

THE OCHIL VIEW

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Introduction from Chair

Welcome to the Spring 2025 Ochil View Housing Newsletter. I hope you all had a lovely Christmas and New Year.



We were very busy towards the end of 2024, with the Tenant Scrutiny Group reviewing our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedures, which saw their recommendations being applied in the review of the Policy. The 2023-2024 Housing Association Charitable Trust Fuel Support Fund came to an end, but I am pleased to report that we were successful in securing £83,623 in fuel vouchers for 300 tenants. I am delighted to say that we have managed to secure additional funding from the Trust for 2025. We also carried out some consultation with tenants on our proposed rent review and the results of this have been published, thanks to all who completed the survey.

We held our annual Meet, Heat and Eat events during January in Alloa, Tullibody and Fife. A total of approximately 80 tenants attended and all received a mug full of goodies including hand warmers, gloves, tea, coffee, hot chocolate, soup and biscuits. The Home Energy Advice Team and Cosy Kingdom attended to advise tenants how they can support them.

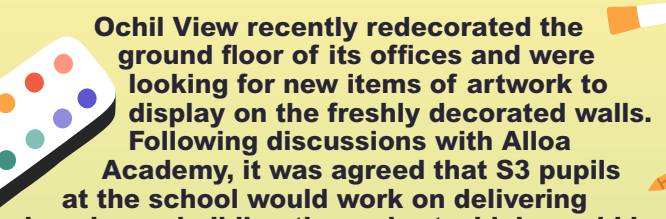
As you will see in this Newsletter, we have lots to look forward to in 2025.

Jade Murray, our new Tenant Engagement and Communication Officer has joined the organisation in February 2025 and will continue to work with the Tenant Scrutiny Group to expand on opportunities for tenants to participate in the decisions we make.

In this edition, you will find information on our planned maintenance programme, budget 2024-2025 update, changes to our Reactive Maintenance Contract and, of course, our annual easter competition. Here's hoping we get plenty of sunshine when the clocks go forward!

Many thanks.
Jim Savage, Chairperson

SCHOOL ART PROJECT



Ochil View recently redecorated the ground floor of its offices and were looking for new items of artwork to display on the freshly decorated walls. Following discussions with Alloa Academy, it was agreed that S3 pupils at the school would work on delivering housing or building themed art which would be displayed in the public areas of the office, and throughout the rest of the building.

Linda McLaren, Director of Housing Services at Ochil View commented "We are thoroughly delighted with the artwork we have received and would like to thank all pupils that took part, as well as Miss Barr and Miss Urquhart who are teachers in the Art Department at Alloa Academy also, in particular Mr Jack for supporting the project. All the artwork received has been framed and displayed throughout our offices."

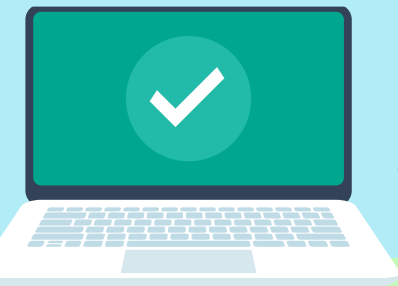
Ochil View staff collectively judged the art, and prizes were awarded to the top scoring three entries at a small gathering at Ochil House, where the pupils and their families were able to see their artwork on display.



My Home Additional Info

We are now using the calendar on My Home to add important dates for you to remember. Once you log in you will see important dates appearing on your dashboard at My Calendar. This can be from bin collection days to when your gas service is due or your periodic electrical safety inspection.


We currently have 983 tenants registered on My Home and we are edging closer to having 1000 Ochil View tenants signed up to My Home. To celebrate this milestone, we will be offering a £50 shopping voucher to the lucky tenant who helps us reach this magical number! There has never been a better time to start using your My Home service. **If you haven't set up on My Home yet, don't delay – you could be the lucky 1000th winner!**



Budget Update



The year ahead see us make considerable investment across our stock with several programmes due to begin. Here's an outline of the main projects we will be undertaking during 2025-26, subject to our budget being approved.

 Kitchen Upgrades

£250,000



Bathrooms

£403,000



Windows / Door Upgrades

£497,000** (Add carry-over from 2024-25)



Roofs

£11,500



Door Entry Upgrades

£254,000



TMV Installation

£65,000

**Total Investment
£1.48m**

If you have any questions on this, you can ask for Andrew Gibb or Billy McCord

EASTER HOLIDAYS

Our office will be closed on Friday 18th April 2025 and Monday 21st April 2025.

Happy Easter from all at Ochil View Housing!



CLOCKS CHANGING

Don't forget the clocks go forward one hour at 2am on Sunday 30th March.

Spring has arrived!



