

Housing News



 East Renfrewshire is in bloom

Garden competition results page 4/5

Tenant-led neighbourhood inspections page 9




Convener welcome

Welcome to the Autumn/Winter 2024 edition of our housing newsletter

We are continuing to use your feedback to find ways to make our services better for tenants and other customers. The results of our large-scale survey of tenants has shown a notable improvement in how you view our services. However, there is still some work to do and we will shortly receive recommendations from our customer led service improvement group to help with this. You can find out more on how we are performing through our published Annual Performance Report (more detail on page 7).

There have also been some important improvements to our digital services to help customers self-serve where they prefer. This includes online rent account and bidding for available homes. We are now launching our online repairs service for tenants, and more detail is included with this edition. We hope as customers you are finding these services convenient to use, and would encourage tenants to sign up if you haven't already. You can get support from your Neighbourhood Housing Officer if you need it, to take advantage of these online services.

With this edition of Housing News you will also find enclosed detail of our annual rents consultation. This is one of the most important consultations we deal with each year, to ensure we can invest in your homes and the services we provide to you, whilst also keeping rents affordable. Please take some time to look at this and respond via our consultation survey online or using the form provided. We are also running some drop in events as part of the consultation, if you would like to speak to us directly or get advice on your rent or other matters (see page 11).

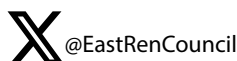
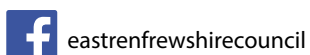
**Housing and Environment Convener,
Councillor Danny Devlin.**

Join us on Facebook!



We recently launched a Facebook group for our Housing Service where we're sharing lots of information and updates for tenants, factored-owners and those on our waiting list.

You can join the group by scanning the QR code or visiting:
www.facebook.com/groups/1077469223300847



Contents

Local housing emergency	3
Garden competition	4/5
Rent increase	6
Performance report	7
New homes	8
Inspections	9
Property services	10
Money advice & rights	11
Contact details	12
Veterans support advisor	13
News	14
Benefits	15

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



How to get involved



We regularly hold consultations, send out surveys and speak to tenants to find out how we are doing and give us feedback on how we can get you engaged. We're delighted when customers take the time to give us feedback. This ensures we are providing the best possible services. If you would like to get involved, contact Lorna or Martin.

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

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Local housing emergency declared in East Renfrewshire

Over recent years, we've seen a significant increase in homeless applications, which has had an impact on both the demand for services and how services are being delivered.



Since 2018, homeless applications have jumped by **53%**, in comparison to just a **10%** increase Scotland-wide.

As it stands, there are **350** households accepted as homeless and awaiting an offer of accommodation, and almost **200** households in temporary accommodation, including those in bed and breakfast.



The emergency has been declared despite us delivering more than 470 new-build homes since 2018, which includes bringing forward the provision of 105 new properties in Maidenhill this year.

Earlier this year, the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) stated that several Scottish Councils are facing "systemic failure" of their homelessness services and this includes East Renfrewshire. The main issue for the SHR is the use of hotel accommodation, which is deemed as unsuitable in most circumstances, and an absence of sufficient suitable alternative accommodation.

East Renfrewshire is not unique in facing these challenges and will be the twelfth local authority to declare a housing emergency, as well as the Scottish Government who did so in May this year. However the local housing market makes it challenging to respond to this increased and sustained demand.

The area has very high owner-occupation levels and the smallest percentage of social housing in mainland Scotland; only **11.4%** of homes in East Renfrewshire make up social housing stock (approximately 4,200 homes), whereas the Scottish average is **22.9%**.



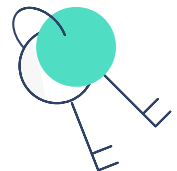
Furthermore, the number of Council homes becoming available for new tenants, through people moving out for example, **has reduced over the past five years from around 260 to 190 homes per year.**

This is approximately half of the typical rate elsewhere in Scotland, further exacerbating the challenges.



