

Westworld

Official Newsletter of West of Scotland Housing Association

Spring 2019 Edition

Barrachnie Redevelopment

Tenants in Barrachnie are settling back into their homes after a large-scale redevelopment. Feedback from tenants has been very positive and they are feeling the benefits of the redevelopment. One tenant, John Sneddon has lived in his home for 42 years and it was the family home of his wife and her family since the 1940s.



John said, "At first I was reluctant to get the work done as I didn't want the hassle however I am happy I changed my mind. Everyone involved has been helpful and friendly and if I have needed something fixed it has been done straight away. Before the redevelopment the house could get quite cold but since I have moved back in it is much warmer."

The positive feedback was echoed by Euphemia Brisbane who has stayed in Barrachnie for 13 years. She commented, "I was a wee bit worried about getting the work done but I am glad I did as it has really improved my home life.

The process was straightforward

and when I was decanted the company even made sure to put my furniture in the same place I had it! Everyone has been so helpful and the work is great, my house feels a bit bigger."

WSHA began the £.1.2 million project in August 2018 with completion due in June 2019. The project has been undertaken by contractors including GDN and has included electrical re-wire, new kitchens and bathrooms and external paintwork.



Welcome



First of all I would like to take the opportunity to thank you all for your support since I took up post in 2015. It has been a busy few years and I feel I have achieved a great deal and leave WSHA in a strong position for the future.

I am delighted that our tenants in Barrachnie are so happy with our investment in redeveloping their homes. It has been a big project for our team and it is reassuring to hear that tenants have received an excellent level of service from WSHA and external contractors.

As I have mentioned in previous issues, like many other social landlords we are feeling the impact of Universal Credit and our Welfare Rights Team are dealing with an increasing caseload. Their hard-work and dedication is reflected in them securing a fantastic £1.1million in backdated and future income for tenants.

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 communications@westscot.co.uk. Remember you can also hear our latest news and events on our Facebook page (WSHAScotland).

Best wishes,

Lynne Donnelly

Lynne Donnelly
Chief Executive

Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey

You may recall in the previous Westworld we mentioned about our Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey.

We'd like to thank all of those who gave their time to speak with staff from Research Resource. We use the results from these surveys to deliver improved services to our customers. You will be able to read the full findings in our Tenant report that will be published in September.

Each tenant who completed the survey was entered into a prize draw and we can confirm that the lucky winner is Miss A McColm from Prestwick.

Key Highlights

Chief Executive Announces Retirement	3
WSHA in Bloom – Garden Competition	4
WSHA gives thousands of books to young tenants	6
Smoke Alarm Replacement Programme	8

Staffing Changes at WSHA

Chief Executive Announces Retirement

Lynne Donnelly, Chief Executive Officer at WSHA has announced her plans to retire in June 2019. Lynne took up post in 2015 and has guided WSHA through a number of key projects including the establishment of an ambitious new build programme, a refocus on putting tenants' needs at the heart of service delivery and overseeing separation from the Gentoo Group.

Ruth Simpson, Chair of WSHA, commented: "On behalf of WSHA and its' Board I would like to take this opportunity to thank Lynne for the hard work and commitment she has given to WSHA since joining us. With over 30 years of service within the housing sector she brought a wide range of skills and experience to help shape WSHA and its' future plans. We wish her the very best for her retirement."



Farewell to David and Mary

We said a fond farewell to David Henderson and Mary Hepburn as they started their new chapter of retirement. David retired after an impressive 32 years of service for WSHA. His role as Housing Officer for the Springburn Area will be taken on by Suzanne Quigley. Mary, a Senior Housing Officer, retired after a fantastic 24 years at WSHA and will also be missed! We would like to thank David and Mary for their hard work and dedication over the years in supporting our tenants and communities.



Grounds Maintenance Update

Tivoli Appointed as Grounds Maintenance Contractor

Our recent tender exercise for a new three year grounds maintenance contract has been won by Tivoli. Five of the contractors were interviewed by both staff and tenant representatives and tenders scrutinised with scorings based on price and quality. Tivoli had the current contract transferred to them from the original contractor, ISS and have recently modernised their IT systems which will allow WSHA to track progress and respond to issues that do arise. Tivoli will also be carrying out a comprehensive new tree survey for us.

Darren Mulligan, Area Manager for Tivoli, said: “We are very proud of our partnership with West of Scotland Housing Association, and are committed to delivering a quality service which everyone can be proud of. Our main focus will be to deliver a grounds maintenance service of the highest standard to the communities, and provide the right culture of continuous improvement, efficiencies and value of money to the WSHA and its tenants.”



