

HousingNews



Garden competition is coming up in our next edition



Housing online – Access your rent account online page 3

Rent for 2024/25 confirmed page 4/5




Convener welcome

Welcome to the spring edition of Housing News. You'll see in this edition we are focussing on improving department services and the service provision for tenants and customers.

As the increased cost of living continues to affect a sizeable amount of households, I'm sure many of you will have financial concerns, but advice and support is available, and I would encourage anyone who needs help to get in touch with our Money Advice and Rights team.

There is more information enclosed on how the team can support you. While we have staff in place ready to help, I would also like to thank the volunteers who run many initiatives and projects across East Renfrewshire that support those in need, notably the food banks in Dunterlie, Barrhead and Thornliebank.

In the last year there have been Participatory Budgeting grants available to community groups within the authority, which has seen residents in Neilston and Busby be successful in bidding to grow their own vegetables and improve gardens, while others like Newton Mearns awaiting the outcome of their application.

As we enter a new financial year, we've increased the rent charge by 5.9%. We will remain prudent in terms of investing in our properties, capital works and services, however, whilst we are committed to prioritising essential works and repairs, we have to adhere to budgets set by local and central governments.

The department is running two independent groups just now through TIS (Tenant Information Services) and Knowledge Partnership, who will be running workshops in April following doorstep and phone surveys, which were carried out between December 2023 and February this year. The purpose was to listen to what you, the tenants think of the services and how they can be improved. There will also be a return to two neighbourhood inspections this year, which is also aimed at improving the neighbourhoods you live in and I ask local people to get involved and tell us about their experiences of the service and where positive changes can be made.

I will end this by advising that following recent works within our Barrhead office, the new customer service centre is now up and running following a temporary closure and re-location.

**Housing and Environment Convener,
Councillor Danny Devlin.**

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**Contact Lorna McDougall or Martin McNelis
on 07741 235 272 or 07788 553 465.**



Get involved

We regularly hold consultations, send out surveys and speak to tenants to find out what we are doing well and areas we can improve. We're delighted when customers take the time to give us feedback on work we have completed. This ensures we are providing the best possible services. If you would like to become involved please contact:

Lorna McDougall

Tenant Engagement and Customer Care Officer

Tel: 07741 235 272

E-mail: Lorna.McDougall@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Martin McNelis

Tenant Engagement and Customer Care Officer

Tel: 07788 553 465

E-mail: martin.mcnelis@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Access your rent account online



We recently wrote to all tenants announcing that the first stage of Housing Online was launching. You can now view your rent balance and statements through our self-service portal, MyEastRen. Please read this information and follow the steps below to access your rent account online.

How do I access my rent account?

As a first step you need to sign up to MyEastRen. You may have already done this, for example, if you signed up for Parentsportal or Council Tax online. If you had a live Housing application before April 2023 you would have already received a letter asking you to create a MyEastRen account and may have already signed up.

If you haven't yet signed up, go to www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/myeastren and select 'Register for My Account' then 'Register'.

If you do not create an account, you will not be able to view your rent account online.

What next?

To link your rent account, use the following URL www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/login. Once you log in at this URL you should select 'Access Housing Online' at the bottom of the page. You must now create a one-time login to Housing Online.

- Select 'Create an Account'
- Enter the same email address you've used for your MyEastRen account and create a password
- You will receive an email from **no-reply@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk**. If you don't see it, try checking your junk email folder. Open the email and select 'Verify Me'. You will be redirected to the Housing Online Registration page
- In the drop-down menu, select Payment Reference and enter your Payment reference number noted at the top of this letter. Complete the rest of the fields on that page and click the 'I accept' button and then 'Finish'
- You will be presented with a screen confirming you have successfully registered
- You can now select 'Continue to Login'
- Enter the username and password that you've just registered and select 'Login'
- You will now be logged in to Housing Online. Select the 'MyAccounts' tile to access your rent account.

The next time you log in to Housing Online go to www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/login and select 'Log in with My Gov Scot'. When you select 'Access Housing Online' you will be directed straight into Housing Online.

Step-by-step video guidance explaining how to access your rent account online is available at www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/housing-online.

Put rent first



Your rent helps us pay for the day to day services we provide for you, including housing management costs, our repairs service and the cost of planned improvement work.

