



OAK TREE HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD



**WINTER
NEWSLETTER
2017**

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TRY THIS

NEW REACTIVE MAINTENANCE CONTRACT



Oak Tree Housing Association are delighted to have appointed Novus Property Solutions to provide our repairs and maintenance service.

We worked jointly with Cloch Housing Association to tender for this contract. The contract will last 4 years with the option to extend for a further year, all being well.

The contract with Novus began on Monday 9th October 2017 when our contract with Mears ended.

During office opening hours you should continue to report your repairs as normal by either visiting our office or calling our dedicated repairs line on 01475 807001.

All emergencies relating to reactive maintenance during out of office hours should be reported direct to Novus' Customer Service Centre on 01506 637643. This information is also provided if you call our office out with opening hours on 01475 807000 or 01475 807001.

You can also report repairs to the Association by emailing repairs@oaktreeha.org.uk or complete the 'Report a Repair' form on our website in our repairs section.

Please note there is no change to reporting emergency repairs relating to gas central heating and these should be reported as normal to James Frew on 01294 468113

Christmas and New Year Holidays

Please note that Oak Tree Housing Association will close at 2pm on Friday 22nd December 2017 and re-open on Thursday 4th January 2018 at 9am.

TAKE A LOOK INSIDE



**UNIVERSAL
CREDIT
UPDATE**



**CUSTOMER
CARE
CHARTER**

The Association is regulated with:
The Scottish Housing Regulator No. HCB137
Financial Conduct Authority No. 2232(S)
VAT Registration No. 156 9197 67
Charity number SC045300



RENT IN ADVANCE REQUIREMENT

Every OTHA tenant has a Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement which states:-

The rent is £_____every calendar month inclusive of the service charge payable in advance by you on or before the first day of each rental period.

This means that by the 28th of each month, your rent account should be showing a full month's rent in credit. This is to pay the rent for the coming month which is then charged on the 1st of the month.

Our staff work with existing tenants to ensure that rent accounts are in advance and if they are not then we are happy to make an agreement that will allow small, regular payments to be made that will bring the account into advance over a period of time.

When we reviewed our Rent Arrears Policy in 2013, we made it a condition of accepting a house or flat from us that a payment would be made before the keys would be issued and if someone couldn't make a payment then the offer of rehousing would be withdrawn. New tenants would also be asked to sign an agreement to pay the advance rent payment within one year.

This proved to be successful as it helped make new tenants aware of some of the costs of taking on a tenancy and realise that they have a responsibility to pay rent – even if they are entitled to benefit assistance.

Earlier this year we reviewed our Rent Arrears Policy again and all new tenants will now be expected to pay a **full month's rent** before the tenancy begins and the offer will be withdrawn if payment is not made.

We carried out a consultation exercise by speaking to tenants over the summer and had an on-line consultation available via our website.

Tenants were asked the following questions:-

The Association currently asks new tenants to either pay the full month's rent in full (or £25 if the tenant will be in receipt of full Housing Benefit) at the sign up appointment. Do you think we should insist that everyone pays a full month's rent – regardless of whether or not they are entitled to Benefits?

If you do not agree with the above proposal, what amount do you think would be a reasonable minimum amount to insist on? £25, £50 or £100

We had 33 responses to the consultation. 18 agreed with the proposal to charge a full month's rent in advance and 15 disagreed. Of the 15 who

disagreed, 7 thought that £25 was a reasonable minimum amount, 2 said £50 and 6 said £100.

Changes to any of our Policies are open to consultation with customers and we also involve staff in all reviews. The Policy then requires to be agreed by the Committee. This took place on 19 September 2017.

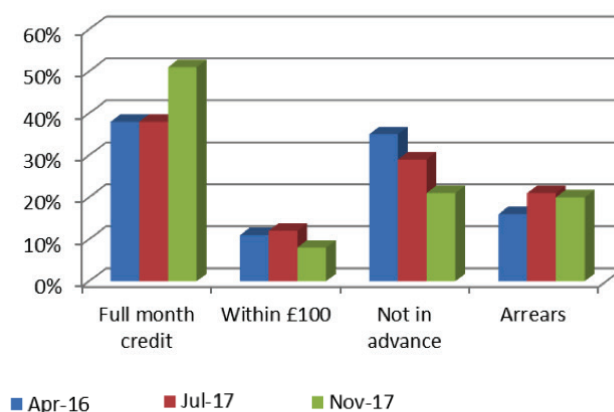
This will mean that if you are thinking of moving to another Oak Tree Housing Association property you will need to pay the full month's rent for your new property before you sign the tenancy agreement.

