

Newsletter

Winter 2023



Christmas Opening Hours and Emergency Repairs

Oak Tree Housing Association will close at 2pm on Friday 22nd December 2023 for the Festive period and will re-open on Thursday 4th January 2024 at 9am.

If you have an emergency repair during office closure periods, please call the office on 01475 807001, listen to the message, select the appropriate option to be connected to our Emergency Repairs Contractor.

Contact Us

You can also visit our website www.oaktreeha.org.uk for further information on reporting emergency repairs out with office hours.

New Members Wanted

OTHA is seeking new Members to join its thriving Management Committee.

Do you want to improve your personal well-being and your career prospects? Do you want a role in improving lives in the Inverclyde area? If the answer is Yes, then volunteering as a Management Committee Member with Oak Tree might be for you.

If you are interested, contact Kirsty Davis for an informal chat/recruitment pack on 01475 807018.

Focus Group - An Invitation to Join us

We are keen to establish a small group of tenants to be part of our Focus Group.

We would love to hear from willing volunteers interested in meeting with us to chat about the Association's Policy work and any consultation projects we are working on. There wouldn't be a long term commitment and you could engage as much or as little as you wanted.

It would be an opportunity to meet with other tenants and our staff and you would receive a very warm welcome.

If this is something that interests you, please contact us either by phone on 01475 807000, via email info@oaktreeha.org.uk or pop into to the office and ask for Kirsty Davis, for an informal chat and further information.

Contents

Consultation Cafés – Rent Consultation 2024-25	P2	A day in the life of a Maintenance Officer	P8
Staffing Update	P3	Annual Assurance Statement	P9,10
Landscaping News	P3	Customer Care	P11
Electrical Installation Inspections	P3	Leaks and how to prevent them	P11
No Access for Repairs	P4	Winter Word Search	P12
Frost Alert	P5	Membership of the Association	P13
Risk Reminder- Legionella & Asbestos	P6	Methods of Payment	P13
Adaptation Service	P6	Bunston Grove Day	P14
Budget Energy Advice	P7	Recipes	P15
		Garden Competition	P16

Consultation Cafés - Rent Consultation 2024-25



**Tues. 16
January
2024 at
6pm**

Our
Consultation
Café's will
take place
on :

**Fri. 19
January
2024 at
11.00 am**

**Wed. 17
January
2024 at
2.00pm**

The focus of this event is the annual consultation on our rent increase. There will be the usual detailed information and survey sent (both a paper version and an electronic version) to everyone but this meeting will be an opportunity for you to talk about it in more detail with us and give us your opinions.

We will send a reminder of the event with the rent increase consultation pack but if you want to come along to this event it would be really helpful if you could let us know in advance on 01475 807000 or email us on info@oaktreeha.org.uk. If you need help with transport please let us know and we will assist.

Here are a few photos from our afternoon tea event



Rent Increase 2024/25

It's that time of year again when we start planning ahead. We make a start by setting our budget for the coming year. This involves looking closely at our income versus our costs.

Like every person and every business across the UK, the Association is facing an increase in its running costs. The costs of running our office, paying our staff and contractors and paying interest on our loans have all risen sharply due to the cost of living, energy costs and rising interest rates.

Setting the budget for 2024-25 involves deciding what resources we need to meet your expectations and deliver the service that you want. As always, we will be consulting widely about what the possible rent increase will be.

Oak Tree Housing Association has been carrying out annual rent increase consultations for more than 20 years but this forthcoming consultation and rent setting exercise will be one of the most difficult we have faced. We need to consider the impact of rising costs and inflation on our organisation whilst recognising the financial hardship that is a reality for many of our tenants. This will inevitably mean that together, we may face some difficult choices and decisions as a result.

At the moment, we are looking at how an increase of 6.1% would affect our business and our service to customers and preparations for the consultation are based on this figure.



Staffing Update



A warm welcome to our new Senior Finance Officer (Job-Share)

Julie-Anne Shearer

Oak Tree welcomed Julie-Anne in October 2023, when she joined the Finance Team as our newest Senior Finance Officer. We wish Julie-Anne every success in her new role.

