

WEST WORLD

Official Newsletter of West of Scotland Housing Association

We have a Community Champion

Do you know a neighbour who stands out for the voluntary work they do for the community? We think community champions should be recognised for the positive effect they have, so we asked staff and tenants to nominate individuals who go the extra mile. We are happy to announce that Community Champion 2016 is Janette Oliver from Fernhill!

Janette has organised voluntary activities in Fernhill for over 50 years. She played an active role in forming the Fernhill WSHA Tenants & Residents Association (TRA) in 2009 when she moved to her new build WSHA house. TRA has organised many fantastic Christmas parties for children over the years. The organisation of Fernhill summer fete has also been a success thanks in part to Janette who provided regular updates to the Association. Hundreds of people attended the event which was a great day out for the tenants of Fernhill. Janette is also a member of The Fernhill Neighbourhood Board, WSHA Tenants Advisory Group (TAG) and is tenant inspector for the WSHA Rate Your Estate initiative.

During summer Janette organises activity trips such as days out to Blair Drummond and runs regular community events including a weekly bingo night, a tea dance and a men's group at the community centre.

In addition to heading up events, Janette keeps an eye on the community in general and is always looking out for her neighbours.

Michael Gallagher, Housing Services Manager at WSHA said: "Janette is a true pillar of the community in Fernhill and it is thanks to her that there is such a thriving social scene. She has been a respected and valued resident for many years and is well deserving of recognition. The community is lucky to have her and we wish her all the best for the future!"



Welcome



It's been a busy few months at WSHA with lots of improvements taking place. We launched our window and door replacement programme at Broomhouse in Glasgow and we have had great feedback from tenants who are enjoying the improvement to their homes. The programme will continue into the New Year with residents on Witch Road (Kilmarnock), Hamilton Court (Ayr), Charles Street (Kilsyth) and Crookston Road (Glasgow) also benefiting from the programme.

We celebrated the launch of 18 new homes on Law Street, Yate Street and Stamford Street in Barrowfield, Glasgow, with a ministerial visit from Kevin Stewart MSP and were entertained by the pupils of St Anne's primary at the Barrowfield Community Centre, renamed by everyone in the neighbourhood. You can read more about all the services that the community hub has to offer on page 4.

Further changes include a review of staff structure to make sure the right people are in the right place to deliver the best services to you. These changes include the possible closure of the Cowlares office, which you can read about on page 9.

Finally, following a customer survey looking at the quality of our day to day repairs service, we are delighted that the level of customer satisfaction has risen from 75% in March, to 90% now. Find out more on page 11.

If you have anything you would like to contact me about then please do not hesitate to get in touch on 0141 550 5600 or lynne.donnelly@westscot.co.uk. You can also follow our latest news and events on our Facebook (WSHAScotland).

Best wishes,

Lynne Donnelly

Lynne Donnelly
Chief Executive

Festive Opening Hours

Our office will be closed over Christmas and New Year on the following days:

2016

Saturday 24 December

Sunday 25 December

Monday 26 December

Tuesday 27 December

Wednesday 28 December

Thursday 29 December

Friday 30 December

Saturday 31 December

2017

Sunday 1 January

Monday 2 January

Tuesday 3 January

Wednesday 4 January



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Community Celebrations

To celebrate the launch of WSHA's newest housing development in Barrowfield, WSHA was joined by the Minister for Local Government and Housing, Kevin Stewart MSP and Councillor George Redmond, Executive Member for Jobs, Business and Investment at Glasgow City Council. The latest £2.4 million development consists of 18 amenity homes designed for older people with two ground floor flats being designated for wheelchair users.

Kevin Stewart MSP said: "This development will provide affordable, good quality social rented housing in the area. We have committed to deliver 50,000 more affordable homes over the next five years."

Other recent physical regeneration in Barrowfield includes a new community park and improved recreational facilities at the Barrowfield Community Centre.

Rita Gallagher, a resident from Barrowfield who has witnessed the physical regeneration of the community said: "I have lived in Barrowfield for 44 years and there have been a lot of improvements since WSHA started working in the area. I was lucky enough to get one of the new amenity homes and it has been a fantastic move for me. It is great having the outdoor space and there is already a sense of community spirit."



Create, craft, and share a cuppa

The Men's Shed movement is taking the UK by storm and WSHA wants you to get involved. Projects in Australia found that men prefer to socialise when they are busy 'doing' rather than sitting. We would like to launch some activity sheds where men can get involved in activities like making, mending, carpentry, bike repair, art, computing, gardening and model engineering. Members can share tools and resources and work at their own pace. Want to get involved?