We review your rent each year, and consult with tenants about proposed rent increases. Following consultation with tenants the Council has agreed a rent increase for 2024/2025 of 5.9%.

For 2024/2025 the “rent free weeks” will be the: Monday 1 July • 8 July • 23 December • 30 December • 31 March 2025.

Please note that the rent free weeks do not apply to those tenants who pay calendar monthly or whose rent account is in arrears.

We know that money is tight right now, particularly with the increased cost of living. It is affecting most things that we have to budget for including; rent, energy costs, food and fuel.

Having a safe and secure home for you and your family, is particularly important during these difficult times so it is

important that you continue to pay your rent.

Our Housing Officers are here to help if you are experiencing financial difficulties or are worried about paying your rent. We can help to work out an affordable rent repayment arrangement and put you in contact with other agencies who can provide specialist welfare benefits and financial advice and support, such as Money Advice and Rights Team.

We have already helped many tenants who were in rent arrears and struggling financially to get back on track.

Everyone deserves a place they’re proud to call home, but sometimes you need a helping hand to get there. From your home to your neighbourhood, our Neighbourhood Housing Officers are here to assist you and can be contacted as follows:

Neighbourhood Housing Officer	Contact Details	Area of Responsibility
 Duty Officer	rents@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or at 0141 577 3001	Barrhead: Aurs Road, Balgraystone Road, Braeside Drive, Craighton Drive, Divernia Way, Fenwick Drive, Firkbank Drive, Hawthorn Drive, Larchwood Terrace, Newton Avenue, Oakbank Drive, Springfield Drive.
 Duty Officer	rents@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or at 0141 577 3001	Barrhead: Aurs Crescent, Aurs Drive, Arthurlie Street, Balgray Crescent, Belmont Drive, Blackburn Square, Bourock Square, Burnbank Drive, Campbell Drive, Conmore Avenue, Fingleton Avenue, Glanderstone Avenue, Harelaw Avenue, Hey’s Street, Langton Crescent, Main Street, Manse Street, Moorhouse Street, Nethererton Drive, Patterton Drive, Princes Square, Rockmount Avenue, Weir Avenue, Woodside Crescent.
 James McCarroll and  Sophia Kaur	James.McCarroll@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or at 07918445222 Sophia.Kaur@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk	Barrhead: Barnes Street, Blackbyres Court, Blackwood Street, Carlibar Road, Commercial Road, Corsemill Court, Cross Arthurlie Street, Dalmeny Drive, Darnley Road, Dovecothall Street, Gertrude Place, Glasgow Road, Kelburn Street, Kerr Street, Murray Place, Robertson Street, Stewart Court, Stewart Street, Tait Avenue.
 Derek McClue	Derek.McClue@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or at 07717 816 510	Barrhead: Barnes Court, Bellfield Court, Bellfield Crescent, Blackbyres Road, Brownside Grove, Crossmill Avenue, Dealston Road, Ferenze Avenue, Gateside Crescent, Graham Street, Lochilbo Crescent, Lochilbo Road, Lochilbo Terrace, Paisley Road, Rufflees Avenue, Waulkmill Avenue, Victoria Road.
 Dan Mushens	Daniel.Mushens@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or at 07788 539 937	Barrhead: Carnock Crescent, Craighead Way, Dougray Place, Kirkton Avenue, Lavern Crescent, Springhill Road, Stormyland Way, Sunnyside Place, Tinto Drive.
 Allister Lynch	Allister.Lynch@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or at 07800 833 562	Neilston North and Uplawmoor
 Mozghan Nafouti	Mozghan.Nafouti@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or at 07341 640777	Neilston South and Eaglesham
 David Rae	David.Rae@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or at 07788 150 224	Thornliebank and Giffnock
 Christine Kyle	Christine.Kyle@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or at 07900 379 855	Busby and Netherlee
 Susan McKeown	Susan.McKeown@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or at 07971 676 307	Newton Mearns





Ways to pay



To make things easier, we offer a variety of ways for you to make payments:



Online

You can pay your rent online by going to www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/rents and entering your details, you will need to know your rent reference number to use this facility.



