

# the tenants' VOICE

CONTACT US

Our access points are currently closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. If you need to contact us or need information, please call our Contact Centre on 0300 123 4566 or visit our website at: [www.moray.gov.uk](http://www.moray.gov.uk)

We will let you know through our website and our Facebook page when our offices are ready to re-open.

## BUCKIE

Buckie Access Point,  
13 Cluny Square, Buckie, AB56 1AJ.

## ELGIN

Elgin Access Point,  
Council Office, High Street, Elgin,  
IV30 1BX.

## FORRES

Forres Access Point, Auchernack,  
High Street, Forres,  
IV36 1DX.

## KEITH

Keith Community Hub, Mid Street,  
Keith, AB55 5AH

Summer 2020

- ▶ Check out our Covid-19 Q and A on **PAGES 6-7**
- ▶ Find information about paying your rent on **PAGE 20**
- ▶ Read about some of our local heroes in our 'Life in lockdown' article on **PAGES 10-11**



EMERGENCY OUT OF HOURS: 03457 565656

# THANK YOU



**STAY HOME**

**STAY SAFE**

# NHS



# Dear Readers,

## Welcome to a different issue of the Tenants' Voice

Coronavirus has forced us all to make changes in the way we live and work. Like many people, I am currently working from home and doing my best to avoid supermarkets and other places where social distancing is difficult. The current situation has made me appreciate so many things, and I suppose it's one of the positives to take from this experience.

I'm very grateful to the people in the community who have stepped up to do what they can to help others. They have been a vital lifeline to those who are self-isolating, shielding, or who have found themselves out of work and suffering hard times. There is all sorts going on such as people out shopping for neighbours, collecting their prescriptions or just making a phone call to check that everything is fine and having a friendly chat. There have been people doing what they can to provide some entertainment for others during this strange situation. Some have been playing the bagpipes or a musical instrument on Thursdays to show appreciation for the NHS and key workers, and youngsters have been dancing for the elderly. People are donating to local food banks and rallying round to make sure that children have what they need for home schooling. It really has been remarkable and has renewed my faith in people. There is an article in this edition about the response from the community which is really worth a read.

This pandemic has also made me realise how difficult it must be to live on your own without company for days on end. We take a lot for granted, like being able to nip to a pals for a coffee or visiting our family, or having them visit us. Without these things life can be pretty lonely and there's also an article further on about loneliness and social isolation and ways to combat this.

I hope you all enjoy this edition of your newsletter and that you all stay safe and well until the world returns to some normality. I can still be contacted within working hours by email at [louise.laing@moray.gov.uk](mailto:louise.laing@moray.gov.uk)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Louise Laing'.

Councillor Louise Laing  
Chair of Communities Committee

# An open letter to tenants

Kevin Stewart MSP, Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning, has written an open letter to social housing tenants in Scotland.

In it, he thanks individuals, organisations, volunteers and social landlords who have responded to the Covid-19 pandemic and worked tirelessly to keep the people of Scotland safe and well.

The letter offers advice and guidance to anyone who is experiencing financial difficulty or struggling to pay their rent as a result of Coronavirus. It explains the emergency law passed by the Scottish Government to protect tenants from eviction during the pandemic, by extending notice periods in certain circumstances. There is also information about where to get help if you are a victim of domestic abuse.

Social landlords are now beginning to start allocating properties again, although most of these will be to people who have found themselves in a homeless situation during the pandemic. The letter advises people to contact their landlord directly if they have any questions about applying for housing or moving home. It explains the safety measures landlords will have in place so that repairs and gas servicing can be carried out safely in tenant's homes. Landlords must meet their statutory safety obligations by carrying out annual gas safety checks, and the letter urges tenants to contact their landlord to discuss any concerns. As landlords re-start their normal repairs programmes, it may take time to work through any backlogs and repairs may take a bit longer than normal. The letter asks for patience and understanding as work schedules return to normal.

The letter also covers what to do if you experience antisocial behaviour. Contact your landlord first, and if you feel you are in danger, you should contact Police Scotland. The Coronavirus pandemic has affected everyone and the letter directs tenants to [www.mygov.scot](http://www.mygov.scot) website which offers information on a wide range of subjects including looking after yourself and others, mental wellbeing, food, medicine, work and unemployment, domestic abuse and child protection. Kevin Stewart ends the letter by thanking tenants and landlords for all they have done to help control the spread of Coronavirus. He stresses the importance of continuing to follow public health guidance and includes some helpline telephone numbers and a link to the Scottish Government guidance on Coronavirus, which can be accessed at:

[www.gov.scot/coronavirus](http://www.gov.scot/coronavirus)

If you would like to read the whole letter it can be found on our website at:

[www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file133383.pdf](http://www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file133383.pdf)



Kevin Stewart MSP



# Visiting your home

The safety of our customers and staff is important. We politely ask everyone to observe social distancing with our staff both inside and outside of your home, whether they are wearing a mask or not. Where customers are not willing to do this, we reserve the right not to enter the property.



## What we need you to do....

- ✓ Tell us if you have symptoms or are self isolating or shielding
- ✓ Keep two metres away from our colleagues at all times
- ✓ Stay in another room if possible, open internal doors and keep all corridors clear
- ✓ Reduce the spread of germs by covering your mouth and nose when you cough and sneeze, or use the inside of your elbow
- ✓ Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or using a suitable hand sanitiser
- ✓ Tell us if the repair gets worse so that we have the materials to complete the job in one visit

## What we will do....

- ✓ Make sure that we are only working if we are fit and well to do so
- ✓ Keep at least two metres away from you and your household
- ✓ Carry and use hand sanitiser
- ✓ Always have the personal protective equipment (PPE) that we need
- ✓ Minimise the number of visits we take to complete a job when possible
- ✓ Clean any surfaces we need to touch
- ✓ Politely decline the offer of refreshments



**moray**  
council

# Gas safety

If your home has mains gas, it is our legal responsibility to make sure a gas safety inspection is carried out every year. Your safety is very important to us and we want to make sure that you and your family and neighbours are safe.

The safety inspection does not take long. Our gas engineers are all qualified and 'gas safe' registered. All work will be carried out to a high standard and our polite and helpful engineers will answer any questions you have. Our engineers will service and repair your appliances and will advise you about any faults on your own gas appliances, if you have any.

We will get in touch when your gas safety inspection is due, to agree a suitable appointment time with you. When we get in touch you should let us know if anyone in the home is self-isolating or shielding due to Coronavirus. We can still carry out the safety check if you are happy for us to do so. All our workmen will wear appropriate safety equipment and make sure they wipe down any surfaces they touch. If you can't make the arranged appointment, it is important that you let us know. We can arrange a further appointment with you.



During the Coronavirus pandemic, we will not force entry to your home but it is important that this safety check is carried out. Please keep your appointment and allow us access to your home to carry out this important check.

## If you smell gas at any time it is important that you know what to do:

- Turn off your gas supply immediately.
- When the gas has been turned off, open your windows and doors to let in the fresh air.
- Do not use any electrical switches.
- Do not use any lighters or matches.
- Do not smoke.
- Contact the National Gas Emergency Service straight away on **0800 111 999**. They will come to your home quickly and make it safe.
- Phone us on **0300 123 4566** if any repairs are needed.

# Your Coronavirus questions answered

Coronavirus has changed every aspect of the way we work and the services we provide. We are doing our best to get services fully reinstated in line with Government advice and within the timescales allowed. We appreciate how confusing it can be as service delivery and information changes on a weekly basis as we work through this crisis.

Staff and tenant safety remains our priority as we move back to a more normal way of working. There will still be areas of disruption as we are working with reduced staff numbers and many staff members are now working from home. We hope this question and answer article helps with keeping you informed.



## How do I get in touch with the council?

All of our access points are currently closed but you can still get in touch with us by calling our contact centre between 8.45am - 5pm on **0300 1234 566**. If you need to get in touch with us urgently due to an emergency, our out of hours emergency number is **03457 565656**. You can also contact us through our website using our online forms: [www.moray.gov.uk/moray\\_standard/page\\_100047.html](http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_100047.html)

## What if I am struggling to pay my rent?

It is important to speak to us if you are struggling with your rent payments. We may be able to help you with a claim for Universal Credit if you have a low income. If you are building up rent arrears you should not ignore it. Contact your housing officer and they will help you with setting up a repayment agreement. This means you will be able to bring your rent account up to date over an extended period of time. We will not evict you if you are in financial hardship due to the Coronavirus pandemic, but it is important that you stay in contact with us so we can help you resolve the situation. If you are still able to make your rent payments, continue to pay in the usual way. Contact us on **0300 1234 566** to discuss your situation.

