

Abertalk



S U M M E R

New "Fintry Hub" Project

One Parent Families Scotland and Abertay Housing Association, who already work closely together to provide community activities from the Families House in Fintry, will be extending what they do. A new joint project will provide a range of activities to support residents in the north and south ends of Fintry. It will operate from both the Families House in Grampian Gardens, and also a converted flat in Fintryside.

The project will provide local information points for financial information, including support to apply for benefits on line, offer group sessions on topics including

budgeting and cooking, and encourage healthy family activities and family play sessions. Initial employability activities will take place to support people on their journey into work and will include confidence building, supporting access to volunteering opportunities and support with job searches and applications.

This project is being supported for one year through a grant of around £50,000 from the Scottish Government's People and Communities Fund.



**One Parent
Families Scotland**

Would you like to have a say?

Do you have an interest in improving the services which Abertay provides? We are still actively looking for tenants and other customers to get involved and become Abertay's 'critical friend'.

There are a number of ways Interested Residents can be involved including:

- Customer Surveys
- Local tenant/Focus Groups
- Mystery Shopping
- Walkabout Inspections
- Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- Armchair Membership

If you feel you can get involved in any of the above please contact **Sharon Clinton** on 01382 903545 or alternatively email her at: Sharon@abertayha.co.uk.

Date for your Diary

The **Fintry Gala Day** is to be held in the grounds of Fintry Parish Church at 11am on **Saturday 29th August 2015**. As well as sponsoring the climbing wall, Abertay has agreed to sponsor archery this year which should prove to be a very exciting and popular free attraction for children. Hope to see you there!!



Revised timetable for our Walkabouts

By now you should have received a revised edition of our Estate Walkabout Timetable. After consulting tenants, we have changed some of the starting times, reviewed the areas they cover and made them smaller and easier for residents to walk around.

So come along and join us on our regular Estate Walkabouts and have a say in how you would like your area improved. Please refer to the timetable for dates, times and meeting point in your area. (A copy is available on our website www.abertayha.co.uk). If you are unable to come along on the day, you can still become involved. Contact us on 01382 903545. Or alternatively email us at: queries@abertayha.co.uk.

Rent Consultation Feedback

Abertay's Management Committee decided in December 2014 to consult tenants on rent increase options for 2015/16. Tenants were able to respond in a number of ways which included, by text, email or freepost reply card. Three options were proposed for tenants to consider:

- Option 1 – 2.3% increase. This will help deliver a £4.5m planned maintenance programme for 2015/16 and continue work to improve energy efficiency of homes.
- Option 2 – 2.8% increase. As above but also install peepholes to around 400 homes.
- Option 3 – 3.3% increase. Same as options 1 and 2 but also carry out further security work such as external security lighting.

The majority of tenants who responded (65%) felt that the lowest rise of 2.3% was the best option. This was agreed by the Management Committee. A report detailing information on the outcome of our consultation can be viewed on our website at: www.abertayha.co.uk. {downloads then survey results 2015}. Alternatively if you would like a copy of the report sent to you, please contact the Customer Service Team on 01382 903545.

Congratulations

The winner of our rent consultation Prize Draw was **Mr Hoskins from Fintry**.

Our thanks go to all tenants who responded.



Pay your rent or charges online worldpay

Did you know that you can now pay your rent and any other service charges through our new payment site? We provide a 24 hour secure internet payment service which is powered by Worldpay and is one of the world's leading payment companies. You can make a variety of payments at your convenience at: www.abertayha.co.uk. All major credit and debit cards are accepted and payments can be made towards rent, owners' bills, recharges or any other invoices you may have received from Abertay.

Evictions – help us to help you!

Last year 7 tenants were evicted for rent arrears as agreements to pay were either not made or broken.

If you don't pay your rent we have less to spend on services and improvements for everyone.

We are here to help - if you are having difficulties paying your rent:-

- ❌ Don't ignore it (we won't)
- ❌ Don't delay – phone our rent team today on 01382 903545
- ✅ Make a lump sum payment or instalment agreement & keep to it
- ✅ Do consider switching to direct debit – it's simple & easy
- ✅ Do stay in touch with us & tell us if your circumstances change



Benefit changes - Universal Credit

Universal credit is being introduced in stages across the UK. It is to be introduced in Dundee from 2nd November 2015 and it will affect those in receipt of benefits, starting with single, working age people first.

Claims for universal credit will be made and managed through an online account. If you think you are likely to need help to apply online please contact our Welfare Officer, Anna Lieske; she will be able to help you through the process. Alternatively please contact the universal credit helpline on 0845 600 0723.

If you need any help with making benefit claims, Please give **Anna Lieske** a call on **01382 513826** or email her at: anna.lieske@abertayha.co.uk.



Eviction for Anti-Social Behaviour

On 26 March 2015, Abertay Housing Association successfully secured an eviction order against a tenant at Dundee Sheriff Court for Anti-Social Behaviour relating to drugs.



In this case, the detrimental effects on neighbouring residents had been extreme and unacceptable for some time. Despite interventions, repeated warnings and continued support offered by Abertay, Police Scotland and other external agencies the situation did not improve, leaving us no option but to pursue eviction.

We managed to collate sufficient evidence to satisfy the Court that an eviction was the right course of action to ensure that other residents in the area could live in peace and quiet.

The eviction was carried out on 1 May.

Abertay will not tolerate persistent acts of Anti-Social Behaviour and will take strong action, including Court proceedings, if we have sufficient evidence.



End of the Right to Buy

The Housing Scotland Act 2014, passed last summer, signals an end to the Right to Buy Scheme. Those tenants who retain the Right to Buy have until 31 July 2016 to submit their application. Remember if you are considering buying your home, as well as the purchase price, you will also have to pay other ongoing costs such as buildings insurance, repairs and maintenance and factoring charges.



Winter Maintenance Programme

We arrange regular inspections of Open Space Maintenance areas located throughout our Housing Estates and Sheltered Complexes to ensure they are kept up to standard. However, we also encourage feedback from our customers, particularly where suggestions could make an improvement.

Feedback from you helps us to collate and add landscaping issues to our Planned Winter Maintenance Programme; additional works are completed based on priority and budget. Work may also be held back until the grass cutting season finishes, including pruning of trees and replanting of some shrub beds within our estate Open Space areas.

We previously highlighted our proposals for last year's Winter Maintenance Programme and we will continue to do this in future through our website at www.abertayha.co.uk.

Our Landscaping Contractor, Land Engineering has completed the Winter Tree Works for 2014/15 and will not be carrying out works of a similar nature until next winter, between the months of December 2015 – March 2016.

However, if you have any landscaping issues in



relation to overgrown or damaged trees/hedges/shrub beds etc. please contact our **Customer Services Team 01382 903545** who will record this information. Your issues will then be inspected and considered as part of our end of year Open Space Inspections for our next Winter Maintenance Programme.

Abertay tenants carrying out Alterations or Improvements

At Abertay, we hope that you feel that the house we provide is your home, and therefore, we understand that tenants often want to put their own stamp on the place. This might range from something simple like fitting alternative lighting to replacing your kitchen or bathroom.

Should you be planning to do any alterations or improvements applications must be completed prior to work commencing. For further information please contact us on 01382 903545. Application forms can be downloaded from our website, requested over the telephone or picked up in person from reception.

Completed Alterations/Improvements Application

Forms should provide us with as much detail as possible with regards to the proposed works, methods, the materials used and contractors who will be carrying out the proposed works. It is also important that all proposed alterations are carried out in a satisfactory and safe manner, and with this in mind you should ensure that works are carried out by suitably qualified trades persons.

Finally should you decide to leave your Abertay home, depending on what works you have carried out, you may be asked to put the house back to its original condition.





Did you know?

Abertay contributes £7,000 a year towards the cost of a dedicated Energy Advisor employed by Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project (DEEAP).

Through this partnership, Abertay tenants received advice, help or payments totalling over £45,000 last year.

Some of the help available includes:-

Energy advice about which tariff is best for you

Help in switching energy supplier

Low energy light bulbs

Heating system demonstration so you don't waste energy

Help with billing or fuel supplier problems

Benefit checks & help with unclaimed benefits

Eligibility check for Warm Home Discount of £140

Emergency fuel payment assistance (if applicable)

Help with white goods (if applicable)

If you need help – please do get in touch.

This service is free to Abertay tenants – just ring DEEAP on **01382 434840** or e-mail **deeap@dundeecity.gov.uk**.



Close Cleaning

Abertay Housing Association currently has 62 tenement blocks on a close cleaning contract. This work recently went out to competitive tender.

To coincide with this, we surveyed our residents on the standard of work of the current close cleaning company.

Based on cost and the results of the survey, we are happy to announce the tender has been awarded to S & S Close Cleaning Company.

Residents will also be happy to know, S & S have maintained their current costs for the fourth consecutive year so this represents real value for money.



We would like to thank those residents who took the time to complete the survey and will consider your comments and suggestions to improve the service.

Helping Residents Switch Energy Supplier

Switching energy supplier can be one of the most effective ways to reduce household gas and electricity bills. The prices offered by various suppliers vary from time to time and it is recommended that options are reviewed every year or so.

Residents of Abertay Housing Association can now take advantage of a free advice helpline set up specifically to help simplify the process. The service is independent of the utility companies.



If you would like to take advantage of this, call the freephone number on **0800 410 1262** with the following information to hand :-

- A recent electricity bill
- A recent gas bill if applicable
- Your approximate annual spend in electricity / gas (if known)

Further details can be provided at **www.switchmyenergy.co.uk**

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	Last year	This year	
Gross rent arrears as a percentage of rent due	3.6%	3.3%	😊
Percentage of rent lost through properties being empty in the last year	0.8%	0.5%	😊
Average time to re-let properties in the last year	32 days	16 days	😊
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs	3.8 hours	1.9 hours	😊
Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs	6.2 days	5.1 days	😊

Abertay are pleased to announce continued improvement in key areas that we know are important to you. Our aim is to provide you with the best possible repairs service and in order for us to do this, we work to keep rent arrears to a minimum and reduce the time it takes us to re-let our empty homes, so the loss in rental income is reduced. We are very happy that we have managed to reduce the average time a property lies empty from 32 days in March 2014 to only 16 days in March 2015. We have managed this without it impacting on the quality of home we offer where all repairs and décor (if needed) are completed before the new tenant moves in.

Scottish Housing Quality Standard

Over the last few years Abertay has been investing heavily to ensure tenants' homes meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. Having achieved this we are now committed to continuing to invest to ensure our homes meet the needs and demands of our tenants in the future.

This year will see Abertay roll out two significant programmes. The first programme will tackle external items such as windows, doors, roofs, gutters, render, fencing and footpaths as required for around 150 properties. This programme had been initially started with Muirfield Contracts, but following their administration has been awarded to Pert Bruce Ltd (who are based in Montrose).

The second programme will tackle internal items such as kitchens, bathrooms, electrics and heating as required for around 300 homes. This programme has been awarded to McTear Contracts Ltd who are based near Motherwell.

In addition Abertay continues to work in conjunction with Robert Gordon University to develop an insulation package suitable for our steel houses in Craigiebank. As part of this we will be completing work to some pilot properties over the summer.

Over the past year we have been able to take advantage of substantial grants to allow us to internally insulate around 140 homes. Although we cannot be certain what grants may become available in the future Abertay will always ensure any opportunities are taken to assist us in improving the energy efficiency of our houses.

If your home is going to be included in one of our programmes we will write to you ahead of time to discuss what works we envisage, explain the process and answer any questions you may have.

In the meantime if you have any questions please ask to speak to one of the Project Team on 01382 513816.



A New Service for Older People in Dundee

- Helping
- Older
- People
- Engage

Are you, or is someone you know dealing with the impact of bereavement, social isolation, increasing frailty or just need some information and advice about local services, housing or care options?

A partnership of 4 local Housing Associations: Home Scotland, Abertay, Sanctuary and Caledonia has been developed with funding from the new **Integrated Care Fund** to support and promote independent living in communities across the city.

Support workers based at local Sheltered Housing developments will provide a visiting service to older people in their local community that assists with life transitions such as bereavement, moving house or following periods of ill health.

Support workers will help older people connect with services and activities in their local communities as well as offering practical assistance and sign posting to more specialist services.

Disposals

Last year, Abertay's Management Committee agreed a disposals policy which allows us to sell certain types of properties including:

- Empty flats in blocks where this is the only flat owned by Abertay.
- Empty properties where the cost to re-let is considered uneconomic.
- Properties in areas of low or no demand.
- Properties that are empty and are unlettable.

- Where a disposal would allow for estate redesign or layout problems to be addressed.
- Where a disposal may allow access to land for redevelopment

Since approving this policy, two properties were identified and put up for sale. Both were empty flats in a block where this was the only flat owned by Abertay. The proceeds from these sales will either be reinvested in planned maintenance works to our remaining properties or will be used to support us buying suitable properties to rent via the Home Owner Support Fund which replaced the Mortgage to Rent Scheme.

There is a new menace on our streets.

Quad bikes and scrambler bikes have been spotted across our estates. The users are ill equipped with no safety helmets, and it is questionable if they are insured. People are in danger of being hurt, or indeed fatally injured due to irresponsible riders. With this in mind, we would like to remind all tenants of the dangers, and also to highlight their responsibilities under their

tenancy agreements. No vehicle can be parked on our land, or within the boundaries of the estate of which the house forms part, without permission. You must not store inflammable liquids such as oil, petrol or paraffin in your house or in any storage or cellar area. It is apparent residents are either unaware of this, or choosing to ignore it. **THINK!**

If a Quad bike or scrambler in unskilled hands goes out of control and hits someone or something the result may be fatal.

REMEMBER!

You need your landlord's permission to park, store or use a vehicle on their land. You are not allowed to store inflammable liquids in your house or in any storage or cellar area.



ABERTAY STAFF GIVE A LITTLE EGGSTRA...

On the 2nd April Abertay staff were delighted to assist by donating Easter Eggs to Kean's Childrens Fund to help brighten a Childs Easter Sunday.

Charlie Kean accepted the eggs on behalf of the Childrens Charity and arranged to distribute the Easter Eggs to local children living with debilitating illness or those in homeless temporary accommodation.



STAFF CHANGES



Cat McPhee



Sarah-Jane Brown



Margaret Gourlay

We celebrated the retirement of Jean Kirkpatrick who was employed with Abertay for over 20 years. She received an emotional send off and we all wish her a long and happy retirement. We also welcomed some new members of staff. Cat McPhee joined us in June as the new Income Officer and has already settled in. Sarah-Jane Brown and Margaret Gourlay have joined the Scheme Management Team.

NEWSLETTERS

We are always on the lookout for contributions to our Newsletters. If you have any interesting articles or want to tell us something that is happening in your local area, please let us know and we will include it in a future newsletter.



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE

Getting In Touch

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