

# ORE VALLEY HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Official Newsletter

Our new monthly newsletter will provide regular updates on the route plan we will be using to deliver the essential services you expect from us, while still meeting the challenge of controlling and mitigating the spread of the coronavirus.

Our offices in Cardenden, Lochgelly and Lochore continue to remain closed to the public but throughout the period of lockdown and into phase 1 and phase 2 of the Scottish Government route plan, the team at Ore Valley have been working from home so that we can continue to deliver the essential services that you expect from us as your landlord.

We can see for ourselves that lockdown has done harm to our communities. It is causing loneliness and social isolation, deepening inequalities and damaging the economy.

None of us want this to last longer than it has to, and as we move into phase 3 of the Scottish Government route plan we are now easing the restrictions to our own services in line with Scottish Government guidance.

We may at times need to hit the brakes on easing these restrictions, however, depending on how well the spread of the virus is being controlled we may be able to lift restrictions faster than we initially thought.

The biggest, single factor in all of this will be how well we all continue to observe advice designed to control the virus. Continued hand washing, cough hygiene and physical distancing will be essential - so too will compliance with the test, trace, isolate and support system.

The Scottish Government has said this will mean that our workplaces and the services we all use will look different from normal – we are all going to have to get used to things being different, but what does this mean for you as a tenant of Ore Valley Housing Association?

How will we be allocating houses, carrying out essential repairs, routine maintenance and planned improvements?

Can you speak to us if you are having difficulty paying your rent, or if you are having a problem with your neighbour?

When will we be available to carry out regular estate management inspections? When will our office be open to the public, and what will our service look like when we do reopen?

When will we be carrying out routine home visits again, and what is happening with the delivery of tenancy support and tenant engagement activities in your local area?

These are all questions that we aim to answer in this newsletter and later issues.

# Services/ Phase 1, 2 & 3

## Emergency Repairs (Gas and Non Gas)

- For our tenants safety and the safety of our contractors, when taking emergency repair calls a set of questions are asked around COVID-19 to establish the level of risk.
- Both Rogerson and Kingdom Gas are attending emergency and call out repairs, with safety checks and risk assessments being carried out when they visit the property.
- Repairs can be reported on 01592 721 917 during normal office hours, when someone will be available to take your call. If you have an emergency repair out-with normal office hours, select 'Option 1 for non-gas emergency repairs; or 'Option 2 for gas emergency repairs. Someone will be available 24/7 to take your call

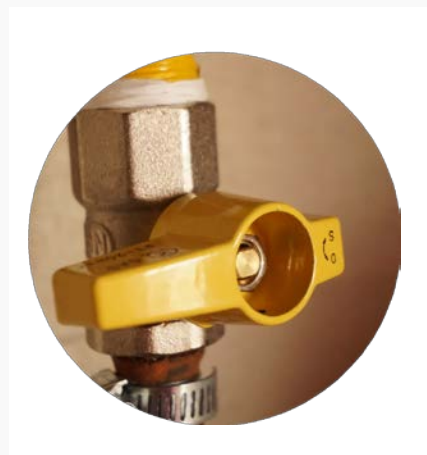


## Routine Repair (Non-Gas)

- Our non-emergency repairs service started again on 20th July 2020.
- We are now working with our contractor to clear the backlog of Routine repairs that have already been reported to us.
- Repairs reported to us at the start of lockdown will be attended to first. If you have a routine repair this can be reported to us during normal office hours when someone will be available to take your repair. Repairs can also be reported to us online using the 'My Home' login Service available on our website.
- While we are working to clear the backlog, it will not be possible to attend to Routine repairs within our normal 15 working days.
- Priority will be given to routine repairs that require more urgent attention.

