

CORONAVIRUS

WE'RE STILL HERE FOR YOU!

The Scottish Government has substantially removed Coronavirus restrictions with effect from Monday 9 August. Some restrictions will stay in place such as mandatory wearing of a face covering in certain settings, and the requirement for office based staff, to work from home, where practicable, will remain.

This, along with the guidance to remain careful, cautious and sensible will have an impact on the opening of our offices at 51 North Bridge Street, Hawick. The office will remain closed to public access whilst the hybrid working arrangements, recommended by the Scottish Government, are established. Those arrangements may also require restrictions on future opening times.

The Waverley Housing Trades Team, is now working as normal, and you can report a repair through the usual channels. The Housing Services Team will look to begin home visits as soon as practicable however, this is also likely to be introduced on a phased approach. We will continue to seek assurances on confirmed infections, within a household, before attending to a repair or making a home visit.

Whilst we continue to deliver services through a mix of office and home based working arrangements, we appreciate the understanding of tenants, and other service users, that we may encounter difficulties, in dealing with queries as quickly as we would like.

UPPER LANGLEE

We continue to progress our estate regeneration plans for Upper Langlee, Galashiels with various areas of work being carried out. Site investigation works have now been completed and our engineers are liaising with Scottish Water over drainage design for the new housing to be provided. Our Architects Camerons, Strachan and Yuill are addressing the eleven conditions attached to the detailed planning approval that we were given by Scottish Borders Council earlier this year for example they are developing hard and soft landscaping proposals for the estate, working on options for street lighting, etc. Plans to deal with the disconnection, diversion and new connections of water, gas and electricity supplies prior to any demolition works being carried out are also being advanced. Once greater clarity on these utility supplies has been obtained we will be in a position to undertake a procurement exercise to appoint a demolition contractor to undertake this work with a view to commencing early next year. Once we have worked up a programme of demolition our staff will undertake consultation with any residents affected by the programme. As ever we remain grateful to residents for their co-operation and understanding as we take another step forward with our estate regeneration plans. Please do not hesitate to contact our Tenant Support Worker Kendra Douglas on 07591 20688 if you have any queries about these plans.



ANNUAL REPORT ON COMPLAINTS 2020/21

Complaints Monitoring

During the 2020/21 financial year we received a total of 41 complaints. 39 of these complaints were treated as Stage 1 complaints, with 3 of these escalating to Stage 2 Complaints. In addition, we had 2 complaints which were treated at Stage 2 from the start. This compares to 39 Stage 1 complaints and 6 x Stage 2 complaints the previous year.

We were able to respond to all complaints within designated timescales of 5 working days for a Stage 1 complaints and 20 working days for Stage 2 complaints. The following table shows a breakdown of complaints:

Number of complaints	1st Stage Complaints		2nd Stage Complaints	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Total number of complaints	39		5	
Responded to in full	39	100%	4	80%
Upheld	18	46%		
Not Upheld	21	54%	4	80%
Complaint Open/ Response Outstanding	0		1	20%
Responded to within SPSO timescales	39	100%	4	80%
Average timescale to respond (in days)	1.89		7.25	

Total Number of Complaints on Register at Year End	41
Number of Stage 2 complaints which escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2 and therefore require to be counted twice	3
Total Number of Stage 1 Complaints	39
Total Number of Stage 2 Complaints	5
Total Number of Days Taken to Respond at Stage 1	74
Total Number of Days Taken to Respond at Stage 2	29 days for 4 out of 5 complaints received. 1 still open.

Breakdown of complaints by Service Area:

Responsive Repairs	13
Gas Servicing/Repairs	7
Planned Maintenance	1
Staff Conduct	9
Housing Services	2
Handling of Anti-Social Behaviour Issues	3
Miscellaneous	6
Total of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints	41

Trends and Learning from Complaints

Our Allocations Policy and Information Leaflet on Allocations have been revised to make clearer how the bidding process and best use criteria operate.

THIS YEAR'S AGM

Tuesday 28th September 2021

Waverley Housing Offices, 51 North Bridge Street, Hawick TD9 9PX at 5:00pm
(subject to coronavirus restrictions this meeting may be held using Microsoft Teams).

The AGM is open to all Waverley Tenants.

Please contact Waverley Housing on 01450 364200 or
info@waverley-housing.co.uk if you'd like to attend.

