

ALMONDVIEW

ALMOND HOUSING ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2023



Almond Cares ... see more on page 3



Help shape our services ... find out more on page 4

PLEASE NOTE... Out of hours emergency phone lines have been updated ... see more on page 2.



A message from John...

Hi all... I hope this finds you and your family/friends all well.

As we enter a new business year, I am pleased to advise that the Scottish Housing Regulator has again assessed Almond HA as being Compliant meaning that we meet all regulatory requirements, including the Standards of Governance and Financial Management.



We have sustained good performance across the majority of our performance indicators. There are 13 indicators that are benchmarked across the sector and we are pleased that we have scored above the Scottish average data in 10 of these (76%). Additionally, 14 out of the total 25 indicators that we measured last year have shown improvement at year end for 2022/23.

Whilst we are pleased by the above, we are mindful that our repairs service continues to be under pressure and that you may have experienced some frustration regarding this. Unfortunately, the current economic climate continues to impact on this area both for Almond HA and many other Housing Associations with contractors finding it difficult to recruit and retain the necessary tradespeople.

We are very aware that a good repairs service is high on the list of your priorities and we are working together with our contractors to clear any backlog of repairs and ensure that the service improves as quickly as possible. Your patience during this time is much appreciated.

I am proud of the work that the team have done in supporting many of our tenants during the current Cost of Living crisis and the article on page 3 about our Almond Cares programme provides more information on this. Please contact us if you require any support or advice.

You will also see information on page 4 about Tenant Participation. We are very keen for tenants to get involved in helping ensure that we deliver services which meet your expectations, and I would encourage you to get involved where you can and have your voice heard.

Alternatively, please do not hesitate to contact me personally at john.davidson@almondha.org.uk 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.

John Davidson, Chief Executive



Reduction in Services

Due to significant increases in costs to Almond HA around inflation and interest rates, we had to cut some non-essential services to avoid passing a further increase on to our tenants. Continuing with the same services as before would have resulted in a rent increase of over 10% which, given the Cost of Living crisis, would have been completely unreasonable.

Unfortunately, one of the services we've had to remove is the free grass cutting service. This decision has not been taken lightly as we have been helping hundreds of tenants with this service since it first started over 25 years ago. We recognise that this may cause some upset to residents who are now worried that they cannot manage their garden. If you are struggling, please contact us about what other options are available, email enquiries@almondha.org.uk or phone **01506 439291** and we will do all that we can to assist.

Emergency phone lines

The out of hours call handlers have changed their phone number to make the service more reliable and to ensure that calls are charged at a local rate.

To report an emergency repair when our office is closed, please call **01506 439291** and **select option 3** or contact the out of hours service directly on **0141 225 2842**.

Please note, if you have the old **0845** number saved, please delete this and replace it with **0141 225 2842**.



Almond Cares

COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

Almond HA was successful in being awarded two funds from the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) to assist our customers with the Cost of Living Crisis:

- Social Housing Support Fund (Round 3) £55,670
- Winter Hardship Funding £12,300

As part of our Almond Cares scheme, the funding was used to provide items such as floor coverings, curtains, air fryers, warm bedding, and we were able to give tenants fuel and food vouchers as well. We also paid for food that was distributed via Craigshill Community Fridge.

We were able to provide a total of 1099 types of assistance to support our customers through our Almond Cares programme.

Although these funding streams have now been spent, we are still able to assist our customers with fuel vouchers from the Energy Redress Fund and Fuelbank. We can also make referrals to the West Lothian Foodbank and signpost to a variety of locally based Community Fridges. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you need help or support.

We will be surveying our customers that we have been able to assist, and we appreciate your feedback. Your feedback is invaluable in assisting us to secure future funds to support Almond HA customers.

Last year, we consulted with tenants about the need to assign a resource to cover the reception area from Monday to Friday, 8.30am-5pm. The overwhelming feedback we received was that tenants were supportive of a move to an appointment system, with the option to drop in without an appointment twice a week. This allowed us to use our resources more proactively and remove the need for a colleague to cover reception for the occasional drop in.

We are aware that some customers are still dropping in at the office outside of pre-arranged appointments and the scheduled drop-in hours. As a reminder, our office is open for non-scheduled visits/drop-in sessions on **Tuesday mornings from 10.30am to 12.30pm** and **Thursday afternoons from 3.30pm to 5.30pm**. Outside of this, you can call or email us and we will endeavour to arrange an appointment at a time and location that works for you, such as at your home, in our office or at another location such as a local community facility.



We have a winner!

Congratulations to Mr & Mrs Arnott who have won our Almond Award for this quarter. They were 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 2023**. 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** Ensure you have not been involved in causing 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.
- 5** Be a member of our tenant consultation list. Contact us or visit our website to find out more and sign up.

Well done to Mr & Mrs Arnott and a big thanks to all our tenants!

Help shape our services

We are committed to understanding our tenant's expectations and there are a range of ways to get involved and help to shape our services, including:

- Answering short text or email surveys that take roughly a minute to complete
- Completing our full tenant survey or profile questionnaires
- Joining the Tenants Focus Group
- Joining our email/text consultation group, which also enters you into our quarterly draw for £250 of shopping vouchers

- Raising a complaint when you are unhappy with our service so we can learn from it
- Attending drop in events we run, including community events, where we might ask one or two short questions
- Consider being part of our management committee or become a member

Thank you to everyone who helps us regularly and we hope we can get more feedback in the coming months. To get involved in shaping our services, please contact us and we will do our best to arrange a method that suits you.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

To report an emergency repair when our office is closed, please call 01506 439291 and select option 3 or contact the out of hours service directly on 0141 225 2842.

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