

# larkfield news

creating a better neighbourhood



**Welcome** to the winter edition of Larkfield News.

Inside, you will find our annual report card, winter preparation tips, an update on our holiday office hours and much more!

We hope you have a peaceful Christmas and a happy start to 2021.

**The committee and staff at Larkfield**

## **Office public holidays closure**

During the festive period, our office will close at 4pm on Thursday 24 December 2020 and re-open at 9am on Wednesday 6 January 2021.

If any of our tenants have an emergency during this period, please refer to the frost precautions article in this newsletter.

Please note, we only operate an emergency repairs service during this period – only emergency repairs will be dealt with until the office re-opens on 6 January 2021

## **TENANT EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

GENERAL EMERGENCY REPAIRS – **0800 783 7937**

EMERGENCY GAS REPAIRS – **01294 468 113**

# Here when you need us

If you're struggling to pay your rent, we're here to help.

If you have lost income and think you will struggle to pay your rent as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak, please contact us as soon as possible on **01475 630930**.

**We understand this is a challenging time for many people, however, tenants who can afford to pay rent should do so. This means our essential services can continue to run smoothly.**

For more advice on financial support, you can contact the following organisations:



- Money Advice Service: [www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/hub/coronavirus-money-guidance](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/hub/coronavirus-money-guidance)
- Citizens Advice Scotland: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/debt-and-money/if-you-cant-pay-your-bills-because-of-coronavirus/](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/debt-and-money/if-you-cant-pay-your-bills-because-of-coronavirus/)

## KEEPING YOU SAFE

### What to do if you smell gas

#### Do:

- Open doors and windows to allow fresh air in.
- Turn off the gas at the mains tap, which is usually near the meter. Move the handle a quarter turn until it's at 90 degrees from the pipe to shut off the gas supply.
- Leave the property.
- Phone the National Gas Emergencies number on **0800 111 999**. Only use a mobile phone from outside the property. The number is free and available 24 hours a day.
- Follow the advice given by the emergency adviser.
- Wait outside for a gas engineer to arrive.
- If you are feeling unwell, visit your GP or hospital immediately. Tell them you may have been exposed to a gas leak or carbon monoxide poisoning.

#### Don't:

- Smoke, light a match or use any other naked flame.
- Turn any electrical switches on or off.
- Use doorbells, mobile phones or any other electrical switches which could cause a spark.



# Winter financial support

## Winter fuel payments



**WHAT?** An automatic payment made to you by 13 January 2021.

**WHO?** For those born on, or before, 5 October 1954, who have lived in the UK for at least one day during the week of 21 to 27 September 2020 and receive state pension or another social security benefit.

For more information, call **0800 731 0160**.

## Warm Home Discount code



**WHAT?** £140 off your electricity bill between September and March.

**WHO?** If you get the guarantee credit element of Pension Credit or you are on low income and meet the energy supplier's criteria.

For more information, call the Warm Home discount helpline on **0800 731 0214**.

## Keep warm and save money with our winter energy-saving tips!

- Use heavy curtains and close them when it gets dark to keep heat in.
- Keep your radiators clear and avoid putting furniture against them. Drying washing on the radiators will make your house colder and causes condensation and mould.
- Only turn on the heating and hot water when you are in the house and need them.
- Regularly bleed your radiators to avoid cold spots.
- Set your thermostat to between 18°C and 21°C degrees.
- You can keep warm without turning up the heating by putting on an extra layer of clothing and wearing socks.



## Want to find out more?

- Home Energy Scotland: call **0808 808 2282** or email [advice@sc.homeenergyscotland.org.uk](mailto:advice@sc.homeenergyscotland.org.uk)
- Citrus Energy: call **0800 221 8089** to get help to switch supplier and get a better deal.
- Age Scotland: talk to one of their advisors during office hours by calling **0800 12 44 222** or visit [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

If your heating system is not working, please contact GasSure on **01294 468 113**.