A warm welcome to our new Housing Admin Assistant, Robyn Somerville

Oak Tree welcomed Robyn in October 2023, when she joined the Housing Team as our newest Housing Admin Assistant. We wish Robyn every success in her new role.



Oak Tree - Landscape & Ground Maintenance Team

We are pleased to welcome two Horticultural Apprentices to our Landscaping & Ground Maintenance Team. OTHA will provide the practical experience element of their apprenticeships, funded by Inverclyde Council. The apprentices will receive on-job training from OTHA's experienced Landscaping & Ground Maintenance Team, as well as take part in external training sessions. This will help to develop their skills and achieve a positive outcome on completion of their apprenticeships.

One apprentice is in their second year and will be with us until September 2024, and the other apprentice is in their first year and will be with us until March 2025. Both will attend College one day per week.

Oak Tree contact information has been applied to our new vans, including our dedicated email address. Should you wish to contact the Landscaping team directly, you can now contact them at landscaping@oaktreeha.org.uk



Electrical Installation Inspections

The Association staff would like to thank those tenants who co-operated and provided access to allow statutory Electrician Inspections. The inspection and certification process is a legal requirement and the Association must undertake these works every 5 years to meet our statutory responsibilities.

If you are contacted by our contractor, Cranford Electrical Services regarding an appointment, we would appreciate your assistance in providing access.

Reactive Maintenance and Void Contracts

Following a successful tender process, Oak Tree now have 21 new contractors covering various trades to help facilitate our reactive maintenance and void contracts

The following contractors have been successful in joining the framework.

Electrical:	Aquila, Alwurk Ltd, CES Ltd, James Frew, Magnus Electrical Services.
Plumber:	WQS Wondersdeal Ltd, James Frew, Aquila, Alliance, John Docherty & Co
Joiner:	Whyte & Christie, Anderson Property Services, Aquila, Alliance, James Frew.
Plasterer:	Alliance, James Frew
Painter:	Mitie Property Services, Bell Group, Andrew P Orr, Aquila, James Frew
Roofing:	Clyde Contracts, RF Watters, KPM
Blacksmith:	City Gate Construction, Inverweld, Lux Fabrication, Martec
Door Entry:	Alpha Comm Systems, Fortress Security, KD Comms, Invincible Security, Sound Service
Drainage:	Damm Environmental, Lanes Group, City Gate Construction
Out of Hours:	James Frew

The contract period will be for 3 years with the potential for 2 extensions of 1 year at Oak Tree's discretion.

The new contracts have been in place since early October 2023, you may well have noticed some of the new contractors working on-site throughout our stock.

The addition of these contractors to our pool will allow for more choice for our repair team when you report any repairs.

There has been no change to repairs reporting process, our telephone numbers for our repair-line and emergency repairs will remain the same- 01475 807001.

No Access for Repairs

The Association is unable to offer an appointment when a repair is reported to us as we do not have access to our contractor's appointment schedule. Our contractors are supplied with your contact telephone number(s) when we are raising a work order for your repair to them and they contact you direct to make an appointment.

We are experiencing a high volume of tenants not providing access when appointments are made with the contractor and have therefore updated our Contractor No Access Procedure. Please note that our contractors have been instructed to notify us if they have been unable to reach you to make an appointment after two attempts. We will then cancel your repair on our system and make a note for the cancellation reason.

We would ask that you ensure that we have your up to date telephone number so that there is no delay in your repair being carried out.

If an appointment has been scheduled and not kept by you and the Association is charged for this aborted visit, then we will re-charge the cost to you.

FROST ALERT

Follow this advice to reduce the risk of damage and disruption.

Keep your house warm

- This will help to avoid burst pipes and damage to your home and your neighbours.
- Remember that the pipes in a flat may supply water to your neighbours.
- In very cold weather, keep the heating on overnight at a low temperature.



Protect your home

- Report any leaks at taps or valves to us as soon as possible. Dripping water increases the risk of freezing.
- Reduce draughts by fitting draught excluders to your doors and windows.
- Make sure you have adequate contents insurance.
- Look out for your neighbours, especially the frail, elderly and vulnerable.
- Ask us if you don't know where your water mains stop valve is.

