

tenants

Informing and involving West Lothian's tenants

news

SUMMER 2022



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Torchlight



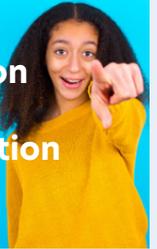
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Talking tenants

Our new section of the Tenants News

Talking Tenants provides an overview of what our tenant participation team discusses, works on, and improves. We will provide a Torchlight on a particular topic we have been working on to provide you a detailed overview of that topic.



Talking Tenants topic is a list of what we have been working on.

Our look and feel

We are revitalising our look and feel. We are including more digital engagement and more opportunities for our tenants to be involved.

The Tenant Participation Action Plan

The Tenant Participation Strategy - the next five years.

Review of the Tenants Handbook

Become a Talking Tenant Expert through Social Media

Talking Tenants - Facebook Guidelines



'Talking Tenants' is a new role within the remit of Tenant Participation.

This is an entirely voluntary opportunity, but if you are interested in helping out our Customer Participation Officers on the running of the Facebook page and being an advocate for digital Tenant Participation, here is what we will do to support you and what the role of the Talking Tenant representative entails.

What We Will Do to Support You?

- ✓ We will make you a Group Expert.
- ✓ We will provide you with training on Facebook if required.
- ✓ We will be there to support, help and guide you.
- ✓ We will provide you with a Facebook page login (if you are not comfortable using your own).
- ✓ We will provide you with a unique profile picture and banner (if you wish to use it).

What the Talking Tenant Representatives role involves?

- ✓ You will provide recipes, positive quotes, and activities (quizzes) as a Facebook post.
 - We expect at least one of the above a week to help keep our tenant engagement levels high.
- ✓ You will be aware of special days worldwide that we may wish to post about, e.g. Christmas Day, Chinese New Year, Valentine's Day etc.
- ✓ You will use your own experience as a tenant representative to help encourage others to be more involved.

What does the role not involve?

- ✗ Deal with any enquiries or complaints from tenants; this is the responsibility of the Customer Participation Officer. If you see a post that requires our attention, please tag us.
- ✗ You will not approve people for the page. We need to check that they are a West Lothian Council tenant before approval.
- ✗ You will not be dealing with anything that impacts West Lothian Council or Housing, Customer, Building Services.

Facebook Admin

Dyann Evans - Customer Participation Officer
Caitlin Howie - Customer Participation Officer

If you are interested or require further information, please email TP@westlothian.gov.uk

Blackburn Community firework

Blackburn Bonfire Night Action Group was recognised as good practice by the Scottish Government and we were invited to become involved in the Scottish Government Firework Review Group.

This led to a visit from Scottish Government Criminal Justice parliamentary committee to Blackburn in March 2022. Ministers of this committee spoke to community reps and to our youth committee Change In Blackburn (CIB)

This was followed by an invite to visit the parliament. On our visit we had 4 young people from CIB along with reps from Community Action Blackburn and the community.

We listened to the debate in Chambers around the draft Fireworks Review Bill, where

we saw and heard how our points raised in March had been included into the draft.

This was an amazing experience seeing how we had influenced the draft document especially for our young people.

We were present at the voting on the draft which now moves to the next stage in the process.

We have been invited back in June to hear the final ministerial debate of the draft before progressing to the final stage of Royal Assent before becoming an Act of Parliament.



If you find that you are struggling to pay your rent, we can help:

- ensure you maximise your income and check that you are claiming all benefits you may be entitled to
- you to prioritise debts to ensure the most important are paid first
- work out realistic repayment plans, taking into account your income and expenses.

If you do fall into rent arrears we will contact you in a variety of ways such as:


Text
message


Telephone


Letter

It is important you address any rent arrears as soon as possible by contacting your Housing Officer on 01506 280000.

As a tenant of West Lothian Council, you are responsible for paying your rent and managing any arrears you may have. We can help you if you are struggling if you talk to us – don't struggle alone.

The Next Generation of Tenant Participation



CALLING ALL 16-25 YEAR OLD TENANTS

We are keen to recruit young and enthusiastic individuals to join our tenant participation team. This voluntary position will provide you with excellent life skills and work experience. Our meetings are held online, so you can take part wherever you are; however, you will be paid out-of-pocket expenses if travel is required.