If you have a credit balance on the property you will be leaving then you will be able to get that refunded to you when you return the keys.

If you are not in advance at the moment, we will be in contact with you to let you know how much needs to be paid to bring your account into advance and we will be happy to make an arrangement with you that is affordable and allows you to get into advance over a period of time.

If you are likely to be affected by Universal Credit in the future then you will need to wait for up to 6 weeks for your first monthly payment and you will be responsible for paying rent for that 6 week period. Having a full month in advance on your rent account will help you at that time as your rent will be covered for a month.

We have been working with our tenants to make sure that more of our existing tenants are a month in advance. We now have 51% of all our tenants in advance and a number of tenants are within reach. Here is a graph showing how we have been making progress.



Please contact a member of the Housing Services Section if you have any queries about any aspect of this article.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE

Universal Credit has been in the news recently and over 300 of our tenants are currently claiming this benefit.

If you are not a pensioner and you have a change of circumstances then it's likely that you will move onto this benefit. A change of circumstance could be:-

- **You move house**
- **Someone moves into your household or someone moves out**
- **You are working and you stop working or your hours reduce**
- **You were in receipt of ESA and are assessed as being fit for work**

We are working hard to help tenants deal with the changes and there are a number of organisations that can assist you make a claim and maintain your claim.

If you move onto this benefit, you will be responsible for paying your rent from the monthly

payment you receive and you must make sure that you let the DWP know that you have "Housing Costs". This is another name for your rent.

You will need to wait up to 6 weeks for your first payment. You can ask for an advance payment to help during this period but you need to repay this from future payments.

The Association charges rent in advance so it is very important that we speak to you as soon as we know that you are going to be claiming Universal Credit to avoid arrears building up on your account.

We can make an agreement with you so that you can pay extra each month so that you do not fall into arrears and your account becomes in advance.

Our Housing Services staff will be able to answer any questions you have about Universal Credit and how you might be affected.

Being in advance with your rent account is very important as it will stop your account getting into arrears while you are waiting for your first payment.

WEDNESDAY WALKABOUTS 2017

We carried out Wednesday Walkabouts this year in June and July carried out with tenants in 11 estates and we also spoke to residents who attended the Funworld events over the summer.

This gave us a chance to discuss neighbourhood issues on site with a range of people. The walkabouts were arranged in advance and tenants chose whether or not they wanted to join for some or all of the walkabout. We carry out the garden competition shortlisting at the same time.

A small satisfaction survey was carried out and we were able to compare the results with last year. The results were as follows for "satisfaction with..." :

Item	2016	2017
Grass cutting	90%	77%
Shrubs	82%	61%
Litter	73%	86%
Dog Fouling	55%	60%
Overall appearance of estate	94%	95%
Behaviour of Children	75%	79%
Condition of fencing, paths etc	67%	83%

With the exception of the grass cutting and the maintenance of the shrubs, all the other items have seen an improvement in the satisfaction levels which is excellent news.

The Association changed its landscape contractor this year, the new contractor started in August 2017 (after the surveys were completed). The Association was aware that the performance by the previous contractor had been poor and the survey results confirmed this.

We would hope to see an improvement in satisfaction levels next year.

Residents were also asked what they liked about their area and what they didn't like. There were lots of positive comments – mainly that the area was quiet and most folk liked their neighbours which is really good news!

There were some issues with cat fouling, rowdy behaviour of children, fencing and drainage to gardens reported and these comments have been taken on board and if we can take steps to improve these problems then we certainly will.

Thank you to everyone for taking part in the survey. It helps us improve our service to you.

FIRE RAISING IN COMMON PROPERTIES

Thankfully the problem of fire raising hasn't been common in our properties but there have been occasions when bin stores have been set on fire and vandalised and other residents in Inverclyde have had fires set in their close.