**Read more about this in our 'Paying your rent' article on page 20.**

## Can you help if I am struggling to feed my family or pay bills?

We can refer you to services that can help such as Moray Food Plus who can provide food and essentials in a crisis. You may be able to get help to pay for food during the Coronavirus pandemic through the Flexible Food Fund. Access to this service will be dependent on individual household circumstances. To find out if you are eligible contact **0300 1234 563** which is the number for our Money Advice service. This service can also help if you are worried about paying other bills and debts. They can negotiate lower payments or payment breaks with your creditors, and can make sure you are claiming any benefits you are entitled to.

If you are struggling with fuel bills, contact your energy supplier as many are offering help to anybody struggling to pay bills as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. REAP (Rural Environmental Action Project) can offer free impartial energy advice. They can be contacted on **01542 888070** or you can visit their website at: [www.reapscotland.org.uk/coronavirus-info](http://www.reapscotland.org.uk/coronavirus-info). Home Energy Scotland's website offers tips for saving energy during lockdown and can be accessed at: <https://bit.ly/2A3nMr3>.

### What if I have a repair that needs fixed?

Until further notice, we are only dealing with emergency repairs which are repairs that are needed to prevent a danger to health, a risk to safety or to prevent damage to your property. This includes serious damage to the building or a risk to security, for example, a loss of electric power, significant leaks or flooding from water or heating pipes, tanks and cisterns, blocked or leaking foul drains or unsafe power, lighting sockets, or electrical fittings. If you are not sure if your repair is an emergency, you can contact us and check on **0300 1234 566**. We are still carrying out gas safety checks as it is a legal requirement to make sure all our gas appliances, fittings and flues are safe.

We know you may be worried about letting people into your home at this time. We have created some guidelines to let you know how we will carry out visits safely. You can read these guidelines on our website at: [www.moray.gov.uk/moray\\_standard/page\\_133392.html](http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_133392.html)

Our workmen will follow strict safety measures regarding social distancing when they are in your home, and they have access to appropriate personal protective equipment if required. We will be re-starting our full repairs service soon and ask for your patience as we work through the backlog of jobs.

### When will the grass get cut?

Grass cutting services were suspended at the start of lockdown to reduce the risk of spreading Coronavirus. This service was under constant review in line with Government guidance, and grass cutting services have now re-started. It may take longer than usual to get round all the areas that need grass cut due to reduced numbers of staff and vehicles, and we thank you for your patience. We hope you will appreciate that the grass has grown so long that it now needs to be strimmed and raked before it can be cut with a mower. Tenants who are included in the assisted grass cutting scheme are now being contacted so arrangements can be made to get their gardens back into order.

**We would like to thank you for your patience and understanding as we return to some form of normality. To keep up to date with when and how our services are being re-instated, check our website at: [www.moray.gov.uk/covid19](http://www.moray.gov.uk/covid19)**

## Building services in lockdown

Mike Rollo, Building Services Manager, spoke to us about the challenges of working in building services during lockdown. He paid tribute to his staff and to tenants for their continued compliance, support, and patience in dealing with the emergency protocols now in place during the Coronavirus pandemic. Mike said:

"These are unprecedented times for us all, and our staff and tenants have shown great strength in a time of adversity. We continue to do our best to deliver essential services such as emergency repairs and gas servicing. The challenge of accessing tenants' homes during the lockdown period has proven to be difficult. Many of our tenants who are vulnerable and in shielded groups are, quite rightly, reluctant to allow us access to their homes at this time. Staff are following strict social distancing guidelines during home visits and the challenges of ensuring they are kept safe and have sufficient PPE, is no different to those being experienced by our NHS and Social Care colleagues".

Mike also praised the Councils' back office staff who continue to support front line staff by way of admin support, stores, supervision and management. "It is important that each member of our team's contribution is praised. Providing essential services to our tenants involves a number of staff not only on the frontline, all of whom have gone that extra mile during the current crisis".

"Lockdown is challenging for us all" Mike continued. "Most of our staff are now working reduced hours on rotas, and surprisingly the majority of us are all desperate to get back to normality. The novelty of being at home soon wears off when the wife continues to find odd jobs for you to do!" he said with a smile.



Plumber, George Beange, wearing his PPE ready to get to work. Although there is no legal requirement for our tradesmen to wear this level of PPE as long as social distancing is observed, it can be worn at our tenants' request.



# A day in the life...

**Wes Duggan is one of our gas and heating engineers working for our DLO building services. This is a very busy service but we managed to catch up with Wes for a quick chat to ask him a few questions.**

**Can you tell us what your job involves, and how it has had to adapt and change due to the Coronavirus pandemic?**

As a gas and heating engineer my job involves servicing and repairing boilers, gas appliances and heating systems. My day involves attending pre-booked heating repairs and boiler services, as well as heating and gas emergencies that come in during the day which are distributed by the schedulers to us engineers.

As an essential service, we have had to continue working during the pandemic, albeit on a reduced rota. We have had to change the way in which we carry out essential gas safety work and boiler maintenance by including additional processes. These include limiting the number of engineers working in any week, distribution and usage of large amounts of PPE (personal protective equipment) and hand sanitizer, and contactless handling of parts and paperwork.

When we go to tenants' homes we make sure that we maintain proper distances from the doorstep, and ask a series of questions at the door before entering to find out if anyone in the home is shielding or self-isolating. We use full PPE which is not the PPE we normally use to protect ourselves from injury, but enhanced PPE that protects us and tenants from the Coronavirus. We also take great care that we only touch surfaces that we need to, and that we clean them thoroughly afterwards.

**What are some of the main challenges you face in your job?**

The main challenge in my job is maintaining ageing appliances as the parts we need are sometimes hard to find. If a part is no longer available there is nothing we can do, the appliance is beyond repair and a new one has to be installed.

Geography is another challenge as boilers tend to break down miles apart from each other so some days involve a considerable amount of driving.

**What is your favourite part of the job?**

My favourite part of the job is repairs. I arrive at a property which has no heating or hot water and leave satisfied that the tenants are now safe and warm. It's a great feeling to know you have made your tenants more comfortable.

**If you had a magic wand, what would you change?**

It would have to be this virus. It has affected everybody without discrimination and caused so much pain and loss for people. A quick wave of my magic wand and it would be as if it had never happened.

**What would you like to be doing for a job if you were not doing this?**

I would be a motorcycle mechanic. It was my first career and something I still toy with in my own time. It's something I enjoy.

**What do you enjoy doing when you are not at work?**

I enjoy walking our German shepherd and her 2 pups, fishing, DIY and motorcycle restoration.

**How would you describe yourself in 3 words?**

Efficient, knowledgeable and helpful.

**Finally, if there was to be a movie of your life, who would play you?**

Someone cheap, I don't think it would be a blockbuster movie. If I could choose, probably Emilio Estevez or maybe Frank Spencer!



Wes Duggan.



# Keeping our **tradesmen** safe

We understand that a household pet is a much loved part of the family and that dogs are a man's best friend. Our tradesmen often have to carry out work in homes where dogs are present, and this does not usually cause any problem. Recently, however, two of our workmen have been attacked by a dog whilst carrying out their job which has resulted in them needing medical treatment and a tetanus injection. This then makes them unavailable for work which results in jobs being delayed and increased workloads.

We have a duty to report any incidents of this nature to the Police and to the Health and Safety Executive, who may follow it up with the tenant and take any appropriate action.

We want to avoid these incidents which can be upsetting to both the tradesman and the tenant involved. To do this, we ask that you put your dog into a different room, or outside, when tradesmen are attending your home to carry out a job. We know that most dogs are friendly and just want to see what is going on, but keeping them away allows our workmen to carry out their job efficiently and without any interruption. It is a good idea to keep any pets out of the way when a job is being carried out as this makes sure they are safe and not in any danger from sharp tools or equipment.

We want to carry out any jobs as quickly and efficiently as we can. The best way to do this is to keep both our tradesmen and your beloved pet safe from harm.



## Garden **maintenance**

Nobody likes to see an untidy overgrown garden. It can spoil the look of a whole estate and cause distress to neighbours. It is part of your tenancy agreement that your garden is maintained to a reasonable standard. Our caretaking staff are responsible for monitoring council owned gardens and estates. They will talk to any tenants who are not taking care of their garden and advise them of the actions they must take within 14 days. If the situation has not improved when they re-inspect the garden, they may arrange for a contractor to carry out the necessary work. Tenants will be charged for this work.

If you are not able to maintain your garden due to a health or mobility reason, it is important that you let us know so we can help. We will make sure that anyone who needs help is aware of our grass cutting scheme. You can apply for this scheme if you are over 65 years of age and have no physically able adults in the home who can help you with the garden. If you are under 65 years of age, you can still apply for the scheme if you are in receipt of certain benefits. You can apply if you are registered blind or if you would be unable to cut your grass due to certain vulnerabilities. You may have to pay for the scheme depending on the benefits you receive.

