

Building on progress for a brighter Hillhead

A RECOGNISED SCOTTISH CHARITY SCO29998

NEW STARTS FOR HILLHEAD!

In March we welcomed 2 new members of staff to our team and 2 staff into new positions.



Heather Montgomery's role as Income Maximisation Assistant was confirmed as permanent following her successful interview. She continues to work alongside Morag, Welfare Rights Officer and Angela from the Simon Community.



Diane Bridges changes role and has been appointed as Estates Coordinator. Diane will be responsible for managing maintenance and upkeep of the estate including paths, fences, open spaces and common closes. She will work alongside the property Services Team and support the Housing Officers with the management of their respective patches.



Michele Stirling has been appointed to fill Diane's previous role as Property Services Assistant. Michele worked before at Govan Housing Association where she performed a similar role.



Janine Pulling joins us as a Housing Officer to support the housing management team. Janine worked for Sanctuary Housing before and has a wealth of housing experience.

Yes, we are open

From Monday 7 March we are opening the office to the public. Please wear a mask and respect our social distancing measures. They are in place for your safety as well as for our staff. Only 2 persons max at a time please!
We don't accept rent payments at our office. Please continue to make payments by phone 0141 578 0200 or Freephone 0800 0523 188.

Our office is open 9am to 12 noon and then 1.30pm to 4pm Monday to Friday. Please wear a mask and observe our social distancing measures.

RENT CONSULTATION 2022/23

We received 88 responses to our recent consultation on rent levels for 2022/23. A big thank you to all tenants who responded. We entered the names of all tenants who replied into a prize draw for £50 of High Street vouchers, this was won by a tenant in Kenilworth Road – congratulations!

This response rate was 10.8% of all tenants. This is broadly similar to the response rate last year. It also means that around 725 tenants did not respond to the

consultation, so we don't know their views on the proposed rent increase.

This year as well as the consultation document being sent by post to all tenants, we also sent the survey via text or e-mail where we hold such contact details for tenants. This provides a quick and easy way for tenants respond. If you did not receive the survey by text or e-mail and would like to receive future communications from us this way, please get in touch with the office and give us your mobile phone number or e-mail address.

The question we asked in the consultation was;

I want Hillhead Housing Association to maintain investment in homes and services by increasing rents by inflation (CPI at 4.2%).

I do not agree with the proposal to increase rents by inflation (CPI at 4.2%).

The results from the 88 tenants who responded were as follows;

Agree	40	45.45%
Disagree	48	54.55%
Total	88	

Of the 88 who responded, 51 are self-payers, 12 are in receipt of partial Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (HB / UC) and 24 are in receipt of full HB / UC. One response did not allow us to identify the benefit status of the tenant. However, it is not the case that those on benefits always agreed with the increase, nor did self-payers always disagree with the increase. A detailed analysis is shown below.

Agree	Full HB/UC	13
	Part HB/UC	8
	Self-payer	19
Disagree	Full HB/UC	11
	Part HB/UC	4
	Self-payer	32

The consultation also asked for comments where tenants disagreed with the proposal. We received a wide range of views and responses, and all of these were passed to our Management Committee in full for them to be considered when the final decision was taken on this year's rent review.

As you may expect many comments were in relation to the varied effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on individual households, the community and the Housing Association. A significant number of comments also made reference to the rising cost of living generally, and energy and food costs in particular.

The Management Committee thought long and hard over the results of the consultation. Many commented that they found this one of the toughest decisions they had taken on the Hillhead Committee. They also looked at the financial plans that seek to ensure that the Association remains in sound financial health over the longer term and can continue to invest in its homes and services. It is critical that the Association has enough rental income to be able to repay the loans it took out to significantly improve or replace the housing stock when the Association was set up.

The current economic situation is extremely challenging both for individuals and for businesses. Inflation is at a rate not seen for a generation. The rent consultation was based on an inflation rate of 4.2%, but inflation is now even higher at 6.2% and looks set to remain high for the remainder of the year. That means that the price the Association pays for materials, goods and services may well increase at that rate. We need to have the ability to pay for those things in order to continue to deliver high quality services to our tenants.