Being part of the next generation tenant participation focus group, you will:

- Improve your professional writing skills through reports.
- Improve your communication skills.
- Develop an understanding of Housing, Customer and Building Services, which will help you with your tenancy or if you have an interest in working in housing.
- Gain experience in participating in meetings which will help build confidence.
- Have opportunities to assist in designing marketing materials such as Tenant's News.
- Become one of our social media experts.
- Have the opportunity to take part in day events such as inspections.
- Leave your mark on high-level policies and procedures.
- Most importantly, have your voice heard within the service and help mould tenant participation for the future.

If you are looking to develop life skills, have skills to offer, or are a budding graphic designer, marketing or business student, please contact TP@westlothian.gov.uk; our friendly team is excited to hear from you.

GET INVOLVED

Don't have time to attend Tenant Participation meetings? Why not join our Facebook page! Our Facebook page is there to allow us to consult and chat with our tenants – but not only that, it is a place where tenants can help each other. We post items relating to housing consultations, helpful hints and tips, survey feedback, and much, much more.

We even have a regular segment to appoint a TP Mascot of the month, where you can get your furry friends involved.

The Facebook page is run by the Housing, Customer & Building Services Customers team and tenant experts.

Search West Lothian Council Tenant Participation on Facebook

Click join and remember to provide us with your address to verify you are a tenant!



Direct debit is the easiest and most efficient way to pay your rent;

it ensures that you are up to date with your rent payments and removes the stress and inconvenience of paying by other methods. Payments made by direct debit are covered by the direct debit guarantee. This means that you are in control of your payments and your money is safe.

Payment dates are available on the 1st, 7th, 14th and 21st of the month.



There are other ways to pay your rent, however, these can take a bit longer. The table below shows how long payments can take to reach your account. If there is a delay in your payment reaching your account, and your account is put in arrears because of this, you may receive our system generated arrears communication.

Payment Method	Days to show on rent account
Direct Debit	Instant
CIS (Payment Desks, Bathgate and Arrochar)	1 day
Online or Telephone	2 days
Bank Transfer	2 days
Post Office / PayPoint	5 days

Did you know that your Housing Officer can take payments over the phone?

If you pay your rent in arrears you will receive our system generated arrears notifications. The only way to avoid this is to ensure you have a credit balance on your account; there are lots of ways to build a credit balance, such as;

- Slightly increasing your direct debit
- Making a one-off payment to the value of one weeks rent
- Contacting your Housing Officer to set up a separate small recurring payment over the phone,
- Making a payment through our Tenants Portal.

We have implemented a system called CallSecurePlus to enable Housing Officers to take rent payments over the phone, directly from tenants. This will make it easier for tenants to make quick and easy payments, and remain in control of their rent accounts. You can also set up recurring payments on the system, so it's a really simple and effective way to build a buffer of credit on your account.

It is important that you keep up to date with your rent payments; if you are struggling to pay your rent, please contact your Housing Office.

Armadale Ward	ArmadaleAHO@westlothian.gov.uk
Bathgate Ward	BathgateAHO@westlothian.gov.uk
Whitburn/Blackburn Ward	WhitburnAHO@westlothian.gov.uk
Livingston Wards	LivingstonAHO@westlothian.gov.uk
Broxburn/Linlithgow/ East Livingston Wards	BroxburnAHO@westlothian.gov.uk
Breich Valley Ward	BreichValleyArea@westlothian.gov.uk

Application Points Online and FAQ

Housing has online services for our customers. You can manage your housing application as a new or existing customer, log simple non-emergency repairs for your West Lothian Council tenancy, view tenancy information, and more. If you haven't accessed these services yet, we invite you to look here and register.

REGISTER NOW



If you are a tenant, you will need your tenancy reference number, which can be found on your rent card or letters from us about your tenancy; if you wish to access your online housing application, you will need your application reference.

A new enhancement within the application management section of the portal now allows customers to view their total

application points online. This means that customers can now create an application, submit documents, see the status, make preference changes and view their points anytime.

We have also published a Frequently Asked Questions section to cover common questions, found [here](#).

Under the Housing Need section, you will find housing applications and homelessness questions. For example one of the recent changes housing made was to look at things customers asked for that would not have any impact on their application, like asking for a note of interest in a property to be recorded.