If you share a garden with other residents, you must take your turn to keep it tidy. The grass should be cut, flowerbeds weeded, hedges trimmed, and the garden should be free from litter. If you have bulky items to get rid of you can use our bulky uplift service. You can find out more about this on our website at:

[www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file120638.pdf](http://www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file120638.pdf)

Owners are responsible for their own garden maintenance. If they neglect their garden to the extent it causes a nuisance to neighbours, the council's Environmental Health section will be informed and may take steps to deal with this.

Find out more about our grass cutting scheme

on our website at: [www.moray.gov.uk/moray\\_standard/page\\_41526.html](http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_41526.html)

Contact us for more information at [housing@moray.gov.uk](mailto:housing@moray.gov.uk) or phone **0300 1234 566**



# Life in lockdown

There is no doubt that the Coronavirus pandemic has changed the world as we know it. There has been suffering and loss as thousands of people lost their lives, worry and stress as businesses closed down and money became tight, and fear and anxiety as we all stayed home, cut off from family and friends.

Despite the devastation caused by Coronavirus, we have seen stories of courage as our NHS and carers continue with their work to look after the sick and vulnerable. We stood on our doorsteps every Thursday night clapping and cheering in appreciation of those who put themselves at risk for us. Rainbows have been hanging in windows as a sign of thanks to our waste teams, supermarket workers, emergency services and all key workers for their service. We have read stories about extraordinary pensioners like Captain Tom Moore and great grandmother Margaret Payne who both raised huge amounts of money for the NHS. Tom walked more than 100 laps round his garden, and Margaret climbed her stairs to the equivalent height of Suliven Mountain.

Closer to home, here in Moray, there are stories of local people who have gone above and beyond to help those in need, or to bring a smile during difficult times. Here are just a few of them:



The Sullivan family from Lossiemouth appeared on the television programme 'A Very British Lockdown' which looked at how people were coping during the Coronavirus crisis. Ben and Zoe and their 11 children have been making the best of lockdown whilst bringing a smile to social media viewers by making their own music videos to well known tunes. You can check these out on their Facebook page at:

[www.facebook.com/BenZoeSullivanFamily/](https://www.facebook.com/BenZoeSullivanFamily/)

Paul Briggs from Elgin has been providing a lifeline for many people who are housebound or self-isolating in his local area. He has been doing shopping for 19 homes and collecting medicines for 22 households, even standing outside the chemist for 90 minutes to pick up prescriptions for those in need. Paul's kindness has been valued and appreciated by those in his community.



Police Scotland have been amazed by the number of men and women who have given up their time to help out as special constables during the crisis. Kevin Willox has been a volunteer with the North East Division for 7 years, as well as holding down his day job as an engineer in the oil industry. Kevin has sacrificed hours of his own time carrying out tasks such as assisting the Moray Road Policing Department. In this photo Kevin was making sure the public understood government advice to take their daily exercise close to home, and not drive into tourist areas such as Findhorn.



The Lossiemouth 2-3 group have done their bit to help their local community through various projects. They became a referral agency for the Moray Baby Bank which provides help acquiring nappies, formula, or baby toiletries. They arranged free bus travel for Lossiemouth families who have received free school meal supermarket vouchers, but were struggling with the cost of transport to Elgin to redeem them. The 2-3 group reached out to Stagecoach who agreed to provide free day tickets so families in crisis could get to the supermarkets and redeem their vouchers. They also worked with Moray Food Plus to deliver over 550 Easter eggs to children in Lossiemouth and brighten their Easter. The group can be contacted through their Facebook page at:

[www.facebook.com/The-Lossie-2-3-group-338814606306746/](https://www.facebook.com/The-Lossie-2-3-group-338814606306746/)



*A car filled with Easter Eggs for delivery to local children.*



*Some of the donations waiting to be delivered by the Buckie Kindness Group*

The Buckie Kindness group is a group of volunteers that got together to help their local community in the Buckie area. They are a subgroup of the Buckie Community Council and have been helping by running errands for those who are shielding or in self-isolation. Shopping, posting mail, collecting medications and other urgent items, or simply being on the end of the phone for a chat, are just some of the tasks the volunteers have been carrying out. They have been working in partnership with other agencies to provide meals and food packages to the people of Buckie who have been grateful for their kindness.

They can be contacted through their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/groups/2524017624509476/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/2524017624509476/) or by phone on **07592 307 501** between 12pm and 7pm.

Residents throughout Moray, including some of our own staff members, have been doing their bit from home by getting out their knitting needles and sewing machines. They have been helping the NHS by making scrubs and masks or knitting teddies and hearts for patients in hospital.



These are just some of the acts of kindness we have seen in our communities and there have been many more. Coronavirus has swept the nation and caused great devastation in its wake, but these stories show that it has also brought community spirit to the fore and created an ethos of togetherness, kindness and compassion.

**Our thanks go to each and every one of you**

# Hoarding

We all have certain items in our homes that are important to us and that we want to keep hold of. This could include items such as furniture, books, photos, or objects that remind us of special memories. Every now and again most of us will have a spring clean and throw out or sell things to make some space.

Some people, however, have trouble letting go of their possessions and instead, they find themselves collecting more and more items until they are surrounded by too many things and do not know what to do. This excessive gathering of possessions in the home can cause problems in all areas of a person's life.

They will find it difficult to move about their home because there are so many things in the way. This can increase their risk of trips and falls. They may be unable to find the things they need for daily life such as keys and money and having so many items in the home can increase the risk of a fire starting. Dirt and food debris may gather in unseen corners which can lead to unpleasant smells, insect infestation and mould. These hygiene issues can affect neighbouring homes, and this can impact on a person's relationships. Their social life may suffer as they become embarrassed about inviting people round, and family or friends may stop visiting as they feel uncomfortable in such an unpleasant environment.

In the worst cases, some people can quickly find themselves surrounded by mountains of possessions. Piles of furniture, papers, clothing, books and ornaments can suddenly turn a home into a prison with people living in one small space they have cleared. When the problem reaches this level, it is known as compulsive hoarding and can have a negative impact on the lives of the people who hoard and the lives of the people around them.

Hoarding can put a tenancy at risk. Neighbours may complain about the state of a hoarder's property if it is impacting on their own home. There may be a hygiene issue due to infestation



or offensive smells and this can result in a council visit to the property. The visit will assess the condition of the property and housing officers will speak to the tenant and may offer support with getting the property cleared and cleaned. The tenant may be charged for this.

We would encourage anyone who hoards to seek help to resolve the problem before it gets worse. If you believe you have a tendency towards hoarding, talk to your GP who will be able to help you if there is a mental health issue. The thought of de-cluttering a home can be overwhelming, but it is important to try and keep your home tidy and clutter-free for your own safety. If you are struggling speak to your housing officer who may be able to get you some support. Dealing with any issues sooner rather than later, will stop problems escalating and keep you and your tenancy safe.

You can find out more about hoarding from NHS Choices at:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/hoarding-disorder/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hoarding-disorder/)

You can contact your housing officer for support at [housing@moray.gov.uk](mailto:housing@moray.gov.uk) or on **0300 1234 566**



# ENDING YOUR TENANCY



You may have been planning to move out of your council property before the Coronavirus pandemic changed everything. This could be because you are leaving the area, moving in with a partner or family, or moving into private accommodation.

The Scottish Government have said that home moves are now allowed as long as they are carried out safely. They have published further guidance about how to do this on their website at:

[www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-moving-home/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-moving-home/)

The guidance sets out how the process of moving home can be adapted to make sure the risk of spreading Coronavirus is reduced. This includes using online processes such as virtual viewings and making sure rules are followed with regard to physical distancing and hygiene.

If you are leaving your council property to move home, it is important that you let us know in plenty of time. If you want to end your tenancy, you should fill in a 'termination of tenancy' form at least 28 days before you leave.

We have around 3000 applicants on our waiting lists, so we want to re-let our properties as quickly as possible and provide homes for people in need. The Coronavirus pandemic has resulted in increased homelessness and we are currently allocating properties to those in emergency need as a priority. Giving us advance notice of when you will be leaving your property allows time for our housing officers to contact you and help your move go smoothly. They may need to arrange a visit to the property in line with Scottish Government guidance around safety, and they will give you advice on how your property should be left.