Biennial tenancy visits

Your housing team have now begun visiting tenants, with visits occurring over a 2-year period.

These visits give you the opportunity to meet your housing team. The purpose of these visits is to check over the household details, offer housing related support, check the property condition and to offer digital assistance where required.



We would appreciate your co-operation with these and gives you a chance to ask any housing related questions you may have.

We intend to notify tenants in advance where possible of each visit and intend to stagger these visits over a 2-year period, some tenants and newer tenants will have already been visited.

Adaptations to your home

We request funding from the Scottish Government each year in order that we can make adaptations to tenant's homes such as **key-safes, **grabrails**, **bannisters** and **showers**.**

This year our award was delayed and less than expected however staff continue to work their way through our backlog based on priority and date received. If you are on this list, staff will have contacted you to provide an update.

As always, we will take any new adaptation requests and these will be progressed in order of date received and provided we have funds available as we are working with a reduced fund.

Please remember that we may be able to assist if you are finding difficulties with your mobility.

A referral from Occupational Therapy is not always required for small adjustments and we can sometimes undertake work such as fitting grabrails and handrails. We can also help you contact the occupational therapy team for more complicated referrals.

You may be required you to fill out a Vat exemption form, and will provide guidance and advice on this area. This requires your signature and if we do not receive it then the adaptation may be delayed.

If you would like to speak to someone about adaptations, please contact us on 01259 722899.

HOW ARE WE DOING?



Our performance deteriorated during the latter part of 2024 across some areas of repairs delivery however overall we maintained high standards. Here is how we performed for the year April 2024 to December 2024:

WHERE WE PERFORMED WELL:



- emergency repairs response times: **99.15%**
- average length of time to complete emergency repairs: **1 hour 16 minutes**
- reactive repair appointments kept: **97.6%**
- tenants satisfied with the repairs service: **87%**
- current tenancy arrears: **2.73%**
- % of annual lets to homeless applicants: **35%**
- average time to let a house: **23.32 days**
- rent collected as a % of rent due: **99.7%**
- Stage 1 complaints resolved within timescale: **97.2%**
- Stage 2 complaints resolved within timescale: **100%**
- positive comments from service users: **596**

WHERE WE DIDN'T DO SO WELL:



- repairs completed on target: **94.03%**
- average length of time to complete non-emergency repairs: **7.17 days**
- repairs completed right first time: **88.89%**
- (New) tenants satisfied with condition of home on taking up tenancy: **86.4%**
- planned maintenance works v programme: **75%**

Questions or comments? Contact Andrew Gibb, Director of Property Services or Linda McLaren, Director of Housing Services.

COMPLAINTS & POSITIVE COMMENTS



Here is how we did during the year between April 2024 to December 2024:

FOR 106 STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS WE RESOLVED

98.11%

WITHIN TIMESCALE (4 DAYS)

FOR 9 STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS WE RESOLVED

100%

WITHIN TIMESCALE (20 DAYS)

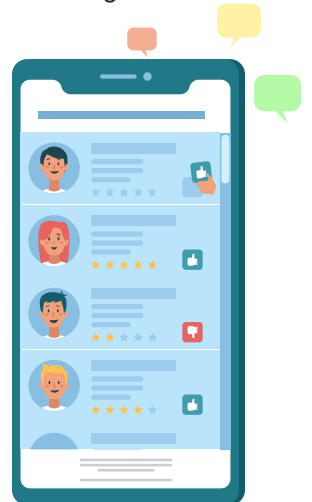
We value all complaints and comments as they help us deliver services better. For the year to date, we identified 44 instances where we could learn from complaints, and these were used to discuss improvements with both staff and contractors to try and eliminate future errors.

Tenants can share positive experiences with Ochil View Housing and we continue to receive amazing comments. Here's a few:

"Work carried out timeously and efficiently and to a very good standard"

"Good communication from start to finish and professional work carried out, very happy with service provided"

"They were super helpful with my issue and made me feel at ease, allowing me to feel supported. Thankyou"



You can share your positive experiences of Ochil View anytime. Just give us a call, chat to a staff member or pop into our office.

Questions or comments: Contact Andrew Gibb, Director of Property Services.



Permissions and Alterations

Should you wish to make alterations or improvements to your home, you must apply for permission before having any work carried out. This does not include internal decoration to the property.

Permissions should be requested if you want to:-

- Alter, improve or enlarge the house, its fittings or fixtures;
- Erect a garage, shed or other structure;
- Decorate the exterior of the property;
- Change light fittings or sockets.

The list above is not exhaustive so it's always better to check before completing anything within the property!

Once we receive your request, we have 28 days to consider your request and respond to you. Before the 28 days have passed, we will either confirm that permission has been granted or advise why the permission cannot be granted.