**COMING
SOON**

**RENT
CONSULTATION**

We consulted with all our tenants in 2017 about future rent increases. This conversation centred around what their preference was in terms of the rent they pay, what was reasonable and fair when considering the improvements, new homes, and investment they also wanted to see in council houses from 2018-2023. Following this consultation we have continued our engagement through smaller consultations, which have been a success.

The time is nearing for the service to consult once again on the future of rent charges and possible increases from 2023 onwards. We understand how important this is to our customers, and this is why we are giving early notice to you of our intention to once again speak to you about the rent you pay.

We will consult with tenants through our social media channels, Tenants News, our CX team will have open discussions to find out what tenants' preferences are, and

our tenant representatives will be leading on the formal discussions we hold on this crucial consultation.

This will begin in the Autumn and will run for several months – and we need your views. Watch our social media, website and future editions of this newsletter for more information on how you can take part.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP RESPONSE TO ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Over the past year, Police Scotland has received numerous complaints regarding the use of off-road vehicles within urban and rural areas throughout the county. Reports of off-road vehicles using public footpaths poses a significant risk to public safety and can also cause significant environmental damage as well as causing a nuisance to those living, working and visiting the area.

Anyone who wishes to provide information about those involved can report to Police on 101 or the 'contact us via the [Police Scotland website](#). Alternatively, you can report anonymously via the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

DELIBERATE FIRE-SETTING

This year, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Community Safety Partners wish to highlight the risks of playing with fire. The consequences are all too real, risking their own safety, that of others and damage to property.

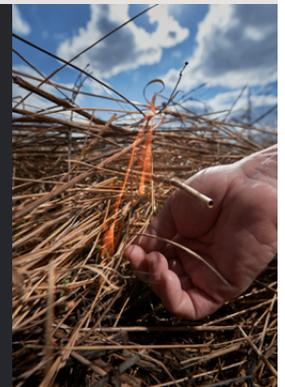
Deliberate fires take firefighters away from other incidents and put lives at risk.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO PREVENT DELIBERATE FIRES

Don't accept it. Report it

If its an emergency, please contact the Police and fire brigade on 999

Contact Police Scotland via the non-emergency number 101 to share information on anyone who deliberately sets fires. Alternatively, give the information anonymously by calling Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.



ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND NOISE

As the better weather approaches and people are out and about and catching up with friends, the Safer Neighbourhood Team often see an increase in antisocial behaviour. The Community Safety Partners are asking people to be mindful of how their daily activities affect neighbours. It is good to be neighbourly.

If neighbours can talk to one another, get on better this may result in improved daily living, helping everyones health and wellbeing.

Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) means a person(s) behaving in a way that causes, or is likely to cause, alarm and distress to you

or your community.

ASB includes noise disturbances, loud music, parties and shouting. Sometimes domestic noise can be antisocial and can include amplified noise, playing instruments, loud banging or sometimes DIY.

If you wish to report antisocial behaviour or seek advice or assistance, please contact

- The Safer Neighbourhood Team at: snt@westlothian.gov.uk
- Call West Lothian Council on **01506 280000**
- Call Police Scotland on **101**
- **For a serious ongoing issue, call 999**

For anyone experiencing antisocial behaviour or noise related disturbances, contact 01506 280 000. The Safer Neighbourhood Team are able to provide advice and assistance.

ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR MYTH BUSTER



'My Neighbour is causing a disturbance at night, and I have heard that the cut off is 11 pm at night for noise. What can I do?'

This is an urban myth. There is no "cut off" time for noise. However, if the behaviour is causing alarm and distress, you should report it to the police or contact the Safer Neighbourhood Team.

If your neighbour is persistently causing disturbances, you should contact our officers on 01506 280000 when this happens so that we can keep a record of all the incidents.

It is important to remember that domestic noise, such as people moving about their home, using a washing machine, or children playing is not antisocial behaviour.

To find out more about antisocial behaviour, please [click this link](#).

Lets improve child safety this summer



90% of the most serious preventable accidents to the under-fives fall into five main areas:

1 Threats to breathing
- choking, strangulation or suffocation

2 Falls

3 Poisoning

4 Burns and scalds

5 Drowning

Let's all help to keep the children in West Lothian safe.