If properties are left in a bad state, it takes longer for us to be able to re-let them and can be costly. Before you leave the property, all your possessions should be removed, and both home and garden should be left clear of any rubbish and in reasonable condition. If we are required to clear anything you have left behind, you will be re-charged for the cost of this. We offer a 'bulky waste' collection service which costs £24.53 per uplift for items which are too big for your bin. We will collect up to 5 items and no more than 2 black bin bags. We will collect items such as fridges and freezers, furniture, electrical appliances, carpets, mattresses and bedding. The items should be left where you would normally leave your bin as our collectors will not enter your home.

**There are some materials which we will not collect, and these include:**

- Liquids such as paint.
- Materials from home improvements such as radiators, doors, wood or glass.
- Garden materials
- Car parts
- Recyclable waste
- Mirrors and windows.

The 'Recycling Guide' on our website details the items we can collect as well as providing further information on waste and recycling:

[www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file120638.pdf](http://www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file120638.pdf)

To contact our Bulky Uplift Hotline, call **0300 123 4565**



**Please leave your home how you would like to find it.**

# Domestic abuse

Police Scotland report that incidences of domestic abuse have been on the rise since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic. Lockdown has heightened domestic tensions and cut off escape routes as victims of abuse spend concentrated time with their abusers. There is more to domestic abuse than the physical violence which is often portrayed on television and in the media. Domestic abuse is when someone close to you behaves in a way that causes you physical, mental, emotional or financial damage. In Scotland, around one in every four women have experienced domestic abuse at some time in their life.

Abuse is about another person having control or power over you. If you find you are changing the way you look or act because you are frightened of a partner's behaviour, this may be abuse. It is important to note that although domestic abuse usually affects women, some men are also abused.

## **Domestic abuse can take many forms such as:**

- Slapping and punching
- Pulling hair
- Scalding or burning
- Throwing and breaking things
- The use of weapons such as knives or other implements
- Humiliation, name calling, and criticism
- Issuing rules and ultimatums
- Isolating friends and family
- Threats against you, your children, or pets
- Jealousy and possessiveness
- Watching your social media activity and tracking your movements
- Control over your money, what you wear and who you see
- Rape

The most important thing to remember is that domestic abuse is not your fault and there is something you can do about it. You can report the abuse to the Police who will help and protect you. They will put you in touch with a specially trained officer and support agencies. They make take you to a place of safety and get you medical treatment if you are injured. If you do not want to contact the Police, you can still get help from support agencies such as Scottish Women's Aid, Victim Support Scotland and the Scottish Women's Rights Centre.

If you are experiencing abuse, please don't suffer in silence. Get help now by talking to someone else. You can find out more about the support available at: [www.mygov.scot/domestic-abuse/](https://www.mygov.scot/domestic-abuse/)

**If you or your children are in immediate danger and need help, call 999.**





# Loneliness and Isolation



We have all felt lonely at one time or another and everyone's experience of loneliness will be different. You may choose to be alone and be quite happy having little contact with other people, or you may miss having social contact and find this a lonely experience. It is also possible to feel lonely even when you are surrounded by family or friends, if you don't feel understood or cared for. It may be that you want to mix socially with other people but you are shy or anxious and find it difficult to engage with others.

The Coronavirus pandemic has increased feelings of loneliness for many people as they have been unable to mix with family and friends in the usual way, and clubs and groups have been suspended. Many groups have been finding ways round this through the use of virtual get-togethers or telephone services.

**Reengage** supports people who are over 75, live alone, or in sheltered housing, and find it hard to get out. As their usual monthly tea parties have been suspended due to the pandemic, they have set up a telephone befriending scheme. This means a volunteer will call you 2-4 times a month, or however often is agreed, and have a chat, share news and find out how you are doing. The same person will call each time so you can get to know each other, and the service is completely free and lasts as long as you want it to. You can apply for a call companion by phoning Reengage free on **0800 716543** or by filling in a simple form on their website:

[www.reengage.org.uk/join-a-group/apply/](http://www.reengage.org.uk/join-a-group/apply/)

Spending time with friends is important to young people who will be finding it difficult to stick to advice about reducing social contact. There are organisations that can offer practical help such as **Young Scot**. Their website offers a wide range of resources and information on various topics including Coronavirus updates, mental health and depression, things to do at home and how to improve your sleep routine. The Health in Mind link provides guidance and advice around loneliness and staying connected:

<https://young.scot/campaigns/national/aye-feel>

The Scottish Government and NHS Scotland have created the **Clear Your Head** website which offers tips, ideas and support to help you look after yourself in these uncertain times. The website includes topics such as staying active, looking after your mental health, relationship problems and staying in touch: <https://clearyourhead.scot/>

If you are feeling lonely or isolated then please reach out. Use the resources on offer in this article, or pick up the phone and speak to someone. These are uncertain times and it is ok to feel different and to ask for some help. Talk to a trusted friend or family member about how you are feeling or speak to your GP. Remember you will not be the only one who feels this way and you are not alone.



**Breathing Space** is a free, confidential phone and web based service for people in Scotland experiencing low mood, anxiety or depression.

We are here to provide a safe and supportive space by listening, offering advice and providing information.

**Open up when you're feeling down**

**0800 83 85 87**  
[www.breathingspace.scot](http://www.breathingspace.scot)

# Moray resource centre



Moray resource centre in Elgin provides a base for valuable community services.

These include a day service for adults with a physical or sensory disability. This service helps to improve quality of life and promote independent living.

The day service runs three times a week on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and offers various activities for its service users. They can get involved in music, art, photography or simply relax. There is a large garden where service users can learn gardening skills and help to grow healthy food which is then sold in the centre's café at a reasonable price. The café also provides a relaxing atmosphere for socialising in an accessible and supportive environment.

If you are over the age of 16 and think you would benefit from the day service, get in touch with your social worker or contact the access care team by phone on **01343 563999** or email **[accesscareteam@moray.gov.uk](mailto:accesscareteam@moray.gov.uk)**

**Please note that day services are currently closed due to the Coronavirus pandemic.**

Moray resource centre is also home to the 'Moray wellbeing hub'. This is a project which aims to help people understand and manage their own wellbeing, as well as provide support to others.

The project runs self-management workshops, peer-support groups and works with health and social care providers to promote mental health recovery.



There is a wide choice of workshops on offer, which include self-help group courses on managing your mental health, wellness recovery and resilience action planning, parenting courses, creative courses and other bespoke mental health training. The emphasis is on improving wellbeing, challenging stigma and supporting recovery.

The project is always looking for help. They want to hear your ideas on what works for you or those you care about, to allow you to live life to the full. They use personal experiences, research and local resources to create change. The ethos of the project includes:

- Tackling stigma
- Creating change
- Focusing on strengths and not illnesses and problems
- Combining personal experiences with research and resources

- Increasing awareness and access to peer-support

To access the Moray wellbeing hub's newsletter, or to contact them for further information on how to get involved, email **[hello@moraywellbeinghub.org.uk](mailto:hello@moraywellbeinghub.org.uk)**

**The Moray wellbeing hub are currently offering virtual wellbeing workshops whilst the resource centre remains closed.**

Other facilities available at the Moray resource centre in normal times include:

- An independent living centre which offers a drop-in service on a Monday afternoon. This service provides factsheets, films and advice on any aspect relating to disability or getting older.
- Designworks – a desktop publishing project run by the Employment Support Service
- Blue badge administration and assessment

The centre can be booked for groups to use at any time, and there are always events and activities going on for those who have a disability or support someone with a disability.

To contact Moray resource centre:

Phone: **01343 551339**

Email: **[resourcecentre@moray.gov.uk](mailto:resourcecentre@moray.gov.uk)**



# Tenant participation

Although most of our tenant participation activities are currently suspended due to the Coronavirus pandemic, there are different ways you can get involved at a level that suits you. We want you to help us make decisions about housing matters so we can provide you with the best housing service possible. You can help us by joining one of our tenant groups, going online to join our private Facebook group, or from the comfort of your own home by joining our list of interested tenants.

Our tenant groups are the Moray Tenants' Forum (MTF) and the Service Improvement Panel (SIP). You can read about the work of the MTF on the next page of this newsletter. The SIP is a small group who meet every few months to review a chosen housing process. They have already completed their first review where they looked at the letters that are sent to tenants about heating upgrades. This review has resulted in a change to the letters. The next time they meet, the group will consider what their next review topic will be. The SIP is looking for more tenants to join them as their group can really make a difference to housing services. They can carry out mystery shopping exercises, visit empty homes, interview housing staff and review policies and procedures.

Social media is another way of getting involved in tenant participation. We have a private Facebook group called 'Moray Council Tenants'. This group is only for council tenants or members of their household and we use this group to share housing related news and information. You can leave comments and find interesting and informative links on our group page.