Kilmarnock has been identified as a potential venue for our first Shed so we would particularly like to hear from tenants there. Please get in touch to let WSHA know what you think.

Contact Michelle Riley, Volunteer Coordinator, on 0141 5505663 or michelle.riley@westscot.co.uk. Find out more here scottishmsa.org.uk

Molly Weir Garden

It's been a busy time at the Molly Weir Garden! New wooden planters have arrived courtesy of the former nursery on Gourlay Street. This gives lots more growing space for volunteers and community members in the spring. In October, the garden hosted a Halloween party for local families with fancy dress, party games and refreshments. It was a perfectly spooky venue for the event!

We would like to thank North Glasgow Community Food Initiative who hosted the Molly Weir Garden Group on a lunchtime visit to their community allotment in Springburn. Volunteers enjoyed homemade vegetable soup and shared gardening hints and tips with staff and fellow gardeners.



Major Repairs for Broomhouse

Broomhouse Housing Association joined WSHA in 2015. There are 98 properties in Broomhouse, which is situated in Glasgow East.

As part of the Associations 2016/17 Major Repairs Programme, new UPVC windows and doors were installed in tenant's homes at a cost of £475,000. A drop-in session was held in August at Broomhouse Community Centre where tenants were able to see the windows and doors that were being installed, have a cup of tea and choose the colour and style they preferred for their home. Staff from WSHA and Sidey Ltd, our Contractor, were on hand to provide advice to tenants and answer any questions. Attendance at the drop-in session was excellent with around 60% of tenants coming along.

Broomhouse resident Marie Convery commended the workmen saying: "The boys did a brilliant job. There was a great atmosphere on the street while they worked with everyone bringing them teas and coffees. I made sure they had a full breakfast!"

Angela Wallace lives in Broomhouse with her son, Andrew. She said: "You can really feel the difference with the new windows, it's nice and cosy for Christmas time. The workers were lovely and they didn't leave any mess."

Work is scheduled to be completed by December 2016.



Andrew is getting into the festive spirit!

Update on cash payments

Cash Payments at our offices stop on 1st January 2017

We want to remind you that from 1st January 2017 we will no longer be accepting cash payments at our offices. We have a small number of tenants who prefer to pay their rent in this way, however there is a reduced demand for this service as more tenants switch to more convenient payment methods. If you are one of our regular cash payers at our offices, we will be writing to you directly about the other payment options available and offering you help with making this change.

The following range of methods for paying rent are available to tenants:

Direct Debit	This can be set up by completing a direct debit mandate with your housing officer at your sign up meeting or by contacting us on 0141 558 6336.
Allpay Rent Payment Card via Post Office and Paypoint	Your rent card will be issued to you 7-10 working days after sign up. Take your new card to an outlet and make payment with cash or debit/credit card
Online via Allpay at www.allpayments.net	Creating an account will allow you to make payments to your rent account with a debit/credit card. Please note you will need your rent card for this service
Allpay – phone 0844 557 8321	You will need your rent card number when making payments via this service with a debit/credit card
Phone the Association – 0141 558 6336	By providing your name, address and/or tenancy reference number payments can be made with your debit/credit card securely over the phone.
Allpay Mobile App	The Allpay Payment App stores your payment reference numbers, bank details and payment amounts securely and lets you make payments at your own convenience. You can download the free app from the Apple App Store, Windows Phone store or Google Play, or by scanning the barcodes: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Android QR Code</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Apple QR Code</p>  </div> </div>
Housing Benefit direct payment	If you receive Housing Benefit it is usually paid directly to the Association. If the payment doesn't cover your full rent amount you will have to pay us the remaining amount due to cover your full rent using any of the methods outlined above.

A Bright Future for

B A R R O W F I E L D

C O M M U N I T Y C E N T R E

Operated by Willowacre Trust

To coincide with the completion of new housing in Barrowfield, in August 2016 residents also celebrated the launch of newly renamed Barrowfield Community Centre. Tenants got together for coffee and a chinwag in the centre and enjoyed a beautiful performance from St. Anne's choir.

So why did we change the name? Working with our tenants and the wider community feedback highlighted that the name G31 was no longer viewed as the right fit. A consultation was undertaken with the community voting on the best new logo in line with the name Barrowfield Community Centre. Along with a name change, we distributed flyers with different designs to every household in Barrowfield and set up polling stations at the community centre and WSHA offices. You chose a colourful new design to represent your community hub.