If your pipes become frozen

- Turn off the water at the main water stop valve.
- Open all cold taps to drain the system.
- Do not open the hot taps.
- Turn off the central heating or immersion heater.
- Collect water in the bath for washing and wc flushing.
- Contact the Association's Emergency Repairs Service.



If you have a burst pipe

- Turn off the water at the mains water stop valve.
- Switch off the electricity at the mains.
- Switch off any water heater.
- Turn off the central heating system.
- Open all taps to drain your system.
- Collect water in your bath for washing and wc flushing.
- Warn neighbours who may suffer damage.
- Contact the Association's Emergency Repairs Service.



How to defrost a frozen central heating condensate pipe.

In the very cold weather, some condensate pipes freeze and the boiler can stop working. If you feel sufficiently confident to know that your boiler condensate pipe has frozen, and you can reach it, you can defrost the pipe by wrapping hot towels or hot water bottles around the pipe. Contact us if you are unsure how to do this.



Going on holiday over the winter period?

- Make sure you have someone who can regularly check your home for problems and consider giving a key to a neighbour for emergency use.
- Let us and your neighbours know your contact details.
- Ask us for advice on how to turn off your water supply.
- Let us know your mobile number so we can contact you and send you helpful text messages.

Reminders regarding the risks associated with Legionella & Asbestos

Precautions Against Legionella

The risk of contracting legionella in the domestic home is minimal. There are, however, some simple steps that you should take to avoid this happening.

- You should turn your shower on at least once a week or more.
- You should make sure that you dismantle, clean and descale your showerheads and shower hoses at least once every 3 months or earlier if scaling is evident.



Precautions Regarding Asbestos

Properties built after the mid-1980s are very unlikely to contain asbestos in the fabric of the building and properties built or refurbished after the 1990s are extremely unlikely to contain asbestos anywhere in the building. Asbestos cement, however, had been widely used as a cladding material and it can still be found in garages and sheds. Asbestos fibres are often present in the air and it is very unlikely that the levels of asbestos fibres in a domestic home will be harmful, particularly given that asbestos materials in good condition do not usually pose a danger if they are not disturbed or damaged.

- If any of our maintenance contractor's suspect there is asbestos in your home, they will contact the Association to seek further advice before they take any action. If you do have asbestos materials in your home, extra care will be taken to ensure the release of fibres does not present a danger to you. If asbestos is discovered you should refrain from carrying out DIY work where drilling or disturbance of the asbestos is required. Remember asbestos is not usually dangerous if it is not disturbed or damaged.
- Some small jobs can be undertaken if the right precautions are taken. Our information leaflet on asbestos gives advice on asbestos and this should be consulted before any work is undertaken. This leaflet can be obtained from the reception area of the Association's office at 40 West Stewart St.



Oak Tree Housing Association's Adaptation Service

The Association would like to remind its tenants of the adaptation service it provides to support the housing needs of people with disabilities.

We work closely with the Inverclyde Centre for Independent Living (ICIL) who have trained Occupational Therapists (OT's) who can assess the particular needs of individuals to determine what adaptations are best suited to allow them to continue living in their home in the degree of comfort they would normally expect from modern day living. If you have a disability and believe you might benefit from the Association's adaptation service or you know of a family member or a friend who might also benefit from an adaptation then please contact ICIL on 01475 714350 to arrange for an OT to visit and assess requirements. If the OT considers an adaptation will be of benefit then he or she will make the necessary referral to the Association. The Association will then review the request and if appropriate, ensure the work is added to its adaptations programme and

have the work carried out as soon as practicably possible. Subject to available funding, adaptations will be categorised in accordance with the OT's recommendations.

The following is a list of typical adaptations that can be undertaken to aid and assist individuals with their particular disabilities. This list is not exhaustive and other adaptations may be considered. It should however be noted that there are cases where it will not be appropriate for the Association to carry out or consent to an adaptation

Typical Adaptations Work

Over bath showers, Level access showers, Wet floor areas, Handrails (internal and external), Access ramps.