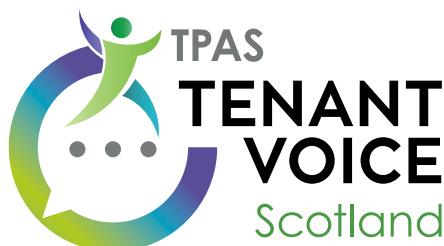
If you don't want to join a group but would still like to get involved, you can join our list of interested tenants. If you are on our list, we will contact you and ask you to take part in any consultations which may be relevant to you. We may also tell you about any upcoming events that would be of interest. If you would like to be on our list, it is important that we have up to date contact details for you. If you have an email address, please let us know as this is the quickest, most efficient way for us to make contact. We can also get in touch with you by letter or phone.

Your opinions matter to us because you are in the best position to let us know what we are doing well and where improvements can be made. With your help we can identify priorities and continue to provide good quality housing services. To find out more about the options for getting involved, and the benefits of tenant participation, read our leaflet which can be found on our website at: [www.moray.gov.uk/tenantparticipation](http://www.moray.gov.uk/tenantparticipation)

Contact us for more information:

Email: [housing@moray.gov.uk](mailto:housing@moray.gov.uk)

Phone: **0300 1234 566**



*Your Friendly Engagement Experts*

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) have recently launched a new national initiative called Tenant Voice Scotland.

Tenant Voice Scotland will give tenants their say on the things that matter most. You can share your thoughts, ideas and opinions to influence and inform their partner organisations such as tenant groups, the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Scottish Government and the Tenant Regional Networks. Your views will shape legislation, influence policies and consult on proposed changes to housing policy to make it safer, fairer and tenant focused.

At the moment membership is only available to tenants who can access their online surveys. You can find out more on their website at

[www.tpascotland.org.uk/tenant-voice-scotland](http://www.tpascotland.org.uk/tenant-voice-scotland)

# Moray tenants' forum

The Coronavirus pandemic has meant that our tenant group have not been able to get together since they last met in February. Before the pandemic struck, it was business as usual for the group and they had been inviting guest speakers to talk to them about various topics.



In December 2019 Olive Scotson attended their meeting to speak to the group about sheltered housing. Olive is one of the council's supported accommodation officers and it is her remit to run the sheltered housing warden service. Olive's manager, Brian Fraser, also attended the meeting to explain to the group how this service fits into the council overall.

Olive talked to the group about the council run sheltered housing schemes in the Moray area. There are 3 schemes in Elgin, 1 in Forres, 1 in Portgordon, 1 in Buckie and 1 in Lossiemouth. Olive is responsible for the team of wardens who look after the tenants of these schemes. She explained the warden's job role and spoke about some of the varied tasks they undertake. As the warden team all work in different areas, it is important that they have regular contact with Olive, and she described some of the difficulties they face and the importance of getting together for regular team meetings.

The tenant group enjoyed hearing about the sheltered housing service and found the talk very interesting. They had plenty of questions for Olive and Brian and felt that they learnt a lot.

In February, Ann Davidson and Tracy Watling from REAP came to speak to the tenant group. REAP (Rural Environmental Action Project), is a charity based in

Keith which aims to see a future where everyone can afford to heat their homes, eat well and protect the environment.

Ann and Tracy informed the group about the various projects that REAP are involved in which include food and growing projects, energy saving advice sessions and the administration of community benefit funds for local wind farms. Their talk mainly focussed on energy saving advice and the tenant group found out how to get the best deal on their energy bills, information about switching tariffs or suppliers and advice on energy grants and schemes. Ann and Tracy gave the group some tips on how to use their heating controls and save energy in their home.

The group were very grateful to Ann and Tracy for their advice and they are going to be putting the energy saving tips into practice to save money on future fuel bills.

The Forum are always looking for new members to join them. As there are no meetings at the moment due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we are looking into the possibility of holding a virtual meeting. If you have access to electronic equipment and would like to join us for a virtual meeting, please get in touch. Joining the Forum is a great way to meet people and make new friends, and you can get involved at any level you want. In normal times, the group meet every couple of months to have a chat, discuss housing matters and work with us to improve housing services for our tenants.

Have fun and make a difference by contacting us to find out more:

Email: [tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk](mailto:tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk)

Phone: **0300 123 4566**



## Tenant participation strategy review

Your involvement helps us to identify improvements in the way we work and improve the quality of the services we deliver.

Our tenant participation strategy will soon be due for review. The strategy is required by law and sets out how we will encourage and support tenants to help make, and influence, decisions about housing services.

You can view our current tenant participation strategy and the opportunities for involvement on our website at [www.moray.gov.uk/tenantparticipation](http://www.moray.gov.uk/tenantparticipation).

We are proud of our achievements during the course of the current strategy including:

- Being one of eight landlords in Scotland selected to take part in the Scottish Government's Next Steps Program

- Introducing more options for digital involvement such as the Moray Council Tenants Facebook group
- A review of the estate improvement budget
- Continuing to work with tenant representatives and other landlords to share ideas, good practice and resources.

We want to hear from tenants who would like to be part of the review. You can register an interest at [tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk](mailto:tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk) or phone **0300 123 4566** and we will contact you when we have more information.





# TPAS Conference 2019

**Leonora, one of our tenant representatives, is a member of the Moray Tenants' Forum. She attended the TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) conference back in December with one of our officers and shares her story below:**

"We left Elgin about 8 in the morning and had an excellent drive down to the Fairmont Hotel in Saint Andrews. We tried the new road, missing out Aberdeen completely, and were a little surprised to find there wasn't a single restaurant or cafe on the way down. After being stuck in a huge traffic jam, we eventually arrived to a very warm welcome at the Fairmont Hotel where we were glad of the refreshments on offer. The Saint Andrew's choir were singing Christmas carols and lots of people were milling around. After checking in and travelling the very long corridors, I found my room which was gorgeous with two double beds and a bathroom big enough to have a party in. It was absolutely beautiful.

We went downstairs the first evening to find a variety of stalls lined up along one of the corridors. Stalls included the Police offering safety guidance, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, and the Simba stall which is a charity that helps bereaved parents who have lost babies during pregnancy or at birth.

Dinner was served by the amazing staff who have many accolades for their service and I can see why. During the evening we were royally entertained with a panto, *Tinder Fella*, which was very amusing and very well presented.

Next morning, after breakfast, we attended our chosen workshops. I had picked 'Comedy in Confidence' which was presented by Anna Devitt who is a comedienne, entrepreneur, speaker and writer. Her idea was to take us out of our comfort zones and show us how to deal with given situations, using our voices to create change and gain confidence. We had to act out various scenarios which was very good and showed us what we could do. We had masks and small props to help us. Laughter yoga therapy is a scientifically proven health benefit which uses breathing and laughter to release endorphins to the brain, and create a feeling of happiness. We were told to stand up and be counted, be confident and proud of what we do!

My next workshop was 'Living well with frailty'.

This workshop was about helping people who are vulnerable or frail to live in their own homes long-term, with the right support provided at the right time. It was presented by Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) and was very interesting. HIS told us about an app which has been developed which can pick up on what is needed in the home. It is hoped this app will become widely available in GP surgeries and communities. Fife have developed a charm bracelet that gives a readout of any problems every week so appropriate care can be delivered. HIS are working with health and social care partnerships and GPs through a national collaborative to improve early identification, anticipate care planning and share decisions made for people over 65 who are suffering from frailty.

Next on my list was 'When Governance goes right' where Stacy Angus from Osprey housing spoke about the link between tenant engagement and governance in delivering best outcomes. Rural tenant consultations were discussed and Stacy told us that all Osprey housing staff have tablets so they can go out and meet their customers face to face and find out what matters to them.

After lunch we gathered to hear about Blackwood's project to create a neighbourhood model of beautiful, accessible gardens where everyone lives and thrives independently. Blackwood want everyone to get involved with planting, beautifying, and creating greenery in their local areas.

Later that evening, after another lovely dinner, we were entertained by the students of St Andrews and their beautiful 'Strictly Come Dancing' routines. The dresses were gorgeous and elegant and we were invited up to join in and have fun practicing our dances.

The second morning, after breakfast, we gathered for our last workshop which was about scrutiny. Scrutiny helps the Council to focus on what tenants need and deliver the best service possible. The objective of scrutiny is to improve the housing and well-being of tenants and residents in Scotland by working together with landlords to plan and deliver housing services.

After a very full but very enjoyable couple of nights in St Andrews, we headed back to Elgin where I was looking forward to sharing all I had learnt with the other members of the tenant group.



# Paying your rent



The Coronavirus pandemic has caused uncertainty for everyone. We realise that many of you may have been self-isolating or shielding at home, and you may have fallen behind with your rent payments. This could be due to the financial pressures of being furloughed, becoming unemployed or working on a reduced hour's contract. We want to work together, with you, to make sure you do not suffer any financial hardship. Please let us know if you are having difficulties paying your rent because your income has been reduced.