We are proud of the changes that we have brought about in the community through careful financial management. Most recently the large-scale environmental improvement works, which many tenants had told us was really important to them, delivered £1.4 million of investment without having to increase rents by higher amounts.

Based on this the Management Committee of the Association made the decision that rents would go up by 4.2% in the coming financial year. Individual letters were issued to all tenants before the end of February 2022 providing exact details of the new charge from 28 March 2022 for their property.

We are aware that the UK & Scottish Governments are putting in place measures to seek to ease the burden of increased costs for households and we support these efforts. We will also actively seek opportunities to bid for funding to help support the Hillhead community, and build on our successful track record in this area. For example, we have just been awarded £18,800 from the Cash for Kids / Scottish Government Winter Fund to support children affected by poverty. As is often the case with such funds, bids must come from community groups rather than individuals. The Association is well placed to take advantage of these types of opportunities.

A big thank you again to all those tenants who took the time to talk to us, comment on Facebook or complete the consultation document either on paper or online.

RENT INCREASE – CHANGES YOU MAY NEED TO MAKE

Everyone should now have received their rent increase letter informing them of how much rent is due to be paid from 28 March 2022.

If you pay by standing order you will need to contact the bank and increase your payment or if you have on-line banking you can log on and update the figure yourself.

For those tenants paying by direct debit the Association will amend the payment accordingly. If you are interested in changing your payment to a direct debit please contact your

Housing Officer who will be able to set this up for you. Once set up you never need to worry about having to update your rent figure again.

If your rent is paid by Housing Benefit you do not need to do anything this will be updated by us.

If your rent is paid by Universal Credit please check your journal as the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) will set a 'To-Do' for you in your journal about your rent increase. It is extremely important that you update your journal with the new rent amount as soon as possible. If you are unsure how to do this please contact our

Welfare Rights team at this office and Morag Bisset or Heather Montgomery will be happy to help you.

If you have lost your letter and are not sure what to pay please contact us and we can let you know.





CHANGES TO YOUR HOUSEHOLD

As a Scottish Secure tenant, you have the right to make changes to who lives in the house with you. However, it is important that the Association keeps accurate, up-to-date records and information about who is living in our properties. For any household changes you must notify Hillhead Housing Association and in some cases you may be required to get our written permission beforehand.

This not only allows us to ensure that everyone is getting the information and services they need but also protects their rights with regard to succeeding a tenancy, becoming a joint tenant or being advised of any legal action to repossess the property.

Knowing details about the people living in your home also means we can advise you of any changes that may affect you including changes to the welfare benefit system.

Please speak to your Housing Officer in the first instance if you wish to make any changes to your household and keep Hillhead Housing Association up-to-date about who is living in your home.



HomeSwapper is an online mutual exchange service for social housing tenants that allows you advertise your property and find someone to swap with - both locally and nationally. This gives you access to thousands of other tenants who are looking to swap their home and it's free to use for tenants of Hillhead Housing Association. You can register online directly at homeswapper.co.uk.

If you live in a home that no longer meets your needs or simply want a fresh start a mutual exchange may be your solution. A mutual exchange allows tenants of social landlords to swap homes as long as they have permission of both landlords

Mutual exchanges are a good additional option for tenants who may not have a high priority for a transfer or for a move with another Registered Social Landlord.

If you need any further assistance or have any questions, please contact Kelly Wallace, our Housing Assistant who will be happy to help.

Think of leaving us? How to End Your Tenancy Correctly



We're sorry to see you go, but if you are moving elsewhere you need to do a couple of things to properly end your tenancy. Don't just hand the keys in.

You must give us 28 days notice in writing and you must sign the notice. We can provide a form for you to fill in. If it is a joint tenancy, both tenants must sign.

If you have been offered and have accepted another tenancy with a different landlord, or if you are moving in with family, in fact if you are leaving for any reason at all, it is important that you give the Association 28 days' notice.

This is a requirement as detailed in your Scottish Secure Tenancy agreement which you have signed.