ENERGY USE: Useful Tips & Advice

As we do not have the ability to reduce the cost of our energy, the easiest way to spend less is to use less. That doesn't mean turning the lights off and sitting in the dark! There are plenty of practical actions you can take to help save energy around your home to reduce your energy bill.

1. Using your heating controls and finding ways to prevent heat loss around your home can help you keep warm for less;

- Reducing your thermostat by 1°C
- Using your thermostatic radiator valves correctly
- Where possible putting your heating and hot water on a timer
- Avoid using plug in electric heaters



2. In terms of your appliances and cutting down your electricity use, you could consider:

- Switching appliances and devices off at the plug rather than leaving them on standby
- Using a slow cooker or pressure cooker rather than an oven
- Using LED lighting and switching lights off when that room isn't being used
- Washing your clothes at 30 degrees will save you around 40% of the energy used each year.
- When using your tumble dryer, spin your clothes on the highest spin cycle before putting them in your dryer for a short period then complete the process on your clothes horse



3. In your bathroom :

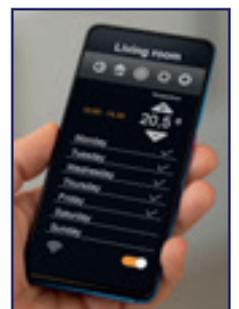
- A quick shower will use less energy than taking a bath

These tips are just some of the simple tricks you can do to try and reduce your costs

You should also consider :

4. Your energy supplier

- If you have a pre-payment meter, ensure you are registered with your supplier. If you aren't registered, you will be missing out on the government funding that is available to help you with your bills. You could also be paying for the previous tenants debt which is held on the meter
- Checking with your supplier to make sure you're getting the best deal
- Switch tariff or supplier to save money. Use a comparison site recommended by Ofgem. Visit www.ofgem.gov.uk
- Take regular meter readings to see how much you use. Consider a smart meter to see daily costs
- Try to top up prepayment meters all year round so you have more credit in the winter months
- If you are older, have young children, a health condition or disability, ask to go onto the priority services register with your supplier
- For more energy tips visit energysavingtrust.org.uk



And lastly, as your landlord we may be able to help you downsize to a smaller property that costs you less in rent and heating. If you are eligible for Discretionary Housing Payment, we will also be able to help you apply for this.

A Day in the Life of a Maintenance Officer (Planned & Cyclical)

Hello, I'm John, I've worked as a Maintenance Officer within the Planned & Cyclical team at Oak Tree Housing Association for two years but have previously worked in a maintenance role with various organisations for over the last 30 years.

My role within the Planned & Cyclical team is a varied one, which involves the planning and implementation of component replacements when they have reached the end of their economical life. These works include works such as central heating systems, windows and doors to name but a few. I am also involved in the planning and implementation of new kitchen and bathroom installs.

The less high profile aspect of the job that goes on in the background is ensuring that we are complying with our statutory requirements in relation to electrical safety, legionella & asbestos management, fire risk management, playpark safety checks and lift maintenance/servicing. We also arrange for the annual gutter cleaning of tenemental properties, certification of roof anchors, common fan servicing and close painting,



We have recently carried out the installation of new bathrooms within several of our properties. These were finished using high quality wet wall panels giving customers a choice of colours / styles to choose from. It was very rewarding to get positive feedback from customers in relation to the quality and standard of the works carried out.

Another very satisfying aspect of the role is stage 3 adaptations this is making an adaptation to a tenant's home to enable them to carry on living in a property. The adaptations can range from a simple handrail to the entrance of a property or the creation of a wet room. The works are carried out following a referral from an occupational therapist and are prioritised on need. There is a limited budget for adaptation works but we ensure every available penny of the available budget is spent on the adaptations. The request for an adaptation can be for a number of reasons including illness, accident or age-related issues. The alterations can be literally life changing allowing tenants to remain in their own homes.