We are well aware of the problems we had in ensuring contractor performance on this contract and the level of customer complaints received, particularly in years 1 and 2. We are looking for much stronger performance in the new contract. To signal our intent we will also be employing our own contract supervisor to oversee the Tivoli contract and keep a check that the contractor is meeting targets and quality standards.

WSHA in Bloom

**Are you daft about your daffodils and proud of your peonies?
Then take part in our 2019 Garden Competition.**

The competition, which is sponsored by Tivoli, will see three winners picked from each of our three areas – Glasgow, Ayrshire and Lanarkshire with the top prize being a £50 B&Q Voucher.

To nominate your garden please contact Sabrina Allan on 0141 550 5630 or communications@westscot.co.uk by Friday 10th May.

**Our judges will then visit your garden mid-August.
Good luck and get gardening!**

WSHA gives thousands of books to young tenants

WSHA has given 2,500 books to young tenants through its' participation in the Imagination Library, a book-gifting charity created by Dolly Parton.

One family to have benefitted from the book-gifting scheme is Michelle Fallon who highlighted: "I signed up my three young children when I first moved into my home four years ago. They all love getting a book personally delivered to them each month and are excited to see what one it will be. There are always really good books and we read them as a family as part of the bedtime routine."

The scheme has been funded since 2015 by WSHA's charitable subsidiary, Willowacre Trust and this is part of a wider Supporting Communities Strategy.



If you would like to sign-up your children for the Imagination Library please contact 0141 550 5664 or communitysupportservices@westscot.co.uk

As part of our celebrations for World Book Day 2019, we had a competition on our Facebook page – well done to Kate Webster, Annfrances Knox and Sammi Hart who each won a £20 book voucher. Keep your eyes on our Facebook page (WSHAScotland) for more competitions!

Staff go the extra mile for charity

Generous staff at WSHA have once again gone the extra mile to raise to raise £5,000 to benefit two charities – Cancer Research UK and Glasgow City Mission.

Since 2012, kind-hearted WSHA staff have raised a total of around £30,000 to support good causes. Each year staff support charities by taking part in a variety of fundraising activities including dress down days, charity auctions and raffles.



Lynne Donnelly, Chief Executive of WSHA said: "We are delighted to have raised this fantastic amount for two very worthwhile causes. As always our kind-hearted staff have gone the extra mile to raise funds for these two charities that do such tremendous work to help improve people's lives."

Joy Andrew, Glasgow City Mission, commented: "The generous donation of £2,500 will make a real and tangible difference in the lives of men and women affected by homelessness and poverty. It will help us provide care and food to people when they have hit rock

bottom and connect them to our range of services that help them improve their situations, grow in confidence and feel hopeful."

During 2019, WSHA will fundraise for North Glasgow Family Support (Action for Children) which provides support to families to help them live happier lives and the first fundraising challenge will see a group of staff taking part in the Kiltwalk – good luck team!

Tenant Engagement

Tenant Advisory Group

The Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) continues to meet every two months to work with us to oversee our approach to tenant engagement and to oversee the progress of our Tenant Engagement Strategy. TAG has had a number of discussions with Managers this year about our approach to void properties, and our updated Anti Social Behaviour Policy. They have also agreed some key areas of work for the year ahead.

Void Properties

Michael Gallagher the Housing Manager for Ayrshire and Glasgow attended the meeting in January to talk about our approach to managing void properties. Michael highlighted that it was important to allocate homes as quickly as possible to reduce the rental income that is lost, while also ensuring that homes are let to the 'Letting Standard'.



Void Pilot

TAG was advised that the Association were undertaking a pilot process to reduce the time it takes to allocate homes. This would involve slight changes to how we organise viewings of properties for prospective tenants, and some minor repairs being carried out after new tenants move in, with their agreement.

ASB Policy

As a result of changes to legislation introduced recently the Association has had to update their Anti Social Behaviour Policy slightly. TAG had the opportunity to provide comment on the draft in advance of the revised policy being approved by the Board.

The Year Ahead

In the year ahead TAG will work with us on a number of areas, including:

- A review of our Estate Management Procedures
- The development of opportunities for some of our younger tenants to get involved with us in a way that suits them
- The development of a 'readers panel' who will be able to check that the documents and correspondence the Association sends to customers are clear and easy to read

TAG will also continue to oversee the Rate Your Estate scheme. The Group have undertaken three visits already this year and you will be able to see the results of these inspections on our website. If you are interested in getting involved in this scheme, or want the inspectors to visit your area then please get in touch.