The Scottish Government have said that during the Coronavirus pandemic there will be no evictions granted by the courts for non-payment of rent. Although we are not carrying out evictions at this time, rent accounts will continue to be monitored and reviewed. It is important you maintain your rent payments to secure your tenancy. If you are struggling to pay your rent, we can help. We will work with you to prevent rent arrears building up during these difficult times and there are things we can do, such as set up a repayment agreement with you. This lets you bring your rent account back up to date over a longer time.

We can make sure you are getting all the financial support you are eligible for. You may be able to claim universal credit or discretionary housing payments or get help from the Scottish welfare fund. We know it can be confusing and upsetting to claim benefits if this is something you have never had to do before, and we want to help you through the process.

Our housing officers have been keeping in touch with tenants by phoning them for welfare checks. They can advise you about other sources of financial support that may be available to help you and your family through this

time. They can refer you to our income maximisation team for money advice, or to food and baby banks and the Coronavirus hub. All these agencies will be able to help make things easier for you. If you want to talk to your housing officer about any concerns you can phone our contact centre on **0300 1234 566** and they will ask your housing officer to give you a call.

It is really important that you stay in touch with us and let us know if your circumstances change in any way. You should make sure that we have your up to date contact details so we can get in touch with you to offer support and advice as information changes frequently. When you make contact please update our staff if your contact details have changed. You can also update your contact details by filling in our census form online at:

<https://bit.ly/3IKIWm2>

If you can still manage to pay your rent, then you should continue to pay in the usual way.

**You can pay:**

- By credit or debit card
- At the Post Office or any PayPoint outlet, using your plastic payment card
- By setting up a Standing Order or Direct Debit
- By Housing Benefit

If you want to discuss anything then please get in touch. We are here to help you.

Contact us:

Email: [housing@moray.gov.uk](mailto:housing@moray.gov.uk)

Phone: **0300 1234 566**

## Are you claiming **Universal Credit** for the first time?

Making a new claim for Universal Credit to help you pay your rent can be a complicated process. Any help towards your rent payments will usually be paid as part of your Universal Credit payment. If this is the first time you have had to claim help to meet your rent payments, you may have some questions or concerns.

We have produced a new leaflet to help answer any questions you may have. Your housing officer will send you a copy of the leaflet when they know you have made a claim. It can also be found on our website at:

[www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file133394.pdf](http://www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file133394.pdf)

Our leaflet explains what will happen after you have made your claim, when you will start to receive payments and

how frequently they will be paid. It provides advice and information about what to do if you are in financial crisis or if your Universal Credit payment does not cover your full rent amount.

It is your responsibility to pay your rent to us. If you are having financial difficulty, it is important that you tell us as soon as possible. Our leaflet explains how we can help you if you are accruing rent arrears. You can choose to have your housing costs paid directly to us or we can apply for direct payments on your behalf. This is explained in the leaflet in more detail.

You will find more information in the leaflet including what to do if your circumstances change and how to get help with budgeting. There is also a list of useful contact details if you need further advice or help.

**UC** Universal  
Credit

the tenants'  
**VOICE**



# LIFT scheme

If you want to buy your own home but don't think you can afford the full price, the LIFT scheme could help you. It is a 'Low Cost Initiative for First Time Buyers' and as a council tenant, you could receive up to 40% towards the cost of buying a new home. This contribution from the government depends on the amount of mortgage you can get and the value of the property you want to buy. You will not be able to apply for the scheme if you can raise more than 90% of the value of the property

By using the scheme, you would have full ownership of the percentage of the property that you hold, and the government would own the additional shares. It is possible to increase your share of the property over time. There are property size and price thresholds, so you would only be able to buy a property which is suitable for your needs. If you ever choose to sell the property, the government will get back their share of the money.

There are two different LIFT schemes. The 'Open Market Shared Equity' scheme provides financial help to buy a home which is for sale on the open market. The 'New Supply Shared Equity' scheme helps people buy a new-build home from a council or housing association.

It is advisable to speak to a mortgage adviser before applying for the LIFT scheme. You will be asked to provide a mortgage agreement in principle when you apply for the scheme, and a mortgage adviser will be able to give you specialist advice.

If you are interested in the LIFT scheme, further information can be found on the Scottish Government website: [www.gov.scot/policies/homeowners](http://www.gov.scot/policies/homeowners)

You can apply for the scheme on the mygov.scot website: <https://bit.ly/2DFotsk>

## New build housing

The Coronavirus pandemic saw the closure of building sites in March as the country went into lockdown. This caused delays for our new build housing developments in Hopeman and Mosstodloch. The Hopeman site offering 22 new homes was due to be complete by Spring but this timeframe has now been extended. The site will provide 8 one-bedroom flats, 8 two-bedroom bungalows and 6 three-bedroom houses. The development in Mosstodloch, which was due to be complete by the Summer, has also been extended. It will provide 30 new homes which are a mix of flats, bungalows and houses. This includes 4 larger four-bedroom properties which will accommodate families of up to 7 people. We want to avoid overcrowding wherever possible and will allocate our three and four-bedroom homes to households where overcrowding is most severe.

There is more demand for larger homes than there is supply. Along with our new build programme, we try to address this issue through our downsizing incentive scheme. This scheme encourages tenants with homes which are too big

for their needs, to move to smaller accommodation. They must have three or more bedrooms and be willing to move to a smaller home. We can offer them priority for a smaller new build home in an area they want to live in, which releases larger properties to relet to overcrowded families. There are a range of incentives we can offer to tenants who want to use the scheme including financial payments and practical assistance.

You can find out more about our downsizing scheme by reading our leaflet:

[www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file102117.pdf](http://www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file102117.pdf)

You can read more about our current new build programme on our website:

[www.moray.gov.uk/moray\\_standard/page\\_84428.html](http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_84428.html)



## Stock condition survey

We have a duty to maintain our housing stock to a certain standard known as the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS). We also have to make sure we meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESHS) by the end of the year.

We told you in our last newsletter about the stock condition survey. We had planned for this to be in progress by now, but due to the Coronavirus pandemic it has been

delayed. We hope to carry out the stock condition survey as soon as it is safe to do so. This survey will assess the internal and external condition of 25% of our housing stock which will provide us with costs for our maintenance programme over the next 30 years.

We will let you know when the survey is due to start as your property may be chosen to be surveyed. It is important that we maintain your home and find out how to target our maintenance where it is most needed.

## PLEASE DO NOT FEED THE SEAGULLS!



We receive a lot of complaints about seagulls and the nuisance these birds bring to residential areas. Although they are beautiful animals, they are responsible for damage to properties, they cause noise pollution and create health risks and mess from their droppings. During the breeding season they can become aggressive if they feel under threat and may swoop down on children or pets. This can be frightening and dangerous.

We understand how frustrating it can be when you see people feeding the seagulls. We know this attracts the birds into housing areas where they may attack people and steal food. It is not against the law to feed the gulls which means we are unable to issue fines, but we do display posters to discourage bird feeding. We know the damage that seagulls can cause to properties where they can disturb roof tiles, block gutters and chimneys, and their droppings can lead to erosion of buildings.

In response to your concerns, we appointed a licensed contractor as part of a trial to remove nests, eggs and birds. The trial covers the Elgin area only and is available to both council and private occupiers, although it ends in September. Until the trial ends, problems with gulls can be reported by email to [elgingulls@moray.gov.uk](mailto:elgingulls@moray.gov.uk). We can check if your home falls within one of the contract areas and let you know what we can do.

You can help to stop seagulls nesting in residential areas by following some basic guidelines:

- Do not drop litter or food scraps as this will encourage seagulls into the area. It is also an offence and can lead to a fixed penalty notice for littering.
- Use bird feeders if you want to feed other birds as gulls are not able to feed from them.
- Make sure that your household waste is disposed of properly and bins are secured so seagulls cannot access waste.
- Have consideration for your neighbours and do not feed the seagulls. This will help to keep them away from residential areas.

Visit our website to find out more, and read our information sheets on seagulls and other wild birds: [www.moray.gov.uk/moray\\_standard/page\\_82583.html](http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_82583.html)

## Sheltered housing news

We do not have our usual stories and photos about life in sheltered housing to share with you in this edition. This is because the majority of our sheltered housing tenants have been shielding and groups and activities have been suspended due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Olive Scotson, Supported Accommodation Officer for the Sheltered Housing Warden Service, told us:

“The necessary measures the Scottish Government is taking to slow the spread of Coronavirus has had a huge impact on everyone in many different aspects of their life, including how we deliver the warden service.