The Association will remove bulk items within closes when they are aware of them but the responsibility is on tenants and residents not to leave items in the first place.

If you see items left in your close which could be a fire risk (or could obstruct an escape route) then please report it to the Association as soon as you are aware of them. If you know who is responsible then please let us know so that we can recharge the person concerned.

You must not leave items in the close that could be a fire risk themselves or could block the doorway or stairs or corridors.

If you want advice on how to dispose of bulk items, please contact a member of the Housing Services team.



COMMUNITY WARDENS SERVICE AT RISK

A budget consultation examining some £8m worth of savings for Inverclyde Council is to start in the New Year.

Residents, groups, businesses and others with an interest are being urged to take part in the consultation when it launches.

The move comes after council officers prepared savings proposals of over £8m over two years which could affect 126 jobs within the Council and see council tax rise by up to three per cent.

The Association were very concerned to learn that one of the options being considered is to cut the Community Wardens Service by 50%. Although this would save the Council a considerable amount of money – it will mean 14 Community Warden posts are lost.

Oak Tree works very closely with the Safer and Inclusive Communities Service and the Community Wardens are a very important part of the overall service. The wardens can provide a prompt response to incidents of anti-social behaviour. They can act as a witness to anti-social behaviour which supports landlords and tenants and they work in conjunction with the Police.

The consultation is not open yet but when the details are available the Association will publicise the details and we would ask you to take the opportunity to make your views known on any aspect of the proposed budget cuts.



ALCOHOL IN PREGNANCY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

As you may know the Association achieved the Gold Healthy Working Lives Award a few years ago and continues to strive to maintain this award.

The aim of the award scheme is to develop health promotion and safety themes in the workplace.

Each year the Association joins in a campaign to highlight awareness of certain health campaigns. This year we have chosen the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde alcohol in pregnancy awareness raising campaign.

You may be aware NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde launched an alcohol in pregnancy awareness raising campaign at the beginning of September. Alcohol is widely consumed by the people of Scotland including those who live in Glasgow and Clyde. When it is consumed within low risk limits it can be safely enjoyed. However alcohol can affect pregnant women and their babies as well as affecting both men and women who are trying to conceive and breastfeeding mums and their babies.

The aim of the campaign is to communicate the most up to date advice on alcohol consumption in pregnancy. Across the UK, the Chief Medical Officers' guidance is to avoid alcohol completely if you are trying to conceive or are already pregnant. Until January 2016, the Chief Medical Officers' across the UK provided different advice on alcohol in pregnancy.

However, the Chief Medical Officers across the UK have agreed on alcohol guidelines for pregnant women and those who are trying for a baby. The advice is:

If you are pregnant, or think you could become pregnant, the safest approach is to not drink alcohol at all, to keep risks to your baby to a minimum. Drinking in pregnancy can lead to long-term harm to the baby, with the more you drink the greater the risk.

- All alcohol a woman drinks while pregnant reaches the growing baby
- In the womb, the baby grows and develops every day during pregnancy, so ANY alcohol drunk while pregnant carries the risk of affecting the baby's development
- The only way to remove the risks from alcohol harm is to avoid drinking alcohol if you are thinking of becoming pregnant, trying for a baby or if you are pregnant

The risk of harm to the baby is likely to be low if you have drunk small amounts of alcohol before you knew you were pregnant but you should stop drinking now.

For further information, please speak to your midwife or other health professional or read the government guidelines here:

www.nhsggc.org.uk/lowriskdrinkingguidelines

No Alcohol, No Alcohol Harm

No Alcohol, No Alcohol Harm



REACTIVE MAINTENANCE

For your information, please note our repair timescales below:

Repair Category	Timescale
Emergency	4 hours
Urgent	2 days
Routine	10 days
Qualifying Repairs	1, 3 or 7 working days

Tenant's Panel – Reactive Maintenance Contract

We would like to find a small group of tenants to meet with us to discuss how we measure how well the contract is going from the tenants' point of view. We would like your help to find the best way to get feedback after a repair has been carried out. This could be by different ways of carrying out a survey, or even by looking at having tenants volunteer for mystery shopping.