[Follow Child Accident Prevention Trust safety advice](#)

- Keeping children safe from button batteries
- Keeping your child safe on a bike
- E-cigarettes and the risks to young children
- Keeping your children safe from fire
- Choosing safe toys



MINUTE CLEAN UP

We live in a beautiful country, with a rich mix of rural and urban beauty, but we have a problem. Scotland could be even better if it wasn't scarred by environmental issues such as litter. Research shows that the effects of this can actually harm the quality of life for people living and visiting our communities.

The effects are not just visual; there are social, health and financial consequences too. Socially, people feel safer in cleaner communities and less anxious and depressed if the local environment is clear of litter and graffiti.

Litter on our streets forces local authorities to divert public money away from other public services like schools and roads. Every year Scotland spends at least £46 million cleaning up after our litterers — that's around £20.00 for each taxpayer.

That's 15,000 tonnes, or 250 million items — nearly 50 pieces of litter for every person in Scotland. Or, in other words, 475 dropped items every minute.

Keep Scotland Beautiful, there are easy ways to get involved and help reverse this growing problem with just 2 minutes. All you need to do is:

Find two minutes in your day

Take a bag and look for litter on your walk to school, work or shops.

Pick the litter up, recycle or bin it as you go or when you get home.

You can make picking up litter the social norm instead of dropping it!

Installing electric vehicle charger points



Electric vehicle charging points make it easy for eco-friendly drivers to charge electric cars whilst they are out and about. We understand that tenants will want to charge their electric cars at home and have provided some guidance on installing charging points:

Do I need permission to have an electric vehicle charger?

Yes, as the council is the property owner you will require our permission. You do not need planning permission to locate a charger for off street parking unless the property is a listed building.

Do I have to have designated off street parking?

Yes, permission will only be granted if you already have a dropped kerb and hardstanding.

What if I live in a flat?

Permission will not be granted if you live in a flat because you need legal entitlement to a parking space and charging cables cannot be placed over public land, such as pavements, even temporarily.

Where should I locate the charger?

This might sound obvious, but your car charger needs to be as close to where you normally park your car as possible. You'll need an electricity supply to whichever location you choose, with a dedicated

connection on your home's consumer unit to provide enough power.

If the installer requires the consumer unit upgrading to accommodate the charging unit, you must contact the council for further advice.

Always check the length of cable that comes with the charger you're considering buying, and make sure it will reach the charging point on your car. You shouldn't be pulling the cable taught or parking your car at an angle to get it to plug in.

Finally, consider where the cable will be while the car is charging. Try to avoid having it trailing across an area where you walk regularly as it will be a trip hazard, particularly at night.

Is there a size restriction for the charger?

Yes, the charger cannot be larger than 0.2 cubic metres which if it was a box, it would be 20cm x 20cm x 20cm.

Who can install a charger?

Your electric vehicle charging point must only be installed by a skilled person registered with a competent person's

scheme and authorised by OZEV.

The charge point installers MUST also notify the relevant Distribution Network Operator (DNO) in advance of the installation. Full guidance for the electric vehicle connection process can be found [here](#).

This is to minimise the chance of power quality issues to electricity customers.

What documentation do I need to provide to the council on completion of work?

A copy of the Electrical Installation Certificate must be provided to the council on completion of works, along with the make and model of the charger unit, and a clear photo of the installed charging point.

What if I no longer want the charger?

In the event you want to remove the charger, the Government regulations compel you to remove the charging point "as soon as reasonably practicable" and reinstate the wall or patch of ground to its previous condition.

PIONEERING NEW SERVICE SUPPORTS 161 PEOPLE IN WEST LOTHIAN IN ITS FIRST YEAR

QUESTIONS
ABOUT
CANCER?

WE'RE
HERE
FOR YOU

Improving the Cancer Journey ensures people affected by cancer in West Lothian are offered emotional, practical and financial support by making just one phone call. Our two local link workers, Megan and Tina provide advice, information and support on a whole range of non-medical issues related to having a diagnosis of cancer. The service is open to anyone with cancer and their family or carers, at any stage of the illness.



Macmillan Cancer Support is investing £2.8m across Edinburgh and the Lothians to introduce Improving the Cancer Journey programme which will provide seamless, accessible and personal support for people affected by cancer. In its first year, working in partnership with West Lothian Council the service has supported 161 people (of whom 12 were carers or family members).