Update

Tenant Scrutiny

The Tenant Scrutiny Group continues to work with us to look at particular service areas and identify improvements that can be made. You can find the two reports about their work completed last year on our website.

In the coming year the Group will have three main tasks:

- Review how WSHA deals with complaints and identify any improvements that are needed to policies or procedures
- Review how WSHA manages the process from a tenant giving notice they are leaving their home until a new tenant moves into the home
- Check that the recommendations made as part of the previous years work has been undertaken

The Scrutiny Group are developing their ideas, but as with all scrutiny activities getting feedback from tenants will be an important part of the work. If you have had any experience of the complaints process, or any comments about the process of moving into your new home, that you want to share with the Group, then please get in touch.

The Scrutiny Group meets on the last Wednesday of each month in our Glasgow office. If you are interested in getting involved with tenant scrutiny then please do get in touch.

Rent Setting

As you will be aware you received a leaflet with the last Westworld outlining our proposals about your rent level from April 2019. We only received a low number of responses to this consultation and we will be working with TAG in the year ahead to try to increase the number of responses we receive. TAG have identified two key issues that they feel need to be addressed which will be implemented in future years. Firstly any consultation process has to take place earlier in the year and certainly before December. Secondly, TAG are clear that any proposals that go to tenants need to be much clearer. If you have any ideas as to how we can gather the views of more of our tenants please get in touch.



If you are interested in getting involved in our Tenant Advisory Group, or want to speak to our Tenant Engagement officer about other ways you can get involved, then please get in touch on 0141 550 5060, or at haveyoursay@westscot.co.uk

Smoke Alarm Replacement Programme



We take the safety of our tenants very seriously and will be increasing the number of alarms within your house by March 2020. We will be installing a smoke alarm in every living room, spaces such as hallways and landings and a heat alarm in the kitchen. These will all be interconnected, and this will alert you no matter where you are in your home, to allow for a faster means of escape.

We have appointed Fraser Fire to install the new alarms and detectors and we will write to you two weeks before the engineer will be in your area. It is extremely important that we get access to your home to let us make these changes. If you have an issue with the date that you are schedule for please contact the number on the letter and we will try to accommodate your request.

The new alarms and detectors will have a 10 year battery lifespan. You should continue to test them on a monthly basis to ensure they are working.

Date	Areas			
April 2019	Springburn			
May 2019	Gallowgate	Tollcross	Camlachie	
June 2019	Camlachie			
July 2019	Dalmarnock Patrick	Easterhouse Hillhead	Broomhouse Yoker	Anniesland
August 2019	Yoker Ibrox Kirkintilloch	Whiteinch Pollockshields Kilsyth	Govan Crookston	Yorkhill Royston
September 2019	Queensieburn Moodiesburn	Cumbernauld Tannochside	Craigmarloch Uddingston	
October 2019	Uddingston	Blantyre	Halfway	Fernhill
November 2019	Fernhill Lanark Hamilton	East Kilbride Kirkfieldbank	Strathaven Kirkmuirhill	Law Blackwood
December 2019	Hamilton Airdrie	Motherwell	Bellshill	Coatbridge
January 2020	Adrossan Mossblown	Irvine Troon	Kilmarnock	Monkton
February 2020	Prestwick	Ayr		



We want you to be aware of fire hazards and give you some advice on how you can reduce the risk of fire by taking some basic precautions.

Smoke alarms

You should make sure these are in working order by testing your alarms monthly. We will change the battery yearly but you may need to change it between our visits. We are currently fitting new smoke detectors with a 10 year battery.

Electrical items

- Keep electricals away from water
- Don't use portable heaters for drying laundry
- Let us know immediately if you are concerned about your electrics e.g. you notice burn marks around plugs or cables
- Don't overload extension leads or adaptors.