BRIDGE HOMES

We are pleased to confirm that we have recently reached an agreement with Bridge Homes to provide them with a repairs and maintenance service for the 54 mid-market properties they own in the Scottish Borders Council area. Back in 2015 Scottish Borders Council in partnership with Scottish Futures Trust Investments established a Council led house building programme which resulted in Bridge Homes being set up. Bridge Homes are responsible for the management and maintenance of these properties and it is a testament to the strong reputation of our repairs and maintenance services that Bridge Homes have sought to partner with us in this respect.

CONNECTING SCOTLAND

Connecting Scotland is a Scottish Government initiative being managed by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations with the aim of helping people to get online. Certain categories of people e.g. families with children, unemployed people,



older people are prioritised for help under the programme. The programme provides internet enabled devices to these people to help with a range of activities such as claiming benefits, contacting family members to reduce isolation, looking for work and employment opportunities. We submitted an application for 30 devices comprising of a mix of Chromebooks and I pads and have received confirmation that our bid has been successful. The first batch of devices has been delivered and is currently being delivered free of charge to tenants who meet the eligibility criteria. We are hoping to receive the second batch of devices soon and will be delivering these to eligible tenants in due course. If you feel that you might be eligible to receive one of these devices please contact Ian Mayo on 07904 588839 or email ian.mayo@waverley-housing.co.uk.

BENEFITS YOU MAY BE ENTITLED TO

1. Applications to open for School Age Payment

Eligible parents of children aged 4 and 5 are being encouraged to apply for financial support worth over £250 when applications opened on 1 June 2021.

The School Age Payment is open to families who get tax credits or certain benefits and have a child who was born between 1 March 2016 and 28 February 2017.

The one-off payment can be used for anything from a new pair of shoes to books or arts and crafts materials.

Parents who have deferred their child's entry to school from August 2020 to August 2021 should still apply before the closing date on 28 February 2022 - if an application is made after this time it will be too late.

To apply please go to www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods

2. New family benefits communications toolkit

Social Security Scotland launched a major awareness raising campaign to make sure families in Scotland on tax credits or certain benefits receive the money they are entitled to. In order to do this, they have promoted their payments through television, radio and online at <https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/benefits>

These benefits are:

- Scottish Child Payment
- Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment
- Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment
- Best Start Grant School Age Payment
- Best Start Foods

3. Young people urged to check out Job Start Payment

Young people returning to work are being urged to check if they are eligible for Job Start Payment.

Over 1,000 young people have already benefited from this support since it launched during the COVID-19 pandemic. That's more than £277,000 invested so far in helping those whose job prospects have been hardest hit over the past year.

Job Start Payment is now £252.50, or £404 if the applicant has children and is available to young people who have been on certain benefits for 6 months or more. This payment could help with travel costs or could be used for clothing, lunches and other expenses that need to be met before someone receives their first salary.

People can apply for Job Start Payment for up to 3 months after their start date. You can find out more and apply through mygov.scot or by calling 0800 182 2222.

4. Are you a young carer? You could be entitled to extra cash.

The Young Carer Grant is an annual payment of £305.10 for young carers aged 16 to 18 who live in Scotland. It's a cash benefit to spend as they choose and they can apply if they are at school, in further education, employed or unemployed. It's administered and paid by Social Security Scotland.

Who can get it?

The young carer must meet all the criteria below:

- live in Scotland aged 16 to 18 and providing care for an average of 16 hours per week for the last three months.
- the person being cared for is getting a qualifying benefit, for example:-
 - Personal Independence Payment (PiP) for daily living,
 - Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for care at the middle or highest rate
 - Attendance Allowance

If more than one person is caring for someone, can they all apply?

- Only the first eligible application will get the grant.

Does the young carer need to pay this money back?

- No, it doesn't have to be repaid.

Who is paid the money?

- It is paid directly to the young carer's chosen account.

When can young carers apply?

- Yearly from age 16 to 18. They will have to reapply each year if still eligible.

Does it affect other benefits?

- No, Young Carer Grant will be disregarded for UK benefit and tax credit assessments.

How do you apply?

- Call freephone on 0800 182 2222 or go to www.mygov.scot/young-carer-grant

For further information on the above and any other benefits that might be available to you please look at

www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/asset-storage/production/downloads/5-Family-Payments-factsheet-English.pdf

Fuel Poverty Fund

At the beginning of March 2021, the Scottish Government announced the £2 million Social Housing Fuel Support Fund to support tenants who are struggling with fuel costs.