We've been anticipating this emergency and over the past few years have implemented a number of actions to respond and mitigate the impact of this issue including:

- Doubling the provision of temporary accommodation from re-designation of some of our own permanent general needs stock from around **60 units** in 2019/20 to over **130 units** currently in use.
- Increasing the percentage of lets to homeless households to **70%** for existing stock and **40%** for new build accommodation.
- Reviewed existing agreements with local Registered Social Landlords.
- Reviewing internal process to focus on a prevention approach.
- Declaring the local emergency was unanimously agreed by Councillors at a meeting of the full council on Wednesday 11 September.



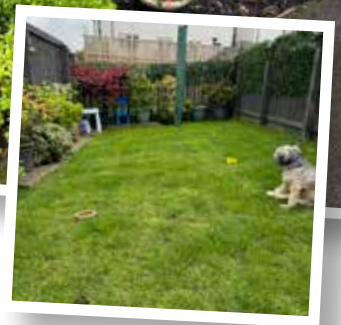
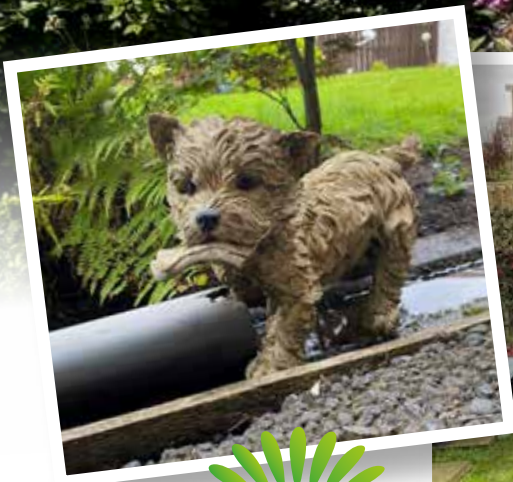
Housing and Environment Convener, Councillor Danny Devlin, said: *'Declaring a housing emergency isn't a decision we've taken lightly. The increase in homelessness over the past five years has continued and has grown at significantly higher rates than the national average. The situation is exacerbated here in East Renfrewshire as it remains an extremely popular place to live and the local housing market is not equipped to deal with this increase in demand. We've actions in place to work towards mitigating the pressures and will continue to work with partners to prioritise actions and develop plans to tackle the crisis over the coming months and years.'*

Furthermore, an additional £1million has been made available from Council capital reserves and it is proposed that this could now be used to purchase additional housing units and/or new builds.

The Local Housing Strategy 2024-2029 was approved by Cabinet in October. It details actions for the next five years, and while it isn't enough to mitigate the immediate emergency, it commits to a continuation of working with partners to prevent homeless and overall housing need by providing effective support and information and advice, and to delivering a minimum of 45 additional affordable homes per year on average over 5 years.

Scan the QR code to read more about the Local Housing Strategy.





Garden competition

Congratulations to Kirsteen who won our tenants garden competition, taking away a £50 East Renfrewshire gift card. I think we all can agree this was a worthy winner your garden is just stunning. Do you think your garden is better?

All the people with green fingers that live in our sheltered housing complexes met up at Hawthorn Court recently for the prize giving of their garden competition. There was a range of prizes on offer and no-one envied the task Suzanne Conlin and Richard Haney had picking the winners.

Well done to Hawthorn Court. 'WOW' was the word used by the judges when they attended your garden, it is simply stunning. Also, congratulations to Kirkglebe who won an award for gardening excellence and Bellfield court for the most improved garden. We had a lovely afternoon tea admiring the winning gardens at Hawthorn Court.





Beatson fundraiser at Waterford Road

A huge well done to Elizabeth Booth, one our tenants at our Waterford Road complex, who held a charity event in the lounge for tenants and raised over £1,700 for the Beatson Charity.



Participatory budgeting update

Fordyce Court and Hawthorn Court sheltered housing complexes were successful in their bids to the local Participatory budgeting events held earlier this year. These funds will make a difference to the lives of so many residents. They plan to use this money for social events, exercise equipment for the complex and to improve their gardens. Also, Kirkglebe's garden in Neilston continues to bloom, following their successful Participatory Budgeting bid last year. If you have a local Participatory budgeting scheme in your area and would like assistance and or advice, please contact us.



Rent increase

Our consultation for tenants on the proposed rent increase for 2025/26 will run until 30 December. All tenants have been sent this information in writing, along with this newsletter.