We would like you to think about whether you could help us do this. If you may be willing to come to a few meetings, give us your ideas by email or phone, or to join in with mystery shopping, please let us know. We are willing to pay an incentive of up to £10 in vouchers for taking part. Please phone Kirsty Davies on 01475 807000 or email to info@oaktreehousingha.org.uk if you would like more information. We will also be contacting tenants who have already put their name forward and who have been involved in similar events in the past.

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.

Maintenance Update

The maintenance section has been going through a significant period of change and one of the outcomes has been to organise our properties into 4 areas which will each be managed by a designated Maintenance Officer. The areas will be rotated on an

annual basis so that our Maintenance Officers can build up knowledge of our properties.

As well as dealing with reactive day to day repairs in your home our Maintenance Officers will also carry out close inspections and inspect common areas on a quarterly basis. This is to identify any repairs that are required in order to keep these areas to a good standard. Please contact us if there are any areas that you feel require to be inspected. We have a 5 day timescale in which to carry out an inspection and instruct work where required.

Through our recent recruitment drive we are delighted to announce that our Temporary Senior Maintenance Officer, Christie Bain, was successful in securing the permanent Senior Maintenance Officer (Planned) position. Christie will begin his new position once we have filled his temporary position. Christie will be taking over from Sean Marshall, Senior Development Officer, who will be returning to development duties due to our increased activity in new build development.

We would also like to welcome Brian Robertson to the team as Maintenance Officer. This is a newly created post to complement the existing team. Brian will start with us on 4th December 2017 and we are looking forward to him joining our team.

Garvald Street New Build - Defects Liability Period

We hope that all tenants are settling in well in their new homes and are happy with their property.

Please note that your home is subject to a defects liability period, which will normally last one year

from the date of the practical completion of your house. During the defects liability period you should not carry out any alterations/improvements to the property.

During the defects liability period you should not redecorate your home, for if a defect were to occur, the contractor will only return the property to its condition on handover.

It is not recommended to lay laminate flooring in your home within the first year of occupation. Permission should also be sought from the Association should you do so at any time after the first year.

Should laminate flooring be fitted, the tenant will be responsible for uplifting and relaying the flooring to allow access for repairs and maintenance. The Association will not accept liability for damage caused to laminate flooring. Due to the presence of pipes within the first floor build up, please ensure when laying carpets etc, to use normal tacks or nail strips, as large nails may puncture one of these pipes.

After the defects liability period you should obtain written approval from the Association before carrying out any alterations/improvements to your house.

At the end of the defects liability period the Contractor and a representative from the Association will arrange to inspect your house inside and out and if anything is found to be faulty arrangements will be made to have these items repaired or made good.

The Contractor will not be liable to repair items that do not form part of the original house or damage that was caused by neglect or accident.



CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Summer Fun at Fun World



OTHA is always trying to find new ways of meeting our tenants and finding out what they think. This summer we tried a series of events for children at Fun World. The mums and dads, grannies, aunts and friends came with the kids and we had chance to chat over tea and biscuits. Over 70 tenants attended and we were able to have really good conversations with tenants in between all the fun. Staff from all sections contributed to the event.

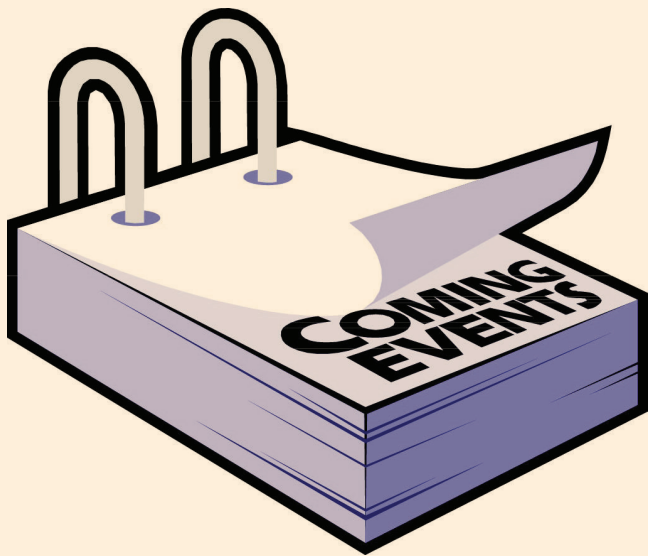
We got general feedback on our services, we got your ideas on new types of engagement activities, we recruited for more formal workgroups; we consulted on changes to the arrears policy & on the draft new Customer Care Charter.

