



## OPERATION: HAPPY CHRISTMAS

*... find out more on page 3*

**PLEASE NOTE...** our office and phone lines will close at 12 noon on Friday 22nd December and will reopen at 8.30am on Wednesday 3rd January 2023. For emergencies during this time, please phone the out of hours number provided on page 4.



## A message from John...

*Hi all... this time last year I referred to the opening of 'The Big Living Room' a new space in our office which aimed to provide a warm and safe environment for you to use during the day, in the face of increasing utility costs.*



*I am pleased to say that the space has been used for a number of events since then, including most recently its use for the 'Big Eat Wee Blether' lunch in partnership with The Larder. The space has also been used for community movie nights, family sessions, upcycling projects and more. We have more events planned for the near future, including our Christmas Open House mentioned on page 3. Please visit our website to find out about the events being held in The Big Living Room in the coming months.*

*We continue to focus on providing you with support, particularly during the winter months. In this issue you will find information on home safety, energy advice and of course our annual Christmas campaign, **OPERATION: HAPPY CHRISTMAS**. More information can be found on our website and if you need any additional support, please don't hesitate to reach out and the team will do their best to help.*

*This time of year also sees us consulting on the annual rent review. As always, we remain committed to protecting you from cost increases as much as possible whilst still ensuring that we can maintain and improve your home. Our rent consultation leaflet will be arriving in the next couple of weeks and provides some examples of the type of impact different scenarios will have. When you receive the leaflet, please read through the information and submit your feedback using the form provided.*

*I hope that you are looking forward to a restful and peaceful festive period and that you can spend quality time with friends and family.*

*As ever, please contact me by emailing [john.davidson@almondha.org.uk](mailto:john.davidson@almondha.org.uk) if you have a particular issue that you would like us to address or ideas on how we can do better as your landlord.*

John Davidson, Chief Executive



## Home safety checks

It is extremely important to us that you and your family are kept safe in your home. To ensure this is the case, we carry out routine safety checks, including an annual gas safety check.

It is a legal requirement to carry out a gas safety check and check your smoke alarms every year and we therefore follow strict procedures to ensure this is done. Thank you to the 70% of our customers who allowed access for our Gas Engineers on the first visit over the last 12 months.

When customers haven't provided access after 3 visits by the Gas Engineer, we send a letter to advise that we will need to force access to the property. This is a last resort to ensure the property is safe and is carried out on the 4th visit. For this appointment, we arrange for a joiner, gas engineer and housing officer to attend the property. This involves a lot of administration and we need to pay for the tradespeople who may or may not be required. As well as the financial cost, this also limits the appointments available to carry out other repairs.

We had a total of 119 (5%) gas safety checks carried out on the 4th visit over the last 12 months, costing the Association over £26,000. To reduce these incidents happening in the future, we are proposing to apply a charge for the 4th visit. We will take the proposal to our Tenant Focus Group and Tenant Consultation Group to agree the best approach. Please contact us if you would like to join the discussion.

# OPERATION: HAPPY CHRISTMAS

The pressures of increased living costs and money not stretching to the end of the month are affecting more and more people this year. With Christmas coming up, we want to try to make the festive season a positive experience for as many of our tenants as possible through our **OPERATION: HAPPY CHRISTMAS** campaign. There will be a variety of events and activities running from The Big Living Room over the winter months, including Winter Ready Events, Christmas crafts, cooking sessions, upcycling projects run by our community partners and more. There will be hot drinks and snacks available at each event, and we're pleased to be working with The Larder to offer community lunches too. Keep an eye on our website and social media channels for further updates.

## Nominate a Neighbour

There have been so many great examples of communities coming together recently to help the most vulnerable, or simply carrying out acts of kindness to help their neighbours. We're bringing back our 'Nominate a Neighbour' initiative this year to say thank you to people in the community who go above and beyond to help make life easier for others.

Nominating someone is easy! Simply tell us the name of the Almond HA tenant, the first line of their address and your reasons for nominating them. Email us at [almondcares@almondha.org.uk](mailto:almondcares@almondha.org.uk) or give us a call on **01506 439291** and speak to one of the team.

We'll consider all nominations, and those who are successful will receive a festive gift hamper.



## Christmas Open House

We'll be holding a Christmas Open House event in The Big Living Room on Friday 8th December 2023 from 1pm to 2pm. Join us for festive refreshments, children's arts and crafts, music and dancing with Minnie & Mickey plus a visit from Santa. Open to all Almond HA tenants. Almond HA Office, The Big Living Room, 44 Etive Walk, Craigshill, Livingston.



## Festive Food Hampers

Working with community partners, we can arrange for a festive food hamper filled with essential items to help with the pressure of Christmas. Where possible, we'll also nominate families for help with Christmas gifts for children via the West Lothian Toy Appeal.

If you know of any Almond HA tenants who might need a helping hand this festive season, please do let us know by phoning **01506 439291** or by emailing [almondcares@almondha.org.uk](mailto:almondcares@almondha.org.uk)



# We have a winner!

Congratulations to Mrs Joyce Bayne who has won our Almond Award for this quarter. Joyce 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 **Spring 2024**. 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 Joyce and a big thanks to all our tenants!*

## Energy Advice from Changeworks Affordable Warmth Services

As we approach the colder months, many of us are thinking about energy costs and how to stay warm on a budget this winter. Did you know that Almond HA tenants can access free, impartial energy advice and advocacy support from Changeworks? Find out more about the services they offer below.

### CHANGWORKS ADVICE AND SUPPORT

- Managing your heating
- Energy efficiency in your home
- Changing appliances to reduce your bills
- Understanding your energy bills

- Discovering what grants are available
- Affording your energy bills
- Financial support available for energy bills

To access this service, email [enquiries@almondha.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@almondha.org.uk) or phone **01506 439291** and speak to a member of the team to ask to be referred to Changeworks.

We also have some energy saving tips on our website [www.almondha.org.uk](http://www.almondha.org.uk)



## 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