Your rent allows for the improvements for over £6m in existing homes which includes almost £3m of external improvements (roof and render) and almost £1.9m of external improvements such as 80 new kitchens, 50 new bathrooms, 200 homes will get new windows and 30 homes will get new doors.

There are significant challenges in investing in our current council homes to meet national standards for energy efficiency and renewing key components of the houses, as well as increasing costs generally for everyone.

Being able to provide enough homes to meet the needs of people who need social housing, or tenants who need to move to a different home, is also critical. But it is challenging given the number of people waiting and the cost of building new homes.

Our proposed increases to our rent reflect these pressures, and the increase agreed will determine how much we can invest in services to tenants. Please take the time to read and respond to the consultation. The easiest way to do this is using the QR code or link provided and completing this online. We want to hear from as many tenants as possible.

QR CODE or visit:

<https://forms.office.com/e/WKLwnJMPiM>



We've also arranged drop in events to discuss the proposals and get more advice on your rent or other housing matters. You told us you would prefer drop-ins/information sessions rather than a conference or presentation, and we have listened.

The drop-ins will take place as follows:

Tue 26 Nov	2pm–4pm	The Barrhead Foundry
Wed 27 Nov	10am–12noon	Clarkston VaER HUB
Thur 28 Nov	10am–12noon	Mearns Hub
Tue 3 Dec	10am–12noon	Thornliebank Library

My Repairs - available now

You can now raise a repair and review your repair history via Housing Online. Log in to your Housing Online account to find out more, or email hmtadmin@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

If you haven't already registered for Housing Online, you can do so by visiting our website: eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/housing-online

You can watch our guide to accessing My Repairs here:





Annual performance report highlights

Each year we must review our performance using the data we submit annually to the Scottish Housing Regulator, along with other evidence. We then publish a report for our tenants and customers, so you can see for yourself how we are doing, and how well we compare to other councils and social landlords in Scotland.

This information, as well as your feedback via surveys, consultations and neighbourhood inspection drives the improvements we make to our service. Our annual performance and assurance reports are now complete and the full report is available on our website at: www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/housing-services

A few of the key highlights and areas for improvement are outlined below:



Whats going well

Satisfaction of tenants has gone up significantly with our contribution to management of their neighbourhood, as well as being kept informed and provided with opportunities to get involved.

We complete emergency and non-emergency repairs more quickly and efficiently than other social landlords, in particular other councils. Our performance has been excellent in this area over a number of years.

The time taken to repair and relet empty homes - and the rent lost while they are empty - has continued to improve significantly in 23.24. This is due to the focus we have put on improving our voids service, despite challenges in tradesmen and contractors' availability.

We work hard to support people to remain in their home where they are having difficulties, this is reflected in the tenants who are successfully sustaining their tenancy or receiving an adaptation quickly. Our performance is much better than the Scottish average.

Where we need to take more action



Satisfaction with our repairs service is better than other councils, but lower than the Scottish average. For other areas we have seen small improvements in satisfaction but want to achieve or go beyond the Scottish average for our tenants.

Our new online repairs reporting and repairs history module for tenants, is aimed at further improving the repairs service for customers. But we recognise that customers would also like to see better communication throughout the journey of a repair.

Although we have seen an improvement, there are more people refusing the offer of a home than we would want to see, given the shortage of homes available and people can bid for these. We will continue to work to understand the reasons for this.

We are continuing to work on key issues such as reducing the rent money owed to us, and our compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. Although we have made good progress in both areas, there is still work to do to get our performance on track.

Over 100 new council homes in Maidenhill

We've started handing tenants the keys to more than 100 new-build council houses in the Newton Mearns over the coming months.

The new homes, built by Cala Homes (West) within their Maidenhill development, will comprise of 36 one-bedroom flats, as well as 37 two-bedroom, 26 three-bedroom and 6 four-bedroom houses.

The project represents an investment of more than £19million, with funding from Scottish Government grants, developer contributions and the Council's own capital investment, and follows on from the successful delivery of 96 affordable homes in Maidenhill through Taylor Wimpey and Robertson Homes in recent years.

The high-quality properties benefit from solar panels, helping to keep tenant's energy bills low, and a water mist system, which is fitted in all rooms and is independently set off when excessive heat is detected.