MONEY MATTERS

If you would like further information on any of the benefits or grants mentioned please contact Margaret Hall our Tenancy Sustainment Officer on 01259 722899 or Margaret.hall@ochilviewha.co.uk

"Margaret was so helpful and advised me on what help could be available to me and my situation."



UC Universal Credit Migration

Transitional Protection if you receive a Migration Notice letter

What is Transitional Protection?

Transitional protection helps with your move to Universal Credit. If eligible, this protection means you can get a transitional protection payment added to your Universal Credit entitlement if you receive more from your previous tax credits or benefits.



Your current benefit

When you may get your letter

Income-based Jobseekers Allowance

From September 2024

Employment Support Allowance (ESA) only

From September 2024 to October 2025

Employment Support Allowance with Housing Benefit

From September 2024 to October 2025

If you're unsure whether you're affected by migration, you can check the government website or contact DWP.

There is support available to help you with the migration process. This includes help with making a claim, understanding your entitlements, and managing your money.

For more information, visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/transitional-protection-if-you-receive-a-migration-notice-letter>

Domestic Abuse and Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment

Financial support is available to people forced to leave their home with their children because of domestic abuse. The help is in the form of a higher amount of Best Start Grant Pregnancy and Baby Payment.

Pregnancy and Baby Payment is **£754.65** for your first child. Your first child is your oldest child under 16 and can include a stepchild, or any child you're responsible for through adoption, or kinship care.

Normally this changes to a payment of **£377.35** for any subsequent child.

However, if you and your children have been forced to leave your home because of domestic abuse by your partner or ex-partner, you may get **£754.65** for any child after your first.

You can get Pregnancy and Baby Payment any time after you have reached the end of the 24th week of pregnancy, up until your baby is six months old.

If your baby is born before 24 weeks, you can apply from this earlier date. If you've taken overlooking after a child (for example, if you've adopted), you can apply up to the day before the child's first birthday.

You can get Pregnancy and Baby Payment for multiple children, as long as each child is the right age when you apply.

You can use the payment for anything you might need, including:

- pregnancy clothes
- a pram
- baby clothes
- a cot
- toys



Annual Rent Increase & Universal Credit

You have recently been notified of the Associations annual rent review. If you are in receipt of Universal Credit, then it is your responsibility to notify the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) of any change of circumstances including changes to your housing costs. On 1st April 2025 the DWP will add a 'Confirm your housing costs' to your to-do area of your online account. You will be asked to confirm your housing costs by the end of your current assessment period, to ensure that the correct housing payment is made. It is important that you go to your 'to-do' and confirm your new monthly housing costs on or soon after the 1st April 2025 Please note you will be unable to do this prior to 1st April 2025.

If you are unsure how to do this, please contact your Housing Services Officer immediately and they will assist you with providing the information to the DWP. Failure to provide this information may affect the amount of Universal Credit you receive.



Carer Support Payment has replaced Carer's Allowance



Carer Support Payment became available across Scotland from November 2024. This benefit replaces Carer's Allowance in Scotland.

You could get £81.90 a week if you care for someone at least 35 hours a week and they get certain benefits.

If you already get Carer's Allowance, you do not need to apply for Carer Support Payment. Your benefit will move to Carer Support Payment by spring 2025.

Carer's Allowance Supplement is an extra payment to help carers in Scotland who get Carer's Allowance.



Energy Advice

Energy advice is available from the HEAT team at Clackmannanshire Council and Cosy Kingdom Fife Council.

They can offer advice and support by telephone or through a home visit to help you stay warm, save energy and reduce your carbon emissions.

Our friendly energy advisors can help you find practical and affordable ways to save energy, understand your gas and electricity bills and tariffs, support you in dealing with suppliers, advise on gas and electricity utility debt and help apply for grants and schemes such as the Warm Home Discount.

- ✓ Clearing or reducing fuel debt
- ✓ Reducing energy debt repayments (for debt that remains)
- ✓ Helping vulnerable households apply for the Warm Home Discount
- ✓ Giving advice on improving the energy efficiency of homes
- ✓ Analysing household energy usages
- ✓ Providing tailored energy saving tips so households avoid wasteful energy use
- ✓ Assisting households to switch to cheaper energy deals

The energy price cap

The energy price cap for the period January to March 2025 is £1,738 per year for a typical household in Great Britain that uses electricity and gas and pays by direct debit. **This is a 1.2% increase from the previous price cap.** Some of the industry experts predict that the price cap will rise again in April 2025.

The energy price cap is the maximum amount that energy suppliers can charge for each unit of energy and standing charge for those on a standard variable tariff. The price cap is reviewed and updated every three months, and the actual rates charged depend on a number of factors, including where you live, how you pay your bill, and the type of meter you have.



Some other things to know about the energy price cap include:

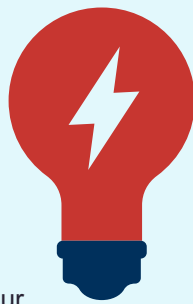
There is a separate cap for prepayment tariffs, which is reviewed independently of the standard variable tariff cap.

The cap is based on a range of factors, including wholesale cost of energy, network costs, policy costs, operating costs, and prepayment meter costs.

The standing charge is a cost that is included in each electricity and gas bill and is set by your supplier.

Energy advice for our tenants living in Fife
<https://www.cosykingdom.org.uk>

Energy advice for our tenants living in Clackmannanshire
<https://www.clacks.gov.uk/housing/energyadvice>



2025
Price Cap
£1,738



Social Security
Scotland

Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

JOB START PAYMENT

Christmas is becoming a distant memory but young people and care leavers who landed a job during the festive season should check if they are eligible for Job Start Payment.

Job Start Payment is a one-off payment of **£314.45** for young people aged between 16 and 24 and who meet a certain criteria (or **£503.10** if you are the parent or main carer of a child) to help with costs of starting a new job including clothes, equipment and transport.

To receive Job Start Payment, eligible people need to have been out of paid work for 6 months or more and been in receipt of one of the following low-income benefits:

- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income Support
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Universal Credit

They also need to have got either Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) or Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) on the date of their job offer.

People can apply for the payment for up to six months after the date of the job offer. Social Security Scotland need to see confirmation of the job offer - this can be a text message, a letter or an email from the employer. The job must also average 12 hours or more a week over a four-week period and it doesn't need to be a permanent job so seasonal workers should check if they are eligible.

Care leavers, someone who has spent time in care but stopped being looked after on, or after, their 16th birthday, can apply for Job Start Payment even if they haven't been out of paid work for six months. They are also eligible for a year longer – until their 26th birthday.

Job Start Payments can be used to pay the bills that crop up before that all important first pay day. Things like travelling to work, child-care costs, paying for lunches or buying new clothes. Find out more and apply at MyGov.Scot job start payment.

Easter Colouring Competition

To celebrate Easter and Springtime, Ochil View Housing are holding a colouring competition (just for the kids).

• HAND DRAWN EASTER EGGS •

We are asking you to draw and colour in an Easter Egg, making it as colourful and bright as you can.

A winner will be picked, and the prize will be a basket full of Easter goodies.

Please send your finished drawing to us either by post, hand in personally or by emailing it to customerservices@ochilviewha.co.uk by Monday 14th April 2025.

Remember to include your name, address and age with your drawing.

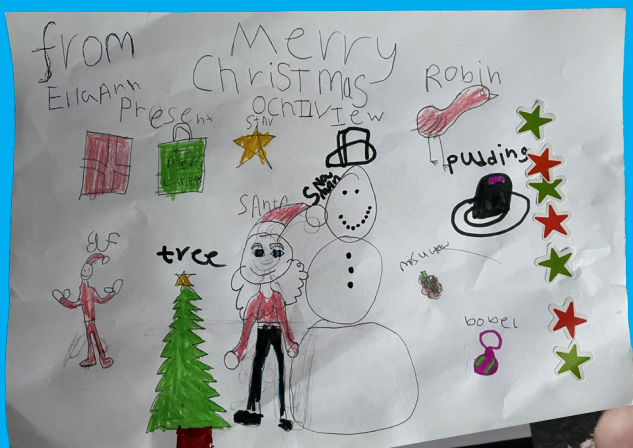
Come on get colouring and get cracking!!



Christmas Eve Box Winners

We received some fantastic entries for our annual Christmas Eve Box competition and our 2 lucky winners were presented with their goodies just before Santa's big arrival.

Our first winner was this brilliant festive drawing from Ella-Ann Boyle, age 9.



The second winner was a cracking Christmas creation from 7-month-old Arlo White (with a little help from his mum!) whose handprints made this beautiful wreath.

Well done to both and we hope you enjoyed your Christmas treats from Ochil View Housing!



REACTIVE MAINTENANCE SERVICE



Our reactive repairs contract with Quality Assured Property Maintenance Ltd (QAPM) will come to an end on 4th April 2025, earlier than expected. Whilst we go through the process of appointing a new contractor for this essential service, we have made temporary arrangements with several contractors to ensure that all repairs are undertaken as quickly as possible and in line with our timescales.

You may therefore be contacted by any of the following contractors should you require a repair.

- Property One
- MP Group (UK) Ltd
- Magnus Electrical Services
- Drainclear
- Forth Roofing

During the upcoming months, you may experience slight delays or interruptions to services and we apologise for this.

These changes do not affect heating and gas servicing, which continue to be undertaken by City Technical Services who can be contacted on 0333 202 0708.

Questions or comments? Contact Andrew Gibb or Andy Walls

NEW TIMESCALES

Following a recent change in our policy you may have seen that we have introduced an additional repairs timescale which covers external repairs. This is designed to cover any external repairs, which are either non-urgent or non-routine that pose no significant inconvenience or threat of further damage to the property. The new timescale for these repairs is 15 working days.

Quality Assurance Checks GAS AND ELECTRICAL

The Association monitors contractors and external consultants and undertakes regular inspections during contracts or after repairs, to ensure work is carried out to specification and to a good quality.



These checks are carried out for gas servicing, gas & electrical repairs, electrical periodic inspections, and void works and we use NICEIC (National inspection council for Electrical installation contracting), to undertake these checks.

The contractors will have ID on them and will call ahead to arrange access. Its is important to allow access so we can independently assess the quality of work undertaken.



Complaints and Serious Concerns about your landlord

The Scottish Housing Regulator monitors, assesses and reports on the performance of all social landlords in achieving expected standards.

Ochil View is expected to make it easy for tenants and other service users to talk to us and get information. If you have a complaint that relates to you or your home you should:

Step 1: Follow Ochil View's complaints procedure in full – this is available on our website or by contacting us

Step 2: If the complaints procedure ends and you are unhappy with how we dealt with it, you can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

**Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO),
Bridgeside House, 99 McDonald Road,
Edinburgh EH7 4NS**

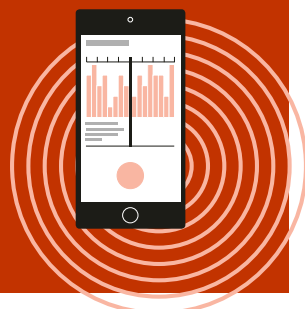
Telephone: 0800 377 7330 or www.spsso.org.uk

If you have serious concerns about a specific complaint that affects a group of tenants, you can report the issue to the Scottish Housing Regulator – this would be in instances where we regularly and repeatedly fail to achieve the regulatory requirements for social housing. More information can be found by contacting us or on either the Association's website www.ochilviewha.co.uk/page/make-a-complaint or the Scottish Housing Regulator's website on their "For tenants" page.



the noise app

The Noise App is simple to use and free to download, it allows complainants who are experience excessive noise or noise at unreasonable times to take short recordings of the noise and report this to us. Recordings can assist us with gathering evidence to confirm that antisocial behaviour has taken place. If you are experiencing antisocial behaviour, please contact your Housing Services Officer to discuss the issues and for more information on how to access The Noise App. We can also ohelp you download the app and show you how to use it.



Antisocial Behaviour Policy Changes

The Associations Antisocial Behaviour Policy was recently reviewed and changes approved by our Board of Management at the end of February 2025.

As part of the review the Tenant Scrutiny Panel looked at our policy, processes and communication. They made three recommendations all of which, have been incorporated into the new Policy.

Other main changes made are to the way we categorize antisocial behaviour reports and the timescales in responding to complaints. In the new policy we have also provided more information on what antisocial behaviour is and the complaints that we can't progress as antisocial. We hope that the changes make it clearer on how we respond to complaints of antisocial behaviour.

A full copy of the new policy is available on our website at www.ochilviewha.co.uk

Ochil View tenants who have signed up for the Housing Perks app have now collectively saved nearly £1000 already!

The app is a fantastic, free and easy-to-use tool that can help you make savings in your shopping – perfect as we are coming up to Christmas! Not only that, but you can shop at many of the top retailers should you be looking for that special festive gift. Shops available include Primark, Tesco, Argos, B&M and Asda, as well as the likes of Google Play.

To get started, all you need to do is find Housing Perks on your phone – either by going into your app store or through your internet browser. Once installed, you will need your tenant reference number and there is an easy-to-follow guide within the app to get you started.

When you know what you are spending at the shop, simply request a voucher on your phone for a discount – show this at the till and start saving!

Staff here at Ochil View would also be happy to help you get started, if you are unsure. Just give us a call on 01259 722899 and someone will assist you. You can also pop into our office, and we will get it set up for you.



Community Benefits and Initiatives Update 2024-25

The majority of our contracts include some form of 'Community Benefit' clauses within, this means that as part of delivering the contract, suppliers and contractors pledge to make a donation which goes toward our community benefits fund. This pledge can be offering time, labour, materials or cash donations, which the Association then uses to undertake projects within the Communities in which we operate.

The donations received this year to date range from £200 to £500. We would like to say a thank you to Idverde and RB Grant, who both donated.