We have had to adapt quickly and deliver our service in a different way, whilst following Government advice, to prevent the spread of the virus. The guidance from Health Protection Scotland has always been to maintain social distancing when visiting our tenants.

Our wardens are providing a housing support service 7 days a week, between the hours of 8am and 3.30pm, and an ‘on call’ service between 11pm and 8am the next morning. Their daily welfare visits have been replaced with telephone support.

The wardens respond to alarm calls and attend to tenants in their accommodation for emergencies as and when required. They will ask a couple of questions about Coronavirus before any visit to find out if their tenants are self-isolating or have any symptoms of the virus. All our wardens have been issued with the appropriate personal protective equipment should this be required.

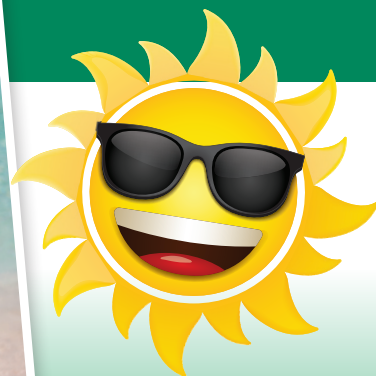
Community groups in all areas of Moray have been assisting and supporting our more vulnerable tenants by providing a shopping service, home cooked meals and a sociable phone call for tenants who live alone. Our staff and tenant’s safety and wellbeing remains our primary focus, and we look forward to a time when we can all be together again in a more normal environment.”



# Summer safety

Summer is here at last! We have been looking forward to it more than usual this year, after months of following Government guidance to stay inside. It is important to stick to the Scottish Government's advice on social distancing when outdoors. Make sure that the excitement of getting out and about to enjoy the weather, does not mean you forget basic summer safety as well. Have plenty of fun without any of the dangers this time of year can bring.

- 1. Sun protection.** Make sure you apply sun creams and lotions carefully to cover all exposed skin. Application is more important than sun protection factor numbers and stick to a spray-based sunscreen which is easier to apply than an oily lotion. Sun creams should be applied even when the sky is cloudy as the sun can still reach your skin.
- 2. Mosquito protection.** As well as being annoying, mosquitos carry disease and should be avoided whenever possible. Use a good quality repellent all over your arms and legs, especially if you are near open water.
- 3. Water safety.** If you are enjoying pool activities or water sports, always make sure children are supervised and have proper floatation devices. Even adults should go in pairs to take part in water sports and all water sports equipment should be in good condition.
- 4. Keep hydrated.** Make sure you drink plenty of water in warm weather. If it is particularly hot, make sure you spend time in the shade and drink regularly to prevent dehydration which can make you seriously ill.
- 5. Food safety.** Keep food sealed and covered up until it is ready to eat. If you are out for a picnic, try and keep your food out of the sun, perhaps leaving it in the shade or the boot of the car until you are ready for it. When having a barbecue, make sure any meat is properly refrigerated before use and cooked all the way through. Always wash your hands before you prepare or eat food to prevent contamination.
- 6. First aid.** Make sure you have a 'ready to go' first aid kit. This should include basic items such as plasters, antibacterial gel or foam, antibiotic ointment, sterile gauze, clean washcloths, cold pack, thermometer and antihistamine tablets. These basics mean you will be able to deal with minor accidents and ailments.
- 7. Dress appropriately.** Babies and children should be dressed to protect them from the hot weather and avoid sunburn. A sunhat with a wide brim or a flap at the back will protect their head and neck and a parasol should be attached to pushchairs to keep them out of direct sunlight. Make sure older children wear t-shirts when out in the sun or in the water for long periods to prevent sunburn.





# Summer staycations

The Coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on all of us. Our health and social care workers have been busy on the front-line helping people through this difficult time, people have been working from home, schools and businesses have been closed and building sites shut down. Travel plans have been disrupted as many parts of the world have gone into lockdown, and holidays have been cancelled.

As the world slowly tries to get back to normal, it may be worth thinking about staying in Scotland for your next holiday. We have an abundance of natural beauty from mountains and forests to lochs and sandy beaches. If remote and picturesque landscapes are not your scene, you could head for the cities of Edinburgh or Glasgow for cultural days and vibrant nights as the cities start to slowly open up again.

Scotland has wildlife like nowhere else in the UK. Red deer, highland cows, otters, dolphins, whales and puffins are just some of the species to be seen. We also have a rich history from the battle grounds of Glencoe to castles such as Dunrobin, Urquhart and Edinburgh. Scotland has around 2000 castles some of which are ruins and some which are still lived in.

If sport is your passion Scotland has countless golf courses, outdoor pursuits such as fishing, skiing and hill walking and is the home of curling. If you prefer to relax with a drink, a holiday in Scotland would

not be complete without a visit to one of its 100+ distilleries. Scotland is also responsible for over half the gin production in the UK and is home to over 100 craft breweries.

Distance is another reason for holidaying in Scotland. Travelling close to home means no crowded airports and long flights to endure. It can also save money as staycations often work out cheaper than a holiday abroad.

If you have children to keep entertained, Scotland is full of magical locations. These include the fairy pools on the isle of Skye, Puck's Glen near Dunoon and Fingal's Cave on the Isle of Staffa. Fans of Harry Potter can take the Jacobite Steam Train from Fort William which goes over the Glenfinnan Viaduct where Harry Potter was filmed.

The Coronavirus epidemic has meant the closure of many Scottish hospitality businesses and the loss of jobs. Why not help these businesses begin to grow again by using their services as they open back up. Spending your holiday in Scotland will result in much needed income for hotels and guest houses, caravan parks and tourist attractions, restaurants, cafes and bars. You can have a great holiday spending quality time with your family or friends whilst helping your country to recover so life can get back to normal for us all.

For more ideas about where to visit in our wonderful country check out the Visit Scotland website at [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)



Dunrobin Castle.



Highland Cows.

# How does your garden grow?

We appreciate that most of our tenants take pride in their gardens and their green fingered skills produce gardens filled with colour, scent and beauty. If you are a keen gardener and think your garden is a sight to be seen, send us a photo of it. We will publish some of them in our next edition of the newsletter.

Email your garden photos to us by no later than 30 November 2020. Enter 'Tenants' Voice Garden Competition' as your subject header and send your email to [tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk](mailto:tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk). Remember to include your name, address and contact details.

**Please note that we can't accept photos sent by post at this point, only by email.**

## REAP (Rural Environmental Action Project)

is based in Keith. It is a developmental charity whose aim is to see a future where everyone can afford to eat healthy meals and heat their home sufficiently. They also work to protect the environment and help to fund local wind farms. REAP carry out consultation and evaluation work on community projects that fit into their values of environmental and sustainable development. They also act as a donation drop off point for Moray Food Plus, Moray School Bank and Moray Supports Refugees.

Their 'Grow Elgin' project has recently received a grant from the Climate Challenge Fund. This means they can continue their work with community groups, schools and individuals for at least two more years. This work includes growing local fruit and veg, harvesting and composting, cooking and eating local seasonal food whilst reducing waste, and increasing awareness of how to reduce the carbon footprint. Workshops and courses are free and volunteer days are also held in Cooper Park in Elgin twice a month. As well as learning new skills, these sessions also provide an opportunity to meet new people and get out in the open air for some light exercise.

These sessions are currently suspended due to the Coronavirus pandemic and will re-start when it is safe to do so.

A great deal of importance is placed on composting. Keeping food waste out of landfill by composting helps



to reduce methane gas which is very damaging for the environment. It also produces valuable home-made fertiliser which helps to grow strong plants. REAP encourage community composting through their free waste collection service. They will collect food waste such as fruit and veg peelings, teabags and coffee grounds, from local businesses who have no space to carry out their own composting. The waste will be collected by bicycle to prevent vehicle emissions and will then be composted by REAP locally. You can find out more about the 'Grow Elgin' project and REAP's other projects by visiting their website at:

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

REAP can be contacted at:

177 Mid Street, Keith, Moray AB55 5BL

Phone: **01542 888 070**

Email: [info@reapscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@reapscotland.org.uk)