You remain responsible for the tenancy and the rent up until the date we agree that your tenancy will end, usually 28 days after you first give notice. And if you do not return the keys on the agreed date you remain responsible for the tenancy and rent until you do so.

Please contact your Housing Officer as soon as possible, if you are thinking of giving up your tenancy.

Getting to Know our Tenants Better

We want to make sure that we understand who is in our community and any barriers that people may have to accessing our services and engaging with us. With that in mind, we will shortly be sending an Equalities questionnaire to every tenant. The survey is completely anonymous.

The survey is also voluntary but the more responses we get the better information we will have to help us design services that include groups that can sometimes be marginalised or excluded. So please fill it in and return it in the reply-paid envelope when it arrives.

We will also start to collect this information, again anonymously, from housing applicants, new tenants, staff and Committee members. Thanks for your help!

Electrical Testing

We're continuing essential electrical safety testing in our homes and tenants will soon receive a letter with an appointment for our contractor AC Gold to carry out a Periodic Electrical Test.

The safety of our tenants and residents is paramount and these checks allow us to examine the condition of the wiring against safety standards. Some wiring can deteriorate or become damaged over time, with the result of electric shock, fire and burns.

This forms part of our legal duty to carry out inspections, and tenants are required to allow these to take place. We would urge tenants to keep their appointment, or if it's not convenient, phone the property service team at Hillhead Housing to arrange a new appointment

"These safety checks are vitally important for keeping our tenants and residents safe, this type of testing takes place every five years and is carried out with the minimal of disruption to tenants. So, if you receive an appointment, please keep this, and ensure access is provided.

We're asking tenants to work with us and provide access to allow us to protect them and their homes from fire and give them the peace of mind that their home remains safe.

We are also reassuring tenants that staff will continue to



wear face masks, maintain social distancing and carry out these checks with tenant safety in mind. If, on the day of an appointment, a tenant displays symptoms of coronavirus they should cancel and reschedule.

If a tenant refuses to provide access and seems unaware of their, and our obligations to maintain and keep them and their properties safe, as a last resort Hillhead Housing Association does have legal powers to enforce access if all attempts of co-operation are exhausted.

ENERGY SAVING TIPS

With longer days and (hopefully) better weather just around the corner, spring is a great time to be looking at ways you could save some pennies. Have a look at these top tips, from Home Energy Scotland, to help you prepare for warmer months ahead and see what you could save over a whole year.

- 1. Reset your thermostats** During the winter, you probably set your temperature at a high level so be sure to reset your thermostats to reflect the warmer weather. Dropping the heat by just 1°C can save you on average £80 per year. And don't forget to reset any thermostat timers – more sunlight means your house will naturally be warmer and lighter, so you'll not need the heating on as much, if at all.
- 2. Change the way you pay** Contact your supplier directly to find out if there is a better way for you to pay your bill that might save you money. For example, most suppliers offer a discount for paying your bill by direct debit. You may also get discounts for receiving bills online, as this cuts down on paper and reduces costs for the supplier and is good for the environment



- 3. Embrace the great outdoors** Take full advantage of the warmer weather by linedrying your clothes instead of using the tumble dryer. This could save on average £35 a year on your electricity bill. Less time spent indoors also means less money spent on your energy bills, so why not head outdoors for a bike ride or take a stroll around the park if you can?
- 4. Switch off** If you're planning any day trips away, remember to switch appliances off at the wall. Turning off appliances rather than leaving them on standby could save you around £30 a year on your bills each year.

Legionella - Reduce Your Risk

The risk of contracting legionella in the domestic home is minimal and most protection from legionella has to be undertaken by people actually living in the home and using the water systems. There are some simple steps that you must take to help protect you and those in your home:

1. You have to turn your shower on and run it for a few minutes at least once a week, preferably more often than this, to flush out stale water.
2. You have to make sure that you dismantle, scrub and de-scale your showerheads and shower hoses at least once every 3 months or earlier if scaling is evident. This is easily done by removing the shower hose and head and leaving it soaking for half an hour in white vinegar then scrubbing off any deposits. You should then rinse it in warm water to wash off the vinegar.

3. If you have a spa type bath you have to make sure you clean it with appropriate approved chemicals at least once weekly.
4. You should make sure that you run water through all the hot and cold water taps throughout your home on at least a weekly basis.
5. Temperatures above 60°C will kill Legionella bacteria so make sure that the temperature of the hot water in your boiler/cylinder is set at a minimum of 60°C. Beware of burns and scalding and take extra care if you have children. Legionella can survive in low temperatures, but thrive at temperatures between 20°C and 45°C.

These are very simple steps to help protect you in your home and minimise any exposure risk. These precautions are even more important if you are over 50 years of age or suffer from ill health. If you would like more advice on this matter please contact a member of staff at our office to discuss.

TEST IT TUESDAY

We provide smoke alarms in all our houses, and they are also subjected to annual checks. However, you should test these weekly to make sure that they are always working. (TEST IT TUESDAY) If there appears to be a fault, you should report this to our Property Services Team.

Remember it is important to keep the smoke alarm in working order – it could save your life.

Please make sure that you do not cover up your smoke detectors at any time. If there is a fire and your detector is covered then the alarm will not always be effective.

By 1 Feb 2022, all homes in Scotland were required to have a minimum number of smoke alarms under changes made to the Housing (Scotland) Act in the wake of the Grenfell Tower blaze and Hillhead Housing welcomes this initiative to improve fire safety for our tenants.

The new requirements means that Hillhead Housing will install a smoke alarm in the room most frequently used for general daytime living purposes (living room), a



smoke alarm in every circulation space on each storey, such as hallways and landings and a heat alarm in every kitchen. However, Hillhead Housing has taken steps to ensure that there is minimum disruption to existing decoration in properties by insisting that all alarms are ceiling mounted and interlinked using RF (radio frequency) and therefore, there will be no need to expose electric cables or damage to papering or painting. The sealed long-life battery in these units should last for a minimum of 10 years.

If you feel your home is not up to the new standard or want advice on how to test the alarms, please contact the office for advice or to arrange an inspection

It's Test It Tuesday! Making sure you have working smoke & heat alarms could save your life. Test them weekly to make sure if fire does break out everyone in your home has time to get out safely.

More: <https://firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/fo>

REPORTING REPAIRS

If you require to report a repair, you are able to do this in several ways, including through your Housing Officer or Housing Assistant.

However, there are times when the Housing Officer/ Assistant may be on leave or absent from work. Therefore, if you have left a voicemail message or email / text message regarding a repair to your Housing Officer or Assistant, this may not be picked up for several days.

To make sure that your repair is reported and dealt with, please contact a member of the Property Services team:

Michele Stirling, Property Services Assistant
0141 776 8625 / 07458 301116

Malcolm Macdonald, Property Services Officer:
0141 776 8627

Marie Savage, Property Services Officer:
0141 776 8623
(Tuesday-Friday)

You can also send a text message to report a repair (Repair + message) to text 07491 163429



HOME CONTENTS INSURANCE

As your landlord, Hillhead Housing Association insures your property/ building, however it does not insure any of your contents. This includes things like your furniture, personal belongings or decoration. If any of these are destroyed or damaged in a fire, burst pipes or by accident you will need to pay them to be replaced if you have no contents insurance.

It is important that you take out your own Home Contents Insurance to protect your belongings and replace them if need be. It not only covers your household goods but it can cover things like replacing keys if they are lost or stolen.

If you would like a leaflet sent out or you would like more information regarding contents insurance, please contact the office. Details can also be found on the Association's website.



How to deal with Ants

We are again coming to the time of year when garden ants become a real nuisance and difficult to get rid of. We remind tenants that Hillhead Housing Association does not carry out treatments for garden ants. Here is some information which may assist you to deal with the problem:

- Although they live outdoors, they can find their way into homes in large numbers through small gaps in brickwork, at windows and doors in their search for food.
- They search for sweet foods so your first control measure must be to ensure that you are not accidentally encouraging them - even a small spill of a soft drink would be a feast to a horde of ants.

Treatment:

You should carry out treatment against ants yourself and need to be thorough.

