

ALMONDVIEW

ALMOND HOUSING ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2022



New development
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Community garden
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A message from **John...**

Hi all... I hope this finds you and your family/friends all well and that you have been enjoying some of the warmer weather that we have had.



I mentioned in the last Almondview that we were finalising our new Business Strategy which outlines our plans for how we will continue to improve homes and services over the next 3 years. I am pleased to advise that the strategy has now been finalised and that you can now view it on our website. The 3 principal areas of focus are Homes, Services and People and we are also focussing on development of new homes, digitalisation of services and our approach to sustainability to ensure that we play our part in addressing the climate change challenge. Additionally, we are working on improvements to how we engage with you, our customers, and looking at how we can generate ways of providing training and employment opportunities for the community.

*Linked to the above ambition to play an even wider role in the community we have also agreed a vision for Almond – **Striving to improve life experiences and opportunities.***

We believe our improvement plans are ambitious but achievable and all are aimed fully at improving our customer service to you. Naturally, we will endeavour to continue to provide you with excellent day to day services whilst we work on the various improvement plans and we will, of course, keep you updated on progress.

I have mentioned performance in previous updates and as we have now reached the end of another financial year, I am very pleased to report that we have improved performance in 17 out of 23 areas during the year. Our team continue to work hard in providing services to you during what has been challenging times. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need any support or advice. We are here to help.

*Please also do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to propose any ways in which we can do better or if you have a particular issue that you would like us to address. You can contact me by emailing enquiries@almondha.org.uk using the subject line **FAO John Davidson.***

John Davidson, Chief Executive



Universal Credit

The Department for Work and Pensions has confirmed that it will recommence with the migration of approximately 2.6 million households currently claiming legacy benefits and tax credits to Universal Credit by the end of 2024.

This migration will happen naturally when people's circumstances change, such as employment status, on a voluntary basis when claimants think that they will be better off on Universal Credit and lastly through a process called 'Managed Migration' where the above scenarios do not apply.



If you are currently claiming other benefits, why not scan the QR code to access an independent benefits calculator to see if you could be better off on Universal Credit?

Any Almond HA tenant deciding to voluntarily switch to Universal Credit should also first get independent advice from our Welfare Rights Advisor and can do so by contacting us on

01506 439291 or emailing enquiries@almondha.org.uk



Drew McLellan
Welfare Rights Worker

Those tenants who choose to move voluntarily will not be entitled to any 'transitional protection' and cannot revert to previous benefits if they find themselves financially worse off.

Opening Hours Update

Our office and opening hours are changing slightly. With no customers accessing our drop-in services on a Thursday evening after 5.30pm, we have decided to change the opening hours to better suit the needs of our customers. 91% of respondents from our consultation group support these changes and we will now be open on **Tuesdays from 10.30am-12.30pm and Thursdays from 3.30pm-5.30pm.**

Customers can also call **01506 439291** or email enquiries@almondha.org.uk to book an appointment outwith these hours.

Polbeth

After six years in the planning, work commenced on Almond's first development in Polbeth in early August 2020. We were delighted to handover the keys to the residents of Polbeth Farm Drive on the 5th of May 2022. The Pandemic presented a significant number of challenges for the Contractor and the team at Almond. These included the second lock-down, labour shortages, the requirement to self-isolate and supply chain problems obtaining materials. The development consists of 25 properties, a mixture of houses and cottage flats, and was built by Graham Developments (UK) Ltd.



These included 4 properties adapted for residents with mobility issues. The site neighbours the Five Sisters Zoo and these will probably be the only Almond properties where you can hear lions roaring from the back garden!

Text/Email Consultation

Help shape our services by getting involved in our text and email consultations. All we ask you to do is answer questions from time to time about our services. The more answers we get, the better we can shape our services to meet the needs of our customers.

In the coming weeks, we will be asking tenants who have signed up to these text and email consultations, to give us their opinion on our new tenant engagement

and participation strategy and on our current garden scheme.

To get involved in this and future consultations, sign up by calling **01506 439291**, emailing **enquiries@almondha.org.uk** or completing the form on our website, **www.almondha.org.uk** You can also access the online form using the QR code above.



Community Gardens

Did you know there are all sorts of activities to get involved in at your local community garden?

So whether you live in Whitburn, Howden, Craigshill, Polbeth, Ladywell or Deans, we're confident there's a community garden near you. With summer approaching, now is a great time to get out of the house, meet new people and be more active.

From basic planting and growing through to wildlife crafts, outdoor cooking sessions and seed sharing events, each individual community garden has something different to offer. The key aim of them all is to support people of all ages who want to grow food.



For help to find your nearest community garden visit **www.almondha.org.uk** or email **enquiries@almondha.org.uk**



We have a winner!

Congratulations to Donna Keegan, who has won our Almond Award for this quarter! Donna was delighted to be presented with **£250 worth of vouchers** for The Centre and Asda.



This draw is our way of thanking customers for keeping on top of their rent payments, taking care of their home and generally being a good tenant.

Our next **Almond Award** will be run in **Autumn 2022**. To be entered for the draw to win **£250 worth of vouchers**, simply:

- 1 Maintain a clear rent account for a minimum period of three months immediately prior to the draw.
- 2 Don't be involved in any anti-social behaviour in your area.
- 3 Maintain your tenancy and any garden area to a satisfactory standard.
- 4 Allow our contractors to gain access to your home where appropriate.

Well done to Donna and a big thanks to all our tenants!

Ways to Pay

We want to make the customer journey as easy and straightforward as possible which is why we offer a variety of ways to pay your rent. You can pay by **Direct Debit, Standing Order, Recurring Payment, Payment App, Internet Payment, Paypoint** and **Post Office** or by phoning us on **01506 439291**.

To guarantee the security of payments, we use an external company, **allpay**, for most of our rent payments.

They are the market leader of payment services within the UK public and social housing sector. To access the many payment services offered by **allpay**, each tenant will need their Payment Reference Number.

This is on your **allpay** Payment Card which was issued to you at the beginning of your tenancy. It is also available upon request by phoning **01506 439291** or emailing **enquiries@almondha.org.uk**



Scan the QR code above to find out more about each of the payment options available.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

EMERGENCY "OUT OF HOURS" REPAIRS: 0845 038 0040 (Calls cost up to 7p per minute, plus your phone company's access charge. Alternatively, you can call our office on 01506 439 291 and select option 3 to be redirected at your local rate).

Almond Housing Association	01506 439 291	Homeless Persons	0800 032 3450	Scottish Power (General)	0845 270 0700
Gas Leaks	0800 111 999	Howden Health Centre	01506 423 800	(Emergency)	0845 272 7999
Citizens Advice Bureau	01506 432 977	Litter Hotline	0800 616 446	St John's Hospital	01506 523 000
Craigshill Health Centre	01506 432 621	Police	101	Street Lighting	01506 280 000
Energy Advice	0808 808 2282	Refuse Collection	01506 280 000	West Lothian Council	01506 280 000