## Gas Servicing

- We have a legal obligation to carry out an Annual Gas Service within your property. This law has not changed due to Covid-19  
We are working with our contractor, Kingdom Gas, to make sure any gas services which are due for renewal are completed on time.
- If your Gas Service is due within the next 8 weeks you will receive a telephone call from a member of our team to discuss the arrangements to have a Gas Engineer visit your home. Kingdom Gas have measures in place to allow this to happen safely and in accordance with Government Guidelines. Our main priority is to make sure you and the Gas Engineer remain safe.
- If you are unable to grant access at this time, we will be in regular contact with you to determine when access will be available.
- These steps are in accordance with guidelines from the Government and the Health & Safety Executive; they are intended to ensure your continued safety
- If you have any concerns about a gas appliance, please switch it off and contact us as soon as possible on 01592 721917



# Services/ Phase 1, 2 & 3

## Planned and Cyclical Programmes

- We are also gearing up to commence various planned and cyclical programmes and await confirmation from contractors in relation to external paintwork, electrical testing and fire detection upgrades. Unfortunately our kitchen replacement programme is currently on hold and we hope to be able to provide further updates about this programme in later issues of this newsletter.

## Transfers or Mutual Exchanges

- The Fife Housing Register is accepting new housing applications and you can also report a change to your current application. This can be done online at <https://www.fifehousingregister.org.uk/> or you can call us on 01592 721917. However due to service disruptions caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the Fife Housing Register Team are currently unable to process new housing applications or changes to existing applications within normal timescales. If you have applied for housing since March 2020 there may also be a significant delay in your application being assessed.
- If you are homeless, or need somewhere to stay urgently, please call 0800 028 6231 to discuss your housing options.
- All transfers, assignments, sublets and mutual exchange requests are currently suspended.



## Housing Allocations

- All allocations, other than allocations to homeless applicants, have been suspended since lockdown. This approach is now being relaxed with priority being given to other applicants who are in urgent housing need.
- To take account of social distancing guidelines, changes have been made to how we carry out repairs in empty homes, view empty properties and sign up new tenants.

## Ending your Tenancy

- All pre-termination visits to our tenant's homes are suspended until Scottish Government social distancing guidelines are altered or removed.
- If you are planning to end your tenancy and you have not already told us, you must give us 28 days' notice in writing by emailing [housing@orevalleyha.org.uk](mailto:housing@orevalleyha.org.uk). If you don't have access to email you can call us on 01592 721917 to request a tenancy termination form.
- Your Housing Officer will contact you to confirm your tenancy end date and will provide you with further guidance



# Services/ Phase 1, 2 & 3

## Estate Management

- Estate management inspections and fire safety inspections in common stairs have been suspended since lockdown.
- We are now planning to recommence these inspections during the week commencing 3rd of August 2020. The date these inspections are due to be carried out in your local area will be announced on our Facebook page. Officers who are carrying out these inspections can speak to you outside your home in accordance with social distancing guidelines but they will not be able to enter your property until further notice.
- Our grass cutting and ground maintenance work has continued as normal. We are no longer accepting cash payments at the office for this scheme, please call 01592 721917 to make a payment over the phone using your debit card.
- You are still expected to continue keeping your garden in good condition with the communal areas and common stairwells kept clean and free from rubbish.
- If you are unable to maintain your garden, or if you have any concerns about the condition of your common stairwells, please contact us on 01592 721917 or email [housing@orevalleyha.org.uk](mailto:housing@orevalleyha.org.uk)



## Neighbour Complaints

- We are continuing to respond to complaints about anti-social behaviour. However we are not able to interview people in the normal way.
- Unfortunately since lockdown we have seen a significant increase in the number of neighbour complaints and this has resulted in an increased pressure on our limited resources. From our experience, in all but the most serious cases, where neighbours make an effort to resolve the problem themselves by communicating in an open and non-confrontational manner, we have found that this provides the best possible outcome for everyone involved. If you are unable to resolve the issue in this way and you need further support our first step will be to make a referral to the Fife Community Mediation Service so that you can work with them to help you resolve the dispute.
- Please be mindful of your neighbours and where possible do not do anything that is likely to cause nuisance or annoyance to others. If you, your visitors or any other member of your household are responsible for regular serious incidents of anti-social behaviour we will take legal action that could result in you losing your home.