This year we only invited tenants with children or in larger sized properties so you may not all have had an invitation. The feedback we got was so useful that we will be very likely to try this again so can open it up to more tenants.

Ideas for similar events are always welcome.

Engagement Calendar 2017-18

The engagement calendar has been approved and lays out the events and activities for the current year. Many of these have already happened or are due shortly. This is available on our website or on request.



Recruitment for Working Groups

Since tenant scrutiny is ultimately about continuous improvement, it has an important role to play in achieving Value for Money in services.

Consequently, recruitment for a short life group is a top priority to look at Value for Money and to feed into the rent increase decision and budget setting for next year. We will be writing out with more details separately.

Community Art Works Project

A wider action project for Community ArtWorks to carry out art based community engagement and development work has been approved for funding. The project has started and will run until March 2018. They will be working in Bow Farm and pennyfern as well as some areas owned by Cloch Housing Association.

The project will enable communities to define the areas they live in, communicate their aspirations for those areas, and use art as a tool to engender creative forms of community development in order to realise those aspirations.

Through art, Community ArtWorks will build enduring local connections which will inspire the community to work together to address issues and affect the positive changes they want to see in the areas they live.

We will facilitate referrals onto wider services where appropriate to ensure residents' involvement in their community is not limited to this project, and they are able to access opportunities for wider development.



FUNDRAISING AT OAK TREE

Charities change the lives of people in need every day with even the smallest of donations making a large impact in a community. However, any charity relies on support to continue their work in the community. Here at Oak Tree we have recently been involved in three fundraisers. We do hope that we have helped in some small way.



McMillan Coffee Morning

Staff held a McMillan Cancer Support Coffee morning on Wednesday 27th September 2017 which saw lots of staff members contributing home baking to raise money for this worthwhile cause. We are delighted to advise that we raised the sum of £112.

Jeans for Genes Day

Oak Tree Housing Association Staff took part in Jeans for Genes Day 2017 which took place on Friday 22 September. Staff made a minimum £2 donation each to wear Jeans on the Day and raised a total of £86. Jeans for Genes Day raises money for Genetic Disorders UK, the charity that aims to transform the lives of children with genetic disorders. Funds raised will go to the vital care and support they urgently need.

www.jeansforgenes.org



10k on Sunday 1st October 2017

Tracey Dargan took part in the Glasgow 10k on Sunday 1st October 2017 to raise funds for Alzheimers Scotland as this was an organisation close to her heart as she lost a close member of her family to this disease. With the help of family, friends and her work colleagues at both Oak Tree and Cloch Housing Associations she raised over £500.00 for the charity. Well done Tracey!

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 High Street.

STAFF TEAM BUILDING DAY - 03/11/2017

You may have noticed our offices were closed on Friday 3rd November 2017. This was because we had our annual staff team building day. The morning consisted of the Crystal Challenge and was filled with a variety of team building exercises which tested the mental, physical and skill abilities of staff. The afternoon included the Ultimate Game Show Challenge. This was a fun, fast and furious interactive event which created a lot of laughs. The entire day was a great success and was enjoyed by all.



GARDEN COMPETITION

This year we asked our staff to take photos of well-kept gardens during their "Wednesday Walkabouts" in June and July.

Despite the very wet weather over the summer we had a lot of lovely gardens to choose from. This made our job difficult but a pleasant task.

We shortlisted 12 gardens and asked staff to judge them. We also posted the shortlisted gardens on Facebook and gave a prize for the garden that had the most "likes".

It was a pleasure to view all the neat and tidy gardens and it is obvious that a lot of our tenants have the gardening bug and are enjoying their outside space. It is particularly satisfying to see a lot of the gardens in the estates that were built in the last few years flourishing as people settle in and make the house their home.