The centre is a hive of activity and is home to a number of charities, support services and community spaces. A youth project organisation provides activities and opportunities for young people in the area and there is a cafe and shop run by local businesses. The Thriving Places Community team are also based at the community centre and they work across the Barrowfield, Parkhead and Dalmarnock communities.

There are also supported living and support organisations including Glasgow Council on Alcohol, John Orr Day Care and The Mungo Foundation.

Other improvements include the resurfacing of the multi-functional games area which has been upgraded with a 3G pitch and netting to stop balls escaping. Derelict land next to the centre has also been turned into a car park to reduce congestion. We look forward to seeing you at the centre soon!



A fond farewell

It is with a heavy heart that we inform readers that Pat McQuade, a tenant with the Association in Orchard House for around 18 years, has passed away. He lived with his wife Mrs Patricia McQuade and was an active member of the Management Committee for 3 years. He gave his all to the role and was a force to be reckoned with, always giving a strong opinion. Pat passed away in July this year at the age of 92 following a short illness. He is survived by wife Patricia who now resides in a local nursing home. Our thoughts are with Pat's family and friends, he will be missed.

Keep warm this winter

The Warm Home Discount Scheme

Keeping cosy in the winter months can be a financial struggle for many people and can lead to the dreaded choice: heat or eat. To avoid this dilemma, there is help at hand for the most vulnerable individuals.

The Warm Home Discount Scheme is a winter rebate applied directly to your electricity account between September 2016 and 31st May 2017. Any pensioner in receipt of guaranteed pension credit doesn't have to apply because their information is passed to their supplier directly and the payment is automatic. Everyone else who thinks they may be eligible must apply through their electricity supplier. Typically if your only source of income is benefits or pension or if your household income is less than £16,200 per year then you have a good chance of getting help.

You can apply either by calling your supplier, applying through their website or requesting a form to be sent out. You can also contact our Energy Advice Officer on 0141 550 5631 to make an application.

You can also contact our Energy Advice Officer on 0141 550 5664/0141 550 5631 to make an application.

The deadline for applications varies depending on the supplier but will usually close by the end of December. So please make sure your application is submitted as soon as possible.

The Affordable Warmth Dividend

Another scheme run by Glasgow City Council (GCC) is the Affordable Warmth Dividend. This is a payment of £100 per person given to help you keep warm during winter. This is only available to residents living in the GCC area who are over the age of 80 by 31st March 2017.

Applications can be made up to 31st March 2017 for this year. Previous applicants should have received a letter from GCC to invite them to apply for this year. If you have not then you can apply by contacting the Welfare Rights Team at WSHA, calling GCC on 0141 287 7961 or by going to your local Revenues and Benefits Centre. Once the applications are received you will typically receive your payment within 1 month either by BACS transfer or cheque.

It is also a good idea to check your energy bills and ensure that you receive the best deal available to you. According to the latest research, up to 38% of households don't switch their energy providers to save money and lose out on savings of £100 - £300 per year!

If you are interested in finding out more about this then please contact our Energy Advice Officer on 0141 550 5631 for more information.



The way we set your rent is changing - have your say on the proposals

WSHA is looking to change the way we set rents. The proposed changes will make for fairer rent setting for tenants. We also want to introduce a new method that is simpler and easier to understand, without the complexities of the current system.

Why is the current rent setting system unsuitable?

At present we use a points category which is based on the following criteria:

- Type of property (e.g. flat/4 in a block/ house)
- Size
- Number of bed spaces
- Condition
- Property attributes (e.g. kitchen type/heating type/window type)
- Location
- Other features (e.g. sheltered housing may have a supplement)

These categories are now outdated. For example, with very few exceptions our homes all have central heating so we can stop using this as a factor in rent setting. The improvements and planned maintenance we do means we have upgraded bathrooms and kitchens plus we provide double glazed windows. This means that these property attributes no longer need to be taken into account.

Is there anything else unsuitable about the current rent setting policy?

Besides being very complicated, which makes it difficult to implement, the current policy is inconsistent and can be unfair, since rents for the same size and type of property vary across the stock. We think we should be moving towards parity, where tenants can expect to pay the same rent for properties that are the same size and type.

What would be the basis of setting rents in the future?

We think rents would be simpler and fairer for everyone if we set a base rent and then added supplements for the type of property and the number of bedrooms. Some properties might occasionally have a rent adjustment where there is a reason for increasing or decreasing the rent. For example a property with an unmodernised kitchen or without central heating may have a lower rent, but not where the tenant has refused an upgrade.

