand - Details of our cost of living assistance projects
- Mould Busters – tips to deal with mould, damp & condensation
- Tenants Charter Report
- Calling all tenants – Participation News & Opportunities
- Why Equality Data Collection Matters
- Owners' Corner
- Holiday Opening Details
- Helpful Contacts

**Warm Welcome Home** – Last Winter we were delighted to have secured funding to help us assist tenants with energy saving measures. Ranging from draught excluders to air fryers and thermal curtains we were able to help over 100 new and existing tenants. We have funding to continue with support this year.

Special thanks go to our friends at the Hallglen Knitting Group for knitting some fabulous draft excluders and the Sensory Centre in Camelon for donating wool.

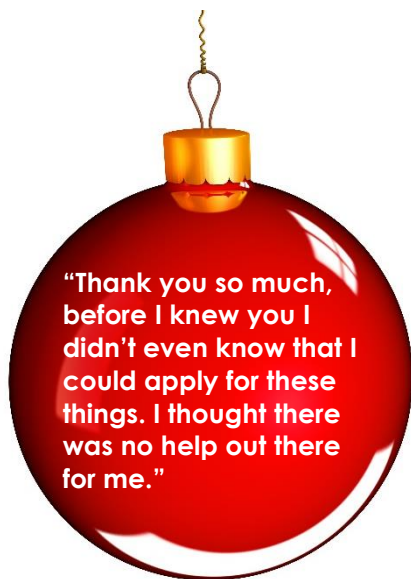


**Home Energy Advice Team (HEAT)** – our latest initiative for Winter 2023 is in partnership with our repairs contractor Everwarm and Falkirk Council's Employment Unit. With funding from SFHA we are setting up an energy advice scheme exclusively for Association tenants. We are bringing trainees into the energy advice sector and delivering advice direct to tenants through Everwarm. Look out for details soon about events and opportunities in your area.

**Tenancy Management Team** – our Tenancy Management Team provides a core service and is there to help including on rent payments and agreements and benefits.

### **HoME (Help on Managing Everything)**

We work in partnership with Link Housing Association and the various parts of the Link Group and one great scheme we have is the HoME project. It does do what it says on the tin! You name it and the HoME team can probably help if you need assistance to manage your tenancy or stay in your home.



- ❖ Help with maintaining your home e.g. hoarding and decorating if you can't do it yourself
- ❖ Issues with neighbours
- ❖ Managing income and bills
- ❖ Keeping safe physically and emotionally
- ❖ Asking for help if you need it
- ❖ How to be involved with your community
- ❖ Volunteering/Work experience
- ❖ Digital skills and more

"I felt embarrassed about asking for help but not anymore. I can see that things are getting better."

Get in touch with the Tenancy Management Team and they can advise you on how to get a referral. The feedback on this project has been brilliant.

**Building Resilience for a Better Home** - is a free LinkLiving service for Paragon Housing Association tenants who are experiencing mild to moderate mental health issues. Sessions are available via phone or video call. As a Paragon Tenant you can receive up to nine online video calls or phone calls with LinkLiving self-help coaches. You will learn techniques to manage your mental health and therefore be in a position to be able to better manage your life and finances, engage with your community, and sustain your tenancy. Contact the Tenancy Management Team for more information.

**There is a lot more support available from other organisations too – just get in touch with us, have a chat and we'll try and point you in the right direction.**

## Repairs & Maintenance

Please help us to keep you safe and warm by allowing access for gas and electrical safety checks. Thanks to everyone who has taken the time to let us in. This is a health and safety issue and if we don't get access to carry out these checks then we will break in to do these and you will be charged for the costs. Please get in touch if you have any problems allowing access or have any questions on how it works.



## Damp, Mould & Condensation

This time of the year can really highlight issues with damp, mould and condensation.

