

NEWS

Autumn edition 2022



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إذا كنت تريد نسخة من هذه الوثيقة بخط طباعة أكبر، أو كنت ترغب في تلقي نص الوثيقة بلغة مختلفة، فنرجو الاتصال بالرقم 01750 724444

Welcome!

Welcome to this Autumn edition of the Tenants' Newsletter.

As I step down as Chair of SBTO, I'd like to say a huge 'thank you' to my fellow SBTO members for all their support over the last few years. I've learned a great deal, and met some brilliant people, all committed to improving services for Tenants. I am sure you will join me in wishing my successor, Gordon Saunders, elected as SBTO's Chair at our recent AGM, every success. I am delighted to continue my involvement with SBTO and I look forward to continuing to work with you all.

The Scottish Borders Tenants Organisation (SBTO) represents all SBHA Tenants and we work together with SBHA to ensure every Tenant has a say in the services they receive. With the cost of living crisis and rising energy costs impacting us all, there has never been a more important time to have your say and I strongly encourage everyone to take part in the forthcoming rent consultation events and surveys to influence rent levels for 2023/24.

Why not join us at SBTO? To find out more, contact SBHA's Tenant & Community Engagement Facilitator, Louise McNeilage, on 01750 724444, or email lmcneilage@sbha.org.uk who is always happy to help.



Dominic Brookes, SBTO Chair, on behalf of the Editorial Panel

IN THIS EDITION



Julia Mulloy, Chief Executive

As the colder weather approaches, we are very much aware of the very pressing concerns many of you will have about the cost of living crisis and rising energy costs. Please be assured that we will continue to offer you as much support and assistance as we can. Our teams are here to help so please do get in touch.

You may have heard that the Scottish Government has frozen all rents - for social housing and private tenants - between now and the end of March 2023, and will set out, no later than 14th January 2023, their decision on whether to end restrictions, continue with a 0% cap for a further six months, or set a different level for the cap from 1st April 2023.

As it may not be until the middle of January before the Scottish Government is able to set out a definite position for 2023/24 and the process of

determining rents can take a number of months, we are proceeding our rent setting work and will be consulting with you in the coming months.

The cost of living crisis affecting Tenants, and the many inflationary pressures which the Association has been facing, make it especially important that our consultation with you finds the right balance between rent affordability and the need to maintain services and keep investing in homes. This includes things like improving the energy efficiency of homes to help limit your energy costs.

These decisions will be among the most difficult we will have faced and strongly urge you to get involved. Through consultation, we will seek to understand what is important to you and hear your views. The services we provide are paid for by Tenants' rent money and the cost of delivering those services is also affected by the cost of living increases. This will inevitably mean that we, together with you, will face some difficult choices and decisions as a result.

We will be publishing in the next few weeks our plans for consulting with you.

SBHA's new Director of Development

We are delighted to welcome Emma Garry as SBHA's new Director of Development. Emma brings with her a wealth of experience in construction and affordable housing, and this new role underlines our commitment to playing a much bigger part in the provision of new homes here in the Borders.



Supporting you

Top tips, and how we can support you



SBHA's Financial Inclusion team offers a range of support, to help you identify and apply for benefits, manage your household budget and advise you on dealing with debt and arrears. If you need help, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Call 01750 724444, or email enquiries@sbha.org.uk, and ask for an appointment.

1,964

Tenants supported through Warm and Well since 2015/16.

800

More than 800 Tenants supported each year to maximise their household income.

400

400 Tenants have received fuel vouchers since December 2021.

£6000

More than £6,000 paid to Tenants through the SBHA Tenant Hardship Fund - providing emergency payments of £40 to Tenants in extreme need to buy food and top up their meter.

Meet the Team on page 6!

Government support this Winter

Households receiving Universal Credit, JSA, ESA or Tax Credits will receive Cost of Living Payments totalling £650, payable in two installments. Every household in the country will also receive a £400 grant towards their energy bills over the course of six months from October. How you receive this - as a discount on your bill, a refund or, if you have a pre-payment meter, a voucher or credit put straight onto your meter - will depend on your energy provider.

The Cost of Living Payment and Energy Bill Grant are applied automatically - you do not have to do anything. Be aware of scam calls, and texts asking you to follow a link to apply. These may sound or look legitimate, but they are designed to steal a customer's private information such as their banking details.

Have you checked whether you are eligible for the Warm Home Discount Scheme? This is an £150 payment to help with heating costs over the Winter. Contact your energy supplier to find out more.

The Scottish Government has launched a new website, pulling together information on support available to people struggling with the cost of living. See <https://costofliving.campaign.gov.scot/>



Turning down your thermostat by 1 degree could save you £100 per year.



Draught-proofing your home with draught excluders could save £50. Cling film on windows also helps stop heat escaping.



Only boil the water you need in your kettle - this can save you £16 a year.



Save around £28 a year by turning appliances off standby mode.



Save around £117 a year by drying clothes on a line, instead of a tumble dryer.