Oak Tree Annual Assurance Statement

Each year, from 2019, the Association's Committee of Management is required to submit an Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to provide assurance that Oak Tree complies with the relevant requirements of the Regulatory Framework. This includes regulatory requirements that apply to all social landlords and the Standards of Governance and Financial Management that apply to Registered Social Landlords. You can find out more about this requirement at the SHR website –

<https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/annual-assurance-statements>

The Annual Assurance Statements that Oak Tree submits are also on the Oak Tree website for anyone to view, <https://www.oaktreeha.org.uk/documents/>

The Association's Committee of Management approved their AAS at their October meeting before submitting to SHR – it is required to be submitted to SHR by 31 October each year.



Annual Assurance Statement by the Committee of Management of Oak Tree Housing Association Ltd – October 2023

In considering our compliance with regulatory and legal requirements for our 2023 Annual Assurance Statement, we have considered a comprehensive bank of supporting evidence.

Gaining the basis of Assurance

The evidence bank combines reports, policies, advice and information which the Management Committee monitors and oversees on an ongoing basis throughout the year to provide continuous assurance that Oak Tree Housing Association (OTHA) is compliant with the relevant regulatory requirements, set out in the regulatory framework. Additionally, the evidence bank incorporates relevant documents and information that contribute to our assurance, and which form the structure of OTHA's business and governance activities.

The evidence which supports this Statement includes:

- Reports about performance in key areas including finance, service delivery, asset management, development and risk.
- Internal and External Audit reports.
- Advice from external specialist advisers.
- Tenant Scrutiny reports and the outcomes from consultations.
- Data analysis about our tenants and customers' needs and views.
- Benchmarking reports, advice and information from senior staff and external bodies.

In reviewing the evidence and assessing compliance, we take account of good practice advice. In considering our assurance OTHA continues to adopt an improvement focus. This includes an Action Plan being implemented, progressed and reviewed on an on-going basis. We have obtained external support to provide us with additional assurance that our approach is effective and robust.

We are confident that, taking account of the current economic and social environments, we continue to meet our responsibilities to our tenants, service users, regulators and funders. Where we have adopted new methods of communications with tenants and/or service delivery, we have communicated these new arrangements clearly to our tenants. We are confident that we have successfully resumed normal service levels, subject to external supply constraints.

We are satisfied at the time of writing that we meet all of our duties in relation to tenant and resident safety. In particular, we have gained the necessary evidence-based assurance of our compliance in respect of duties relating to gas, electrical, fire, water and lift safety and our obligations relating to asbestos, damp and mould. An external audit has confirmed this along with quarterly performance reports which we received.

In reviewing our compliance with the Regulatory Framework, we are assured that we have established appropriate systems for the collection of equalities data. We are assured that we are working towards using this data to take account of equality and human rights issues in our decisions, policy-making and day-to-day service delivery.

Oak Tree Annual Assurance Statement

We are assured that Oak Tree Housing Association (OTHA) is compliant with the Regulatory Standards and Regulatory Framework requirements with (only) the following exceptions: -

- 2 Gas Safety checks } as at 31.03.2023
- 141 Electrical Installation Condition Report's (EICR's) } as at 31.03.2023

An action plan has been implemented and at the time of writing we are now fully compliant. An external audit has been carried out which confirms this (Substantial Assurance).

New Build Development Site

At the time of writing an initial report has been received detailing significant failures at the Strone Farm development site. An external investigation has been instructed and its findings are awaited in order to move forward. The Scottish Government's, More Homes division has been notified and this matter has been advised to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Statement of Assurance

The Committee of Management confirms that we have reviewed and assessed a comprehensive bank of evidence to support this Statement that Oak Tree Housing Association (OTHA) is compliant with the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management and the requirements of Chapter Three of the Regulatory Framework.

Ongoing Monitoring

We understand that we are required to notify the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) of any changes in our compliance during the course of the year and are assured that we have effective arrangements in place to enable us to do so.