We awarded a 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize. We also had our Facebook winner and all the other shortlisted gardens received a small prize. We invited the winners to our office to receive their prize and have a tea or coffee and a cake.

Here are some of the winning gardens and a photo from the prize giving.



SMARTERBUYS STORE

SHOP SMARTER, PAY SMARTER

YOU CAN NOW SHOP SMARTER AND PAY SMARTER WITH SMARTERBUYS STORE!

Smarterbuys Store, a scheme that provides an ethical alternative to loan sharks and high street weekly payment stores, helping social housing tenants to buy household essentials in an affordable way.

Smarterbuys Store works with lots of other social landlords across the country, providing tens of thousands of tenants access to a dedicated online store, where they can purchase new furniture and white goods. Oak Tree is delighted to be a Smarterbuys Store partner.

More than providing a great range of big brand products at competitive prices, Smarterbuys Store also provides access to responsible and affordable credit if customers are unable to pay for the goods they need up front. Following a simple, safe and confidential credit check, customers can pay for their goods in weekly, fortnightly or monthly instalments over two years.

And as if this wasn't enough, the scheme also encourages tenants to save as they buy, by putting 25p from every weekly payment into an account opened especially for them. At the end of the loan term, customers will have at least £26 in their account, more if they choose to add to it further themselves.

Smarterbuys Store products are up to 40% cheaper than other weekly payment stores and provide a real alternative to the much higher cost options offered by unscrupulous lenders. At 24.19% APR, the rate of lending is very competitive, and is actually cheaper than many high street favourites.

The full range of products includes a wide range of white goods including ovens, fridge freezers and washing machines, as well as a stylish range of quality furniture for the whole house. Smarterbuys Store also stocks a great range of baby and nursery products, and offers value packages for those seeking to make a number of purchases. Delivery is completely free

and Smarterbuys Store can even install your new purchases. Plus, it doesn't matter how many items customers buy; Smarterbuys Store only charges one administration fee per transaction.

All in all, Smarterbuys Store offers safe and secure purchasing, from a name you can trust. Go online and take a look at the range today, at your dedicated Smarterbuys Store <http://www.inverclyde.sbstore.org/> and find out how you can shop smarter and pay smarter or call Smarterbuys on 0300 500 0975.



Smarterbuys Store
Shop Smarter. Pay Smarter.

SMARTER starterpack

Option ONE PACKAGE
Ideal for new home makers, the Smarter Starter Package One offers people the chance to get three items for their home for under £10 per week.

Tempo
Two seater sofa in a box

Repose
Celina Divan Bed (Double platform)

Digihome
Black - 32Inch Smart HD Ready LED TV with Freeview, Built-in WiFi, 2x HDMI and 1x USB Port

Cash Price: £770.36
Total weekly: £9.61
Total Price payable: £999.44
Over 104 weeks
Interest rate: 24.19% (fixed)
Representative APR: 24.19%

Visit www.sbstore.org or call us on 0300 500 0975

CUSTOMER CARE CHARTER



The Oak Tree Customer Care Charter was approved by Committee in October 2017. This Charter replaces the previous Customer Care Policy. We developed the Charter with our customers in mind. We wanted a more user friendly document that clearly sets out our service standards. We are delighted to say that the Charter has a Crystal Mark approved by the Plain English Campaign. A copy of the full Charter can be obtained by contacting our office. Below is an extract of some of the service standards we have set:

If you phone us during office hours we will:

- answer your call within 20 seconds;
- give the name of the person you are speaking to;
- transfer your call to the relevant staff member or their voicemail; and
- call you back, if you have asked us to, by the next working day.

If you email us we will:

- email a response within five working days; or
- if we cannot provide a full response at that time, tell you when you can expect to receive one.

If you write to us we will:

- send you a response within five working days; or
- if we cannot provide a full response at that time, tell you when you can expect to receive one.

If you contact us through social media we will:

- respond to your enquiry within five working days; or
- if we cannot provide a full response at that time, tell you when you can expect to receive one.

In all our communications we will:

- use language that is easy to understand; and
- sign with our name and job title.