Spending one minute less in the shower per day will save up to £207 per year for a family of four.



Washing clothes at 30° instead of 40° will save you around £54 a year.



Switch off lights when you leave the room - this could save you £27 a year.



Cut back your washing machine use by one cycle a week, and save around £19 a year.

For a family of four, this could save up to £618 a year.

(source: Money Saving Expert - find more hints and tips at www.moneysavingexpert.com)

Do you have a tip that's helped you to save money? Share it with us for a chance to win a £20 voucher! Send your tips to communications@sbha.org.uk by 30th November 2022.

GETTING INVOLVED

Scrutiny - improving services together

How your input helps make things better

Over the Summer, SBTO's Customer Audit Team (CAT) carried out its annual Tenant Scrutiny project focussed on improving SBHA's Neighbourhood Standards – a great example of Tenants working together with SBHA to influence the services they receive.

The CAT visited a number of neighbourhoods, checking and challenging how the Standards were being delivered. They have made a number of recommendations, including improvements to the Estate Walkabout process, enhanced communication with Tenants, and making it easier for Tenants to access the Neighbourhood Standards.



Thank you to the Customer Audit Team, SBHA teams and Tenants involved in this Scrutiny project.

Community projects



Do you have an idea that you think could have a positive impact on your community? We'd love to hear about it, and we may be able to help you with setting it up - contact Louise at lmcneilage@sbha.org.uk, or call 01750 724444.

Consultation winner!

Over the Summer we consulted with Tenants living in the Croft Street area of Galashiels about how they would like to see the area improved. Thank you to everyone who completed our survey - the lucky winner of the £50 voucher in the survey prize draw was Sandra Redpath - huge congratulations Sandra!

Thank you also to everyone who has taken part in our satisfaction survey with BMG Research. The latest winner of the survey draw is Marcelle Pearson of Galashiels. Congratulations!



Engaging with communities

Our Teams have been out and about, taking part in local community events over recent months. It has been great to meet you at these events, hearing your experience and feedback to help improve what we do.



Thank you to everyone who has submitted photos for our Tenant calendar. We've had some stunning entries, and we can't wait to share them with you. The 2023 edition will be with you before Christmas, along with your Winter newsletter.



Wellbeing Festival,
Hawick



Focus Centre, Galashiels



Langlee
Carnival

GETTING INVOLVED Gardening competition

The winners are announced!

Well done to everyone who entered SBTO's 2022 Gardening Competition! Every year, we're blown away by the extremely high standard of entries, and this year was no exception. More than 30 of you took the time to enter, and you made the judges' decisions extremely difficult!

More and more people are growing fruit and veg in their gardens, so this year we introduced the new category of Best Food Grown in the Garden or Home.

Congratulations to the worthy winners who each receive a £50 gardening voucher, and the overall winner, Sheila Gass, (pictured with husband Bill) who receives the Eric Kelly Memorial Trophy. Fantastic work!!



The prize for Best Food grown in the garden goes to Marion Brockie from Peebles



**The overall winner is Sheila Gass from Galashiels
Sheila receives a £50 voucher along with the Eric Kelly Memorial trophy.**



The prize for Best Container Garden goes to Tony Burton in St Boswells



The prize for Best Window Box goes to Sandy Scott, Langlee



Best Amenity Scheme Garden, won by residents at Rutherford Square, Kelso

Meet the Team

Five minutes with the Financial Inclusion Team

If you're struggling with paying your rent or other bills, we would always encourage you to get in touch with us as soon as possible, as there are lots of ways in which we may be able to help.

(Clockwise from top) **Debbie Mzee** is our Welfare Benefits Officer. She can help you with identifying any Benefits you may be entitled to, and can also help you to apply. She can also help if you need to ask for a Benefits decision to be looked at again.

Debbie says: "Each year, millions of pounds worth of Benefits go unclaimed. Many applications can only be completed online, and we understand that some people struggle with that, but don't let it put you off - we can help! Remember as well that your entitlement could change if your circumstances do - for example, if you retire."

Barry Wood is SBHA's Financial Inclusion Officer. He works with Tenants to help them manage their budgets, finding ways for them to cut back and make their money go further.

Barry says: "Please do not suffer in silence. Everybody at some point in their lives has money worries and if you are not used to dealing with these, or have lost your way and don't know what to do then please get in touch to see how I can help. There is no judgment - just help with possible solutions to take the pressure off your shoulders in a time where everyone is affected."

Matt Rorison is our Warm and Well Co-ordinator. We're all aware of rising energy prices, and Matt has never been busier in his role of helping people to heat their homes more affordably.

Matt says: "The energy-saving tips on page 3 add up to make a difference. Another good tip is 'heat the human, not the home' - if you're worried about having the heating on too much, focus on keeping yourself warm with layers and hot water bottles. If you have a pre-payment meter and have been or are close to being cut off, contact us - we can supply top-up vouchers. We also have access to funds to support those with solid fuel or oil-filled heating systems."

Call 01750 724444, or email enquiries@sbha.org.uk, and ask for an appointment.