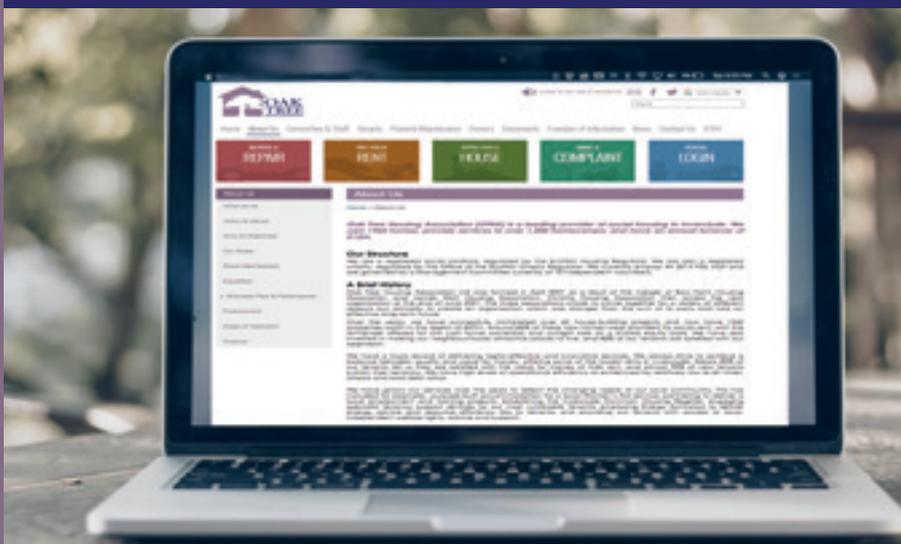
Authority to sign and submit

As Chairperson, I was authorised by the Committee of Management at its meeting held on 23rd October 2023, to sign this Assurance Statement for submission to the SHR.

Signed Sandra McMenamin (Chair)

Date 23rd October 2023

Annual Assurance Statement / Feedback



The Committee of Management would welcome any input or suggestions from our tenants and residents. If you would like to get involved, please simply advise us by e-mailing info@oaktreeha.org.uk or phoning 01475 807000. We will also keep our website updated on any developments.



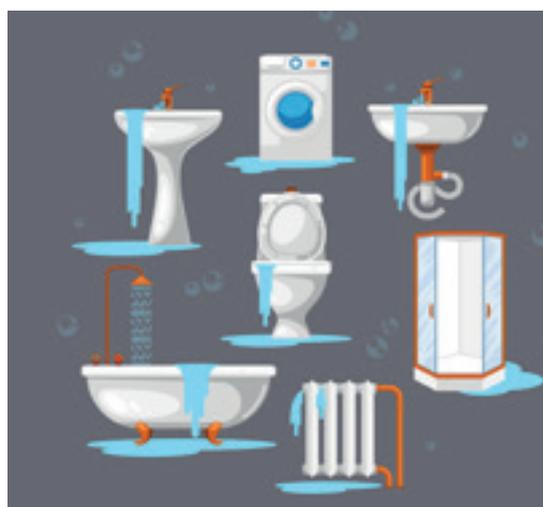
Customer Care Statistics Quarter 1 -2023/24

Target Area	Task Targets	Target Times (annual %)	Method of measuring performance	Performance Q1
Answer incoming telephone calls	Within 20 secs	100%	Export of data from telephone system	96.15%
Return telephone call	By end of next working day	100%	Checking complaints register and Customer Care survey for non-compliance	100%
Email response	5 working days	100%	As above	100%
Social Media response	5 working days	100%	Facebook inbox & comments	100%
Time to wait for an appointment to see specific member of staff	Same or next working day	95%	Survey carried out twice per month (rotating days)	N/A – no survey
Appointments kept/ attended on time	Within 5 mins of agreed time	100%	Survey carried out twice per month (rotating days)	N/A – no survey
Acknowledge or fully respond to a written enquiry	5 working days	95%	Incoming mail register	100%
Behavioural code of Committee, Staff and Contractors/ Agents	Adherence to Code	100%	Based on complaints received via Complaints Handling Procedure	2 incidents
Behavioural code of Customers	Adherence to Code	100%	Managers reporting incidents	0 incidents

Leaks and how to prevent them

If you live in a flat there is always a possibility of getting a leak from above, either from the roof being damaged by a storm or faulty plumbing. However, the main source of water going down to the flat below is where a resident inadvertently leaves a tap on at the bath, wash hand basin or kitchen sink which then overflows. So always remember to turn off taps before you leave your home.