'Pat' was referred to the service by her clinical nurse specialist. What mattered to her was to stay as independent as possible and be able to continue to do her own shopping. The conversation with the link worker highlighted that a referral to dial-a-ride would enable her to get the right support for this to be possible. Pat described this as the 'most helpful thing that has happened in 2 years' and it now means she can conserve her energy to enjoy an extra Sunday outing on the bus.

'Mary was referred by a local cancer support service. In the conversation with the link worker she discussed how her mood and motivation had been negatively affected by the isolation of covid, a recent bereavement and the uncertainty of her diagnosis. She wanted to give up smoking but recognised that she needed support to do this. The link worker referred her to 'Quit Your Way' for support. Since the appointment with the

link worker Mary has also started attending a local community fitness group and is noticing the positive impact that getting out more is having on her mood.

If you have cancer or if you are a carer or family member of someone with cancer and would like to speak to one of our link workers, please get in touch.

Our friendly Lothian Admin team, Sandra or Kelly, will set up your appointment with Megan or Tina our West Lothian Link Workers.

Your meeting with a Link worker can be by phone, online or face to face and we will give you time to talk about what is important to you, discuss any concerns you have and help you get the right support or advice.

**To get in touch with the Macmillan
Improving the Cancer Journey service or
to find out more call 07977 307 286
or 07929 784315 or email
loth.icj@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk**



Support with living costs

If you are worried about rising living costs and how to make ends meet, you are not alone. Two thirds of Scots now report worries about how to manage the cost of essential bills including rent, council tax, gas, electricity and groceries.



Anyone worried about money can contact the Advice Shop to speak to an advisor about any support you might be entitled to.

Tel: 01506 283000 (option 5)

Email: advice.shop@westlothian.gov.uk

[Online](#) 

If you are worried about money or the rising cost of bills and other essentials, check out the range of support available from the list below.

Debt Advice

You can contact the advice shop and speak to any of our advisors about money and debt issues.

If your enquiry is complex or involves multiple debts, you will be referred to our dedicated money advice team and you will be allocated a case worker who will work with you in the longer term to bring your debts under control.

[Find out more about how a money advisor could help you](#)

Financial Wellbeing Support

Good financial wellbeing means having a sense of security and feeling as though you have enough money to meet your needs. It's about being in control of your day to day finances and having the financial freedom to make choices that allow you to enjoy life. The Advice Shop has a team of financial capability link workers who can support you to improve your money confidence and feel better about your finances.

[Check out our online financial wellbeing self-help guide](#)

Discretionary Housing Payment

The Discretionary Housing Payment is a cash limited fund available for short term assistance for those people who face hardship as a result of not being able to meet their housing costs.

Discretionary Housing Payments are available to assist council tenants, tenants of registered social landlords and tenants who are renting in the private sector who are in receipt of housing benefit, or the housing cost element of Universal Credit.

[Applications can be made online](#)

West Lothian Council Fuel Grant

In response to rising energy costs, a one-off grant of £100 is currently available through the Advice Shop energy advice team to help people who are struggling with their gas or electricity bills. We are hopeful this will be available throughout 2022.

This grant is available to households with low income who are experiencing fuel poverty or at risk of disconnection from their gas or electric

Grant payments are made by bank transfer into a nominated account that must match the name of the energy account holder.

To make an application contact the Advice Shop on **01506 283000** (option 5) or fill in the [online application form](#).

Online Scams how to stay safe



What is a scam?

A scam is a type of fraud in which someone steals your money or information. You can be scammed online, in person, by phone, or by post. Scams can be challenging to recognise, but there are things you can look out for.

What is an online scam?

An online scam is a type of cybercrime or con that uses the internet and could involve hiding information or providing incorrect information to trick victims out of money, property, and inheritance.

How to spot a scam

Ask yourself the following questions. If you answer yes to any of them, there's a good chance it's a scam.

Have you been contacted out of the blue?

1 Cold calls or unexpected emails or messages from people you don't know,

especially if you're asked to give personal or payment details.

2 It's unusual for legitimate organisation to contact you to ask for sensitive information.

3 If you're not 100% convinced about the caller's identity, hang up and contact the company directly.

Have you been asked to share personal details?

1 Never share your personal details with anyone.

2 Phone scammers will often try and get valuable personal data from you, and they can use this to steal your money or even to use your identity fraudulently.