We take any reports of these issues seriously. It's a "fabric first" approach to all reports of Condensation, Damp & Mould. This means if you contact us to report condensation - we will always come out and assess the situation and deal with any repairs to the property that could improve the situation.

	Washing Clothes	0.5 litres a day
	Cooking	3 litres a day
	Drying clothes without ventilation	5 litres a day
	Breathing when active	0.2 litres per hour per person
	Showers and Baths	1.5 litres per person

We also need your help in dealing with this. A combination of the temperature of your home and everyday activities can cause problems. It is important that you understand how they happen so you can help tackle them.

There is always moisture in the air. The warmer air gets, the more moisture it holds. The colder it gets, the less moisture it holds. Most moisture gets into the air via condensation. Air indoors gets damp and humid from everyday things like taking showers, cooking, and drying clothes. When that humid air hits colder surfaces – like windows and walls – then it turns back into water droplets, which mould loves.

Whether it's cooking, cleaning or just sleeping, we generate a lot of moisture throughout the day in our homes. Look at the table to see how much moisture comes from some of our daily activities.

If you are having an issue with damp, mould and or condensation in your home, let us know about it as soon as possible. We can work together to resolve it.

## How to avoid the problem

Mould grows when houses start to get humid and damp. It's a kind of fungus that grows in damp conditions. Once it's started appearing, mould will keep growing until the conditions are changed and the visible mould is removed. Reducing the moisture inside your home will help to stop mould from growing.

Mould is part of the natural environment, and it only becomes a problem when it builds up indoors and starts posing a risk to your home and your health. You can't completely remove mould from your home. You can minimise it by following some simple steps.

Mould Busters			
Put less moisture in the air	Ventilate: Get moisture out of your home	Keep your home warm	Removing mould
If you notice any leaks or other problems with your home that could be allowing damp to get in, please report them to us as soon as possible.	Open the trickle vents in your windows if you have them – they are usually above the window frame.	A warm home means fewer cold places for wet air to settle and turn into water droplets.	Vinegar: a mild acid which is non-toxic and can kill 82% of mould species. Spray white, distilled vinegar onto a mouldy surface - leave it to sit for an hour. Wipe clean with water and allow the surface to dry.
Close the door to the room when you're cooking or showering / Keep lids on pans when cooking.	Use any extractor fans in the bathroom and kitchen or open the windows slightly. Contact us if you can't open your windows or if your extractors fans are not working.	The Energy Savings Trust recommends heating your home to at least 18°C. A low heat running evenly through the day will help tackle mould even if you don't heat every room daily.	Baking Soda: harmless to your family and pets but deadly to mould. It absorbs moisture and gets rid of bad smells. Add a teaspoon of baking soda to a spray bottle of water or a damp cloth and scrub the affected area.
Give your windows, sills and any other surfaces a wipe when they're wet.	If your drying clothes indoors, do it in well ventilated areas, e.g. the bathroom with the door closed and extractor fan on or window open.	If you are struggling to heat your home or concerned your heating isn't working properly, please contact us.	Bleach spray – can kill virtually every species of indoor mould that it meets, but it is only effective if the mould is growing on non-porous materials like tiles, bathtubs, glass and counter tops, it won't work on things like wood and carpet and can damage and stain them. Always handle with care and follow manufacturers' directions.
	Open windows for a few minutes in the morning to replace the damp air with fresh air from outside.	If you want to check your room temperature then we can give you a thermometer.	