As part of our Community Benefits & Community Initiatives strategy we also make donations to groups and community organisations.

So far during 2024-25 we have donated a total of £500 across the organisations below:

- Valleyfield Community Council
- Alloa Academy Parents Association

Free Vodafone SIM Cards

Ochil View have free Vodafone Sim cards available for our tenants. The Association has signed up with Vodafone's charities connected initiative to tackle digital exclusion. We want to support our tenants and families to get online and access services. The Sim cards come with unlimited calls & texts (to standard UK numbers) and 20GB of data, all free for 6 months. Tenants can then request to be considered for a new Sim card after the 6-month period has expired. We also have digital champions available to help any tenant who would like some help with accessing services digitally.

If you would like a sim card or some digital help, please contact the Association.



DAMP AND MOULD

The Association has updated its procedures for dealing with reports of condensation, damp and mould following further work over the past 12 months.

If you report any instances of damp, mould or condensation, our staff will undertake out an initial diagnosis and this will take account of whether this is the first report which is crucial to determining any further action that's required.

Appropriate advice and action will be taken, and we will ensure that we follow up any reports to check if advice given or works issued has resolved the problem. We will always make sure you are informed of what actions we will take, and when.

To ensure we diagnose correctly, the Association may install sensor equipment within your home, which will allow us to accurately record levels of moisture, air flow and temperature so we can ensure we provide the best possible solution to the problem.

There are some self-help tips that can assist when dealing with condensation in your home.

- Ensure the property is heated appropriately, between 18 and 21 degrees is best
- Ensure the property is being ventilated appropriately, opening trickle vents and windows assists with this
- Ensure your bathroom and kitchen fans are working and used when bathing and cooking
- Minimise drying of clothes on radiators

If the problem persists we may engage an independent inspection by a qualified contractor or surveyor for further advice.





The Gate Charity

The Gate Charity was established in 2011 to help people who were affected by homelessness and food insecurity.

Over the years The Gate has evolved and

is a community resource that offers practical help for positive change. The Gate provides a safe environment that is open to all.

The Gate have several projects including a Foodbank Food Larder, Social Projects, Community Café, Cookery Classes, School Uniform Bank and external catering.

Here are some projects that may interest you:

Community Café - is open the first Wednesday of the month for Clacks Memory Café

Breakfast Bingo - Held on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month at 10.00am for Breakfast Bingo, friendly chat and refreshments

The Gate Book Club - meet monthly on a Friday at noon in the Community Café

Fakeaway Night - The Gate food van travels to various locations on most Saturdays and serves free hot meals, just bring your own Tupperware. The areas and times they stop are:

4.30 pm Clackmannan Primary School

5.00 pm Sauchie (behind Tartan Tikka Tikka)

5.30 pm Tillicoultry Carpark at Ochil Street clock tower

For more information, please go to <https://the-gate-charity.org/>

Staff at Ochil View hosted a Macmillan Coffee morning in February with a total of

£246.00

being donated to Macmillan Cancer Support. Donations were made of home baking and various other goodies. As staff enjoyed a cuppa and a cake there were fundraising activities and a raffle. It was a great success, and we are happy to support an amazing charity once again.

Macmillan Cancer Supports helps people living with cancer in many ways including:

- Through support from Macmillan nurses
- With money and unexpected costs
- With emotional support through the Macmillan Support Line
- Finding their best way through, from diagnosis through treatment and beyond

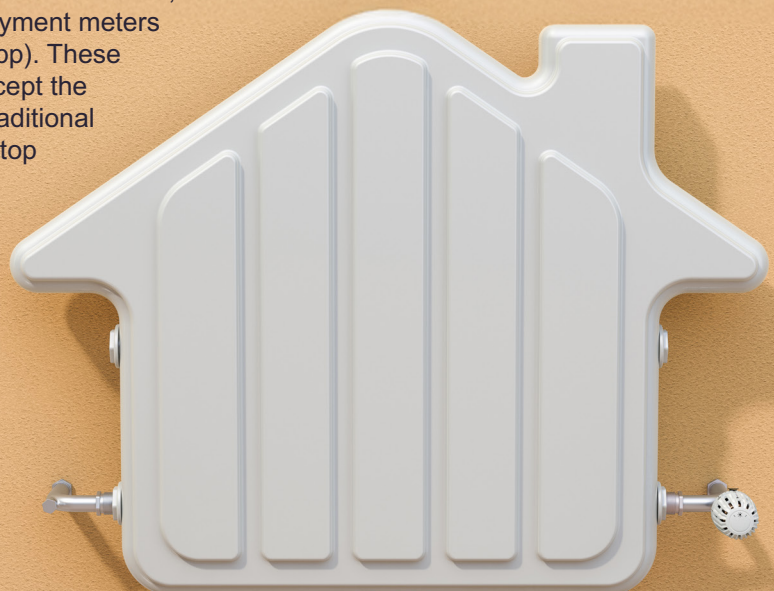


Fuel Vouchers Available

During 2023-2024 we were successful in sourcing funding from the Housing Association Charitable Trust Fuel Support Fund to the value of £83,623 for 300 tenants. This came to an end in December 2024 however, we are delighted to announce that we have managed to access the fund for 2025 and launched this to tenants early in February 2025.