# Services / Phase 3 & 4

## Opening the Office

As we move into phase 3 we are continuing to follow Scottish Government guidelines about when we can open our office to the public. Phase 3 guidance says that non-essential offices can re-open for work purposes.

There is no confirmed date for this but we know that this will be no earlier than 31st July 2020. Working from home and working flexibly will remain our preferred option and this is likely to be the situation for the foreseeable future.

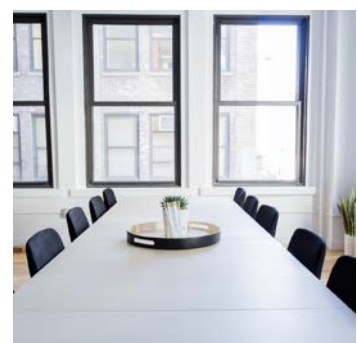
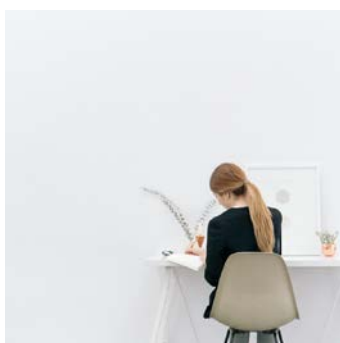


We are implementing the relevant guidance (including physical distancing) so that we can have a phased approach that will allow a small number of our staff to start working from our offices in Cardenden and Lochgelly sometime after 31st July 2020. Our office will remain closed to the public until phase 4 as this is when it is expected that the virus will be suppressed to very low levels and will no longer be considered a significant threat to public health.

However, in accordance with guidance about the resumption of the essential public services we are delighted to announce that our office in Cardenden is now being used to offer a limited number of essential office based appointments where you will be able to have a meeting with a member of staff.

In addition to this service we are also offering tenants the opportunity to have a virtual meeting with a member of staff. This can be done using your own computer at home, or you can make an appointment to come into our office in Cardenden to use a computer in the reception area that has been set up for this purpose.

Please note that strict social distancing guidelines will be followed for all office based interviews and the person being interviewed will need to complete a short questionnaire over the phone before we can proceed with an interview in our office.



# Services/ Phase 3 & 4

## Housing Support

We continue to provide housing support for tenants who may be struggling with their household bills or rent payments. We know that lockdown has had a negative impact on people's finances as well as their mental wellbeing, and this may have a knock on effect that could last several months. We are here to help you; should you need assistance with claiming Universal Credit or if you need any other financial support, including help with household bills such as gas, electricity or food please contact us on 01592 721917.



Throughout lockdown, we have also been providing support to local food distribution projects in Cardenden and Lochgelly. The Cardenden Community Fridge is open at the Bowhill Community Centre - Monday (1pm-3pm) and Friday (2pm-4pm) and the Lo'gelly Lunches Project is based at the Salvation Army Hall in Lochgelly - check out their own Facebook page for more information about the great work they are doing, and the wide range of services they are providing to support their local community.

## Employment Support

Kingdom Work is a service that is available for our tenants or any other member of their household who are looking for employment. Kingdom Works can:

- Provide information, advice and guidance Let you know what is available locally
- Help to identify your goals and remove barriers Organise and fund training courses
- Help with CV's and Application Forms Assist you through the interview process
- Find industry specific pre-recruitment training courses - designed to meet the needs of recruiting employers in your local area.
- These short courses offer practical work experience and certificated training so that you have the skills to gain employment in your chosen sector.



If you or a member of your household are interested in using this service, please call us on 01592 721917 or email [housing@valleyha.org.uk](mailto:housing@valleyha.org.uk)

# CardenEden Project

Ore Valley Housing Association's CardenEden Project was set up to support our local community and encourage a sense of unity and promote positive mental health and wellbeing. The aim of the project was initially to encourage the community to come together and maintain identified green spaces throughout the village.