# Frost precautions

- Keep your home reasonably warm. Even if there is no one in your home during the day, in the very cold weather, it is always better to leave your heating on at a low temperature.
- Never leave a tap dripping. If you have a dripping tap you should report it immediately.
- When it is very cold it is always better, if possible, to open the hatch to the roof space. This allows the warm air to circulate and helps to prevent frozen pipes in your roof space.
- Find out where your stop valve is located, so that you can turn off your water should a burst pipe occur.
- Check the insulation around your pipes and water tank. If there is none or a section is missing you should report this to us immediately.

If you are going away:

- Do not turn the heating off. During the very cold weather it is always better to keep your heating on, even if it is only at a low temperature.
- Leave a key with a friend, relative or neighbour and, if you are a tenant, tell us who the key holder is. If you do not wish to tell us who the key holder is, leave the emergency telephone numbers with the person who has your key. Also ask them to visit your home regularly i.e. once a day, in order to check that everything is ok.

## Frozen pipes

If cold weather is forecasted, or during a cold snap, keep your heating on a constant low temperature to help prevent pipes from freezing. If you can't afford to keep the heating on in all rooms, make sure you heat your living room throughout the day and heat your bedroom before you go to sleep.

### If you find frozen pipes:

Find the main water valve, close it and switch off gas and electric water heaters. Gently heat the frozen section of the pipe using a fan heater or hairdryer or, alternatively, you can wrap a hot water bottle or heated cloth around the pipe. Start from the tap side and work towards frozen section of the pipe.

### What to do if your pipes burst:

- turn off the supply at the valve and switch off electrical supply at mains;
- contact us on **01475 630930** during office open hours or **0800 783 7937** out of hours;
- open all taps to drain the system and switch off central heating systems or water heaters; and help others
- warn neighbours if they are likely to be affected.

# Our charter report card 2019/20

In this report we will let you know how we performed on the standards and outcomes set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter (the Charter) in 2019/20.

We report on how we are getting on to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) each year and you can see the full report on the SHR's website [www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/for-tenants](http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/for-tenants). The website also has a comparison tool you can use to find out how other landlords perform.

## WHAT WE HAVE REPORTED ON

We asked our tenants for feedback on our previous charter report cards. As a result, we have focussed on the following standards:

- Tenant satisfaction;
- our relationship with you;
- housing quality and maintenance;
- neighbourhood and community; and
- value for money

We have also included additional information, so you are able to see where we are doing well and where we need to improve. This includes:

- How we compare to other landlords
- The previous year's performance
- Ratings for performance
- The actions we are taking to improve performance

## HOW WE MEASURE OUR PERFORMANCE

Our performance information comes from a range of sources. In November 2018, we commissioned an independent company, Research Resource, to complete a customer satisfaction survey for us. Most of the customer satisfaction information for 2019/20 is based on the November 2018 survey.

Customer satisfaction with repairs is measured using in-house surveys completed throughout the year.

### THE RATINGS



We are doing well



We are doing ok



We could do better

In most instances, we compared ourselves with the SHR's Scottish average (which includes all councils and housing associations (HAs)). However, when it comes to comparing our rents, we have also included the HA average.

## Tenant satisfaction

Our overall satisfaction is based on the 2020 customer survey and we are pleased to see a slight improvement on past years, as well as continued performance above the Scottish average.

INDICATOR: Percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2019/20	Scottish Average 2019/20
	<b>94.5%</b>	<b>94.5%</b>	<b>89.2%</b>

2019/20 comparison to local HAs

Riverclyde Homes  
**89.3%**

Cloch HA  
**91.3%**

Oaktree  
**92.2%**

## Our relationship with you

INDICATOR: Percentage of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about services and outcomes	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2019/20	Scottish Average 2019/20
	<b>96.6%</b>	<b>96.6%</b>	<b>92%</b>
INDICATOR: Percentage of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in their landlord's decision-making processes	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2019/20	Scottish Average 2019/20
	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>87.2%</b>

We continue to encourage all our tenants to participate with us in a variety of ways e.g. surveys, service improvement group, local meetings, and tenant open days. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions we will be looking at alternative ways to engage with our tenants and developing our digital platforms.