Another source of leaks are faulty washing machines and their connections. For existing washing machines check that all connections are tight on a regular basis and before using a new washing machine make sure that all connections are tight.



Stepwell specialises in improving the wellbeing, capabilities, and employment opportunities of local people with health and wellbeing challenges which are preventing them from moving into work.

Our **Progress Pathway** provides tailored employment support which includes access to:

- ▶ personal development and career coaching
- ▶ health and wellbeing support (inc. physiotherapy)
- ▶ accredited vocational training courses (inc. REHIS Emergency First Aid at Work)
- ▶ work placements in 'live' businesses and
- ▶ a bespoke job search/matching service

To register for Progress please scan the QR code or visit our FB/Instagram pages for the link.

Please note to access Progress you must be:

1. A resident of Inverclyde
2. Unemployed and wanting to get back to work (a small spark is all we ask for)
3. Not registered on the Fair Start Scotland programme
4. Have a health and wellbeing issue or a physical/sensory impairment which you feel is limiting you gaining and sustaining employment (inc. anxiety, depression, etc.)
5. Aged between 18 and 60



getting back to work is possible

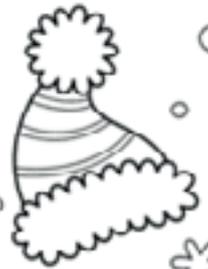


REGISTER NOW



WINTER SEASON

L	T	D	R	I	F	T	L	P	I
J	U	S	Y	H	O	L	L	Y	I
S	N	O	W	X	R	R	G	I	U
R	Y	G	D	Z	C	O	L	D	F
M	V	O	F	Q	I	B	D	G	R
O	H	A	R	E	A	I	F	X	O
O	W	F	Q	Q	Q	N	Z	I	S
S	E	H	O	N	M	S	J	T	T
E	I	V	H	U	S	K	Y	E	H
L	D	L	Z	T	L	F	I	R	N



WORD LIST

COLD	HOLLY
DRIFT	HUSKY
FIR	HUSKY
FROST	MOOSE
HARE	ROBIN
	SNOW



Homemade GIFTS MADE EASY

Methods of Payment

We have traditionally taken money in all sorts of different ways and welcomed every payment type. However, times have changed and we have also changed some of our methods.

We introduced a new on-line payment method in July 2022 on our My Oak Tree Portal. This has proved to be very successful.

If you would like information on how to pay this way, please contact the office and ask for a member of the Housing Team or register on our website www.oaktreeha.org.uk and click on the blue "Portal Login" button

We strongly discourage cash payments in the office and we are happy to discuss alternate payments methods instead. Cheques and Standing Orders are also being discouraged.

Many of our tenants have chosen to make weekly or fortnightly payments towards their rent instead of once a month. This may have been chosen to match your wages or benefits payment cycle at the time.

Direct Debits are ideal for many of our customers and there has been a shift by all organisations to move to this method – gas, electricity accounts and more recently TV licence and road tax can now be easily set up and once in place they are changed by the provider.

If you pay by Direct Debit, the Association makes the required change when your rent changes in April of each year. Direct Debits also take away the need for you to go to a shop or post office and you don't need to remember to pay each month – all you need to do is pick a day of the month that suits your income payments.

If you want to make changes to how you pay your rent just now, please don't wait until we contact you. We are happy to discuss it with you now. Please call 01475 807000 and ask to speak to one of the Housing team.



Membership of Oak Tree Housing Association

Join us!

Lifetime membership of the Association costs just £1 and you can apply at any time. As a member, you would be invited to attend the Association's AGM where you would be entitled to vote for the Management Committee or stand for election to the Management Committee yourself.

If you would like to find out more about membership of Oak Tree Housing Association, or you would like an application form, please contact our office on 01475 807000 or email us at info@oaktreeha.org.uk.