Around the house

- Be careful with candles and tea lights
- Never smoke in bed
- Check your furniture has fire-resistant permanent label
- Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach

The Kitchen

- Keep tea towels and cloths away from the cooker and hob
- Use a spark lighter rather than matches to light gas cooker
- Make sure to turn your cooker off when you have finished cooking
- Avoid cooking under influence of alcohol or drugs

Before going to bed

- Switch off and unplug all appliances except those that are meant to stay on e.g. fridge
- Ensure all cigarettes are stubbed out
- Ensure ashtray contents are emptied into the bin
- Close doors to prevent fire spread

Be prepared in case of fire

- Familiarise yourself with escape routes keeping all exits clear
- Find out the evacuation procedure if there is one in place for your block, ask if you're not sure if one is in place
- If you lock your doors at night leave your keys where they can be easily accessed
- If you discover a fire exit the property immediately and dial the emergency services

WSHA Allocation Policy

We are proposing to update our Housing Allocation Policy. Some of the changes we have made are in response to the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 which were introduced this year. The new draft policy can be found on our website (details below) but here is a summary.

Applying for housing

The ways to apply have not changed although we have made it clearer that WSHA tenants can register with Homefinder, for a mutual exchange with another social housing tenant, anywhere in the UK, not just WSHA. For more information about Homefinder check their website or speak to us.

Reasonable Preference (and best use of housing)

The 2014 Act makes it clear that we must give 'reasonable preference' when we allocate homes to applicants who are homeless (defined by legislation), to applicants in unsatisfactory housing conditions and also assist social landlord tenants who are in a property that is too big for their requirements. Please be aware that though these applicants will have priority, demand for our homes in many areas exceeds the housing we have becoming available.

In our policy you will see we also award points for applicants in housing need. This means we give priority to applicants with health needs, those leaving a care setting, facing harassment or domestic abuse, to give or receive support, those living in a shared house or having an insecure tenancy and applicants leaving the Armed Forces.

Bedroom requirements

We are proposing to allow two children of the opposite sex aged under 8 to share a bedroom. Our current policy says that children of the opposite sex should have their own bedrooms.

We have found that this policy has worked against the interest of some families looking for a home with us. What do you think?

In areas where we are part of a shared approach to allocating homes, with other social landlords it may be that different rules apply for assessing occupancy. For example, the Common Housing Register operated in South Lanarkshire.

Suspension from the housing list

We are proposing that applicants may be suspended from the list for the following reasons:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Tenancy related debt
- Breaches of tenancy conditions e.g. property left in poor condition
- Previous eviction by a court order
- Refusal of 3 reasonable offers

You can download the Allocation Policy from our website or just contact us and we will send you a copy. We will be consulting with the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) and also applicants who are currently on our housing list.

For any further information or discussion please contact Stewart Gibb, Director of Housing and Customer Services on 0141 550 5600.

Welfare Rights Update



In 2018/19, our Welfare Rights Team secured a fantastic £1million in backdated and future income for our tenants! If you would like any advice or support with your welfare benefits then please contact them on 0141 550 5662.

Changes to Pension Credit and age related Housing Benefit for mixed age couples:

From 15th May 2019, pensioners will no longer be able to apply for Pension Credit if their partner is working age. They will need to apply for and claim Universal Credit instead until their partner reaches State Pension age.

Currently a couple can choose to move from working age benefits to Pension Credit as soon as the older partner is State Pension Age. A couple can usually receive a total income of £255.25 per week if on Pension Credit.

In comparison, on Universal Credit, this amount will be £115.13 per week.

Mixed age couples with a partner under State Pension age already getting Pension Credit or age related Housing Benefit will not be affected while they remain entitled to either benefit.

Claimants with a severe disability premium prevented from claiming universal credit:

Were you receiving Severe Disability Premium as a single person, or jointly as a couple? Were you doing so on the 16th January 2019, or in the month previous to this date?

If the answer is yes, you may not now be required to migrate to Universal Credit, at least for the time being. This would allow you to keep your current benefits. Concerned? Please get in touch with us.

Help to Claim – Citizens Advice Scotland:

From April 2019, Citizens Advice Scotland will be funded by DWP to provide a 'Help to Claim' service for new Universal Credit claimants.

Initial contact to the Citizens Advice will be through a national Helpline. The new service can assist claimants to make an online UC claim and support the claimant until they receive their first payment.