## Tenants Charter 2022/23: How to find out more

We submit an Annual Return to the Scottish Housing Regulator on the Scottish Social Housing Charter known as the Tenants Charter. Find out about our performance across a wide range of indicators. Here's a taster. Our annual report on our Charter return can be found on our website - go to the Fact and Figures Page or email us and we'll send you a summary report - [enquiries@paragonha.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@paragonha.org.uk)

### Rents & Arrears

*Our Annual Rent increase in 2023/24 was 4% - lower than the average of 6% for Scottish Housing Associations. Arrears were higher than the national average at 3.9% for current tenant arrears. This in part reflects the fact that a lower percentage of Association tenants are in receipt of benefit help with housing costs than the average.*



### Letting Houses

*The rate of refusal of offers of a home are very low for the Association compared to other social landlords. However the time taken to re-let properties remained high in 2022/23 at 73.4 days. The figures are improving this year and we are working hard to bring them down even more. 100% of lets to homeless households in 2021/22 were sustained for a year or more, with tenancy sustainment levels overall being high at 95.96%*

### Repairs & Maintenance

*No properties failed the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. Some properties are deemed to be in abeyance as door entry systems have not been upgraded due to the need to get owners involved. The time taken to complete emergency repairs was an average of 2.01 hours compared to the Scottish average of 3.6 hours. Repairs satisfaction was 77.25%, lower than the Scottish average.*

## Participation Corner- News & Opportunities – How To Get Involved

Our new 5-year Tenant Participation Strategy was recently approved. The Tenant Participation Policy and accompanying Action Plan are being developed. We are also looking to consult on our repairs policy. Do you want to get involved in these areas of our work?

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel continues to meet on a regular basis and recently reviewed how we handle complaints and have made some recommendations.

Want to find out more about the TSP and their work? We are looking for tenants to get involved in some working parties around appointing repairs contractors and specifications for new kitchens – want to join in?



## Current Policy Consultations - Closing Date Friday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024

### Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

The majority of our interactions with tenants and other customers are very positive, a handful each year are not. We will not accept abuse of staff or contractors so we are consulting on an Unacceptable Behaviour Policy so we are clear what is not acceptable and the action we will take.

### Estate Management Strategy & Policy

The Estate Management Strategy sets out how the Association will continue to ensure high quality management of its estates. The Policy sets out 22 Estate Management Commitments. What do you think should be in it? Give us your views - we know that this is an area of interest to most tenants.



To get involved in any of our activities phone us on 01324 664966 or email [enquiries@paragonha.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@paragonha.org.uk). You can read the draft policies on our website and complete the brief questionnaire to let us know what you think. Please get involved. Your views matter.

## Equalities Data Collection - Why it Matters

We are asking tenants and housing applicants to give us some information to help us shape what we do to provide a fair and inclusive service. You don't have to provide it, but we hope this article will explain why it's useful to do so.

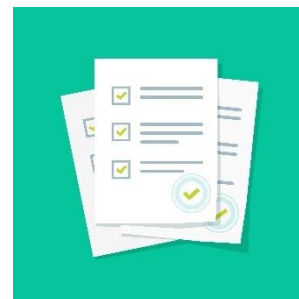
### Why are we collecting it?

To help us to plan and deliver effective services and to meet our legal and regulatory obligations.

### What do we do with it?

We use it for a range of purposes, including to help us to:

- protect and promote your rights and interests
- promote equality objectives across our services
- identify and address our customers' needs, and improve our services
- identify and eliminate any form of discrimination
- we will treat data confidentially and in line with the law



### What does this mean in practice?



By being told about ethnicity and related needs, we can ensure we are providing appropriate services, for example, arranging interpreters for tenants who do not speak English as their first language.

By telling us about disability and advising us of your needs, we can adjust our services to address requirements. In law, this is known as making reasonable adjustments.



### So what are we doing on the ground?

We can provide contacts in organisations where specialist help is available – for example the Sensory Centre in Camelon have given us information on a great free mobile phone app called Seeing AI that you can download from the App Store for your iPhone and it will read text and more for you. It can be a real help if you have a visual impairment. It's not available for Android phones but there are other Apps available like Be My AI.

We have an ongoing programme of training and learning for staff and committee members on equalities so we are always trying to improve.



We offer the Happy to Translate Service (HTT) to assist tenants and applicants to access services where English is not their first language and we won an award for our use of it. The Housing Management Team are the HTT Team of the Year 2023.