One of the new tenants is Douglas Watt, who has moved into a one-bedroom flat. Council Leader Owen O'Donnell visited Mr Watt at his new home and spoke to him about how he's enjoying living there.

Douglas Watt said: "My son moved out of our home into his own place, so I had been looking to downsize and was delighted to be offered this flat. It has a fantastic layout and you can see it's really high quality. Most of my family live on this side of the authority, so it's a lovely place to live and I really see it as my home for life. I'm looking forward to seeing all my new neighbours move in across the coming weeks and months, whether its families or individuals like myself – everyone I've met so far has been lovely.

"I'd like to pass on my thanks to everyone I dealt with from the Council's Housing Service; it was the dream team! Every one of them have been true to their word and they've been absolutely fabulous, from the point I was told I'd been allocated the flat, to moving in – I couldn't have asked for a better service."



Housing and Environment Convener, Councillor Danny Devlin, said: "I am delighted that we're going to provide people with such high-quality flats and houses. East Renfrewshire continues to be an extremely popular place to live, and we know that more people than ever are in need of a permanent place to call home, so it's extremely important that we do all we can to create more social housing in the area. This development reflects our ongoing commitment to the people of East Renfrewshire and I commend Cala Homes (West) for the work undertaken here in Newton Mearns."

Council Leader Owen O'Donnell added: "It was great to visit Mr Watt and see how pleased he is with his new home; these are quality, modern properties from Cala Homes (West). With a state-of-the-art primary school at the heart of Maidenhill, I'm sure that our tenants will be very happy to move in and play their part in building this community."





Neighbourhood inspections



This year we decided to increase our Tenant Led neighbourhood inspections to two a year. These took place in April and September. Thank you to everyone who came along and got involved.

We've recently completed inspections in Dunterlie Barrhead, Auchenback Barrhead, Newton Mearns, Neilston and Thornliebank.



We completed reports on each area and they have been fed back to the tenants involved. Thanks again to everyone who attended. We'll issue information on 2025 inspections in the new year.

I would like to thank the elected members who came along to the inspections held in September and they were keen to come along to future ones.

If you would like an inspection arranged in your area please get in touch, these are tenant led and they are all about listening to and working with the community to resolve issues.



In these areas we:



- Cleared 12 instances of fly-tipping and if possible lettered the persons responsible
- Emptied 9 wheelie bins that could lead to vermin in areas
- Supported people to tidy up 9 gardens
- 15 repairs issues were identified, including broken guttering, roughcasting repairs and one broken window, inspector has attended and works have either been completed or lines are out for works
- We referred 5 homes to our Empty Homes officer to see if these can be brought back into use
- Our housing mixed tenure team ensured trees and bushes were made safe and cut grass where required 9 times
- We referred 8 issues to roads regarding kerbs, potholes and overflowing drains needing repaired
- 1 issue of vermin has been reported
- 5 issues of green spaces needing work completed reported

We also completed inspections of all Sheltered Housing Complexes:

- 33 repairs were flagged up and inspectors have visited and raised lines to get job completed
- 16 general maintenance works were flagged up for works and these have been investigated and works raised to complete
- 4 areas with fly-tipping that has since been removed
- 1 referral to roads to fix a pothole.





Property services

The budgets have been confirmed for the year ahead, please see below the number of properties that will be upgraded in 2024/25:

CAPITAL PROJECTS FOR 2024/25	NUMBER OF PROPERTIES UPGRADED IN 2024/25
New Gas Central Heating Systems _____	80
New Kitchen Installations _____	70
New Bathroom Installations _____	35
New Window Installations _____	130
New External Door Installations _____	30
New Whole House Rewire _____	28
New Roof Replacement _____	18
New Render _____	9
Cavity Wall Insulation _____	9
Properties Changed from Storage Tank to Mains Water Supply _____	150
New LD2 Fire Alarms Installation _____	80



East Renfrewshire residents who have the most housing needs

We're in the process of developing a new Housing Allocation Policy. Over the coming months we'll be engaging with all stakeholders to gather feedback on the draft policy.

The new policy will have a focus on ensuring that East Renfrewshire residents in most housing needs are given the greatest priority for housing.

Money Advice and Rights



Over the past couple of months, you may have seen a lot of news coverage about the Winter Fuel Payment – specifically about who will be able to receive this payment this winter.

Previously, anyone who had reached state pension age received this payment, however, from this winter it will only be paid to those who receive certain qualifying benefits; one of which is pension credit.



£ What is Pension Credit?

Pension Credit is a means tested benefit that tops up your income to an amount set by the UK Government. If you receive a benefit such as Attendance Allowance, Adult Disability Payment or Disability Living Allowance you may be entitled to a higher amount depending on your circumstances.

Pension Credit can be paid if you are single, or if you are a couple and you have both reached pension age. If you are part of a couple and one of you has not reached pension age, you may have to claim Universal Credit (contact Money Advice & Rights Team if you want to discuss this).

£ How to claim

Money Advice & Rights Team can support you to make a claim for pension credit. A claim can be made over the phone, on a paper form or, if you are already receiving your state pension, online.

You will need to provide the following when you make a claim:

- Your national insurance number
- Details of income (e.g state pension, private pensions), savings and investments
- Your bank account details

A claim for pension credit can be backdated for up to 3 months and this backdating provision could be particularly useful this year. To be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment this winter, a person has to be receiving state pension and pension credit in the week beginning 16 September 2024 (this is called the qualifying week). If you make a successful claim for pension credit at any time up to 21 December 2024, this may be backdated to the qualifying week and will entitle you to the Winter Fuel Payment.

If you want to check if you may be entitled to pension credit, discuss any other benefit questions or seek advice about debts, please do not hesitate to contact Money Advice & Rights Team (MART) on 0141 577 8420 or email mart@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk.

£ Drop in sessions

If you would prefer to speak to someone face to face, we are holding some drop in sessions at the following locations.

Every Wednesday morning 10am – 12pm we will be at Voluntary Action, Barrhead (Barrhead Resource Centre, Carlibar Road, Barrhead).

We will be at Voluntary Action Clarkston (60 Busby Road, Clarkston G76 7AT) at the following dates and times:

Date	Time
19 November 2024	10am – 12pm
03 December 2024	
17 December 2024	
12 November 2024	1pm – 3.15pm
26 November 2024	
10 December 2024	





Housing officers	Contact details	Area of responsibility
 Michael McNamara	Michael.McNamara@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or at 07341 640387	Barrhead: Aurs Road, Balgraystone Road, Braeside Drive, Craigton Drive, Divernia Way, Fenwick Drive, Firbank Drive, Hawthorn Drive, Larchwood Terrace, Newton Avenue, Oakbank Drive, Springfield Drive.
 Andrew Smyth	Andrew.Smyth@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or at 07778225296	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, Netherton Drive, Patterton Drive, Princes Square, Rockmount Avenue, Weir Avenue, Woodside Crescent.
 James McCarroll and Garry Gilmour	James.McCarroll@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or at 07918445222 Garry.Gilmour@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or at 07443 204403	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, Fereneze 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, Levern 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
 Mozhgan Nafouti	Mozhgan.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
 Melissa Bell	Melissa.Bell@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or at 07971 676 307	Newton Mearns



Knowledge partnership

Earlier this year, Housing Services concluded work on a refresh of our large-scale tenant satisfaction survey. This was carried out by consultants Knowledge Partnership, independently on our behalf. This takes place every 2-3 years, though we carry out a range of smaller surveys on an ongoing basis.

We surveyed

- 568 tenants face to face (including sheltered housing tenants)
- 75 owners receiving factoring services, by telephone.

The results were also enhanced through some mystery shopping calls to the service using different routes customers would use to contact us (e.g. phone, email, dropping into the office). The survey results were discussed recently with our Customer Scrutiny Group, focusing on customer care matters. The full results of the survey work have now been provided to us by Knowledge Partnership.

Key issues are set out in 3 separate reports, focusing on a range of service areas, highlighting the views of:

- Tenants
- Sheltered Tenants
- Factored Owners.

Fuller details have been published in our Annual Landlord Report 20/24. You can access this here: <https://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/housing-services>

Highlights

83% of tenants were satisfied with opportunities to participate in our decision making, up from 68% in 22/23.

87% of tenants were satisfied with our contribution to management of the neighbourhood they live in, up from 78% in 22/23.

As a landlord, we need to keep you informed about our services and decisions. 87% of tenants were satisfied we do that, up from 78% in 22/23.

Areas to focus on

Communication with customers throughout day-to-day processes - such as updating on the status of a repair, and the next steps - to ensure customers are updated at key stages. Knowing your housing officer better and understanding what they can help with. Customers having better links with the Neighbourhood Housing team is an area we are working on as a service.

The role of the veterans support advisor



Jane Duncan is the Veterans Support Advisor for Renfrewshire Council, East Renfrewshire Council and Inverclyde Council. Having served 22 years in the British Army, Jane is a veteran herself and has a wealth of understanding about the resources that are crucial to ensuring Military personnel are provided with the right services when returning to Civvy Street.

Commencing the role in 2014, Jane underpinned what services were already in place and what needed to be implemented to improve services and opportunities for Military personnel within these regions. It was quickly apparent that whilst there was information and services available, these were not readily accessible for veterans due to poor communication. Many veterans voice that it can be overwhelming to know what support is available.

Jane commented: *"There is no reason for any veteran to feel alone or isolated when leaving the Armed Forces, you may feel like you have left leave a community, and that is difficult to step away from. Replicating that community sense via groups and organisations can, for some, help Military personnel feel part of a tight knit group and most importantly, valued. My role extends to liaising with local clubs and initiatives within the area to ensure that they are equipped with the knowledge of how to help veterans in their community integrate. We need such clubs and groups to welcome veterans, and recognise the pool of talent and skills they hold."*

The appetite from Renfrewshire Council, East Renfrewshire Council and Inverclyde Council to help veterans integrate into the community has significantly increased since 2014 and they all want to play their part in ensuring that the region is viewed as a place to settle for veterans.

Looking to the future

Jane fundamentally believes that there would be great benefit for each Council in Scotland to implement a Veterans Support Advisor role. *"I would love it if every veteran in Scotland was able to contact their local authority directly and get the support they required. Whilst it's great to promote national level services, it can be difficult for veterans to know who to turn to for advice."*

If you need support please contact Jane at: Jane.Duncan@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

How you bid for Council Housing has changed

Bidding for our Council Housing is now done through the Council's self-service portal, MyEastRen.

Should you wish to bid for properties in the future, please read this information and follow the steps to ensure you are able to bid.

How do I access Housing Online through MyEastRen?

As a first step you need to sign up to MyEastRen. You may have already done this, for example, if you are a Council tenant and signed up to view your rent account online. You may also have

set up a MyEastRen account to access Parentsportal or CouncilTax online. If you had a live Housing application before April 2023 you may have already received a letter asking you to create a MyEastRen account.

If you don't create an account, you won't be able to complete the registration process, which means you won't be able to bid for council housing.

What next?

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

Once your logged in to MyEastRen scroll down and select 'Access Housing Online' at the bottom of the page. You must now create a one-time login to Housing Online.

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

If you need any advice or assistance, contact your Housing Officer or or alternatively email HousingOnlineEnquiries@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk





Meet Neill, our new repairs delivery manager



We spoke to our new Repairs Delivery Manager who's recently joined the team:

"I'm a time served joiner who served his apprenticeship with a local authority, and have worked with a number of local authorities and RSLs within social housing.

I believe in good quality housing for all; the benefits this can bring to the wider community and people's ability to live, work and raise a family, have been key driving factors in my career.

In my personal time I enjoy watching football and love great design, art and music! I'm delighted to have joined the team in East Renfrewshire and look forward to helping make a difference."

You said we did!

Every complaint we receive that is upheld, we ask ourselves what we did wrong and how can we prevent this happening again. Since the last newsletter here is an update on the changes we've made:

The issuing of correspondence to a former tenant, for whom a family member holds Power of Attorney – we had been notified of this. This happened due to moving to a new system but we have now put additional checks in place so this does not happen again.

Waiting excessively for replacement door when advised it was required. This was due to not having a contractor during the pandemic so when work was required tenants was placed on a waiting list with no timescales. We now have a contractor in place and cleared waiting lists, so works can now be actioned when required.