Unfortunately, the fund is not available to British Gas customers, Scottish Power customers who have smart prepayment meters (People who top up their meter online or via an app). These are the only exceptions all other providers will accept the vouchers. Scottish Power customers who have traditional prepayment meters (where you go into a shop to top up the card) are eligible to receive vouchers. We realise this is disappointing to our tenants who can't apply however, we will continue to try and source additional funding and will advise if successful.

If you haven't applied already, please contact us to see if you are eligible for help.





UNACCEPTABLE Actions and Expected Behaviours

The Association's values are at the core of our customer service delivery. Our values are to be open, transparent, responsive and trustworthy and our aim is to deliver a high standard of service to all our customers.

All customers will be treated with courtesy, respect, fairness and dignity and the Association expects this in return from all customers contacting our staff.

We understand customers may contact the Association in times of trouble and distress and may act out of character in stressful and frustrating situations, however our staff have a right to do their jobs without being treated badly and there are certain behaviours which will not be tolerated.

Examples of such behaviour –

- Verbal abuse/swearing, aggression, threats, personal derogatory remarks and allegations.
- Unreasonable demands
- Unreasonable persistence

Although instances of unacceptable behaviour towards staff are relatively low, we would remind all customers that unacceptable behaviour will be taken very seriously.

The Association's Unacceptable Actions Policy is in place to manage situations where actions/behaviour is deemed unacceptable. Depending on the severity of such behaviour action can be taken to restrict or limit how customers can access our services. We would hope, however that such action would rarely be necessary.

TENANT ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

The focus on tenant engagement over the past few weeks has been strengthening numbers on the tenant scrutiny group ahead of them carrying out their next review exercise. Positions on the group were advertised to tenants through post and email, and we are pleased to have four new members looking to join in 2025. The group will now reconvene and begin assessing Ochil View Housing's performance indicators before agreeing on their next subject.

We have also been engaging with tenants on the proposed rent increase for 2025-26.

You can read more on this below. Consultation also took place on the reactive maintenance policy, which was under review. Tenants were sent a short survey on issues such as what we class as emergency repairs and timescales for issues being fixed. We were delighted to receive 158 replies, all of which were fed into the review process.

STAFF NEWS

Linda Ure, Housing Services Officer, retired in December and as a result we are delighted to advise that Adele Rae has been promoted to the role of Housing Services Officer following a successful interview. Adele has been working in our Housing team for almost 30 years, and, with her promotion, it meant her previous post of Assistant Housing Services Officer was available.

A recruitment process was carried out and we were delighted to welcome Holly Brember to the Association.

We asked Holly to introduce herself:

"I've worked in the Local Government for 13 years, initially in a Customer Service role before moving to work in the housing team as a Repairs Advisor, Assistant Housing Officer & a generic Housing Officer. I am looking forward to this exciting new chapter in my career with Ochil View!

Outside of work you will either find me in the gym, spending time with my cats or gaming!"

We also said goodbye to Chris McShane, our Tenant Engagement & Communications Officer in December. As a result of Chris's departure, the post was advertised and a range of candidates interviewed.

From this, we are delighted to welcome Jade Murray to the team.

Jade comes with loads of housing related experience. We asked Jade to tell us a bit about herself:

"I have 14 years' experience working with community-based housing associations in Glasgow and most recently took up a seconded post with Glasgow City Council. The role was primarily to advocate on behalf of citizens in relation to housing matters and allowed me to voice concerns and opinions for those who were not able to do so themselves.

I am really excited to start my new role at Ochil View HA as Tenant Engagement & Communications Officer and look forward to meeting you all!





E-bike & E-scooter Safety

Do you, or any of your household own an e-bike or scooter? Here are some handy tips on buying, using and keeping these items safely.