We are taking into account the feedback from the November 2019-21 satisfaction survey and are implementing an action plan to continue to improve the services we deliver.

## Housing quality

INDICATOR: Percentage of stock meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2019/20	Scottish Average 2019/20
	<b>94.5%</b>	<b>94.5%</b>	<b>94.4%</b>

Almost all our properties meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS). There are a small number of properties that still require external improvements within mixed tenure blocks. We continue to work with other key stakeholders to engage owner occupiers to participate in future projects to allow these works to be carried out.

INDICATOR: Percentage of stock meeting the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2019/20	Scottish Average 2019/20
	<b>94%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>84.4%</b>

INDICATOR: Percentage of tenants satisfied with the quality of their home	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2019/20	Scottish Average 2019/20
	<b>96.2%</b>	<b>96.2%</b>	<b>87.15%</b>

Our performance with this indicator remains consistently high and we believe this is largely due to our ongoing commitment to investing in our stock. Last year we invested £345,000 and plan to invest a further £400,000.

## Maintenance

INDICATOR: Percentage of tenants (who have had repairs or maintenance carried out in the last 12 months) satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2019/20	Scottish Average 2019/20
	<b>94.5%</b>	<b>97.9%</b>	<b>91.3%</b>

Local comparison

Riverclyde Homes  
**89.2%**

Cloch HA  
**86.8%**

Oaktree  
**87.9%**

<b>INDICATOR:</b> Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2019/20	Scottish Average 2019/20
	<b>3.3 hours</b>	<b>4.1 hours</b>	<b>3.6 hours</b>

Our average length of time to complete emergency repairs has increased since last year. We continue to work with our reactive repairs contractors to improve our performance around emergency repairs.

<b>INDICATOR:</b> Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2019/20	Scottish Average 2019/20
	<b>7.6 days</b>	<b>7.4 days</b>	<b>6.4 days</b>

This year we have reduced the average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs. We continue to work with our reactive repairs contractors to improve performance in completing non-emergency repairs response times and increase the percentage of repairs completed right first time.

<b>INDICATOR:</b> Percentage of reactive repairs carried out in the last year completed right first time	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2019/20	Scottish Average 2019/20
	<b>94.7%</b>	<b>91.6%</b>	<b>92.4%</b>

## Neighbourhood and community

<b>INDICATOR:</b> Percentage of anti-social behaviour cases reported in the last year which were resolved within locally agreed targets	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2019/20	Scottish Average 2019/20
	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>94.1%</b>

<b>INDICATOR:</b> Percentage of tenants satisfied with the management of the neighbourhood they live in	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2019/20	Scottish Average 2019/20
	<b>99%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>87.7%</b>



## Value for money

Rent is our main source of income. We use it to maintain your home, carry out repairs manage neighbourhoods and provide housing management services.

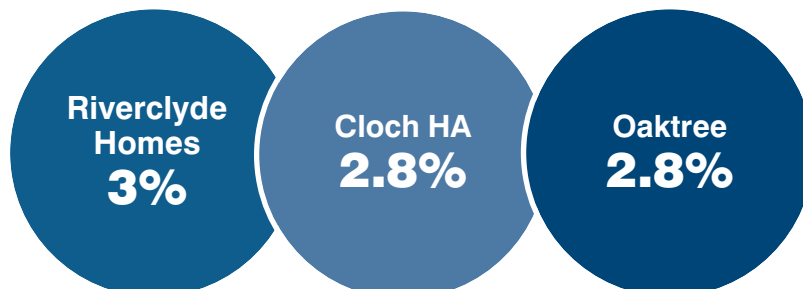
Our average rent is calculated for all properties of the same size across all areas.

Size	No. of Properties	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2019/20	Scottish average 2019/20	HA average 2019/20
1 bedroom	12	£60.38	£60.79	£78.02	£84.97
2 bedroom	127	£83.71	£84.74	£80.04	£85.92
3 bedroom	212	£96.70	£98.17	£86.99	£95.01
4 bedroom+	31	£109.46	£110.63	£96.11	£104.38

Although our rents for two, three and four-bedroom homes are above the Scottish and housing association averages, the increases we applied for the last five years were below the Scottish average.

INDICATOR:	Larkfield 2015/16	Larkfield 2016/17	Larkfield 2017/18	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2018/19	Scottish average 2019/20
Percentage average weekly rent increase to be applied	1.5%	2%	2.5%	2%	2%	2.9%

### Comparison



We consider affordability of rents, together with investment requirements, to maintain the quality of our homes, prior to setting rents. Our 2019/20 rent increase was once again below the Scottish average. We strive to keep our rents affordable. We will be consulting on our April 2021 rent increase in the coming months to establish a better understanding of what affordability means to you.

INDICATOR: Average length of time taken to re-let properties	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2019/20	Scottish Average 2019/20
	35.3 days	28.8 days	31.8 days
INDICATOR: Amount of rent lost due to homes being empty as percentage of total rent due	Larkfield 2018/19	Larkfield 2019/20	Scottish Average 2019/20
	0.98%	0.60%	1.2%

Our total re-let time also includes time taken to complete major works carried out prior to the start of the tenancy, for example, kitchen, bathroom and central heating improvement works in order to minimise disruption to new tenants before moving in.

## What do you think?

To improve the information we provide on our performance in the future, we want to know what you think of this report.

If there is anything you would like to ask or discuss in more detail, then please get in touch – we would be delighted to hear from you.

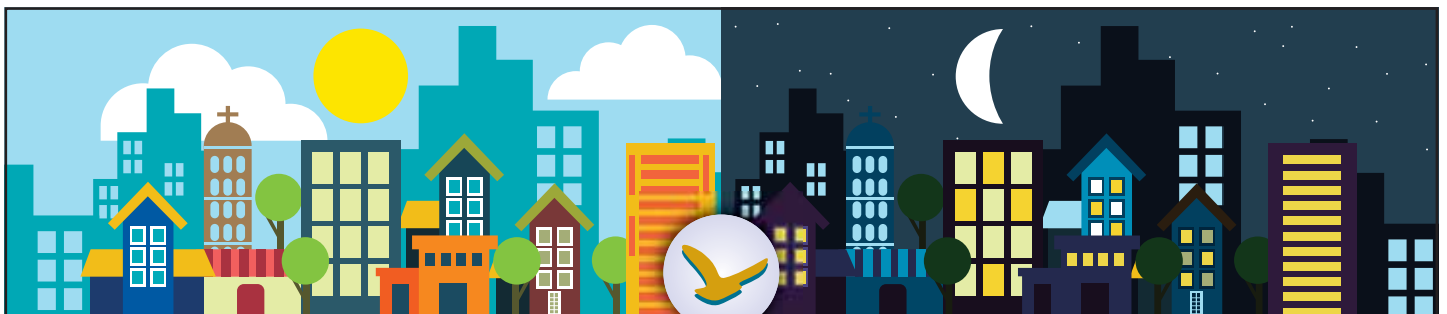
There are lots of other ways to get involved to help us improve services for more information:

Call us on **01475 630930**

Email **info@larkfieldha.org.uk**  
Write to us at 14 Lothian Road, Greenock,  
PA16 0PG  
Website: visit **www.larkfieldha.org.uk**

## Find us on Facebook

For the latest updates on all things Larkfield, like our Facebook page! Search Larkfield Housing Association **@LarkfieldHousing**



### MyLarkfield

## DAY OR NIGHT...

Manage your tenancy at a touch!