In Person

By visiting our offices at either 211 Main Street, Barrhead or Council Headquarters, Eastwood Park, Rouken Glen Road, Giffnock - Monday to Friday 9.00am till 4, 15pm or at your local post office - remember to take your rent payment card with you.



By Telephone

By calling 0141 577 3001 during office hours you can make rent payments using a debit or credit card (your credit card provider may charge you for this service). Out of hours you can use the Automated Service on 0141 577 3030.



Internet Banking

If you use Internet Banking you can set up regular payments or make one off payments to your rent account. The Sort Code is 82-63-25 and Account Number is 40573178. You also need to quote your rent reference number.



Direct Debit/Standing Order

To remove the worry of remembering to pay you can set up regular payments from your bank account. Contact 041 577 3703/8354 for further details on how to pay by this method.



By Post

You can pay by cheque by sending your payments to East Renfrewshire Council, 211 Main Street, Barrhead, G78 1SY. Cheques should be made payable to East Renfrewshire Council and you should write your rent reference number on the back of the cheque so we know who is paying.

Don't risk the roof over your head

Put Rent First



If you're struggling to pay your rent or need some advice, please get in touch.

Call 0141 577 3001 or email rents@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk



Join our new Facebook group

If you're on Facebook, keep an eye out for the launch of our new group for Housing Services. We'll share lots of relevant information, advice and updates for our tenants, applicants and factored-owners. The group will also provide a space for anyone looking for a mutual exchange. So, get involved!

COMING
SOON

Help from Money Advice and Rights



We've previously highlighted numerous ways of savings and managing money.

These have ranged from:

- reducing your credit card balance
- changing energy provider
- managing debts
- accessing benefits



This edition's topic will look at benefit entitlement in relation to claiming and maintaining benefits and some tips to help overcome any difficulties.

The interaction between different benefits can often be complex and difficult to manage. Benefit entitlement is often not fully maximised until a new set of circumstances means you have to complete reviews, notify changes or contact supporting agencies all within certain time limits and constraints. With this in mind there are some useful things to consider.

Contact us: Tel: 0141 577 8420
Email: [MART @eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:MART@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)



Who should I contact when I have benefit problems?

The Money Advice and Rights Team are uniquely placed within East Renfrewshire Council to give advice and support regarding benefit advice. Although you may not have direct support from the team, you can still make self-referrals. Our contact details are listed below but do not hesitate to seek support, either directly (self-referrals) or indirectly, via other teams involved in your care. All referrals will be treated via our duty service whereby we would hope for a satisfactory outcome. Many benefit disputes are caused by changes in circumstances.

Practical difficulties - managing change of circumstances

When you have a change in your circumstances it is important that you tell the relevant departments e.g. DWP, Scottish Social Security or East Renfrewshire Council. Changes in circumstance can relate to the following:

- Change in condition/function

This is relevant in relation to disability or health benefits which are based on the difficulties arising from health conditions. The departments within DWP or Scottish Social Security (SSSA) who are paying these benefits will make arrangements to check the correct level of entitlement is being paid. The way this is done is by review forms. Reviews can be triggered by DWP or SSSA or by clients themselves. It is not necessarily a bad thing as it allows clients to increase their entitlement should there be a change in their circumstance. In these situations there can be issues.

- Change in amounts, capital savings

A recent case (of which there are many) dealt with by the team highlights the importance of reporting any change in income capital and savings. Client X recently contacted the Team as she was feeling particularly anxious and stressed their capital was too high. In the process of trying to deal with the issue, she had a friend compile a letter to DWP which documented her income and certain dates and times.

The client contacted the team for assistance as she had not had a response from DWP. By keeping a record of letters, dates and times it allowed a very good resolution in that the overpayment amount was written off as official error as the Team were able to establish early contact with DWP and identify that she had made contact previously.