# Summer Wordsearch

U	Y	R	F	Y	Q	S	Q	G	N	F	R	I	D	B	K	L	E	Z	G
C	G	P	A	R	A	S	O	L	Y	C	H	B	V	S	Q	D	E	K	D
L	Z	U	Z	T	S	M	A	E	R	C	N	U	S	R	U	J	S	T	S
Z	S	Y	P	K	A	M	T	J	B	I	Z	P	D	X	M	B	G	G	U
L	X	I	R	S	N	P	Y	D	X	N	F	E	W	T	H	Z	W	N	N
U	S	H	V	D	D	G	T	L	C	C	Y	A	D	I	L	O	H	I	S
U	Y	R	I	J	A	S	S	B	K	I	J	P	R	U	H	M	A	M	H
M	A	E	S	P	L	E	A	I	S	P	K	I	R	S	U	O	I	M	I
K	S	V	O	C	S	R	D	R	N	W	A	Y	E	M	T	B	Y	I	N
Q	N	O	F	K	B	J	Z	D	O	H	I	J	H	I	G	L	N	W	E
L	L	M	N	E	G	Q	I	D	C	N	Z	S	U	W	F	K	N	S	D
B	O	U	C	U	S	A	V	K	P	C	G	Q	O	S	M	M	I	B	T
P	R	U	A	N	R	T	C	S	E	S	S	A	L	G	N	U	S	Y	L
T	E	J	N	K	R	E	I	O	U	O	E	G	V	L	P	Z	Q	D	W
U	U	L	Y	G	D	J	I	V	M	N	D	I	Z	E	Y	Z	M	N	C
U	M	J	Z	E	E	B	Q	M	A	F	B	B	L	U	W	Z	S	P	B
B	U	V	L	G	I	R	W	N	Z	L	R	A	B	L	J	L	B	M	U
C	C	X	N	I	C	S	S	D	M	C	S	M	T	K	O	R	H	M	K
K	X	B	E	A	C	H	A	A	R	A	M	S	V	H	U	L	F	M	K
P	L	L	M	M	K	Z	J	P	H	L	R	N	S	X	E	R	X	W	L

SUNSHINE | SUNGLASSES | POOL | SWIMMING | TRUNKS | PICNIC | MOSQUITO | SUNCREAM  
 BEACH | HOLIDAY | LOLLIES | SUNBATHE | SWIMSUIT | SANDALS | SARONG | DECKCHAIR  
 PARASOL | FESTIVALS | BARBECUE | LOUNGER

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....Postcode:.....

Phone number:.....

Email address:.....

**To be entered into our prize draw for a £20 shopping voucher please complete the wordsearch and send it to us by no later than 30 November 2020.**

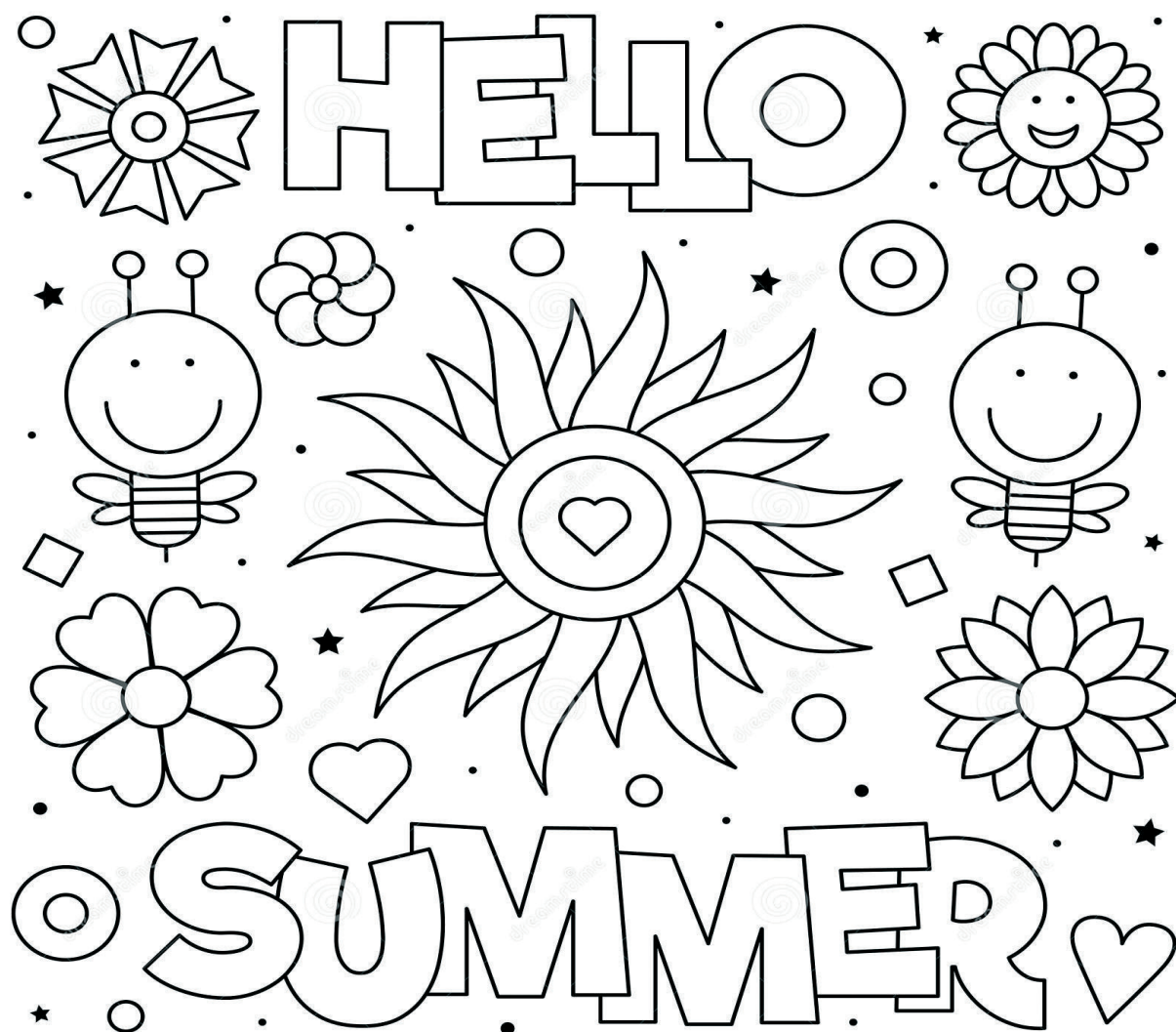
You can post it to us at: **Summer 2020 Competition**, Housing & Property, PO Box 6760, Elgin, IV30 1BX.

## CONGRATULATIONS

The winner of the Winter 2019 wordsearch competition was Ms Loraine More from Elgin.  
 A £20 shopping voucher will be winging its way to Lorraine for her to spend in  
 the shops now that they are opening up again.



# Children's summer colouring competition



The best colouring in, as selected by our judges, will win a £10 shopping voucher.

**Please send completed pictures to us by no later than 30 November 2020**

You can post it to us at **Summer Colouring Competition**, Housing & Property,  
PO Box 6760, Elgin, IV30 1BX.

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....Postcode:.....

Phone number or email address: .....

## CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Kenzie Simpson, aged 4, from Buckie who was the winner of the Winter 2019 colouring competition.

Kenzie was delighted with his shopping voucher as you can see from his smiling face. Well done Kenzie!



# COVID-19 Home Fire Safety Checklist



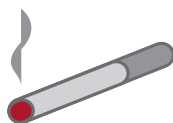
With all of us spending more time at home due to COVID-19 there can be an increased risk of fire.

Here are some steps to help you stay safe in these challenging times:

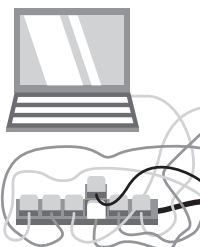
- ☐ **Don't leave cooking unattended and don't** cook if you're tired, under the influence of alcohol or drugs or on strong medication.



- ☐ If you smoke, **smoke outside**, at an open external door or window and never while under the influence. **Always use an appropriate ashtray.**



- ☐ Using a laptop? Make sure it's placed on a hard surface **to prevent overheating.**



- ☐ **Always turn** computers and laptops **off at night.**

- ☐ **Don't overload** electrical sockets.

- ☐ Make sure all common areas and exits are **kept clear** of any combustible materials and don't leave any items in escape routes.



- ☐ With bin collections reduced at this time it is important that flammable items like cardboard or paper are **safely stored.**



At night when you go to bed:

- ☐ Ensure white goods such as washing machine, dishwashers or tumble dryer are **switched off**, and **never used while sleeping or out.**



- ☐ **Switch off** all electrical appliances not designed to be left on overnight.



- ☐ **Don't leave** chargeable items like phones and tablets **charging overnight.**

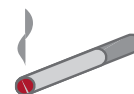


- ☐ **Turn off** portable heaters and put a fire-guard around the fire place.

- ☐ Keep mobility aids and any methods of calling for help **accessible** for a cared for person.



- ☐ Before going to bed, check any candles and cigarettes are **extinguished.**



- ☐ Make sure the main door keys are **accessible and in a safe place.**



- ☐ **Close all the internal doors** before going to bed.



And finally:

- ☐ Make sure you have **working smoke alarms.** Test them **once a week.**