The next phase of the project includes our two Horticultural Mentors - Jo and Lewis, who are here to help expand the project and provide support and knowledge to members of the community who are interested in gardening. Due to the recent social distancing we have come up with a more imaginative way to keep in touch with our community by creating a new website with lots of new content. [www.orevalleyha.org.uk/page/cardeneden](http://www.orevalleyha.org.uk/page/cardeneden)

Over the last few months, Jo and Lewis, have been busy adding content to the site. This is being updated regularly with a variety of content including starting your garden from scratch, step by step guides on how to grow your own vegetables, zero waste gardening, composting and re-purposing waste items into planters. To support these ideas we have also developed step by step video guides on our YouTube Channel: CardenEden Project.

The content for this website is inspired with the community's mental health in mind, to help people through this time of self-isolation and uncertainty, guides such as 'creating a sanity garden' and monthly jobs to keep you busy outdoors have been written to help.

If there is anything that has not been covered so far that you are interested in let us know by email or leave a comment on one of our videos and remember to keep an eye on our website and social media for new content, or if you have a google account like and subscribe to our YouTube channel. See the links for access to our current content and remember to get in touch if there is anything you want us to cover, we would love to hear your feedback. Please email us at:

[CardenEden@orevalleyha.org.uk](mailto:CardenEden@orevalleyha.org.uk)

To get things going we are looking for tenants who would like to participate in our community growing projects, and we are putting together resource packs that can be delivered to your home so that you can start working with us. Please choose one or more of these packs:

- Vegetable seeds for your garden in August with a handy guide
- Windowsill growing kit with a handy guide, this includes –  
Plant Pot  
Leafy veg mix and herb seeds  
Multi-purpose compost

If you would like to receive one or more of these packs so that you can start growing at home, please email us [CardenEden@orevalleyha.org.uk](mailto:CardenEden@orevalleyha.org.uk) or give us a call on 01592 721917. All you need to do is let us know the resource pack you are interested in and we will deliver this to you, or make arrangements for you to collect this from us as soon as possible.

In return all we want is some photographs for our Facebook page and a few updates on your progress. Remember if you participate in this project, Jo and Lewis will also be on hand to provide hints and tips to improve your growing experience.



# Condolences

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of our former colleague and friend Karen Burt on Friday 10th July, following a period of illness. Karen was one of the first members of staff to join, what was then, Auchterderran Housing Association in July 1996 latterly working as a Housing Officer. Karen was well known and was well liked by our tenants, and decided to take early retirement in September 2016 having accumulated more than 20 years' service. A message of condolence from all associated with OVHA has been sent to Karen's family.



## Useful Contact Numbers

### Ore Valley Online

Facebook/orevalleyha  
Twitter@orevalleygroup  
www.orevalleyha.org.uk

### Fife Council

Switchboard:: 03451 55 0000  
Environmental Health (for rubbish collection, dog fouling): 03451 55 00 22  
Antisocial Behaviour: 03451 55 00 33  
Welfare Fund Team: 0300 555 0265  
Email: [welfarefund@fife.org.uk](mailto:welfarefund@fife.org.uk)  
Emergency Homeless – 0800 028 6231

### Advice & Help

National Grid: 0800 111 999 - gas leaks  
Scottish Water: 0800 0778 778 – water leaks  
NHS 24: 111  
Citizens Advice & Rights (Fife)  
03451 400 095  
Money Advice Scotland – 0141 572 0237  
Samaritans Scotland – 116 123

### Ore Valley Housing Association

114-116 Station Road  
Cardenden  
Fife KY5 0BW  
Tel: 01592 721917

If you would like to see anything included in our newsletter that isn't there already you can phone us on 01592 721 917 or email: [housing@orevalleyha.org.uk](mailto:housing@orevalleyha.org.uk)