The cost of living crisis has brought new challenges for everyone and, as the result of receiving external funding, we have been able to provide new services through our Warm Welcome Home Project. This has included the provision of food and fuel support together with practical measures such as issuing air fryers, heavy tog duvets, thermal curtains and more. Taking an inclusive approach has helped the Team to include harder to reach tenants in the programme so our language tools are important to help us understand what people need and for us to be able to deliver what assistance we can.

## Owners Corner

Throughout the estates owned by the Association there are owners and tenants living side by side as neighbours. All of us have an interest in these Estates and want them to be well looked after and pleasant areas to live in.

### Thinking of selling?



Please tell us about changes of ownership and remind your solicitors that they need to inform us of the proposed sale and give us plenty of notice so we can provide them with the information required.

You may also be interested in our Buy Back on the Open Market Scheme (BBOOM) which operates in the Clackmannanshire and Falkirk areas. In some areas we will buy properties provided they are offered with vacant possession. Give us a call or email [enquiries@paragonha.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@paragonha.org.uk) for more information.

## Owners Pages on Website

We are currently updating the owners' pages on our website and hope to include a lot more information about Estate Inspections, Open Space Maintenance and Programmed Improvements & Repairs. If you would like to be involved in the shaping of the services offered to owners moving forward then why not join the Owners Group. It's a lively group with great contributions from the owners involved. Contact the Estates Team on 01324 664966 / email: [estates@paragonha.org.uk](mailto:estates@paragonha.org.uk) for more information.

## Helpful Contact Information

Paragon Housing Association	Telephone: 01324 664966 Web Site: <a href="http://www.paragonha.org.uk">www.paragonha.org.uk</a> Email: <a href="mailto:enquiries@paragonha.org.uk">enquiries@paragonha.org.uk</a>
<b>Out of Hours</b>	
Emergency Reactive Repairs – Everwarm	0330 0531 804
Out of Hours Gas Repairs – City Technical Services	0333 202 0708
For Gas Leaks National Grid Emergency Services	0800 111 999
Scottish Water Helpline	<a href="http://www.scottishwater.co.uk">www.scottishwater.co.uk</a> 0800 0778 778
Flooding warnings and advice - SEPA Floodline	<a href="http://www.sepa.org.uk">www.sepa.org.uk</a> 0345 9881118
<b>Electricity Suppliers – May Vary By Area</b>	
Scottish Power Energy Networks	Landline: 0800 092 9290 Mobile: 0330 1010 222
Scottish Hydro	0800 300 999
Note - some phones lines may be free from a landline but not from a mobile. Some companies offer online reporting facilities - visit their websites for more information.	
<b>Council Holiday Bin Collection Bulk /Special Uplifts</b> Please check when your bins are due to be collected over the holiday period. Take care to dispose of your rubbish responsibly and do not dump it. Please note that arrangement and charges for uplifts differ in each council area so please contact them direct if you need an uplift. Our staff can also provide you with advice on refuse collection and special uplifts. Your council may also offer an online booking form. Check their web site.	
Clackmannanshire Council	0500 545 540
Falkirk Council	01324 504411
Stirling Council	01786 404040

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 SHR Registration No. HAL 298  
 Scottish Charity No: SC 036262  
 Property Factor Registration No. PF000282

### Public Holidays Festive Period 2023-24

#### Office Closed Christmas

Monday 25<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup>  
December 2023

#### New Year

Monday 1<sup>st</sup>, Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup>, Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup>  
January 2024

*Only emergency repairs will be carried out during this period and you can find out more about how to report these by visiting our web site [www.paragonha.org.uk](http://www.paragonha.org.uk)*

Go to Our Services – Emergencies

Here is the link  
[www.paragonha.org.uk/our-services/repair-services-emergencies](http://www.paragonha.org.uk/our-services/repair-services-emergencies)

**We wish you a  
Happy Christmas  
and a Good New  
Year**

