



Rooftops

Issue 69

December 2021

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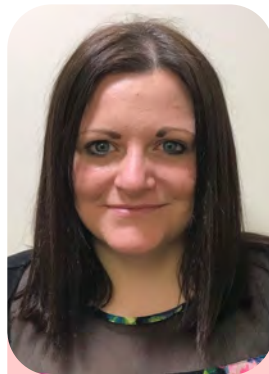


Staffing Update

We recently welcomed two new members of staff. Donna Wilson joined the Housing & Customer Services Team as a Housing Officer, and Fiona Dart came on board as Finance Assistant.



Donna Wilson



Fiona Dart

Congratulations go to Alan Sim who is now a Senior Housing Officer, and to Cat Browne who has become a Finance Assistant.

We bid farewell to Glynis Farquhar, who retired from the Finance Department after 20 years service, and wish her a long and happy retirement.

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Christmas Closure & Rent Payments

The Association's office will be closed from 5pm on Thursday 23 December 2021 until 9am on Wednesday 05 January 2022.



You can still pay your rent during this period by logging onto our website at www.ohal.org.uk and making your payment online.

Allpay payment cards, Direct Debits and Internet Banking will continue as normal during this time. Anyone using an Allpay payment card will need to be aware of the following payment limits:

- Paypoint outlet - £200 limit per transaction
- Post Office - £999 limit per transaction

If, for any reason, you are unable to make a payment either over the Christmas/New Year break or at any time in the future, please contact your Housing Officer to discuss your options. We can offer advice and support to help you during this time.

How OHAL can help you

The Association understands the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on our Community and, as such, is offering extra support to tenants facing financial difficulties during this time. You will receive a call from a member of staff in the coming months to ask how you are managing. If you feel you would benefit from some advice, your Housing Officer can work with you to access existing routes to funding and income maximisation to help maintain tenancies. (Details of which can be found in this newsletter).

Your Housing Officer can help you identify any discretionary awards for eligible households, which may be used to help with such things, including:

- **Rent payments**
 - ◇ To sustain a tenancy or prevent homelessness.
 - ◇ Reduction in employment income due to reduced hours resulting in reduced income.
 - ◇ New tenancy support.
 - ◇ Support transitioning to Welfare Benefits such as Universal Credit.
- **Household bills** that support engaged, independent lives:
 - ◇ Food shopping
 - ◇ Household essentials eg nappies.
 - ◇ Energy costs
 - ◇ Mobile phone costs
 - ◇ Broadband costs
- **Direct payments** for any circumstances mentioned above where a rent account is in credit or clear.
- **Socially/digitally excluded tenants** who receive a part or incorrect benefit award. Application for device and/or internet connection through Connecting Scotland, if criteria is met.

We would strongly urge anyone having any difficulties to speak with their Housing Officer in the first instance to discuss options. We are committed to providing help and assistance wherever we can.

CONNECTING SCOTLAND

Having the ability to access services and information has never been more essential than now. The Housing and Customer Service team have been offering excellent support to all of our tenants throughout the pandemic, including working in partnership with the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations (SCVO). Their Connecting Scotland programme has helped keep 32 Association households connected to friends and family, informed and entertained, and able to access health information and other public services.



Staff have been busy providing support to those who lack the confidence, equipment and connectivity at home, through the provision of digital devices such as chromebooks and Mi-Fi devices to help get people online at home. They have also been helping tenants set up and maintain their new devices. Staff are pictured with the digital support packs prior to delivery. If you need any help or support with your tenancy don't hesitate to get in touch with your Housing Officer.



Making a new benefit claim

Tenants requiring assistance with the following benefits can do so online or via Kirkwall Job Centre by phone 0800 169 0190.

- **Universal Credit**
- **Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)**
- **Employment Support Allowance (ESA)**

If required, your Housing Officer can assist you with an online benefit claim.

Check your eligibility

You may be able to get Universal Credit if:

- you're on a low income or out of work
- you're 18 or over (there are some exceptions if you're 16 to 17)
- you're under [State Pension age](#) (or your partner is)
- you and your partner have £16,000 or less in savings between you
- you live in the UK

The number of children you have does not affect your eligibility for Universal Credit, but it may affect how much you get.

If you live with your partner

Your partner's income and savings will be taken into account, even if they are not eligible for Universal Credit.

If you're 18 or over and in training or studying full-time

You can make a new Universal Credit claim if any of the following apply:

- you live with your partner and they're eligible for Universal Credit
- you're responsible for a child, either as a single person or as a couple
- you're disabled and entitled to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and have limited capability for work
- you're [in further education](#), are 21 or under and do not have parental support, for example you're estranged from your parents and you're not under local authority care

If you're 16 or 17

You can make a new Universal Credit claim if any of the following apply:

- you have limited capability for work or you have medical evidence and are waiting for a Work Capability Assessment
- you're caring for a severely disabled person
- you're responsible for a child
- you're in a couple with responsibility for at least one child and your partner is eligible for Universal Credit
- you're pregnant and it's 11 weeks or less before your expected week of childbirth
- you've had a child in the last 15 weeks
- you do not have parental support, for example you're estranged from your parents and you're not under local authority care

If you're studying full-time

You can also make a claim if you're in full-time further education and any of the following apply:

- you do not have parental support
- you have limited capacity for work and you're entitled to Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- you're responsible for a child
- you're in a couple with responsibility for a child and your partner is eligible for Universal Credit

If you're in a couple and one of you is State Pension age

You and your partner can claim Universal Credit as a couple if one of you is under [State Pension age](#) and eligible for Universal Credit.

When you both reach State Pension age your Universal Credit claim will stop.

You may be able to apply for [Pension Credit](#) or other benefits as a couple when your Universal Credit stops. Ask your [Jobcentre Plus work coach](#) what else you could be eligible for.

Scottish Welfare Fund

This fund is being administered through Orkney Islands Council on behalf of the Scottish Government and consists of two types of grant for people on a low income or benefits.

Crisis Grants

Providing a safety net in the event of a disaster or emergency. A Crisis Grant may help if you are:

- In crisis because of a disaster like a fire or flood, or an emergency such as losing all your money or having to visit a sick child in hospital.
- Need help with costs that have arisen as a result of the disaster or emergency, to keep you and your family safe from harm. If you qualify for a Crisis Grant, the help you receive will depend on the particular difficulties you face. You may be given money or another form of support, for example, a voucher, fuel card, travel ticket or furniture.

Community Care Grants

Providing help to leave care and live on your own, or to continue living in your own home. A Community Care Grant may help if you:

- Are about to leave care to live on your own in the community, for example after being in hospital or in prison, or face going into care because you don't have the things you need to continue living at home. A Community Care Grant may also be able to help if you are struggling to provide a safe and secure home for your family.
- Need help to get essential household items like a cooker or washing machine but don't have the money to buy it. As with the Crisis Grant, if you qualify for a Community Care Grant the help you receive will depend on your circumstances. You may be given money or you may receive support another way, for example, a voucher, fuel card, travel ticket or furniture.

COVID-19 Self Isolation Support Grants

The Scottish Government has committed to providing a grant of £500 to individuals who are in receipt of low income benefits and who lose income as a result of being required to self-isolate to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Applications can be made at any point during the 28 calendar days from the day advised to self-isolate. It is not possible to accept applications for a back dated grant award once the 28-day period ends.

Applications must be made during the 14-day self-isolation period, as it is not possible to accept applications for a backdated grant award once the 14-day period ends.

Individuals will be eligible to receive a grant payment if the applicant meets the Scottish Welfare Fund's eligibility conditions, and the applicant:

- Is required by the Test & Protect Service to self-isolate as a result of COVID-19;
- Is employed or self-employed, and unable to work from home while self-isolating;
- Is in receipt of Universal Credit or another low income benefit; and
- Will experience loss of income as a result of self-isolating.

Applications can be completed online at <https://www.orkney.gov.uk/Service-Directory/S/scottish-welfare-fund.htm>.

Or you can contact the team by emailing swf@orkney.gov.uk.

If you need any help or want to discuss, please speak to your Housing Officer.