- Always ensure that any electrical item is purchased from a reputable supplier and meets relevant British or European safety standards
- Register all products with the manufacturer so that you get updated with any recall or safety information
- Do not store or charge e-bikes or e-scooters in common areas – these are escape routes. Batteries should be stored in a cool place and in line with manufacturer’s instructions
- Keep e-bikes and e-scooters away from combustible or flammable materials – this includes whilst charging
- Check batteries regularly for any signs of damage

Safe charging is also vital:

- Unplug chargers when not in use
- Do not charge any items while you are sleeping or away from your home
- Ensure your smoke and heat alarms are working, and that you are charging in an area where these are present
- Use only the manufacturers approved charger, and ensure they are in good condition
- Do not cover items whilst they are charging
- If you must use an extension lead for charging, make sure it is correct for use, uncoiled and appropriately rated for charging and ensure it is not overloaded

In the event of an e-bike, e-scooter or lithium-ion battery fire, do not attempt to extinguish the fire. Get out, stay out, call 999. Further advice can be found at <https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/at-home/e-bike-and-e-scooters/>

Lornshill Careers Event

As part of Scottish Careers Week, we were delighted to be invited along to Lornshill Academy in November to share what a career in Housing can offer. The initiative brought together organisations from across Scotland and we had three members of staff, **Lori Ritchie** (Assistant Finance Officer), **Connor Hazlett** (Property Services Assistant) and **Joanne Reid** (Housing Services Officer) in attendance. Each shared their unique journey into their current role and the different options a career in Housing can offer. **Can you spot us in the picture!**

Dress Down Donation

Each month, staff donate money towards a charity that provides a service to the area and we were delighted in December to make our latest charitable donation of £400 to Connect in Alloa.

They are a fantastic youth charity, supporting young people & reducing social isolation.



Connect Alloa

£400
Donation



EASTER EGG BLONDIES

These mini egg blondies are a fun and easy recipe to make with children for Easter. They have a mild toffee flavour and a fudgy richness similar to raw cookie dough.

INGREDIENTS

250g/9oz cold unsalted butter, cut into 6–8 pieces
150g/5½oz light soft brown sugar
125g/4½oz caster sugar



METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 190C/170C Fan/Gas 5. Grease and line a 20cm/8in square loose-based cake tin with baking paper.
2. Melt the butter in a saucepan over a medium–low heat. Stir in both sugars and cook for 1–2 minutes, or until the butter is absorbed and the mixture turns a creamy toffee colour and looks smooth and glossy. Take off the heat and set aside.
3. Whisk the eggs, vanilla and salt together in a large bowl. Whisk in the melted butter and sugar mixture until thoroughly combined, then whisk in the flour until smooth. Pour the batter into the prepared tin and bake for 20 minutes.
4. While the blondie is cooking, cut 125g/4½oz of the chocolate eggs in half. It's best to use the heel rather than the tip of the knife and work with just a couple of the eggs at a time.
5. When the 20 minutes is up, take the blondie out of the oven and scatter the halved and whole chocolate eggs on top. Carefully press the eggs into the blondie mixture and don't worry if the surface cracks a little. (Take care as the sides of the tin will be hot.) Return to the oven for a further 10 minutes or until the blondie is pale golden-brown.
6. Cool the blondie in the tin for at least 10 minutes before cutting into squares. Serve warm or cold.



Office Opening Hours

Ochil View office opening times are:

Monday's, Tuesday's and Thursday's: 9am to 5pm.
On Wednesday's: 12.30pm until 5pm.
On Friday's: 9am until 3pm.

Out with these hours, you can still call our main number on 01259 722899 to report any emergency repairs. Just follow the instructions on the call to speak to the right person.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Gas servicing and electrical safety checks

Annual Gas Safety checks are carried out every year by City Technical Services. It is vitally important to give access to your home for these checks to be carried out. If we are unable to access your home by the anniversary date, then we may take further action to disconnect your gas or arrange to force access to your property if the meter is internal.

Electrical safety checks are carried out every five years and are currently being undertaken by RB Grant Electrical. As with gas servicing it is important to allow access to your home for the check. If we are unable to gain access by the anniversary date, then we will arrange to force entry to your home for these works to be carried out.

These checks are essential and by not allowing access you may be putting yourself and other residents of your home at risk.

If the appointment you are provided with is unsuitable, contact **Leona on 01259 722899**. Normally there is adequate time to re-arrange the visit. We would rather this than attend your property and get no answer!

Have your details changed?

It is important to let us know if you have recently changed your mobile number or email address as it means we will be able to contact you with any important information about your tenancy, as well as making sure we can carry out necessary checks at your home, such as electrical safety.

If you have recently made any changes, or you are unsure if we have the correct information, there are plenty of ways to let us know. The easiest way is to simply log on to your My Home account and update it there. You can also do it by giving us a call on 01259 722899 or by emailing us at: customerservices@ochilviewha.co.uk



Different Formats

We are striving to make this Newsletter as accessible as possible for everyone. Should you require a copy in large print, audio or in another language, please let us know by contacting our office.



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE