



Spring 2021

Newsletter

ORE VALLEY
Housing Association



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Stay Updated!

Remember you can stay up to date with all the latest Ore Valley news on our website www.orevalleyha.org.uk and social media, so why not like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter?

 facebook.com/orevalleyha
 twitter.com/OreValleyGroup

Services / COVID-19 Protection Levels

There are 5 Covid-19 Protection Levels (0-4)

Our local authority area is currently at level 3 but if the spread of the virus is still under control, it is expected that the Scottish Government will move the Fife area, along with the rest of Scotland, to the lower protection levels on the following dates:

- 17 May - Level 2
- 7 June - Level 1
- June (late) - Level 0

What this means for the delivery of our services is summarised below, with updates and further information about Covid-19 protection levels also available from the Scottish Government website at gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19

Tradespeople, home repairs and working in someone else's home

Level 3 to 0

As outlined in the **Coronavirus (COVID-19): local protection levels** guidance, for levels 0 to 3, tradespeople can continue to work in other people's homes, providing they follow **guidance on working safely**.

This means that you can continue to report emergency and non emergency repairs by contacting us on 01592 721 917 or by using our online [My Home](#) service

Please note as we return to delivering more non-essential services we will continue to give priority to the following essential services:

- to carry out utility (electricity, gas and water) safety checks, repairs, maintenance and installations
- to carry out repairs and maintenance that would otherwise threaten the household's health and safety
- to carry out a house inspection to support a home move or mutual exchange

Services to our tenants such as repairs, voids processing, allocations and lettings, dealing with anti-social behaviour, tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention work are all essential services. We will continue to deliver these services throughout the pandemic, in line with public health advice, and the team at Ore Valley will continue to follow the relevant guidance to ensure infection prevention and control measures are in place.

This means that although our offices still remain closed to the public we are continuing to provide essential services, and will continue to do so even if we return to level 4 restrictions.

Working from Home / Public Services

One of the biggest changes to our service is the continued closure of our offices. Scottish Government guidance remains in place that even as we move through Level 2, 1 and 0 people should work from home where possible. *'By law, employers must take all reasonable steps to minimise the risk of the incidence and spread of coronavirus. Supporting employees to work from home where possible is an important part of that.'*

This approach needs to be balanced with our duty to provide essential services for our tenants that are easy to use, and easy to access.

Level 3 - restrictions currently provide that public services should be delivered online where possible, with face-to-face services to continue where this is essential. Ore Valley is delivering our service with staff largely working from home, with tenants and other services users being able to contact us by telephone or online. Where there is a need for a face-to-face service we have been able to deliver this by offering tenants and other service users an office appointment, with the relevant guidance being followed to ensure that infection prevention and control measures are in place.

Level 2 to 0 - As we move into Level 2 and Level 1 we will be carrying out a full covid-19 risk assessment for staff and customers to identify the essential services that can be delivered safely from our office so that tenants and other service users can make an appointment to attend our office.

Although our offices will remain closed to the public for walk-in services until we at least reach level 0, we are planning to reopen our office for some essential appointments if these cannot be delivered to you over the phone or online.

Examples of essential services include:

- Rent arrears or debt advice to prevent homelessness
- Tenancy support to prevent homelessness
- Urgent repairs
- Housing advice relating to domestic abuse
- Medical adaptation requests
- Serious anti-social behaviour – for example threats of violence, assaults, drug-dealing, serious harassment and racial harassment

If you need to make an appointment for an essential service, you can do so by calling us on 01592 721917. When you contact us a member of our team will assess whether an office appointment is required and will book a time slot for you. Before you attend an office appointment you will be asked some questions to confirm if you or another member of your household have any Covid-19 symptoms, and you will be asked to reschedule your appointment if you or another member of your household develop any symptoms prior to your visit.

When you attend our office you will be required to follow the physical distancing and hygiene requirements that we have in place.

Level 0 and beyond - When we reach level 0 we will be carrying out a further review of our arrangements for reopening our office in Cardenden for walk-in services, and as part of this process we will be surveying all our tenants so that you can inform how we can best deliver our services in a way that is easy to use and access, whether that be face to face, over the phone or online using virtual platforms such as Near Me.

Services to Tenants in their home

Level 2 to 0 - In addition to home visits for repairs and maintenance there may be occasions when we will need to visit you in your home to deliver an essential service similar to those outlined for office appointments. Prior to making or arranging a home visit we will speak to you to discuss if a home visit is required, and we will discuss with you whether there is another way we can deliver the service either remotely or at an alternative outdoor location.

Prior to recommencing home visits for essential services we will be issuing written guidance to all tenants on what can and cannot be expected during a home visits, including the requirements for physical distancing, hygiene and any other new protocols which may need to be followed, this will include the following:

- Advise tenants that a two metre distance is kept from those working, if possible
- Advise tenants to follow all hygiene advice during the visit (e.g. washing hands and coughing or sneezing into elbow)
- Advise tenants to leave all internal doors open to minimise contact with door handles
- Advise tenants that in an emergency, for example, an accident, fire, or break-in, people do not have to stay 2m apart if it would be unsafe
- Advise tenants that all staff/ external contractors have been fully trained on the new protocols
- Advise tenants that appropriate risk assessments have been completed for staff who will have been approved to carry out home visits
- Where an in-home visit is required, prior to the visit we will discuss with you the working environment and the type of work that is being planned, we will confirm the numbers who will be present and agree how long the visit will take.
- When booking appointments, we will remind tenants of the new protocols to make sure they understand any written guidance issued.

Further announcements about how to access our services as we move through the various protection levels will be updated on our website and facebook page.

www.orevalleyha.org.uk/page/coronavirus-covid19

www.facebook.com/orevalleyha/

Remember **FACTS** for a safer Scotland



Face coverings



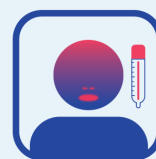
Avoid crowded places



Clean your hands regularly

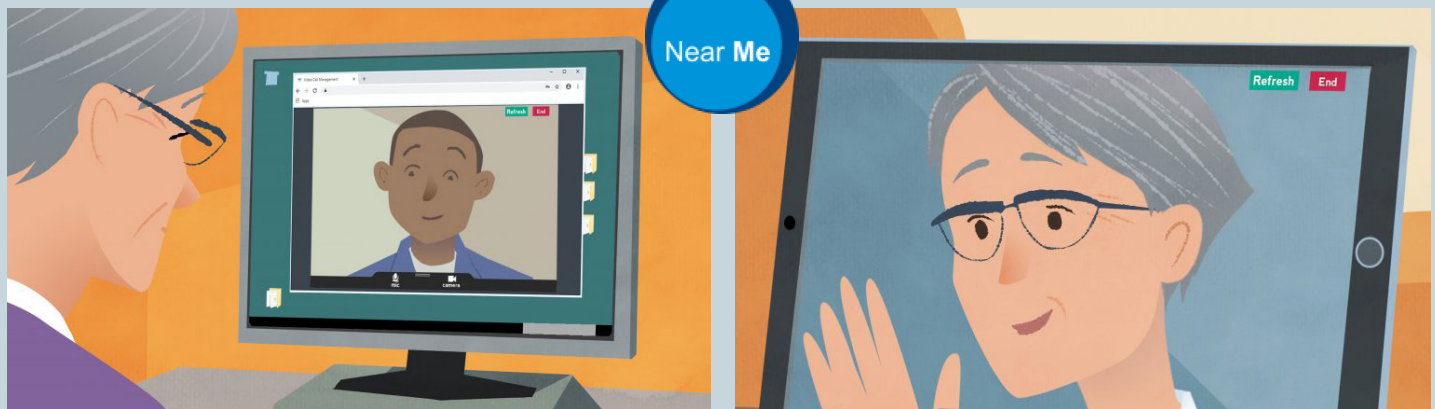


Two metre distance



Self-isolate and book a test if you have symptoms

What is Near Me?



Near Me is a video consulting service that enables people to attend appointments from home or wherever is convenient. The service is already widely used across NHS Scotland for health and care appointments with around 20,000 consultations being held every week.

Covid-19 has made meeting tenants in their own home or in our office incredibly difficult and social landlords across Scotland are now testing the use of video calling as one solution to this problem.

All you need is a device for making video calls like a smartphone and an internet connection. Near Me is a secure form of video consulting approved for use by the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland.

Not everyone has access to a device, and not all appointments will be appropriate for a video appointment, but this is an excellent opportunity for us to test out a video-based appointment system that will allow tenants to make an appointment to speak to your Housing Officer or our Technical Officer 'face to face' without them having to visit your home or make an appointment for you to come into our office.

Examples of situations where video appointments may be used:

- To report a repair issue where we need to carry out a visual inspection
- To provide an alternative to home visits and office appointments if the spread of the virus is no longer under control.

Is Near Me confidential and secure to use?

Yes. Near Me uses secure video consulting which has been approved as confidential and safe by the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland. No Near Me calls are ever recorded and no personal information is stored by the system. You do not need to download an App or create an account to use Near Me.

How much does it cost to make a Near Me call?

On a WiFi or wired internet connection, Near Me calls do not cost anything. If using mobile data: waiting for your call to be connected has no cost, once you are connected a typical 20 minute Near Me call will cost 230MB of data on a mobile device. Data use is less on lower speed connections.

If you would be interested in helping us to test this new service, please contact Maryjane Elder on **01592 721917** or email **housing@orevalleyha.org.uk**.



Rent review

Following on from our rent review consultation survey at the start of the year, the Board agreed in February to limit this year's rent increase to 1.0%.

We have calculated that this increase of less than £4.00 per month for the majority of our tenants will allow us to continue with our planned programme of property maintenance and service improvements.

In approving this lower increase we have taken account of the Scottish Housing Regulator's clear and consistent message that any costs incurred by Social Landlords as a result of the global pandemic, or inflationary costs as a result of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union should not be directly passed on to tenants in the form of increased rent payments.

Affordability continues to be very important to us and we continue to measure our performance in this area using the affordability criteria that our rents should be no more than 25-30% of your net income. Even with this criteria in use we still recognise that many of our tenants could be facing increased financial pressures in the coming years due to high energy or high food costs, combined with uncertain or insecure employment, and we therefore plan to continue investing in our core services to support our tenants who are facing financial hardship.

We also need your rent money so that we can continue investing in our existing homes, and working with our communities to improve your local environment as much as possible. New homes are still required to respond to an ever increasing demand for good quality affordable social housing and it is our aim to continue meeting all of these challenges through applying a robust approach to delivering social justice for the communities that we serve while keeping rents at a level that are affordable for you and your family.

If you have any concerns about the affordability of your rent or are experiencing difficulty in paying your rent, please contact us as soon as possible. Support and advice is always available and we will make every effort to help if you are having financial difficulties.

To discuss your rent you can call us on **01592 721 917** or email **housing@orevalleyha.org.uk**

What do we plan to do with your rent money

In our next newsletter we are going to start providing tenants with an easy to follow breakdown of our planned budget spend for 2021/22, together with an update on our quarterly performance in key service areas.

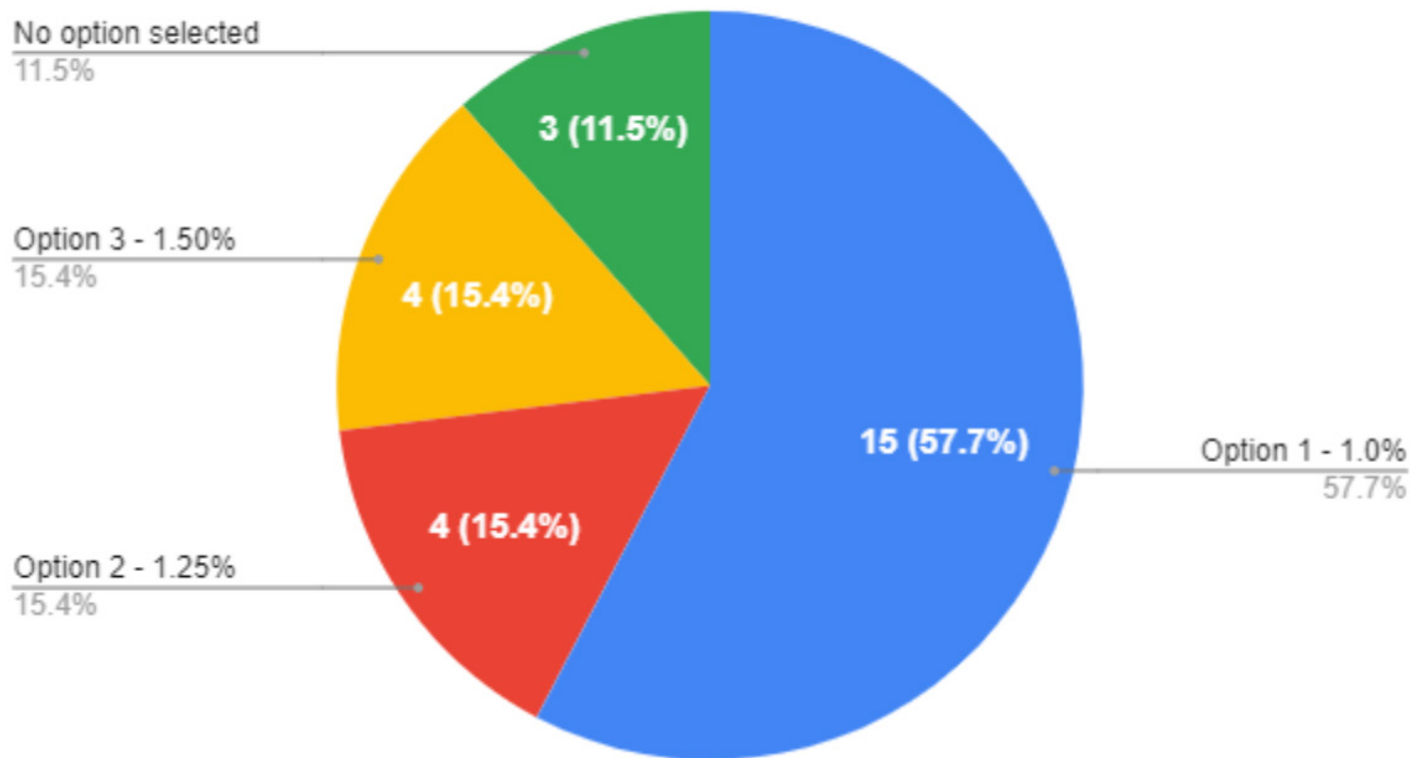
www.orevalleyha.org.uk/page/performance

Rent Review Consultation Survey Results

We received 26 responses from tenants, equating to 3.8% of the maximum potential response. This compares to a responses rate of 6.9% (47) last year.

The chart below shows the breakdown of tenant responses with the majority of feedback being in favour of a proposed increase of 1.0%

Rent Review Consultation Results 2021/22



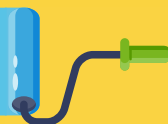
Although the response rate from tenants to this year's rent review consultation survey was very disappointing, the comments and feedback we did receive have been shared with the Board and this is already helping to inform our approach to how we can start to replace some of the older bathroom components that we still have in some of our properties.

We would also like to thank everyone who did respond to our rent review consultation survey, and we are delighted to announce that Mr & Mrs Yuill from Cardenden were the winners of our prize draw competition, winning a £50 Co-op gift card.

Universal Credit

Tenants who are in receipt of Universal Credit will have received a request from the DWP to update their online journal with their new rent charge. If you have not already done this, please do so immediately or contact us on 01592 721917 to ensure that you are receiving the correct payments for your housing costs.

Maintenance and Repair Update



External Paint Work: Other than external work and issues relating to tenant safety much maintenance work has been delayed because of Covid-19. We were able to complete the external paint work programme last year and arrangements are in place for the commencement of work to 131 properties during mid to late May. Occupants of the homes involved will be notified of our plans.

Common Stair Paint Work: As well as external paint work this year, we will be commencing a programme to paint the common areas within blocks of flats with a shared entrance and stairway. We will be using the same contractor, Novus, who carry out our external paint work.

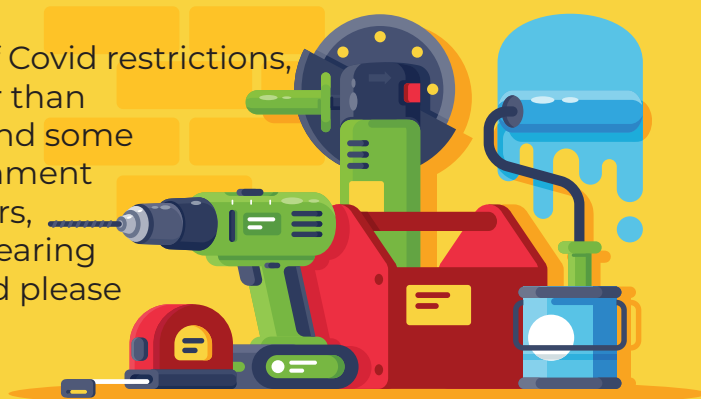
Roofing: It is a few years since we had a regular re roofing programme, we are hoping to be in a position to resume the replacement of roof covering on some of our older properties with a view to establishing a regular programme of roof replacements. We hope to be able commence this summer in Craigside Road in Cardenden. Occupants of the homes involved will be notified of our plans.

Kitchen Replacements: Unfortunately our kitchen replacement programme has been on hold since pandemic restrictions were introduced because it was not safe for the various trades to work in such a confined space. Now that we have been placed back in tier 3 with further reductions in restrictions predicted we hope to be in a position to resume work this year. Our contractor has indicated that if all goes well they may be able to start surveys in June.

Fencing: We continuously have to make choices about how to spend the limited budgets we have. Fencing repairs and replacement always feature in the feedback we receive from tenants. We have commenced a fencing survey of properties and will be carrying out repairs where we can and will certainly do whatever work is required to ensure that everything is safe. We also intend to commence a fencing replacement programme this year which we will repeat in future years.

Gas and Electrical Safety: We carry out an annual programme of visits to homes to ensure that gas and electrical safety is maintained. Thankfully we have been able to continue to carry out this essential safety work throughout the course of this pandemic. Having this work carried out is a legal requirement and we really do need you to help us by providing reasonable access to our contractors. You can contact our office if you need assistance or have any special requirements or concerns about giving access. Please know that we will not compromise on your safety and not providing access is not an option.

Reactive Repairs: After a long period, because of Covid restrictions, when we have been unable to do anything other than emergency and essential safety related repairs and some external work, now that we are in Tier 3 of government restrictions we are discussing with our contractors, the resumption of work and arrangements for clearing the backlog of work. This will take some time and please bear with us as we catch up.



Weavers Row

Ore Valley is pleased to welcome the first tenants to our latest development in Lochgelly.

The new properties in Weavers Row, Lochgelly were developed partnership between OVHA, Fife Housing Alliance and Richard Street builders.

The project is being completed in two phases, bringing a total of 27 much needed new homes in the Lochgelly area. Phase 1 consists of 8 x 2 bedroom flats and 4 x 2 bedroom bungalows and phase 2 will consist of 6 x 2 bedroom flats and 9 x 2 bedroom bungalows.

The first phase was completed on 15th February and the first tenants have already settled in to their new homes, the second phase is expected to be completed towards the end of June.

Ore Valley CEO, Andrew Saunders said 'It is always very exciting to complete new homes, that is especially true here, given that we have been trying to develop this site since 2001. We are grateful to all of our partners who have supported us to deliver these high quality properties. The most important thing now is to wish our new tenants a long and happy and healthy stay in their new home'



WEAVERS ROW



Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

Occasionally, the behaviour or actions of individuals using our service makes it very difficult for us to deal with their requests or respond to their complaints. In a small number of cases the actions of individuals also become unacceptable because it involves them being hostile or abusive toward our staff or contractors.

When this happens we have to take action to protect our staff and contractors, and we also have to consider the impact their behaviour is having on our ability to do our work so that we can provide a service for others.

- We are committed to providing a fair and accessible service.
- We believe that everyone who contacts us has the right to be treated with respect and dignity.
- We also believe that our employees and contractors have the same rights, and we must provide a safe working environment for both.
- We must also ensure the efficient and effective operation of our service to all our customers.

What actions do we consider to be unacceptable?

People may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to someone contacting us to either request a service or make a complaint, and we recognise that our employees need to be trained to handle these situations.

We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because the person making the complaint is upset or is clear about the outcome they would like to see. However, we do consider actions that result in unreasonable demands on our service or unreasonable behaviour towards our employees or contractors to be unacceptable.

It is these actions that we aim to manage better with the introduction of policy setting our new standards of behaviour for customer and service users and we would welcome your comments and suggestions to help us develop this policy.

We would like to set up an online working group with tenants so that we can look at this issue together. This will be the first time we have ever done this so we are keen to encourage as many of our tenants to participate as possible.

If you are interested in getting involved in this project, please contact Colin McInnes on **01592 721 917** or email **housing@orevalleyha.org.uk**



EU Settlement Scheme

If you're an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen, you and your family can apply to the EU Settlement Scheme to continue living in the UK after 30 June 2021. You can also apply if you're the family member of an eligible person of Northern Ireland.

If your application is successful, you'll get either settled or pre-settled status.

The EU Settlement Scheme is open and you can apply now if you meet the criteria. The deadline for applying is 30 June 2021.

For more information and to apply visit www.gov.uk/eusettlementscheme

APPLY TO THE EU SETTLEMENT SCHEME BEFORE THE DEADLINE ON



Find out more and apply now:
[gov.uk/eusettlementscheme](https://www.gov.uk/eusettlementscheme)



USEFUL NUMBERS

FIFE COUNCIL

Switchboard - 03451 55 00 00

Environmental Health - 03451 55 00 22 (rubbish collection, dog fouling etc.)

Antisocial Behaviour - 03451 55 00 33 or call the police on 101

Fife Council's Welfare Fund Team - 0300 555 0265 or email: welfare.fund@fife.gov.uk

ADVICE AND HELP

National Grid - 0800 111 999 (if you smell gas)

Scottish Water - 08000 778 778 (if you spot a water leak outside or for any issues with your water supply)

NHS - 111 (for out-of-hours services including mental health services)

Homeless Emergency Number (free) on 0800 028 6231

Samaritans - Call 116 123, email: jo@samaritans.org or visit www.samaritans.org

Breathing Space - 0800 838587

Drinkline Scotland - 0800 7 314 314

Substance Misuse - 0800 587 5879 or www.knowthescore.info

Adult Protection Phone Line - 01383 602200

Silverline (24hr helpline for older people) - 0800 4 70 80 90

Citizens Advice & Rights Fife - 0345 1400 095 (provides general advice)

Step Change - 0800 138 1111 (debt advice charity providing impartial advice)

Money Advice Scotland - 0141 572 0237

Fife Trading Standards - 01592 583141

Traveline Scotland - 0871 200 2233 or www.travelinescotland.com

ORE VALLEY ONLINE

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www.orevalleyha.org.uk

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If you would like to see anything included in our newsletters that isn't already you can phone us on 01592 721 917 or email: comms@orevalleyha.org.uk