Resident Panel Update

Members continued to get together outdoors during the summer months and managed to carry out some estate walkabouts, visiting Bosquoy Road and surrounding area, Meadow Drive & Crescent and Lynn Crescent. The visits were to take a general look at how the estates are managed, and the Housing Officer responsible for the area was on hand to answer any questions. Management Committee members were also invited to come along to chat with the Resident Panel and any tenants in the area. During the visits, it was noted that the standard of grass and ground maintenance was high this year and the estates were generally looking very tidy. The Housing Officers were able to explain how they monitor and manage the contractors and, when necessary, to engage with tenants to make sure they are meeting the requirements of the tenancy agreement.



We also looked at the design and content of the Annual Return on the Charter report to tenants, to give some input on what we thought should be included. Of course we are always open to further suggestions and would welcome your feedback. The report has been published on our website for anyone interested in our performance in the year 2020-21: [Orkney Housing Association Limited \(OHAL\) — Annual Report on the Charter](#)

Business Plan Review.

In 2019, we approved a 3-year Business Plan setting out our aims and priorities over that period. We have since spent the majority of that time delivering services through the COVID pandemic, but have successfully delivered much of what we planned to.

Our corporate outcomes throughout this period have been:

- ⇒ A Great Place to Work
- ⇒ Great Customer Service
- ⇒ A Great contribution to our community

Our Management Committee are now developing a new plan for 2022-25. This begins with a strategy day in December and will see the final new plan decided on at the end of March 2022.

If you have any views on changes to our 3 outcomes above for the following plan, our elected Management Committee would love to hear those. You can email enquiries@ohal.org.uk



THAW Orkney

For folk who are experiencing difficulties affording to heat their homes this winter, THAW Orkney may be able to help in some way.



With electricity prices rocketing, and energy supply companies disappearing, the switching market has more or less disappeared. The general advice in what is a fast-changing energy market, is that electricity customers should stick with their present suppliers, given that any available switching options are only likely to result in higher prices.

And if your energy supplier collapses then the advice is also to stay put until you are moved to a new supplier. <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/news-and-views/blog/how-youre-protected-when-energy-firms-collapse>



However, there are still sources of help out there. You could, for example, get £140 off your energy bill through the **Warm Home Discount Scheme**. The money isn't paid to you - it's a one-off discount on your electricity or gas bill, usually between September and March.

Not everyone gets the discount though, so you need to [check if you qualify](https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme/energy-suppliers) on the UK Government website - <https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme/energy-suppliers>. THAW Orkney staff can support folk with the application process if necessary. Contacting energy suppliers can be difficult, and THAW Orkney is able to provide a third-party service to help clients with this.



In terms of financial support, THAW Orkney is a referral partner of the **Fuel Bank Foundation**, meaning we are able to access funds for emergency electricity vouchers for folk on prepayment meters, and from the Fuel Bank Foundation's heat fund to pay for oil or solid fuel.

We are also a referral partner for the Scottish Government's **Home Heating Support Fund**, from which we were able to secure almost £25,000 for clients last March, helping pay off debt and giving them some breathing space on their energy bills. We hope to be able to support folk through that fund again this winter.



With fewer choices for switching to cheaper tariffs, keeping an eye on electricity usage may be more important than ever. THAW Orkney is partnering with **ReFLEX Orkney** and may be able to fit an energy monitor in homes to help raise awareness of what is using the most electricity, and whether savings could be made.

THAW Orkney will also have **Cosy Home Packs** available again this winter, which contain useful items to help folk keep warm and save energy.

THAW Orkney can be contacted on 01856 878388, by email at info@thaworkney.co.uk or via the contact form on our website at www.thaworkney.co.uk



Every Child Deserves A Christmas



This year's scheme is now open for applications, with a closing date of 17 December 2021.

Life brings unexpected challenges and at Christmas these pressures can feel even greater. The COVID crisis brings even more pressures and challenges this year. We are here to support young people in our community. This grant provides assistance towards a Child's Christmas. The grant is £60 per child, paid by bank transfer.

The Trust helps in many ways and has funds that are open to all:

- ◇ Orkney Fund
- ◇ Bairns Need Nappies
- ◇ Help from Home
- ◇ Every Child Should Be Warm In Bed
- ◇ Every Child Deserves A Christmas

Information and applications can be found on the OCT website

www.octrust.org.uk. If you have any further questions you can email info@octrust.org.uk.

Help for Women and Children



The holidays can often be a difficult time for families, Women's Aid Orkney are available to provide free and confidential support to women and children affected by domestic abuse.

Contact us: Our office hours are 9am – 4.30pm

Phone: 01856 877900

Email: info@womensaidorkney.org.uk

Need support, information or advice outside of these hours?



Scotland's 24 hour Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline can provide information, advice or support at any time of day.

Call: Scotland's 24 hour Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline on 0800 027 1234

Email: helpline@sdafmh.org.uk

Or visit: sdafmh.org.uk

It's an emergency? Call the police on 999

Age Scotland Orkney



Guide to keeping well in Winter - practical tips on looking after yourself this winter

- Keep moving, try to get up and move about to help maintain strength and improve mobility
- Eat well, keep some basics in the cupboards and prepare warm tasty meals
- Get winter vaccinations, if you are entitled to get a jag it will help prevent any unnecessary viruses
- Try and keep your home to a comfortable temperature, close the curtains at dusk to keep the warmth in.
- Wrap up well, wear lots of layers, cover up hands and feet and move about to encourage circulation.
- Keep an eye out for vulnerable neighbours.

Age Concern Orkney also do daily check in calls and home visits, contact **872438** for more details.

!! CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH !!
To be held at Kirkwall Salvation Army -
contact **872438** to make a booking.



Together at Christmas

Join us for
Christmas Day Lunch
at Kirkwall Salvation Army
for good company and a free Christmas meal!

Contact Age Scotland Orkney (01856 872 438) for more information or to make a booking.



A joint venture between Age Scotland Orkney (SC007638) and Kirkwall Salvation Army (SC009359)

Orkney Foodbank - Helping people in tough times

If you need help from Orkney foodbank there are a few simple steps to follow:

The most important step is to get a Foodbank voucher

In order to provide the most appropriate help for the circumstances of your situation, the foodbank work with local agencies such as GP practices, health visitors, social workers as well as a wide range of third sector organisations such as Citizens Advice, THAW Orkney, Advocacy Orkney and Women's Aid. These agencies identify people in crisis and issue them with a foodbank voucher which is then presented to the Foodbank.

Receiving a food parcel

The foodbank may be able to deliver your food parcel to your home, especially if you have mobility needs or are unwell. Please discuss any such requirements with your Housing Officer if a referral is being made via the Association.

Get in touch

By phone: **07719 293 378** or **01856 873685**,
Email: info@orkney.foodbank.org.uk, or [Facebook](#) messenger,
or speak to your Housing Officer who can email you a voucher for the Foodbank.



Home Start Orkney



Home-Start Orkney provides volunteer befrienders who support parents and their young children through difficult and challenging circumstances, including isolation, relationship difficulties, financial difficulties, having children on the autistic spectrum, lone parenting, parenting twins, the effects of domestic abuse, poor health and many other situations which affect families living in Orkney. The volunteers support the families for 2-3 hours per week, helping practically, providing emotional support, and encouraging parents in their parenting skills, confidence and self-esteem.

In addition, we have a weekly Drop-in for supported families at our office premises, as well as monthly Bookbug and Peedie Puffin sessions. We can also offer parents the Triple P parenting programme, either individually or in a group. The service is available to families across Orkney, including the isles. For further details on support in the isles, please contact Elsie Cooper on the number given above.

****UPDATE DUE TO COVID**** We are currently working from home so the office is shut but we are still accepting referrals. We can temporarily be contacted by phone on these mobile numbers as alternative numbers to contact us instead of the office no: **079 386 34075** and **077 576 28 214**.

The **Orkney British Red Cross** provides support at home, transport and mobility aids to help people when they face a crisis in their daily lives. If you need help with transport to and from medical appointments, help with shopping or other everyday tasks or would like to hire a wheelchair please get in touch.

We also have guesthouses in Kirkwall and Aberdeen for folk who are visiting relatives or in transit between hospital appointments.

- Kirkwall Guesthouse Reservations: 01856 875372
- Aberdeen Guesthouse Reservations: 01224 592226



SAMARITANS

Should you feel like you have nowhere else to turn, the Samaritans can be contacted by phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, on **116 123**.

If you would prefer to send an email you can write to jo@samaritans.org and someone will get back to you in 24 hours.

Their website contains some really helpful information for noticing your triggers and how you can help yourself if you feel yourself becoming overwhelmed:

[Signs you may be struggling to cope | Samaritans](#)

Y-People



Y-Talk is Orkney's youth counselling service. We are free and confidential, and specialise in counselling for young people up to the age of 25.

We are here to support you through issues such as substance misuse, stress, depression, anxiety, feeling down, self-harm, not coping, feeling alone, or bullying. Our counselling service is spread throughout Orkney, and as well as face to face sessions we also offer online or telephone counselling. Appointments can be flexible so we can be there when you need us. We can meet you at your GP surgery, at college, in your school, at our office or somewhere else which is convenient for you.

We welcome referrals from all agencies as well as individuals. If you would like to speak to someone, or would like to learn more please contact:

Mobile: 07770019147

Email: y-talk@ypeople.org.uk

Scam Awareness

With more of us online than ever before be wary of fraudsters trying to take advantage of this. There are numerous scams doing the rounds with some of the most used being: courier fraud – claiming they have tried to deliver something to you and you should pay a fee to have it redelivered, to impersonation scams, hacking email or social media account of your family or friends, and claiming to need money.



Orkney Scam Action Group have a great Facebook page which regularly update on scams popping up in Orkney. Make sure to keep friends and family who are not on Facebook updated. [Orkney Scam Action Group | Facebook](#)

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

We aim to provide an excellent service at all times but recognise there may be occasions when people are unhappy with it. We strive to resolve any problems as quickly as possible via our Complaints Handling Procedure.

If, after investigation, you are still dissatisfied with our decision you can ask the SPSO to look at it. However, they will only become involved once our 2-stage internal complaints process has been fully completed.



Our Complaints Handling Procedure is available on the website or from the office on request.



Emergency Repairs during the festive period



The Emergency Repairs Service number is **01856 873430**. This will put you through to the duty OIC Building Inspector who provides out-of-hours cover for the Association.

Please ensure you only use this service for actual emergency repairs (and over the Christmas period urgent repairs) as described below. If you use this service for non eligible repairs you will be recharged both the out of hours call (currently £36.00 incl VAT) plus the cost of the contractor attending.

Sharing owners are responsible for their own repairs and should be aware that if they use this service they will be recharged.

What is classed as **Emergency** or **Urgent** Repairs?

- **Emergency repairs** are necessary where there is an immediate risk to life or limb, serious structural damage to property or security of the property. Examples of emergency situations are:
 - ◊ Major fire damage
 - ◊ Major structural damage to roofs, walls, doors or windows
 - ◊ Burst internal pipes, cylinders or storage tanks
 - ◊ Serious electrical faults
- **Urgent repairs** are those which do not constitute an emergency but where any substantial delay in attending to the repair could cause damage to the property. Examples of urgent repairs are:
 - ◊ Water penetration causing damage to ceilings and/or walls
 - ◊ Broken glass, doors, locks (not lost keys)
 - ◊ Repairs to toilet and cistern (where there is no other toilet in the house)
 - ◊ Failure of heating or hot water systems
 - ◊ Heating repairs in winter

If you have to use this out of hours service please be sure to let us know when we re-open.

Frost Protection

If you are going away please do not leave your home unheated. Ask a friend or neighbour to keep an eye on things and leave the heating on a low setting to avoid pipes freezing.



We suggest you let us know when you are to be away for an extended period and where a key may be obtained in the event of an emergency.

Have you insured your home contents?



This time of year presents a higher risk of damage from the elements eg, floods and frost. We would like to remind you that it is your responsibility to ensure that your home contents are insured.

The Association can provide you with an application pack for either **SFHA's Diamond Insurance Scheme** or **Thistle Tenant Risks**, both of which offer competitive rates. These can also be found in the Downloads section of our website: www.ohal.org.uk.

BE PREPARED - have a torch and spare batteries in case of a power cut. Also remember to store trampolines inside and secure wheelie bins to stop them from blowing around.