Are the contact details vague?

1 Scam websites often have vague contact details: a PO box, premium rate number (starting '09'), or a mobile number.

2 If anything goes wrong, it's essential

you can contact those involved. This won't be easy if you don't have accurate contact information.

3 Premium rate numbers are also a favoured trick for squeezing every penny they can get out of you.

Are you being pressured to make a decision?

1 Fraudsters often try to hurry your decision making. Don't let anyone make you feel under pressure - it's OK to take a break and think things through if you're unsure.

2 Sales staff should always give you time and space to make an informed decision, anyone who tries to rush you do not trust them.

What do I do if I think I've already been scammed?

Report the fraud to Police Scotland on 101.

Keep a note of any telephone numbers, emails or other correspondence with the fraudster. Consider contacting a credit reference agency to review your credit report; if you notice any unauthorised activity contact the organisations involved as soon as possible or the bank.

or:

If you think someone is trying to trick you into handing over money or personal details... Stop,

hang up and call 159 to speak directly to your bank.

159 is the memorable, secure number that connects you directly to your bank if you think you're being scammed.

159 works in the same way as 101 for the police or 111 for the NHS. It's the number you can trust to get you through to your bank, every time.

159 will never call you. Only a fraudster will object to you calling 159.

Who is behind 159?

159 has been set up by banks and telephone companies who want to fight fraud. It's a pilot scheme at the moment. The following banks are part of it:

- Barclays
- Co-operative Bank
- Lloyds (including Halifax and Bank of Scotland)
- Nationwide Building Society
- NatWest (including Royal Bank of Scotland and Ulster Bank)
- Santander
- Starling Bank
- TSB

That covers over 70% of UK primary current account holders. We want more banks to join us, and we hope they will over the course of the pilot.

For more information about 159, please click the link: [159 — Stop Scams UK](#)



The Customer Experience Team Turns

The Customer Experience team is celebrating our first birthday.

We want to thank everyone who has taken the time to participate in our surveys. To celebrate our success with you, we wanted to share a list of service improvement recommendations put forward by customers over the past year.

We hope you will see the difference your voice has made from the list below within the first (of hopefully many) years of CX.

Key Statistics:

- We attempted to contact 3032 customers.
- The CX Team have spoken to 667 customers.
- 23% provided us with an insight into their lived experience.

Improvements

- Quick Fix – can be implemented at minimal cost and use of resources.
- Long-term – more complex improvements that may involve changes to systems and processes, there will be a cost associated with this and higher usage of resources.

Number of Improvements identified in the last year:	Quick Hits  14	Long-Term  14
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You said...	We did
You would like the service to review the Tenant Participation Facebook Group and provide more engaging and relevant content to the customers part of the group.	Over the past year, we have started providing updates about the customer experience projects the service has undertaken and what upcoming projects we have on the horizon. We have uploaded some of our surveys directly to the Facebook group, allowing members to participate in some of our themes, starting with our Customer Satisfaction Survey in February 2022.
Customers informed us that they did not know or understand the role of their housing officer.	In our 2021 Winter Edition of Tenants News, we pulled together some key points highlighting the role our Housing Officers play in the communities they serve.
Customers during our Building Services project highlighted that they were unsure of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● how to report a repair? ● what does the service consider an 'emergency repair'? ● what repairs are a tenant's responsibility? 	In our 2022 Spring Edition of Tenants News, we included three articles covering the topics suggested by customers. Over the subsequent few editions, we will include a section on tenant responsibility repair. We have already covered windows, doors and structure in our spring edition and look at Kitchens and Bathrooms in Summer Edition.
During our Antisocial Behaviour survey, customers advised that they were not aware of the support the Safer Neighbourhood Team can provide about antisocial behaviour or how to report antisocial behaviour issues to the service.	We included an article in our 2022 Spring Edition of Tenants News highlighting the support the team can provide and the contact details for reporting antisocial behaviour issues to the Safer Neighbourhood Team.
Customers highlighted that they would like to know more about Tenant Participation and suggested we have a recruitment drive to increase the number working with our Tenant Participation Team.	Our Spring 2022 edition of Tenants News included an article on getting more 16-25-year-olds involved in TP. The article also detailed some of the benefits of getting involved.
Customers informed that they were unsure when the Safer Neighbourhood Team were available due to the team working various shift patterns.	The service has updated its webpage to include frequently asked questions which include details of when the team are available to contact.
Customers stated that they would like to hear from their housing officer more often as they did not know their current housing officer, particularly when there had been staffing changes and they had not been updated.	The service will shortly roll out a new customer engagement procedure where housing officers will contact their customers for a quick discussion. If additional support is required, they will be able to make support referrals on the customer's behalf.