- Apply a residual insecticide for crawling insects. You will be able to buy these at many DIY supermarkets and garden centres.
- Apply it to the entrance to the nest and wherever ants can enter your home.
- Inside your house you should apply the insecticide around the sink unit, skirting boards, around doors and window frames.
- You are trying to create a band of insecticide which ants must cross to get into your home.

To ensure you get rid of the problem you will need to find their nest. Follow any ant trails and look for small entrance holes in the ground surrounded by small piles of fine earth. Once you have found the nest follow the instructions that come with the pesticide about dealing with ants' nests. Please read the label and follow the instructions on the pesticide you chose.



Keeping Our Gardens Clean & Tidy

Life remains very different for us all and everyone is spending more time at home. Hopefully the weather improves and more of us are likely to be out in our gardens. Do you want to sit in a garden full of old household rubbish and bulky items where children cannot play freely, or enjoy the sunshine in a clean, tidy and well maintained garden?

We may not be in the office, or out and about in Hillhead & Braes of Yetts, but the Housing Officers are still keeping an eye on the estate and responding to complaints. Unfortunately, the Housing Management Team are dealing with an increasing number of complaints about bulk household rubbish left in gardens.

With the help of our colleagues in the office, these tenancies are monitored and contact made to make sure that an uplift has been requested. If you have arranged for an uplift, it is best if you phone to tell us.

We are aware that in some cases tenants are leaving their rubbish lying there for months on end. It can upset neighbours having to look at it all the time, could attract vermin, potentially be a fire hazard, as well as a hazard to young children.

It is a breach of your Tenancy Agreement which the Association takes seriously and it is your responsibility to organise the clearance of any rubbish or household goods.

Be aware that anything you dispose of outside needs to be removed. If you cannot afford to pay for an uplift, please do not put the items out until



you can. When the charity shops reopen you may find that they can make use of items you no longer want, particularly any furniture, so please do bear this in mind. If you are getting a new fridge/freezer or washing machine can the supplier take the old one away? Many companies offer this service for a small additional fee.

Please make sure that you arrange to clear all your unwanted items from your garden either by taking to the Council dump yourself; or by arranging an uplift through the Council by calling them on **0300 1234515**. There is a fee for this service which must be paid before any items are uplifted.

Common Areas

We would encourage any tenant or resident in the area to report any Health & Safety issues they may see in the common areas within the estate and backcourts. Hillhead do not have as many staff out and about on the estate but we are still carrying out inspections of common areas in order to record and monitor their condition and we will take any necessary remedial action.

Common area include: entrance doorways; close area/stairs; bin stores; backcourts/drying areas; pathways and driveways/parking bays. If your home is within a common close you are required to keep the close and backcourt areas clean, clear, litter free and tidy on a weekly basis. Common closes and stairways should always be free of hazards, particularly those that would restrict easy exiting of the building should an emergency situation arise.



2 STARS

and a

Wish

Summary of Feedback Forms January/February 2022

You will recall that we sent out our 2 Stars and a Wish form with our Annual Performance Report in December. A big thanks to everyone who returned this and for all your positive feedback!

Congratulations to our winner Mrs Johnstone who won our prize draw!

Tell us two things that we are doing well

Repairs

Lovely friendly staff

Prompt repair help

Keeping in touch with tenants during the Pandemic

Investing money back into homes and gardens

The staff listens to you on the phone

Have plenty of time for you

Putting in an external fence is a very good thing

Coped well so far during COVID-19

Keeping in touch with your clients and are always willing to help where possible

That you are there for the community

Getting repairs fixed promptly

Friendly staff

Tell us one thing that you would like us to do better

Garden Maintenance. Cutting wasn't as regular as last year

Find a decent gardening company

Make the communal green spaces look nicer

A nice thing is to paint the building from the outside

Open up community centres for kids and have discos, child play, pool, darts, table tennis football etc keep them from hanging about the streets getting drunk and full of drugs

What can I say, I have no complaints. I'm quite satisfied with all my dealings with everyone

It would be nice if in 2022 I'd get the feeling that you didn't favour some tenants over others and that all tenants were treated all the same

HOW WELL ARE WE DOING?