Stock condition surveys



Over the next year we're looking to increase the number of Stock Condition Survey's within our housing portfolio. These surveys help to record the condition of our housing stock and to form future programmes of work and capital investment. The table below shows the number of properties where capital investment programmes have been carried out, in the 2023/24 financial year:



CAPITAL PROJECT	Number of properties with complete installations as of end of Feb 2024
Windows	65
Doors	58
Kitchens	58
Bathrooms	8
Conversion of Tanks to Mains Water Supply	160
Door Entry Installations in Block of Flats	29
Roof and /or EWI	15
Renewal of Heating Systems	85
Electrical Rewire	9
Test & Inspect	454
Smoke Detector (LD2)	220
Aids and Adaptations	24
EESSH (EPC Certs)	426
Lift Renewal in Sheltered Housing Complex	6
3 New Gas Boiler Replacement at Montgomery Court	1

Electrical safety

The Scottish Housing Regulators changed the Electrical Inspection and Conditions Report (EICR) inspections from 10 year to 5-year inspections cycle. This means landlords are required to carry out inspections, at least once every five years.

In January 2022, we appointed Consilium Contracting Services to carry out these tests but the contract with Consilium is ending this month, April 2024. We appointed a new contractor, Valley Group in January 2024 to continue this project.

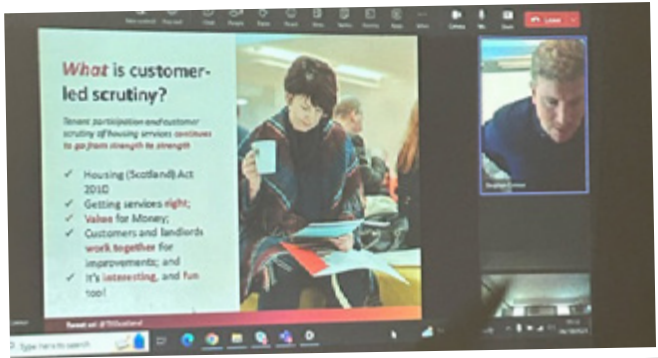
This will be an ongoing programme, similar to gas safety check, however this will be once in every five years. The electrical safety check is to ensure our tenants are safe in their homes and there will be communications from the contractor to arrange access. During an inspection, an electrical contractor is expected to test all the electrical appliances in the home; make sure all the wiring is safe; make sure electrical circuits are not overloaded; check for fire hazards and check for risks of electric shock.

Safety in your home is our priority and we wish to thank all our tenants for their co-operation and allowing access for their homes to be checked.

Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete

You might have seen recent media coverage and concerns regarding Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) and its use in buildings. RAAC is a lightweight form of concrete, weaker than regular concrete and concerns have been raised about its long-term durability. This is to inform you that we have carefully followed the guidance issued by the Government and we are comfortable that we have no RAAC present within any ERC properties. To ensure further compliance, we engaged a Structural Engineering company (Cowan Design), to double check the investigation work carried out by our Technical officers and confirm the findings we already have. The structural engineer's report that we have received, confirmed that there is no presence of RAAC in our housing stock. We trust this is reassuring to all.

Tenant led scrutiny TIS



The Tenants Information Service (TIS) are delighted to be working in partnership with East Renfrewshire Council (the Council) and its tenants to develop tenant **scrutiny** of the delivery of housing and related services.

TIS are experts in housing, community development, and engagement practice. As a National Membership Organisation, with over 200 tenants, community and housing organisation Members, we are committed to influencing change and strive for an active, inclusive, and just Scotland, with strong, equitable, and sustainable communities.

What is tenant participation?

Tenant participation is about tenants, and wider customers of housing services, taking part in decision-making processes and influencing decisions about housing policies;

housing conditions; and housing (and related) services. It is a **two-way process which involves the sharing of information, ideas, and power.**

Scrutiny

Tenant-led scrutiny of housing services enables tenants and their landlord to **work in partnership**, to identify where services and investment are well placed, and where value for money is being delivered. **More importantly it identifies areas for improvements**, which in turn can lead to improved service performance and increased tenant satisfaction.

Scrutiny is an opportunity for tenants, landlords, and community groups alike to work together and influence decisions about housing services.

Scrutiny empowers tenants to question their landlord on how their rent money is spent and whether it is spent in a way that achieves value for money.

Why get involved?

We are looking for service improvement volunteers to help identify good practice in the Council's housing service, however more importantly areas for improvement.

Working together in partnership with the Council we can improve services and make a real difference! You don't need experience as support will be provided throughout.

Stephen Connor: sconor@tis.org.uk 07950 158621

We Are East Ren Awards winners!