Waverley Housing were successful in applying for some of this money which has been split into two categories: -

i) Fuel Poverty Fund – payments from the Borders Fuel Poverty Fund are limited, and will be allocated on a first come first served basis, the maximum award we can make is £1,000. You have to provide us with a statement from your supplier confirming your debt.

ii) Fuel Bank Foundation – tenants can apply for grants up to £50 by way of a voucher scheme towards their fuel costs.

To date we have supported 30 tenants to the total value of £19,247.49 from the Fuel Poverty Fund and 50 x £30 vouchers have been issued from the Fuel Bank Foundation.

To apply please email Derek.Grieve@waverley-housing.co.uk providing your contact phone number, or call the office 01450 364200 or email info@waverley-housing.co.uk.

If you have a pre-payment (key card) meter and find yourself using the emergency credit, we may be able to provide you with a voucher from the Fuel Bank Foundation - please contact us as above for further information.

ELECTRIC TESTS

In line with Scottish Government legislation all properties must have a valid 5-year periodic electric test certificate by 31st March 2022. We are due to complete around 760 inspections by 31st March 2022 to comply with this legislation. We have written to all tenants who are due to have their home inspected. The contract to complete these inspections has been awarded to Saltire Facilities Management Limited. A representative from Saltire will contact you direct to book in the inspection. Please be patient as they have a lot of tenants to contact to arrange a suitable appointment.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT COVID-19 CESSATION OF TEMPORARY PAYMENT INCREASE

Please note that Universal Credit claimants are now being advised via their online accounts of the date when they will receive the last of their “uplift” payments. These payments for all claimants will stop and your payments will resume to the amount you received pre-Covid-19.

Please look out for a message from DWP in your online account which will be similar to the *example* below: -

‘You have been getting an extra £86.67 each month since 27 April 2020. This was a temporary increase because of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. This increase will end soon. Your payment on 27 September 2021 will be the last time you receive this amount, further payments will be of that prior to the Covid temporary increase.’

The notification then invites the claimant to ‘get help with managing your money’ via the DWP’s Help with debt and managing money resource, or alternatively if you prefer, you can speak to our Welfare Benefits Advisor by contacting us at info@waverley-housing.co.uk or telephone 01450 364200 and a member of staff will contact you.

CUCKOOING AND COUNTY LINES

County lines and Cuckooing is a national issue involving the use of mobile phone 'lines' by groups to extend their drug dealing business into new locations outside of their home areas. Over the past few years, we have seen an increase in this criminal activity moving into the Scottish Borders Region.

What are County Lines?

- County Lines is a term used for organised drug-dealing networks, usually controlled by a person using a single telephone number or 'deal line'.
- They operate in major cities such as Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham, and distribute drugs across counties via 'runners'.
- Vulnerable children and adults are recruited as runners to transport drugs and cash all over the county, so that the criminals behind it can remain detached and less likely to be detected.

What is 'Cuckooing'?

- Criminals running County Lines will set up a base in a rural area or small town for a short time, taking over the home of a vulnerable person, 'cuckooing' them (named after the cuckoo's practice of taking over other birds' nest for its young).
- Victims of 'cuckooing' are often drug users but can include older people, those suffering from mental or physical health problems, female sex workers, single mums and those living in poverty. Victims may suffer from other forms of addiction, such as alcoholism.
- Some people may be forced to leave their homes, making themselves homeless and leaving the gangs free to sell drugs in their absence.

When they are in an area, they will take over a persons home by intimidation and/or violence.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Signs

- Lots of different people visiting the property at odd times of day/night
- Increase in cars pulling up close to the property often for short periods of time
- Increase in anti-social behaviour near the property
- Curtains or blinds closed all of the time
- Disengagement with support services.

Please be vigilant and if you notice anything suspicious occurring in your area, please call Crime Stoppers 0800 555111 – All calls are treated with the strictest of confidence.

Play your part – LET'S KEEP THE SCOTTISH BORDERS SAFE

SCOTTISH HOUSING DAY 2021

Scottish Housing Day is back for a sixth year continuing to highlight challenges and achievements across the housing sector. As the world's attention will be on Glasgow for the UN's climate conference COP26 in November, this year we will be focussing on housing and the climate emergency.





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www.waverley-housing.co.uk

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