Making the change fairly

If your current rent is lower than the proposed new target rent you will find your rent will need to increase to meet it. If your rent is higher than the target rent, your rent may stay the same until other properties in the same category catch up (although we will not reduce rents).

To reduce the impact and possible hardship of rent increases, phasing will be introduced. We will limit the amount of the increase to a set figure, no more than £25.00 per month until the rents align. This alignment or harmonisation process will take several years - in some cases as much as seven. Although it will be a long term process, it will create a better rent setting framework for everyone.

WSHA is not introducing these changes to raise more rent income. Our proposals are cost neutral and we will continue to set rents that are affordable and comparable with other social landlords and local authorities. These proposals are separate from the annual consultation and you will be soon be contacted for your views on the proposed rent for 2017/18.

What if I have a registered rent?

Registered rents are set by the Rent Officer every three years. We will take account of our rent setting policy at the time of your rent review.

Concerned or want more information?

If you would like to find out more about this proposal, you can speak to our dedicated help team by calling this Freephone number 0800 731 3772. A survey was sent to you with this newsletter along with a prepaid envelope. You can also complete it online here: <http://bit.ly/2g5kNh1>

Alternatively you can write to us at our Camlachie Office using the address below:

West of Scotland Housing Association
40 Barrowfield Drive
Glasgow
G40 3QH

Welfare Reform update



Benefits

In May/June of this year, The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) issued letters to claimants likely to be affected by the reduction in the amounts used in the benefit cap.

The changes are as follows:

- £500 per week for families and couples – this has now been reduced to £384.62 per week.
- £350 for single people – this has now been reduced to £257.69 per week.

Different amounts apply to the Greater London Areas. The DWP has confirmed that the new caps will be applied from 7th November 2016 in some areas and will be varied across others, depending on the Local

Authority Area. New letters advising those affected were issued, by the DWP, in late September.

The cap, in Universal Credit cases, is applied to the whole award. Those on Housing Benefit will only have it applied to this award with a guarantee of at least a £0.50 remaining, to allow for an application to be made for financial assistance to the Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme. There are some exceptions to the benefit cap which have been extended to Guardians and Carers.

If you receive notification that you are to be affected by this change, please contact our Welfare Rights Team on 0141 550 5662, who can offer you advice and assistance.

Universal Credit Rollout – revised timetable

In July the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) announced that the Scottish Job Centres going live with Universal Credit in November 2016 were in Port Glasgow, Greenock and Kirkintilloch.

A further announcement from DWP in November 2016 has set out the timescale for the full roll out of Universal Credit across Scotland.

All existing benefit claims will be migrated between July 2019 and March 2022 unless there is a change in their circumstances prior to these dates.

If you have any concerns about what this means for you or your family, please contact the Welfare Rights Team on 0141 550 5662.

Council Area	Date
East Ayrshire	October 2017
South Lanarkshire	October 2017
North Ayrshire	November 2017
South Ayrshire	February 2018
North Lanarkshire	April 2018
Glasgow	September 2018

Disability Living Allowance is ending

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is ending for people born after 8th April 1948, who are aged over 16. If you currently receive DLA and are in that age group, The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will write to you when it's time for your claim to end. They'll also tell you about Personal Independence Payment (PiP), the new benefit which replaces DLA.

When you get your letter, it is important to read all the information carefully before you decide if you want to make a PiP claim. If so, you need to call the DWP to start the process and they will send you a form. Should

you choose to make a claim, you have four weeks to respond or your DLA payments will stop.

If you need help completing the form, please contact our Welfare Rights Team on 0141 550 5662 who will be happy to assist. You may have to attend a face to face consultation, with a health practitioner, as part of the PiP process.

The DWP will write to you with a decision and explanation. If you think the decision is wrong, you will have a month from the date on the decision letter to request reconsideration.

Tackling anti-social behaviour

A key role of WSHA is to assist in the management of Anti Social Behavior (ASB) in our communities to ensure our tenants live in a safe and secure environment.

The nature of ASB varies greatly from minor neighbour disputes to serious criminal activity like drug dealing. The way in which ASB is reported is crucial to preventing it escalating or, where appropriate, referring to other authorities like the police.