If you visit us we will:

- do what we can to make sure you can get into our offices;
- treat you with respect and provide a high-quality service;

- see you within five minutes of your pre-arranged appointment time or, if you do not have an appointment, tell you approximately how long you will have to wait to speak to a member of staff;
- see you in a private room to keep the matter confidential;
- wear ID badges and give you our name and job title;
- arrange an interpretation service if English is not your first language; and
- provide an induction-loop system if you wear a hearing aid.

If we visit your home we will:

- introduce ourselves and show our ID badges;
- arrive within 10 minutes of the appointment time or phone you if the appointment will be delayed or needs to be cancelled;
- treat you and your home with respect; and
- if you are not at home, leave a calling card telling you how to rearrange your appointment.

If we visit your home we expect you to:

- be polite and non-threatening;
- treat us with respect;
- meet our reasonable requests;
- not smoke; and
- understand that we may not be able to help, as some matters may be beyond our control.

CUSTOMER CARE

Target Area	Task Targets	Within Target Times (annual %)	Comments Jan 2017 – March 2017	Comments April 2017 – June 2017
Check new housing application, point and process	10 working days	95%	100%	100%
Time to wait for an appointment to see specific member of staff (within OTHA area or at office/ Excludes Applicant Surgeries)	Same or next working day	95%	Survey carried out twice per month (rotating days) 100%	Survey carried out twice per month (rotating days) 100%
Appointments kept/ attended on time	Within 15 minutes of agreed time	100%	Survey carried out twice per month (rotating days) 100%	Survey carried out twice per month (rotating days) 100%
Acknowledge or fully respond to a written enquiry	5 working days	95%	94.10%	92.3%
Behavioural code of Committee, Staff and Contractors/Agents	Adherence to Code	100%	100% based on complaints received via the complaints handling procedure.	100% based on complaints received via the complaints handling procedure
Behavioural code of Customers	Adherence to Code	100%	100% (No Incidents).	1 incident – Unacceptable behaviour letter sent to tenant from Housing Manager, due to tenant's continued swearing on phone at a member of staff

BE SOCIAL WITH ICHR

The ICHR is constantly looking to improve on ways we can communicate with our customers; we also want to make sure that you see all of our available properties. We have been using Twitter now for over a year but we now realise that a lot of our customers prefer using Facebook.

We have decided to dive into the facebook world with our own ICHR page. The page will advertise our available properties and allow you to make contact with our team.

We launched our Facebook page early in 2017 and we currently have 388 follows.

Our page is the perfect place for you to see our available properties for yourself and also to share properties with family and friends.

Like and follow our page @InverclydeCHR



ICHR

**Inverclyde Common
Housing Register**

facebook

HEALTHY RECIPES

SPICY CARROT AND LENTIL SOUP

Serves: 6

Prep time: 5-10 minutes

Cooking time: 15-20 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 sticks celery, finely chopped
- 2 carrots, coarsely grated
- 55g (2oz) split red lentils
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 850ml (1.5 pints) vegetable stock
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Method

1. Heat oil in a saucepan. Add onion and celery and cook until soft, stirring.
2. Add carrots, lentils, cumin, coriander, stock and black pepper. Stir to mix.
3. Cover, bring to the boil, then simmer gently for 15-20 minutes or until carrots and lentils are soft, stirring occasionally.
4. Ladle into soup bowls. Serve hot with fresh crusty bread.



STOCK TRANSFER ANNIVERSARY

In March of 1997, Scottish Homes through a majority vote by tenants to transfer their stock of 557 properties to James Watt Housing Association. At this time, James Watt Housing Association had a team of 7 staff members who managed less than 300 properties at their offices at 30 Nicolson Street, Greenock. However, following the stock transfer this soon increased to 11 staff members who would now manage over 800 properties.

Since the stock transfer James Watt Housing Association, now Oak Tree Housing Association, demolished 160 properties at the Branchton flats which would be later see 120 new build cottages take their place over two sites. Improvements were also made to the steel houses at Inverkip Street through comprehensive refurbishments.

The stock transfer was on the 13th March 1997.