How to access the Help to Claim service in Scotland

**Phone: 0800 023 2581
(Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm)**

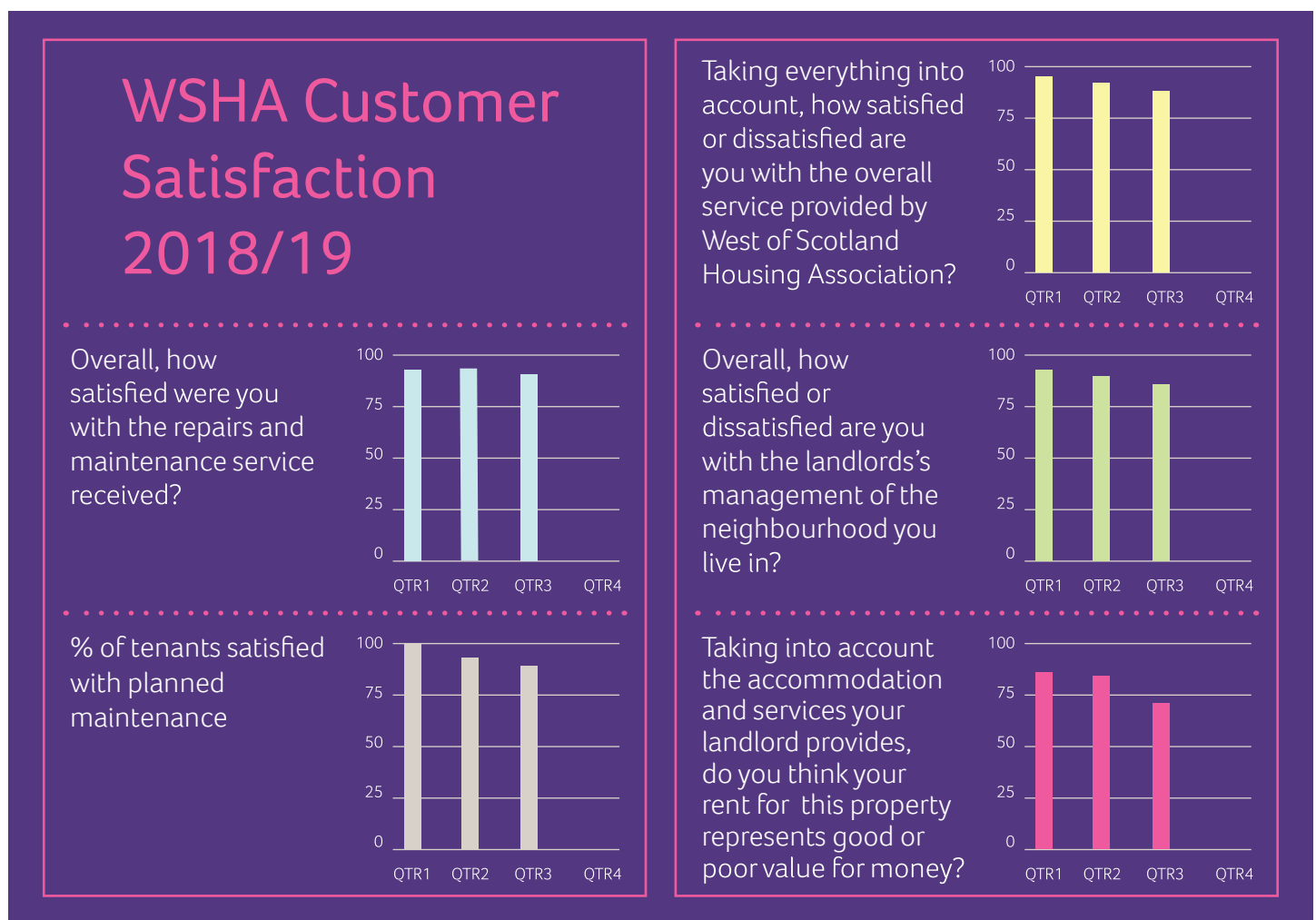
**Webchat: www.cas.org.uk/helptoclaim
(Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm)**

Face-to-face: Contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau

Complaints and Customer Satisfaction

We are committed to listening to your views so we can deliver services more effectively, or where we can do more things that you want us to do. To support us to do this we regularly monitor the complaints we receive, and also have an independent company Research Resource undertake monthly satisfaction surveys. Where an issue comes up as part of a complaint, or is fed back to us by Research Resource we will look to make changes to how we work. Below is an example of a change we are making as a result of tenant feedback. If you think we could do something differently that would be better for tenants please speak to any member of staff.

You Said	We Will
A number of tenants have indicated that the Association needs to keep tenants better informed about what work is planned to their homes in the near future	We have developed an Asset Management Strategy and will shortly publicise indicative planned programmes for the coming years.



Please let us know if you need help to read or understand this information. If you require this information in large print, audio or any other language, please contact Sabrina Allan on 0141 550 5630 or email sabrina.allan@westscot.co.uk

This newsletter is also available on our website www.westscot.co.uk

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