Here is a reminder of the themes we will be contacting customers about to discuss over the coming year:

- Affordability
- Antisocial Behaviour
- ARC (Annual Return on the Charter) Survey
- Building Services (Repairs)
- Customer Contact, Support, Advice & Participation
- Customer Profile
- Digital Engagement
- Financial Profile
- Housing Options
- New Build Properties
- Your Home

If you are interested in participating in any of these discussions or would like us to consider other topics, please feel free to contact the CX Team by calling 01506 280434 or emailing at HCBSCX@westlothian.gov.uk

HACT Project

The Customer Experience team are working in partnership with Housing Associations Charitable Trust (HACT) and Shelter Scotland to gather data on the social impact of new build and refurbished properties across Scotland. The project aims to look at an individual's well-being, health and satisfaction.

The purpose of the project is to:

- Understand the customer's views pre-allocation, six months, one year and two years after moving into their tenancy;
- Housing 2040 states Scotland will deliver 110,000 affordable homes with 70% social rented housing over the next ten years. The Scottish government does not routinely carry out post-evaluation surveys on affordable housing. This research will demonstrate the value for money of new build homes and the social value of the investment.

The statistical data from this project will guide future local and national policies and procedures; not only that, the data will be included in Housing, Customer and Building Services quarterly reporting.



EVERY PENNY COUNTS!

Making your money stretch to cover all your monthly costs can be a real struggle! To help you make sense of what you have coming in and going out check out our budgeting tool.

BUDGET TOOL >

Remember to pay off the most important bills first, such as your rent, council tax, gas and electricity. If you can manage, try to save a small amount each month for any unexpected costs that may occur throughout the year.



Social Security Scotland Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

At Social Security Scotland, we want to ensure that everyone gets the payments they are entitled to. We do that by offering a variety of ways people can apply for benefits – including online, by phone or face-to-face and have colleagues available to help in all local authority areas across Scotland.

We currently deliver twelve benefits for people on low incomes, carers, families and disabled people. Our newest benefit is Adult Disability Payment – which has been introduced as a pilot in Dundee, Perth & Kinross, the Western Isles, Angus, North and South Lanarkshire. The payment will be delivered in West Lothian from 29 August when it is rolled out nationally. Adult Disability Payment replaces Personal Independence Payment in Scotland, previously delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions.

We also support families on low incomes with a series of family payments. Scottish Child Payment provides financial support to families with children under six. The payment is £20 per week per child and will be extended by the end of 2022 to all eligible children under the age of 16 and then will also increase to £25 per child per week.

More information on our benefits including eligibility can be found on mygov.scot. You can also contact our advisers on 0800 182 2222 or via web chat on mygov.scot. If you need further assistance, you can request a local delivery appointment which will allow you to speak to an adviser based in West Lothian, either at home, in a local venue or by phone or video call.

To arrange an appointment, please contact us on 0800 182 2222.

Social Security Scotland currently administers 12 benefits:

- Carer's Allowance Supplement
- Pregnancy and Baby Payment
- Early Learning Payment
- School Age Payment
- Best Start Foods
- Funeral Support Payment
- Young Carer Grant
- Job Start Payment
- Scottish Child Payment
- Child Winter Heating Assistance
- Child Disability Payment
- Adult Disability Payment

Building Services, Repairs: who's responsible?

As your landlord, Housing, Customer and Building Services has a legal responsibility to carry out certain repairs, while others are the responsibility of the tenant.

Did you know toilet seats are tenant's responsibility?

Did you know internal alterations to gas or plumbing pipes to accommodate new appliances are the tenant's responsibility and they must arrange a gas safe engineer to carry out any necessary work?