- **557 houses were owned by Scottish Homes (previously Scottish Special Housing Association).**
- **These were managed by Inverclyde Council because Scottish Homes didn't have an office in the authority.**
- **There was a vote held with tenants before the transfer of property could proceed. Over 90% said yes.**
- **At the time Oak Tree was known as James Watt Housing Association and had their offices at 30 Nelson Street, Greenock. JWHA owned and maintained less than 300 properties. As a result of the stock transfer, this number more doubled.**
- **Prior to the stock transfer, some new staff members were recruited.**

Branchton flats were demolished (160) and were later replaced with new build cottages.

Improvements to Inverkip Road stock, steel houses. Comprehensive Refurbishment.

RECRUITING BOARD MEMBERS

Oak Tree Housing Association is looking to recruit new members to its Board. We are looking for people with a range of skills, knowledge and experience.

The Association is an equal opportunities organisation and welcomes interest and a contribution from all sectors of the community. There is always a lot going on at Oak Tree Housing Association, we never stand still.

Being a member of the Oak Tree Housing Association Board means you will be involved in a lot of important decisions. It is a varied and interesting role.

Would you like to be a part of Oak Tree Housing Association's future? If you have the skills, enthusiasm and commitment to help shape and direct our future, we would like to hear from you. Please contact the office for more information.



EVICTED FOR DRUG DEALING



The Association was recently successful in evicting a household where one of the tenants had been convicted of drug dealing from the property.

The house was repossessed on 4 July 2017.

In this particular case there was a delay between the conviction in the criminal courts and the Decree of Eviction being obtained by the Association in the Sheriff Court. This delay was not on the Association's part as legal action was raised as soon as staff became aware of the conviction.

Thankfully this course of action is not something that the Association takes very often but we will always seek to recover a tenancy when the premises have been used for drug dealing.

If you are concerned about drug dealing in your area then please let us know. We can give you advice on how to report it in confidence to the Police and we will assist in any way we can to stop drug dealing in and around our properties.

HELEN MCGREGOR AWARD FINALIST



Jackie McKelvie, Chair of Oak Tree's Management Committee was recently selected as a finalist for this year's Employers in Voluntary Housing, Helen McGregor Award.

The award celebrates success, commitment and dedication from volunteers. It also recognises the significant contributions that committee members in social employer organisations make to improve services, their local communities and also provision of affordable housing, through giving freely of their time and assistance.

The Awards Ceremony took place during the EVH Annual Conference on Saturday 28th October 2017. Jackie can be seen in the photo receiving her finalist award from Jim Hempsey, Shettleston Housing Association (award sponsor) and Cat Harvey, Presenter.

Well done Jackie!

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 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 the Inverclyde Centre for Independent Living 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
- Lever taps

WINTER WEATHER WORDSEARCH

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

Clues

Avalanche

Blizzard

Chilly

Cold

Flurries

Foggy

Forecast

Freezing rain

Frost

Hail

Ice storm

Icicle

Icy

Rainy

Sleet

Slush

Snow

Sunny

Temperature

Thermometer

Whiteout

Wind chill

Windy

Winter storm



CONTACT US

There are many ways to contact us

Phone No: ~ 01475 807000 (General Enquiries)
~ 01475 807001 (Repair Line)
Email: ~ info@oaktreeha.org.uk
Website: ~ www.oaktreeha.org.uk
Text: ~ 07866 555 538
Twitter ~ @OakTreeHA

Or call in to the office:

41 High Street, Greenock, PA15 1NR

OFFICE OPENING HOURS

Monday 9:00am ~ 5:00pm
Tuesday 9:00am ~ 6:00pm
Wednesday 12noon ~ 5:00pm
Thursday 9:00am ~ 5:00pm
Friday 9:00am ~ 4:00pm

Website



www.oaktreeha.org.uk

Facebook



OakTreeHA

Twitter



@OakTreeHA

CUSTOMER CARE WINNERS

Name	Month
Name Withheld	April
C. Lavery	May
I. McGavigan	June
C. McGeachy	July
L. McDowall	August
M. McCann	September



**WELL DONE TO ALL OUR
WINNERS WHO WILL EACH
RECEIVE A**

**£10 TESCO
VOUCHER**