WSHA has clear policy and procedures to deal with reports of ASB. When ASB is initially reported we divide the reports into one of three categories as follows,

Category 1 Solely a tenancy related issue

Category 2 A tenancy related issue that might also involve an element of criminal activity

Category 3 Primarily a criminal activity

Our response targets are based on the above categories as follows,

Category 1 Response within 5 working days

Category 2 Response within 3 working days

Category 3 Response by end of next working day

It is vital when reporting an ASB issue that is of a criminal nature that you also contact the police. They will give you a crime report number. If a case continues or escalates to the extent that WSHA needs to seek a court decree for eviction, it is crucial that we have a full record of events including police reports.

Early intervention can prevent problems escalating so the sooner we are informed the better the chance of early resolution, particularly with regard to neighbour disputes. In some neighbour dispute cases, we may suggest mediation as a method of resolving issues.

If you need to report ASB please contact your local Housing Officer for advice.



Proposed separation from the Gentoo Group

Many tenants may recall that back in 2012 the Association consulted you about proposals to enter into a partnership with a Housing Association based in Sunderland, the Gentoo Group. At the time we agreed that within five years we would review how the partnership progressed, and following comprehensive review, we are proposing a change.

Following severe cuts and financial restrictions affecting Housing Associations in England which resulted in the Gentoo Group cutting back on services, we have concluded that we can deliver tenant services more effectively by working independently. We will be giving tenants the opportunity to have their say with a consultation ballot.

Over the next few months you will have ample opportunity to find out what this would mean for you. Our staff will be out and about in your area providing information on the proposal and we will be working with independent tenant advisors (TIS) to ensure tenants are fully informed about how the proposal will affect them. A Freephone service will be available throughout the project so that tenants can to speak to TIS staff and give their views. Tenants will also have an opportunity to send questions via email.

Customer satisfaction

We use customer satisfaction to gauge how well we deliver our services and use the feedback to make improvements. We reported satisfaction levels across our services in our Annual Charter Report which was based on a large scale annual survey of one third of our tenants.

We also gather satisfaction with our services on a monthly basis and these surveys are carried out on our behalf by Research Resource. This helps us to demonstrate impartiality and transparency with the feedback.

There were 145 customers interviewed between July and September 2016 and the results are detailed below:

Overall satisfaction with the Association	Overall satisfaction with management of the neighbourhood	Overall satisfaction with repairs and maintenance	Overall satisfaction with factoring service
78%	79%	87%	75%

We have listened to feedback and have put a number of service initiatives in place:

Repairs

We appointed Carillion as our new day to day repairs Contractor in August 2016 and have introduced some service improvements. These include new repairs categories to improve completion times for jobs according to the category and urgency of work required, and an extended the contract to provide a daily service in Ayrshire. To ensure we better understand how our contractor is performing, we will carry out post inspections and customer satisfaction surveys of 20% of all tenants who had repairs carried out. This will provide us with more robust information on service levels.

Neighbourhoods

Almost half of those tenants who were dissatisfied with the management of their neighbourhoods cited grass cutting as the main reason. Our Housing Services Managers meet monthly with our Contractor, ISS, and raise these issues directly with them. In addition, we have put in place an enhanced tree management schedule targeting key areas of concern for our tenants.

We will continue to use customer satisfaction feedback to improve our services.

Changes at Cowlairs

Over recent months we've been reviewing how often tenants call into our office at Cowlairs and after careful consideration, the Association has decided to propose closing our North Glasgow office at Keppochill Road. If the closure goes ahead, we will be looking to provide alternative options for our North Glasgow tenants including a drop-in service and a local base for our Housing Officers and other staff. The drop-in service would be available at agreed times following a public consultation. We will be contacting residents in the area who are most affected by this proposal for their views.

The closure at Cowlairs makes sense financially for the Association and any savings we make will be reinvested in our tenant's homes. Our staff will be relocated to the Camlachie office in Glasgow where they will continue to manage our repairs service.

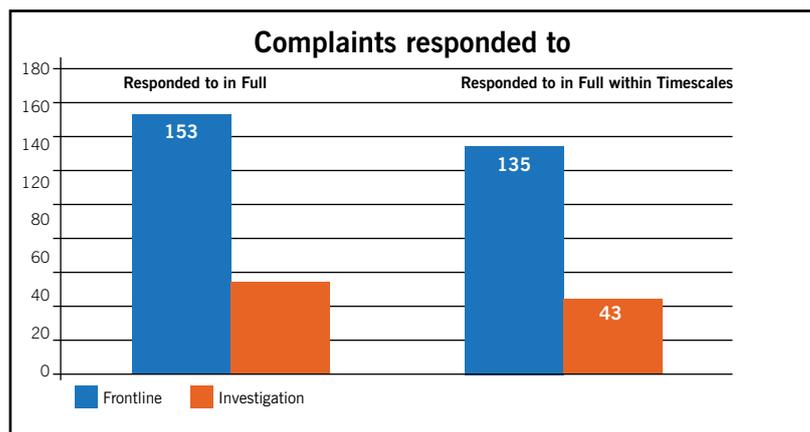


You complained - we listened!

