

ALMONDVIEW

ALMOND HOUSING ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2021



Open now... for appointments

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New telephone system

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Hi all... from our **CEO**

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A message from **John...**

Hi all... I hope you, your family, and your friends are all keeping well and staying safe. Since my last update, the easing of restrictions has meant that we could return to a normal repairs service from 26th April.

Colleagues in our repairs and investment teams are working hard to get through the backlog of repairs whilst continuing to respond to new jobs coming in. We have also been able to return to delivering our investment programmes and we appreciate your patience as we deal with any works that were delayed due to Covid.



Further easing of restrictions from 17th May allowed us to open the office to the public for an appointment only service. Moving forward we are keen to hear your thoughts on how we deliver services to you beyond the Covid restrictions. Look out for more information on this in the coming weeks.

I am pleased to report that in terms of overall performance we have had a very strong year, particularly given the difficult circumstances. Despite the challenges faced we have managed to hit our targets / been within tolerance across 75% of our Key Performance Indicators. Whilst it is positive for Almond, most importantly it demonstrates the service we provide to our customers has continued to be delivered well. We are determined to continually improve our services and, as I mentioned in my last update, we have developed several plans which are aimed at achieving this.

One of the early improvements we have made is the introduction of a new telephone system. I am aware that there have been a few early teething problems and wish to thank you for your patience as we work through these. I have no doubt that once fully embedded the system will allow us to respond quickly and efficiently to your calls.

We continue to be very aware of the wider impact of the pandemic on many of our tenants. As such I would again like to remind you that we are here to help you as much as possible and you can contact us with any concerns regarding your home or financial position.

John Davidson, Chief Executive



New telephone system

Callers to our office will be aware that we implemented a new telephone answering system at the beginning of April. The system was introduced to make call handling more streamlined and to enhance the customer experience, as whilst working remotely utilising mobile telephones, we were not able to transfer calls to our colleagues. The new system is web based and allows us to provide a full service to our customers.

The new system also allows callers to press 9 to receive a call back from a member of staff. This maintains your position in the queue and the cost of the call is covered by us rather than you as the caller.

Your patience whilst we embed this new system is greatly appreciated and we hope that it will make calling our office a more straightforward process with a higher level of immediate resolution. In the near future we will be conducting a survey to gather customer experiences and we will keep you updated of the results in future Almondview editions and on our website.

Closing the Digital Divide

When Coronavirus hit, a huge array of services that support local people had to move online. This meant households who were struggling to afford either a suitable device or broadband, were now also unable to access vital services. In response, AHA have worked with partners to increase the level of digital inclusion in our communities by providing devices, internet data and support to help people access the internet. In total, 400 digitally excluded households in the communities where our housing stock sits have now been provided with digital devices through an array of grants and funding which we have been involved in.

In addition to supporting people to get digitally connected, local residents volunteered to undertake training to become digital champions. This gave them the skills to provide community-based help and advice for those who needed it to get online.

If you do not have access to a digital device in your home and would like to get online, we may be able to help. Call us or speak to your housing officer for more information.



Appointments

Following further easing of Covid restrictions, our office is now open to the public for appointments only. If you wish to visit us in person, you can make an appointment by emailing us at enquiries@almondha.org.uk or calling us on **01506 439291**. Alternatively, government guidance permitting, our staff can visit you in the comfort of your own home so you don't have to make the journey to our office. Just let us know what is best for you when arranging your appointment.

For your safety, we have made several changes in our office reception area. We now have two open air consultation areas, with sound cancelling screens for privacy. We ask that you wear a mask in the building, use hand sanitizer and socially distance from anyone outside your household. Please let us know in advance if you have any concerns.

Throughout the past year we have adopted a new way of working. Many of our staff are currently working

from home and we are now at a stage of reviewing how we previously did business to ensure we provide the best service and value for our customers going forward. Over the next few months, we are planning to carry out a consultation to establish your preferred contact methods and the best approach to our office opening hours.

We will contact you in the next few months about this consultation, but you do not have to wait until then to tell us your views! You can email us at enquiries@almondha.org.uk or call us on **01506 439291**.



Did you know...

You can use our website to:

Report a repair 

Pay rent 

Have your say 

Contact us 



We have a winner!

Congratulations to Mrs Thomson, who has won our Almond Award for this quarter! Mrs Thomson was delighted to be presented with **£250 worth of vouchers** for Almondvale Shopping 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 2021**. 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 Mrs Thomson and a big thanks to all our tenants!

NEW COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Our complaints procedure has been updated in line with new guidance from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. In terms of how you report complaints, nothing has changed.

We still take complaints by phone, email, letter or in person when the office is open.

For details of what to expect when you make a complaint and how your complaint will be handled, please see our new complaints leaflet which can be found online at www.almondha.org.uk



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

OUR PHONE LINES ARE OPEN AS USUAL DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC.