

Housing Brief

Advising and supporting our tenants to enjoy their homes

Further Funding Secured to Help with Fuel Costs

We are pleased to announce that we have secured a further £76,000 from the Social Housing Fuel Support Fund to support some of our most vulnerable tenants. The project has been administered on behalf of the Scottish Government by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA). The Association will be working with our partner ALLenergy in supporting tenants through the Lochaber Affordable Warmth Scheme (LAWS). The project will be running from December to the end of March 2024 and direct payments will be made to tenants who meet the criteria in January 2024, however, ring fenced funds are available now for tenants to get help via ALLenergy.


Our Chief Executive, Margaret Moynihan said, "We are pleased this winter to be able to continue providing support through the provision of fuel vouchers, direct financial assistance as well as providing energy efficient products. LHA recognises this much welcomed and needed support provided by the Scottish Government and the considerable funding received over the past 18 months. This has enabled direct payments to tenants along with advice provision through our partnership with and the funds we provide ALLenergy. In times of financial difficulty we hope to offer some relief to those in need and we fully understand the enormity of the situation being faced by households."



The Association will again be focussing on financial support for tenants over 65 and those reliant on benefits, with a direct £100 payment towards fuel. Where funds are available, we will also be able to consider help for those in employment who are experiencing financial difficulties or energy debt, through fuel vouchers and payment for oil, logs, coal or towards fuel debt. We will also be making available a variety of domestic items and furnishings to help tenants to reduce their cooking costs and retain heat in their homes.

As part of our Winter Campaign our aim is to help as many people as possible, particularly those most at risk. As well as referring you to your local ALLenergy advisor for advice and support, we can provide details of online self-help which is available during the cost of living crisis. We will also be offering focus groups across our communities during January and February where you can have a chat, get some advice and pick up some warm pack items.

If you are struggling and in crisis, we encourage you to contact us on:

 **01397 702530** or

 **housingmgt@lochaberhousing.org.uk**.

How to Get the Most Out of Your Heating this Winter

The Association has various different types of heating and domestic hot water systems across its housing stock. It is important to have the knowledge of how you control and use your system to gain the most efficient running costs to your property, especially when we are all experiencing higher fuel costs.

To help you understand how to use your system at its best efficiency, **Changeworks** has a fantastic website that has a wealth of useful information and guides.

Please visit: <https://bit.ly/ManagingYourHeating>.

In addition to this, the Association's Asset Department can reissue you with instructions on how to use your system efficiently. If you have any questions or would like support with the settings for your heating system, please telephone us on **01397 702530** or email info@lochaberhousing.org.uk



Remember it is important to heat your property to a minimum 16 degrees for your health and reduce the chance of condensation within your property.

Multiply West - Free Maths Courses for Adults



Multiply West is an initiative delivered by UHI North, West and Hebrides, funded by the UK Government and delivered in partnership with Highland Council. This innovative project gives adults the opportunity to improve their numeracy and everyday maths skills through short 'multiply' sessions in community settings, on campus, at work or online across the West Highland area. Their friendly and approachable multiply-mentors will facilitate these sessions.

We will be working with the Multiply West Initiative to help tenants access any budgeting courses available and provide 1-2-1 support for individuals as well as parents to enable them to be confident in helping their children with homework. Other support available is in the use of spreadsheets.

LHA will work with Multiply West to identify drop-in sessions for tenants where there is a need, and we will be including these sessions in our Winter Focus Groups, planned for January. This is a great opportunity and available until December 2024 for anyone who feels that they may benefit. We will also offer referrals and identify any opportunity for sessions with our tenants when supporting them to sustain and maintain their tenancy.

For more information, please speak to your Housing Officer or email housingmgt@lochaberhousing.org.uk



The Association recently undertook a bit of fundraising for Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland. Staff were invited to show off their culinary skills and didn't disappoint, by presenting a fantastic selection of sweet and savoury bakes. Unfortunately in all the excitement, we forgot to take any photos, but can confirm that it all tasted delicious! A donation of £64.20 has been made to the charity.

If you would like to find out more about Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland click on the link below.

<https://www.chss.org.uk/>

Cost of Living Resources

These websites offer lots of useful advice to help you navigate through the cost of living crisis:

The Highland Council -

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20022/cost_of_living

Scottish Government - <https://costofliving.campaign.gov.scot/>

CAB Lochaber - <https://www.lochabercab.org.uk/>

Citizens Advice Scotland - <https://www.cas.org.uk/help-cost-living>

ALLenergy - <https://www.alienergy.org.uk/>



Cost of Living and your Mental Health



LHA recognises the impact that the cost of living crisis is having on mental health, and acknowledges that many people are feeling the strain as the cost of living continues to rise.

Highland Mental Wellbeing can help you find support and services in the area that you live: <https://www.highlandmentalwellbeing.scot.nhs.uk/> and

Mental Health and Money Advice has a whole range of useful tools and information on how you can maintain your mental wellbeing whilst managing your money as bills rise

<https://www.mentalhealthandmoneyadvice.org/scot/>

Are you Cold Weather Ready?