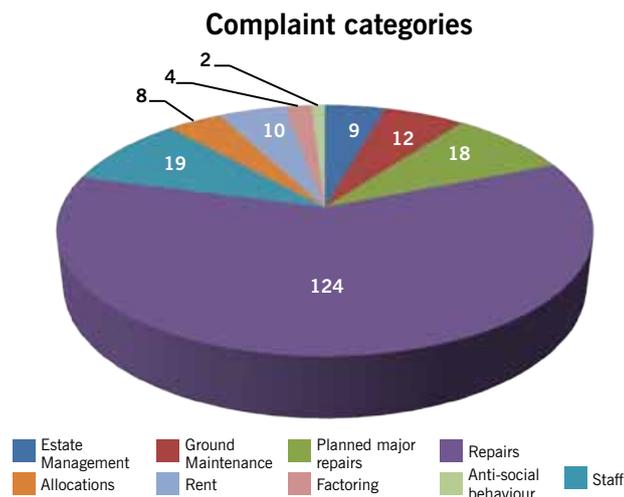
We value complaints because they provide us with valuable information we can use to improve the services we provide. Last year, in 2015/16, we received 206 complaints covering a range of our services. We aim to respond to complaints within timescales set out by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) which are 5 days where we can respond to them at the 'frontline' and 20 days where they need more 'investigation'.

The table below shows that we responded to 88% of 'frontline' and 81% of 'investigation' complaints within the SPSO timescales.

The highest number of complaints, 142, relate to repairs (124 day to day and 18 planned or major works) and the quality of services provided by the Association and its contractors. Our aim is to learn from complaints to reduce them in future. Our target is between 45% and 55%. Of the 206 complainants received, 115, or 55.82%, were upheld indicating that we felt the tenant had cause to be dissatisfied with the service. This is only slightly outwith our target range.



The chart opposite shows the breakdown of complaints



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The level of complaints upheld shows us more accurately where we have service failures and this is set out in the table below

Category	Complaint	What we've done
Day to day	Multiple visits for the same job	Introduced new repairs response categories
	Communication	Introduced an electronic tracker to identify contractor's whereabouts and update tenants
	Lengthy timescales	
Planned major works	Dissatisfaction with standard of work	Started post repair inspection surveys to analyse workmanship and feedback
Staff	Communication	Held tenant consultation events so residents can view new products and ask questions
	Lack of information	We have a full Major Repairs Programme for 2016/17 which all tenants have been advised about
Allocations	Communication	We plan to carry out refresher customer care training for all staff early in the New Year
	Lack of understanding	We hold regular meetings across departments to enhance communication and follow up complaints where necessary
	Lack of understanding of allocations policy	
	Communication	Introduced a housing options approach where every new applicant receives an interview rather than just completing a form. This means applicants are better informed about their options

Serving your
community,
saving you
money!

Christmas is a time of year many of us look forward to, although it can be difficult to pay for. You might be thinking of borrowing, but if you can't go to mainstream sources of credit like banks, resorting to some other lenders can be very expensive!

We can now process initial applications online and over the phone, call our friendly staff on **0141 276 0525** or visit our website, www.scotcash.net for more information.

£500 over 52 weeks	Scotcash	Provident
Loan	£500.00	£500.00
Admin Fee	£30.00	-
Weekly Repayment	£12.85	£17.50
Number of Repayments	52	52
Total Amount Repayable	£697.71	£910.00
APR	**108.2%	*272%
Total Saving	£212.29	-

* Loan featured on www.providentpersonalcredit.com at September 2016
 ** Rates may vary (All loans subject to status, terms and conditions apply.)

121.5% Scotcash Representative APR

What if I do not have a bank account?

We can usually help you to open one. Just explain that you don't have a bank account when you call and we will attend to this matter first with you.

Why are Scotcash loans affordable?

Our affordable credit is just that, affordable. The amount of interest you will pay compared to a home credit lender will be lower.

How flexible are you with repayments?

We collect payments direct from your bank account on a day of your choice. We can even let you take payment holidays, all we ask is that you let us know in advance.

Scotcash CIC | 55 High St, Glasgow, G1 1LX | 0141 276 0525 | www.scotcash.net

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