Have you download our free customer app yet?

With MyLarkfield, you can report a repair, check your rent balance, pay your rent and much more 24 hours a day, seven days a week! Search **MyLarkfield** in Google Play and the App Store. All you need to register is your tenancy reference number.

For more information, visit  
**www.larkfieldha.org.uk/mylarkfield**

Link Housing is part of the Link group of social enterprises.



# STAY SAFE THIS CHRISTMAS

Keep your home hazard-free this Christmas by following Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's safety advice:

## Fairy lights

- Unplug fairy lights or other electrical Christmas decorations when you leave the house or go to bed.
- Check fairy lights are in good working order and replace any bulbs that have blown.
- Bulbs can get very hot, don't let them touch materials that can scorch or burn easily, such as paper or fabrics.
- Make sure the fuse in the plug is the correct rating.
- If you need to plug more than one appliance into an electrical socket use a multi-socket adaptor which is fitted with a fuse and has surge protection.



## Decorations

- Decorations made of light tissue paper or cardboard burn easily.
- Don't attach them to lights or heaters.
- Don't put them immediately above or around the fireplace.
- Keep them away from candles.

## Christmas trees

Special fire safety precautions need to be taken when keeping a live tree in the house. A burning tree can rapidly fill a room with fire and deadly gases.

## Selecting a tree for Christmas

Always buy your tree from a reputable retailer to ensure the freshness and quality.



Needles on fresh trees should be green and hard to pull back from the branches, and the needle should not break if the tree has been freshly cut.

The trunk should be sticky to the touch. Old trees can be identified by bouncing the tree trunk on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree has been cut too long, has probably dried out, and is a potential fire hazard.

## Caring for your tree

Don't place your tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace, heat vent or candles. The heat will dry out the tree, causing it to be more easily ignited by heat, flame or sparks.

Be careful not to drop or flick cigarette ashes near a tree. Do not put your live tree up too early or leave it up for longer than two weeks. Keep the tree stand filled with water at all times.

## Disposing of your tree

Never put tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove. When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly. The best way to dispose of your tree is by taking it to a recycling centre or having it taken away by a community pickup service.



## Ways to pay your rent

**By phone** Pay by credit or debit card over the phone. Make sure you have your allpay reference number to hand. Call allpay free on **0330 041 6497** (24-hour automated service). To download the allpay app for your mobile phone, please refer to the **[www.allpay.net/app](http://www.allpay.net/app)**

**Direct Debit** Paying by direct debit is worry free and ensures your rent is paid each month. Payment is taken directly from your bank account. This is a paperless process and can be set up over the phone using your account number and sort code.

**Text** - Debit or credit card payments can be made using your mobile phone - register first at **[www.allpayments.net/textpay/login.aspx](http://www.allpayments.net/textpay/login.aspx)**

**Online** Pay online using either a debit or credit card by visiting the allpay website at **[www.allpayments.net](http://www.allpayments.net)**. Make sure you have a note of your allpay reference number.

**Pay by cheque or postal order** Please make the cheque payable to “Larkfield Housing Association”, write your name and address on the back and then hand it in or post it to the office. We will issue with a receipt after each payment has been made. If a cheque is dishonoured, we reserve the right to make a charge against your account to cover bank charges plus handling costs.

**Pay in person** You can use your payment card to pay your rent at any shop or outlet where you see the “Paypoint” logo.

**At the Post Office** You can use payment card to pay your rent at any Post Office.

**MyLarkfield app** You can use the MyLarkfield app to make your rent payments too.



14 Lothian Road, Larkfield, Greenock PA16 0PG

t: 01475 630930

f: 01475 636111

e: [info@larkfieldha.org.uk](mailto:info@larkfieldha.org.uk)

[www.larkfieldha.org.uk](http://www.larkfieldha.org.uk)

### Office opening hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9am – 4pm

Wednesday 9am – 12.30pm. Closed Wednesday afternoon

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