A huge well done to our Housing Options Team who clinched Team of the Year at the recent We Are East Ren staff awards.

They carry out vital work every day with some of the most vulnerable people in our community, so we're delighted their hard work was recognised.

Chief Executive Steven Quinn said: *"Congratulations to all our winners from the We Are East Ren Awards. It was wonderful to celebrate the amazing contribution made by so many of our staff and hear all the stories about the work which goes on day-in day-out to ensure our residents receive the best services possible."*





Neilston community allotment

A recent visit to an allotment in Neilston, off of Craig Road, showed a work in progress by local residents. This was a piece of wasteland that was often subject to complaints in respect of anti-social behaviour and fly tipping.

Last year, local residents offered to take care of the land in an informal agreement to create the Neilson community allotment. The project allows people to visit, learn about gardening, volunteer and even just drop off/collect plant pots. They also have compost that can be used by anyone.

It has made a huge improvement to the area and will be revisited again in the summer to check on how it is shaping up. Anyone wanting more information on how they can get involved can look them up on Facebook, or contact Martin McNelis or Lorna McDougall and we can pass over any information you may require.

Martin.McNelis@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk 07788 553 465

Lorna.McDougall@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk 07741 235 272



Egg-cellent efforts from our temporary accommodation team!

The temporary accommodation staff based at Overlee House, Clarkston put out an Easter egg appeal and have received enough eggs for all the children who are currently residing within temporary accommodation. The staff delivered them throughout Easter week.

A big thank you to everyone who donated and our staff who distributed the chocolatey treats!

Tenant garden competition



Our annual tenant garden competition will open for entries this summer and we look forward to seeing the entries from the green-fingered community!

So if you're getting your garden ready for a summer of blooms, then keep an eye out for more information on the competition and be sure to submit your entry.





Community health walks

The clocks have gone forward and the weather is improving, so it's the perfect time to get outside and moving. A range of walks take place in our communities where you can enjoy a stroll with other locals. There are shorter walks for beginners and longer ones at a higher pace for those who want more of a challenge.

There's even an outing specifically for wheelchair users on a Wednesday in Cowan Park. You can just turn up or if you have any questions, **contact Allan Murdoch - allan.murdoch@va-er.org.uk or T: 07545 653 817**

East Renfrewshire HEALTH WALKS



MONDAY

NEILSTON WALKING GROUP

12pm - Advanced level
Meeting place: St Thomas Church

GIFFNOCK JAUNT (longer walk)

10am - Advanced level
Meeting place: outside Lidl on Fenwick Road

GIFFNOCK JAUNT (shorter walk)

11am - Beginner level
Meeting place: outside Lidl on Fenwick Road.
Dementia Friendly Walk

SOCIABLE SENIOR SAUNTER

10am - Beginner level
Meeting place: corner of Broomburn Medical Centre, 257 Mearns Road

TUESDAY

ST JOHNS. STROLLERS

10am - Beginner and Advanced level
Meeting place: entrance to Cowan Park, Barrhead.
Dementia and Cancer Friendly

AUCHENBACK WALKERS

10am - Advanced level
Meeting place: outside Auchenback Resource Centre, 64 Aurs Drive, Barrhead

FIRST STEPS IN EASTWOOD PARK

9:30am - Beginner level
Meeting place: entrance to Eastwood Leisure Centre

WEDNESDAY

CROOKFUR HEALTH WALK

10am - Advanced and Beginner level
Meeting place: outside Newton Mearns Baptist Church, 2 Greenfarm Road

THURSDAY

BARRHEAD EVENING STROLL

6pm - Advanced and Beginner level
Meeting place: Barrhead Council Offices

FRIDAY

STEPPING OUT IN THORNLIBANK

10am - Advanced level
Meeting place: Mags Café, 23 Kennishead Road

CLARKSTON WALK

1pm - Advanced and Beginner level
Meeting place: outside Eastwood Health Centre, Drumby Crescent

To register for a Health Walk or find out more information please contact: Allan Murdoch
allan.murdoch@va-er.org.uk

07545 653817



EAST RENFREWSHIRE
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE
PARTNERSHIP



Beginner level walk: Approximately 1/2 hour

Advanced level walk: Approximately 1 hour

Volunteer appeal!