The tables below let you see how we are performing against some key activities during the period 1 October to 31 December 2021.

Remember, we always want to hear from you, whether it is good or bad. We can only improve our service if we hear from you.

KEY HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE PERFORMANCE STATISTICS

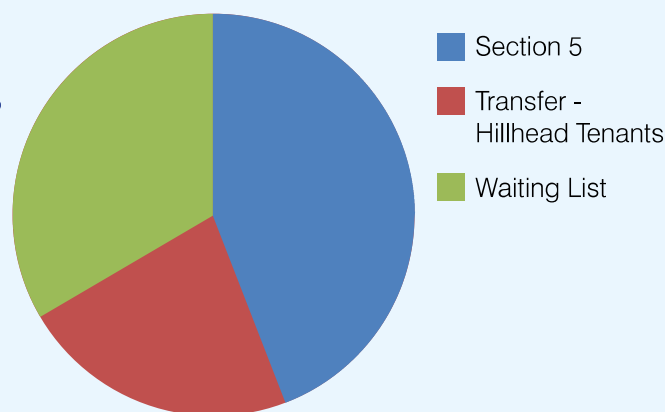
CURRENT TENANT RENT ARREARS

Month	Tenant Arrears	Level of Arrears	Rent Arrears Target
October	£117,649.37	3.07%	5.0%
November	£113,775.27	2.97%	5.0%
December	£122,263.56	3.19%	5.0%

ALLOCATIONS

Month	No. of Lets
October	2
November	6
December	1

WHO WERE PROPERTIES ALLOCATED TO?



REPAIRS RESPONSE TIMES (excludes gas servicing)

Category/Month	% Completed within time scales		
	October	November	December
Emergency (24hours)	95.45%	100%	100%
Urgent (3 days)	100%	96.84%	100%
Routine (10 days)	93.38%	98.27%	98.16%
Voids (7 days)	100%	88.89%	100%
All Repairs - HHA 2000	96.90%	97.23%	98.03%

HOW WE COMPARE TO OTHER HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

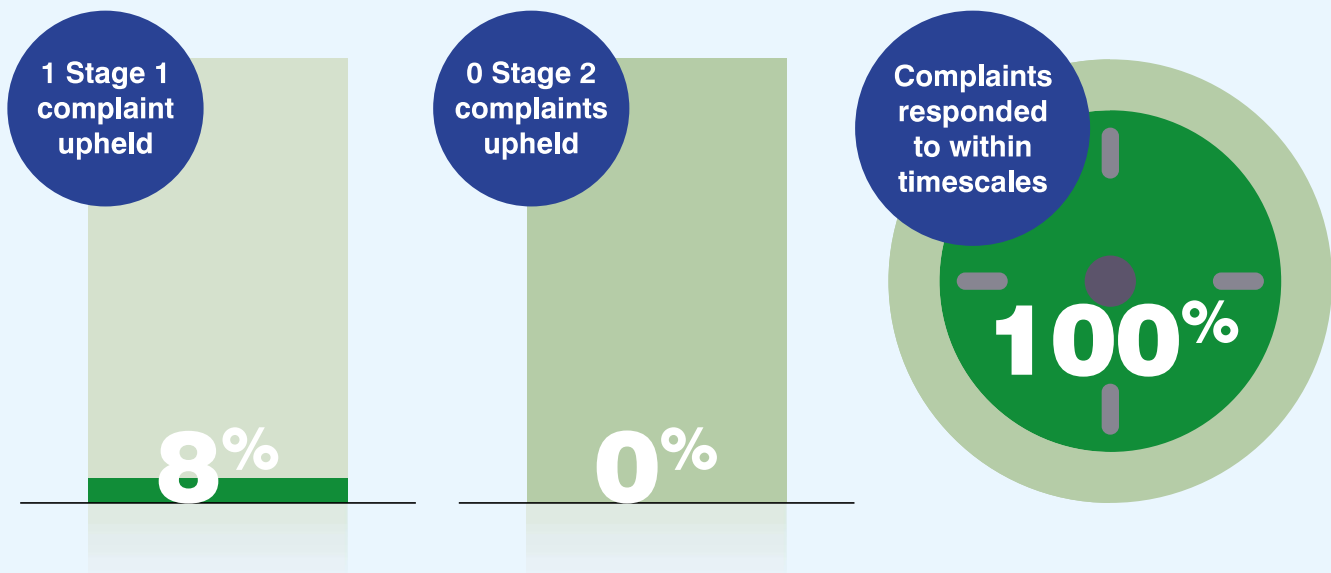
We compare our performance against those of 3 other housing associations every quarter. The table below lets you see how we are performing against the average of this group at the end of December 2021.