There are many ways that cold weather can be prevented from causing damage to your home and its contents. Try and avoid burst pipes and damage to your home this winter by keeping your home reasonably warm day and night. In particularly cold weather keep the heating on during the night at a low temperature. A few do's and don'ts:

- ✓ If you have a burst pipe, turn off the water at the mains stop valve. Turn off the central heating and open all the taps to drain the system.
- ✗ If your water supply becomes frozen, **do not** open the hot taps because the hot water cylinder may collapse if the pipes feeding it are frozen.
- ✗ **Never** attempt to thaw out frozen pipes by switching on your immersion heater or boiler.
- ✓ Contact Lochaber Housing Association for a plumber at the earliest opportunity.

If you're going away even for a short time during the winter months and you don't want to leave the heating on, you should turn off all services at the mains and ensure that the water is turned off and drained down. To do this, you should turn off the stopcock and then turn on all the sink, basin and bath taps until the water stops running. DO NOT TURN OFF THE TAPS. Don't leave until all the water has stopped running in case the waste pipes are frozen and the water can't drain away. You should also put salt in the toilet pan to prevent the water from freezing.

IF YOU DO NOT REPORT A REPAIR which then gets worse and causes further damage to your property, you will be recharged for the cost of putting this right. Further guidance is given in our leaflets Frost Alert Advice: <https://bit.ly/FrostAlertAdvice> and

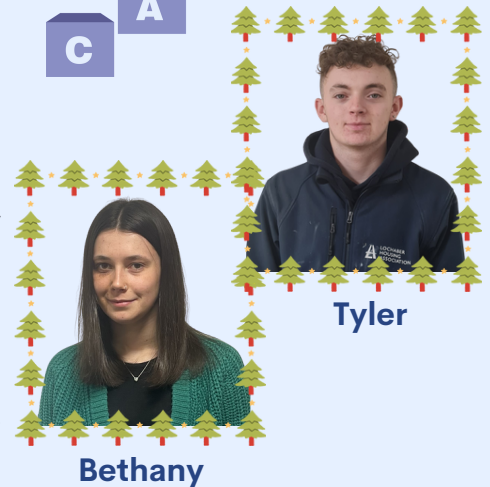
Living in our Home: <https://bit.ly/LivingInYourHome>

Our Apprentices Take their First Steps on the Career Ladder

The LHA Group continues to provide opportunities for young people in Lochaber. Bethany Chisholm joined the Association in May and is providing valuable support within our Customer Services department. She is currently undergoing a business administration SVQ qualification with UHI North, West and Hebrides.

Tyler MacKay commenced a 4 year joinery apprenticeship in July of this year, during this time Tyler will be learning from our established joinery team and attending Inverness college on block release.

Customer Services Manager Jenny MacKay commented "We have a long and trusted record of supporting young people commence their careers. It is encouraging that despite these difficult times we are able to continue to offer these opportunities in both business administration and building maintenance and we wish Bethany and Tyler well."



Bethany

Tyler

**For general enquiries our telephone lines will close
4:00pm Friday 22nd December and
re-open 9:00am Thursday 4th January
For out of hours emergency repairs**

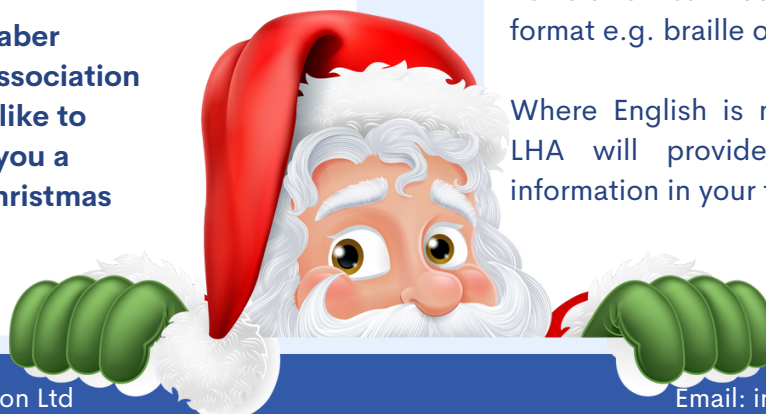
 **01349 886691**

Please note that rents will not be applied until 4th or 5th January. Payments can still be made in the normal way and the correct rent balance will be available from the 5th.

We are aware that the festive period can be challenging for tenants, however we would encourage you to pay rent as usual and if you are struggling, please contact your Housing Officer on 01397 702530 or email housingmgmt@lochaberhousing.org.uk. Rent arrears can be difficult to maintain and repay, with a risk that a small debt becomes a larger debt that is difficult to sort out. Remember we can refer you to advice agencies who can help with other debts that don't risk your tenancy.



**Lochaber
Housing Association
would like to
wish you a
Merry Christmas**



We are committed to removing any barriers to communication. Upon request, this newsletter can be produced in another format e.g. braille or large print.

Where English is not your first language, LHA will provide on request, written information in your first language.