Issue with tenants in a block not disposing of rubbish appropriately leading to vermin- although we had been actioning this we have not been communicating this to the complainant – Communication procedures updated

To read a QR code, you need to:

Open the camera app on your phone or use a web app to scan a QR code online.

- Point your camera at the QR code and wait for it to come into focus.
- Tap the lens icon or the "What's on my screen?" option to reveal the code content.
- Tap the link that appears to open and view the code's contents.

Feedback on your repairs

Have you had a repair completed by our team, please complete our survey, your feedback helps improve our services.

2024/25

**Customer Repairs
Satisfaction Survey**



Have you had a Gas Service recently. Please complete our survey, your feedback helps improve our services.

2024/25

**Customer Gas Services
Satisfaction Survey**



Remember to apply for clothing grant & free school meals

Although schools have returned, you've still got time to submit an application for clothing grant and free school meals.

You can apply if your child attends a school in East Renfrewshire and you receive a qualifying benefit. Qualifying benefits include Universal Credit, Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance and many others.

For school year 2024 to 2025, the amount of clothing grant you can get is £120 per primary school child and £150 per secondary school child.

All primary 1-5 children qualify for free school meals. We'd encourage you to still select 'yes' for free school meals to ensure you receive any additional payments you may be due.

For the full list of qualifying benefits and to apply online, visit: eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/free-school-meals.

If you're currently in receipt of Scottish Child Payment and your child is in Primary 6 or 7, email: CGFSMapply@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk with parent's name and address, your child's name, date of birth and school, and attach a copy of your Scottish Child Payment letter to apply for free school meals during term time.



Education Maintenance Allowance applications are open

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is a weekly payment of £30 to help support pupils beyond the school leaving age of 16.

Pupils who qualify for the 2024 to 2025 school year must go to an East Renfrewshire school, were born between 1 March 2005 and 28 February 2009, their study involves at least 21 hours of guided learning a week, should sign a learning agreement with their school and have a household income of up to £24,421 for one dependent child and up to £26,884 for two or more.





Protect your home

If you are going away over the winter months and are leaving your home unoccupied you should

- ❄ Turn off and drain down your plumbing system or make sure you leave your heating switched on at a low setting to avoid pipes freezing.
- ❄ Leave a key with a trusted neighbour, friend or relative and ask them to drop in now and then to check everything is okay. Make sure you tell Housing Services who has the key in case of emergency.
- ❄ Check with neighbours if you shut off valves as you might shut off their water also.

Get to know your stop taps

Find and label all stop taps and valves - you'll need to turn them off quickly if there's a burst. Check regularly that they're working.

The main stop tap is often found under the kitchen sink or in the bathroom. Some valves will be in the loft space or perhaps a cupboard. There will be a mains water control valve in the street but remember to tell your neighbours if you turn this off.

If your pipes freeze you should

- ❄ Thaw out the pipes using warm water or warm air from a hair drier but remember this is electricity so watch out for burst pipes.
- ❄ If the hot water pipes are affected, switch off the source of heat - your immersion heater, gas boiler or fire.

Dealing with frozen pipes: Don't panic - just follow these steps to minimise damage and get everything back to normal

- ❄ Turn off the water at the main stop valve.
- ❄ If water gets into any electrical fitting switch electricity off at mains switch.
- ❄ Tell your neighbours you have turned off your water. Valves outside your house may also affect your neighbours' water supply.

What if I cannot live in the house because of water damage?

If you become homeless as a result of damage to your home, the Council will provide information, advice and assistance.

During normal working hours you should contact Customer First in the first instance on **0141 577 3001**.

Out with normal working hours you can contact us on freefone **0800 052 0180**.

Social Work Standby Service **0800 811 505**.

To report an emergency

Your first point of contact for reporting emergency repairs during normal working hours is:

Repairs Call centre – **0141 577 3700**

Textphone – **0141 571 0110**

If you need to report an emergency repair outwith office hours the number is:

Freephone – **08080 03 1601** (free from a landline only)

If you smell gas or are worried about gas safety, phone the National Gas Emergency Number on **0800 111 999**.

For emergency gas heating repairs or a blocked flue contact our heating contractor City Technical Services on **033 202 0708**.

Scottish Water have issued information on how to protect your property during cold weather, visit their website or contact them via twitter or facebook for more information.