Performance Area	Hillhead	Housing Association Group
Rent Arrears	3.92%	3.90%
Rent Loss for empty houses/flats	0.4%	1.0%
Average time taken to re-let a house	25 days	28 days
Average number of days to complete non emergency repairs	2.58 days	3.85 days

COMPLAINTS

Between 1 October and 31 December 2021, the Association received 12 Stage 1 complaints and 0 Stage 2 complaints. When you complain, we always aim to resolve the issue as soon as possible and within 5 working days. However some complaints are more complex and require detailed investigation, meaning they are treated as Stage 2 complaints which we aim to respond within 20 working days.

COMPLAINTS RESULTS



COMPLAINTS BY NATURE OF COMPLAINT

Housing Quality & Maintenance	5
Access to Housing and Support	0
Customer / Landlord Relationship	5
Getting good value from rents & service charges	0
Neighbourhood and community	2
Complaints relating to equalities	0

ACTION TAKEN TO IMPROVE SERVICES

There was only one complaint which was found to be upheld. This was in relation to debris being left by contractor. This was actioned and contractor was advised accordingly.

Useful Telephone Numbers

Below is a list of contact telephone numbers that we hope you will find useful

Advice and Response EDC

0141 775 1311

Emergency Housing EDC

0141 578 2133 / 0141 578 8000

Kirkintilloch Integrated Care Centre

0141 232 8200 /
0141 304 7400 / 0141 355 2200

EDC – The Hub

0800 901 057

Housing Benefit

0800 901057

Caledonia Housing, Kirkintilloch

0141 578 0260

Police Station, Kirkintilloch

0141 532 4400 or 101

Special Uplift

0300 1234515

Cleansing and Recycling

0300 1234514

**Environmental Protection
(including dog fouling, dog
barking, antisocial noise)**

0300 1234510

Fire Station

0141 776 6263

National Grid (formerly Transco)

Gas Emergency

0800 111 999

DWP (Cumbernauld)

01236 786500

Local MP, Stuart McDonald MP

01236 453 969

Local MSP, Rona Mackay

0141 776 1561

Citizens Advice Bureau

0141 775 3223

Crimestoppers Scotland

0800 555111

How to contact us:

Hillhead Housing Association,

2 Meiklehill Road, Hillhead, Kirkintilloch, G66 2LA

**Please refer to Direct Dial Numbers for
all staff on enclosed Staff Contact List**

Email: admin@hillheadhousing.org

Web: www.hillheadhousing.org

Free Phone Number: 0800 0523 188

Tel: 0141 578 0200 • Fax: 0141 578 4817

Text Number: 07491 163429

Our phone lines are open between 9.00AM
and 12.30PM and from 1.30PM to 5PM.

**KEEP US
UP TO DATE!**

Please remember to let
us know of any changes
in your circumstances,
for example change of
name, change of number
in household etc.



OUT OF HOURS EMERGENCY REPAIRS CONTACT NUMBERS:

(Gas Heating repairs–James Frew Ltd)	01294 468 113
(all other repairs–Rodgers & Johnston)	0800 999 2520
For tenants of new build properties built within 1 year call NPA	0345 6016 084

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS - OFFICE HOURS

Our office will be closed on the following dates:

Friday 15 April and Monday 18 April. Monday 2 May.
Thursday 3 June and Friday 4 June.

Please let us know if you
require any information
within this newsletter in
larger print, Braille, cd/tape
or in another language.