The table below shows tenant's and landlord's responsibilities:

Item	Responsibility		Category
	WLC	You	
Kitchen appliances (unless provided by WLC)		●	
Cooker socket	●		L1/L2
Supply & fit a new bayonet for a cooker		●	
Kitchen units, sink bowl and drainer (through fair wear and tear)	●		L3
Alterations to kitchen layout or worktops to accommodate new appliances (purchased by the tenant, WLC must provide permission for any alteration work)		●	
Alterations to gas pipes or plumbing pipes to accommodate new appliances (WLC must provide permission for any alteration work)		●	
Bath	●		L3
Wash basin	●		L2
Toilet seat (unless subject to occupational therapist referral)		●	
Shower unit (unless provided by WLC)		●	L2/L3
WC and cistern	●		

Full details of the landlord and tenant responsibilities can be found online [here](#).

APSE Scottish Apprentice of the Year Awards

Congratulations to Callum Sutherland (electrician), Jack McKeown (plumbing) and Hannah Cockburn (joiner) who reached the final stages of APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) Apprentice of the Year Awards.

All 3 of our entrants fell within the 3-4 year category and whilst they didn't come first they were tied in 2nd place. Well done Callum, Jack and Hannah



Summer word search



- castle
- shell
- palm
- bucket
- shovel
- ball
- sunglasses
- umbrella
- crab
- lighthouse
- boat



s	h	o	v	e	l	e	l
u	l	p	e	b	i	t	u
n	a	a	h	o	g	b	m
g	s	l	m	a	h	c	b
l	a	m	c	t	t	a	r
a	c	r	a	b	h	s	e
s	r	l	u	a	o	t	l
s	h	e	l	l	u	l	l
e	b	o	g	l	s	e	a
s	b	u	c	k	e	t	s

Summer Scavenger Hunt

Take a picture or draw the items you can find.



- SOMETHING FROZEN
- BEACHBALL
- FLIP-FLOPS
- A RAINBOW
- 3 DIFFERENT SHELLS
- LIFEGUARD TOWER
- 2 SEAGULLS
- ICE CUBES
- UMBRELLA
- A BEACH CHAIR
- A FEATHER
- BUCKET & SPADE
- SAND CASTLE
- SUNGLASSES





Tenants Tasty Treats

Banana muffins

Make these moreish banana muffins for an easy breakfast or a snack on the go. They're also great for lunchboxes and will prove popular with the whole family.

Prep Time: 15 minutes
Cook Time: 25 Minutes
Serving: Makes 12 Muffins

Ingredients

- 250g self-raising flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 110g caster sugar
- 75g butter, melted
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 eggs
- 2 large ripe bananas, mashed
- 125ml buttermilk (or add 1 tsp of lemon juice to milk and leave for 20 mins)
- 50g pecans, chopped, plus extra to decorate (Optional, if allergic to nuts please skip this step)

Instructions

- Heat the oven to 190C/170C Fan/Gas 5.
- Line a 12-hole muffin tin with paper cases.
- Sift together the flour, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda and caster sugar with a big pinch of salt.
- Mix the melted butter, vanilla extract, eggs, mashed bananas, and buttermilk in a separate bowl.
- Make a well in the centre of the dry ingredients and pour the wet ingredients in.
- Roughly mix together with a fork, being careful not to over-mix.
- If using, scatter in the chopped pecans, then spoon the mixture into the muffin cases.
- Top with pecan halves (optional), then bake for 20-25 mins, until golden brown.
- Once baked, leave them to cool down.
- Then enjoy 12! 😊



Contact West Lothian Council

The council's Customer Service Centre (CSC) lines are open from Monday to Friday, 8am to 10:30pm. Thereafter, a number of staff are on site to deal with emergency calls. The CSC lines are also open from 10:30pm on Friday to 8am on Monday for emergency calls relating to noise, homelessness, repairs to council houses, roads, street lighting and environmental health.

MyWestLothian (Report It, Request It, Pay For It, Tenant Self Service)	my.westlothian.gov.uk
Contact us	www.westlothian.gov.uk/contactus
Homelessness	0800 0323 450
Housing, Repairs and Gas Servicing	01506 280000, select option 1
Council Tax and Benefits	01506 280000, select option 2
Customer Service Centre	01506 280000 Customer.service@westlothian.gov.uk
Antisocial Behaviour	01506 282000 or the Police on 101
NETS and Land Services	0800 616 446
West Lothian Advice Shop	01506 283000 Advice.shop@westlothian.gov.uk www.westlothian.gov.uk/advice-shop