The Community Hub is looking for energetic, kind and compassionate volunteers to take chair-based exercise classes and conduct health walks around East Renfrewshire. If you would like to help out in your own community and love making connections with people this role is for you. Choose Kindness at www.eastrencommunityhub.org.uk/volunteering or contact Allan Murdoch on 07545653817 or allan.murdoch@va-er.org.uk



Big lunch

The first East Renfrewshire “Big Lunch” took place at the Eglinton Arms, Eaglesham on Wednesday 6 March with around 100 people in attendance. In between various short presentations and stalls from the likes of East Renfrewshire Disabled Action (ERDA), Money Advice & Rights Team (MART) Talking Points, entertainment was provided by a comedian, magician and it finished with music from a fantastic guitarist.

It proved to be a big success, with organisers, East Renfrewshire Self Directed Support Forum (SDSF), receiving numerous messages and emails from people who attended saying how much they enjoyed it and asking if they can put their names down for the next one!



All the staff at SDSF would like to thank everyone involved in making the Big Lunch happen, whether that was with funding, administration, organising, attending, having a stall, presenting, jumping in and doing extra jobs on the day, and whatever other ways people contributed. The next one is scheduled for December and we look forward to seeing you there!

It's play time for Thornliebank

We've unveiled a brand new play park in Thornliebank.

The new play area, located in the Thornliebank playing fields, includes state-of-the-art equipment including climbing frames, slides and accessible swings and roundabouts for children to enjoy. There is also picnic benches with spaces for wheelchair users.

More than £125,000 has been invested in the new facility through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund as well as the Scottish Government's Play Park Renewal Fund, and the local community had their say in the choice of equipment installed through a public consultation.

In addition to Thornliebank, we recently completed a £90,000 refurbishment of McDiarmid Park play area in Barrhead, with a range of new equipment installed. This upgrade was also funded through the Scottish Government and people in Barrhead had the opportunity to tell us the improvements they wanted to see.



Councillor Danny Devlin, Convener for Environment and Housing, visited the park in Thornliebank and was joined by pupils from Thornliebank Primary School, Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig and Nursery. He said: 'This is a fantastic new facility for the younger members of the Thornliebank community and beyond. We're committed to creating and maintaining high quality parks and public spaces for our residents and this play park, along with McDiarmid Park, is testament to that. It was great seeing the pupils from Thornliebank have fun today as they tested out the new equipment and, as we head into spring, I look forward to seeing lots more children enjoy this play park.'

Support available from trading standards

Trading Standards are cracking down on bogus traders and reminding residents to always "say no" to un-verified traders offering home improvements, including gutter cleaning, roof repairs and landscaping work.

You can also say no to uninvited doorstep callers by picking up a free "No cold calling" sticker and displaying it on your door. Stickers are available to collect from Council buildings at Eastwood HQ or Barrhead, libraries and from the "Supporting Business Preventing Scams" van.

Never engage with cold callers knocking on your door or who call out of the blue, and when you can choose a trader that is part of the East Renfrewshire Trusted Trader scheme by visiting: trustedtrader.scot/eastrenfrewshire.

Remember doorstep fraudulent activity is a crime, report to Police Scotland on 101, or 999, if feeling threatened. Ring and Report suspicious doorstep callers on 0800 013 0076 and report potential scams to Advice Direct Scotland on 0808 800 9060 or Trading Standards on 0141 577 8487.

Trading Standards self-help financial harm toolkit is a guide to avoid many types of scams and includes useful information on: doorstep crime, email scams, online shopping, living with dementia and scams, power of attorney and more. Read it at: eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/prevention.



A range of support is also available to help residents in vulnerable situations, who are experiencing a high number of cold callers or have been a victim of a scam. Call blockers and smart video doorbell systems are available for residents who meet a range of criteria free of charge. If you think you or a family member would benefit, email: preventionteam@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or phone 0141 577 3782.

Eligibility is based on an individual case basis with criteria based around vulnerability, financial harm and scams.

Trading Standards also offer short talks to local groups on scam awareness, with details on ways to keep yourself protected from scams, and our call blockers and smart doorbells projects. If this is something you're interested in, get in touch directly with the team.