Bunston Grove Fun

Oak Tree, Larkfield and Link Housing Association hosted a fun day on Wednesday 18th October 2023 to celebrate the completion of the New Build properties at Bunston Grove. Julie, Ann-Marie and Ellie attended from Oak Tree Housing Association. We organised a face painter, bouncy castle and a finger buffet for all that attended.

All tenants were asked to complete a short survey and were entered into a prize draw with 5 lucky tenants winning a tesco voucher.



Tenancy Support HoME (Help on Managing Everything)

HoME: Help on Managing Everything



Update on our new Tenancy Support services provided by HoME (Linkliving). The project started in July 2023 and so far Lynsey, our Project Worker has:

- Received 17 Referrals
- Has 8 Active Cases
- Closed 2 cases with positive outcomes.
- Has referred tenants to:
 - Support from the GP
 - Scottish Welfare Fund
 - The Wise Group
 - Community Payback Scheme
 - Financial Fitness
 - The Pantry



With accessing various grants and funds Lynsey was able to access £3,344 from July to September 2023 to assist tenants with their home and utility bills.

If you would like to be referred to our HoME Project Worker please contact a member of our Housing Services Team.

Easy chicken casserole

Ingredients

- 8 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs (around 850g/1lb 14oz)
- 1 tbsp olive or sunflower oil
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 4 rashers smoked back bacon, cut into roughly 2cm/¾in slices
- 150g/5½oz small mushrooms, halved or quartered if larger
- 3 medium carrots, peeled and cut into roughly 1.5cm/ in slices
- 20g/¾oz plain flour (around 2 tbsp)
- 1 tsp dried thyme or 1 tbsp fresh thyme leaves
- 500ml/18fl oz hot chicken stock (made with 1 stock cube)
- 1 medium leek, trimmed and cut into roughly 1cm/½in slices
- salt and freshly ground black pepper



Method

STEP 1. Preheat the oven 190C/170C Fan/Gas 5. Season the chicken thighs all over with a little salt and lots of black pepper.

STEP 2. Heat the oil in a large non-stick casserole pan over a medium heat and fry the chicken for 7–8 minutes, skin-side down, or until the skin is nicely browned. Turn and cook on the other side for 3 minutes more. Transfer to a plate.

STEP 3. Return the pan to the heat and add the onion, bacon and mushrooms. Fry over a medium-high heat for 4–5 minutes, or until lightly browned, stirring regularly. Add the carrots and flour and toss together well.

STEP 4. Sprinkle with the thyme, then pour in the stock, a little at a time, stirring well between each addition. Add the chicken pieces back to the pan and bring to a gentle simmer. Cover the pan with a lid.

STEP 5. Place in the oven and cook for 45 minutes. Take out of the oven and stir in the leeks.

STEP 6. Return to the oven for a further 15 minutes, or until the chicken and leeks are tender and the sauce has thickened. Serve.

Winter vegetable & lentil soup

Ingredients

- 85g dried red lentils
- 2 carrots, quartered lengthways then diced
- 3 sticks celery, sliced
- 2 small leeks, sliced
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- 1 tbsp fresh thyme leaves
- 3 large garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 tbsp vegetable bouillon powder
- 1 heaped tsp ground coriander

Method

STEP 1: Tip all the ingredients into a large pan. Pour over 1½ litres boiling water, then stir well.

STEP 2: Cover and leave to simmer for 30 mins until the vegetables and lentils are tender.

STEP 3: Ladle into bowls and eat straightaway, or if you like a really thick texture, blitz a third of the soup with a hand blender or in a food processor.



Garden Competition Winners

The gardens that were selected were from nominations from tenants and by the Housing Services Team when they were out on their summer Wednesday Walkabouts. The Branchton Garden Club and Housing Officer, Louise Ward visited all the garden nominations in October. Guy from the Gardening Club provided great advice to Louise to help the team pick this year's winners. The top 6 winners are:

- Donald Hardie • Delia McGonigal • Janet Coyle • Roderick and Annette McDonald
 - James and Irene Murphy • Diane McCarney
- and they all received a £25 voucher.