Are you looking for a new home? Have you tried HomeSwapper? HomeSwapper is the UK's leading mutual exchange service for social Tenants in rented property, and can help you to swap your Council or Housing Association home with other social tenants. This is like our own Mutual Exchange scheme but by joining HomeSwapper you can extend your search to anywhere in the UK. Any swaps being accepted by your landlord will be subject to certain criteria.

Register at - www.homeswapper.co.uk. You can also download the HomeSwapper App from the App Store or Google Play.

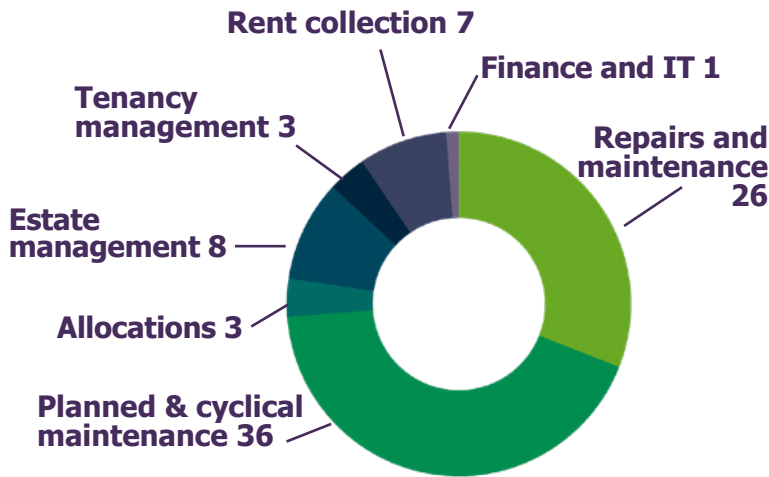
New phonenumber on the way

You told us that it should be free for you to contact us. At the moment, we know that every saving matters. So we're delighted to announce that we'll soon be introducing a new, freephone phone number for general enquiries, for Tenants to use when contacting SBHA. This is in addition to our freephone repairs line. So soon, whatever your reason for calling SBHA, your call will be free.

This is part of an upgrade to our telephone system, which will give us the ability to add more digital contact channels in the future. We'll bring you more news soon!

How are we doing?

Complaints received by service area - April to June 2022



Total complaints received	Apr-June 2021	Apr-June 2022	Improved
	59	84	

Complaints outcomes	Apr-Jun 2021	Apr-Jun 2022	Improved
Resolved	Stage 1 - 51% Stage 2 - 0%	14% 0%	
Not upheld	Stage 1 - 29% Stage 2 - 0%	34% 11%	
Partially upheld	Stage 1 - 2% Stage 2 - 0%	10% 11%	
Complaint upheld	Stage 1 - 18% Stage 2 - 100%	42% 78%	
Average days to respond	Stage 1 - 4 Stage 2 - 8	4 16	
Responded to within required timescales*	Stage 1-85% Stage 2-100%	86% 100%	

* Timescales for responding to complaints are set by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman - www.spsso.org.uk/spsso

Learning from complaints

A Tenant seeking a transfer complained that when they applied to move, they did not receive enough advice on points they could be awarded. They felt that this led to them missing out on opportunities to move.

Following on from this complaint, we will make sure that all Tenants who want to transfer will be given a housing options interview, to help identify their needs and maximise their points.

	Apr-June 2021	Apr-June 2022
Tenants satisfied with overall service	 80%	 81%
Tenants satisfied with how they're kept informed	 68%	 78%
Tenants satisfied with opportunities to participate	 60%	 62%
Tenants satisfied with a repair they've had carried out in the last 12 months	 79%	 84%
Time taken to carry out an emergency repair	 1.9 hrs	 1.97 hrs
Time taken to carry out a non-emergency repair	 14.3 days	 12 days
Percentage collected of rent due	 95.6%	 96%
Days to re-let an empty home	 31	 30
Calls resolved at first contact	 90%	 88%

And finally...

Talk to us!



If you wish to see anything featured in future newsletters, want to give us some feedback on this newsletter, have a story or photo to share, or are interested in learning more about how you can get involved, please contact Louise McNeilage, Tenant & Community Engagement Facilitator.

Just email lmcneilage@sbha.org.uk or send us a message on any of our social media channels, or call 01750 724444. Also, if you would like to receive this newsletter digitally, rather than in print, please let us know and help us to reduce our carbon footprint.

Did you know...

We have more than 6,000 followers on social media!

It's a great way to keep up to speed with all the latest news, competitions and updates, as well as job opportunities at SBHA. Scan the QR codes below to go to our social media channels and website. We can also provide you with support to get online - call 01750 724444.



Spot the difference



Find the ten differences between our two Autumnal images! Send a picture of your completed puzzle to jmcrobbie@sbha.org.uk by the 30th November for a chance to win a £20 voucher. Thank you to everyone who entered our Summer puzzle comp - the winner is Moira McDaid in Hawick - well done Moira!



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