

Community News

muirhouseha.org.uk

Spring Edition • April 2019

A new look for MHA!

We were delighted to announce the launch of our new website and logo in February



Celebrations included afternoon tea with branded mugs and cupcakes, and other goodies to give away!

Our new website has everything needed for a great customer experience:

- **Easy to navigate to find information**
- **Quick and easy access to report a repair**
- **Works seamlessly on mobiles and tablets**
- **Up-to-date, bright photos of staff, tenants and homes**
- **Clear, understandable information.**

Thanks to NSDesign who designed and built our website and developed our logo, and thanks to everybody who gave us feedback on our online survey.

Our new logo creates a bold modern brand giving us flexibility going forward. NSDesign said "The new logo gives a legacy feel with dark green carried on from previous logos but also offers the vibrancy about MHA moving forward in the light green and yellow".

The people who took part in our online survey were overwhelming positive about the change, commenting 'Logo depicts types of housing and modern design & name is clear', 'It's a good example of the brilliant houses you give us', 'Nice, bright, cheerful colours', 'Boldness and instantly recognisable'.

The new site is now live, and any thoughts, ideas or suggestions can be fed back using the online form at www.muirhouseha.org.uk

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter 2019

We are delighted to introduce our new website and extremely proud that we have achieved another milestone in our pursuit of excellent customer service.



We hope all users of the website find it both informative and enjoyable to use. We are resolute in our ambition to continue to develop our website in future and ensure it always meets user needs, so it is very much still and always a work in progress. A big thank you to all who contributed to and supported this project, especially our tenants, staff and board. We are also extremely grateful to NSDesign for all their hard work in creating our website.

Stevie McAvoy, Chief Executive

Meet the Board Member: Helen Armour, Chair of the Staffing Subcommittee

How long have you been on the Board?

I have been a Muirhouse HA Board member for 3 years.

Why did you join?

My reason for joining the Board was to use my knowledge and experience of social housing to help the community I live in. I grew up in Muirhouse and for me there's no better place to live.

What is the best thing about being on the Board?

The best thing about being on the Board is working as part of a team to do the best for our customers and staff.

What is the most difficult thing about being on the Board?

The worst thing is having to make difficult decisions that impact on both our customers and staff. But knowing we exhaust every avenue as a team before we reach a final decision helps.

Why would you recommend joining the Board?

I would recommend becoming a Board member if you have a vested interest in Muirhouse. No matter what your background is you can still help make a difference. You receive training in a number of areas (good for the cv) and you have an opportunity to meet an interesting group of people.



Feature your story in our next edition!

Call 0131 336 5282 Email info@muirhouseha.org.uk
Visit MHA, 11 Muirhouse Medway, EH4 4RW



CommunityLife

Rent Increase 2019-2020

Thank you very much for letting us know your views about the rent increase!
This year there were 48 responses which is our highest response rate for the last 3 years

After taking everything into consideration, including what's best for our business, the Board decided to increase the rent by 2% and to increase the service charge for stair cleaning and communal garden maintenance to 2.75%.

We asked what you thought about 3 different options for the rent increase and here is a summary of the replies:

Which rent increase option would you agree with to allow us to continue improving homes and the community?

Answers:

- 8 people (17%) thought we should increase the rent by 0%
- 10 people (21%) thought we should increase the rent by 1%
- 26 people (54%) agreed with our proposal to increase the rent by 2%
- 4 people (8%) didn't chose an option

Comments:

- "Although below inflation, workers don't always get these increases"
- "2% will deliver great houses"
- "Ok if it allows for proper improvements"
- "My wages haven't gone up this year"
- "Fair considering my new kitchen and boiler are fantastic"

Do you think that your rent provides value for money?

Answers:

- 38 people (80%) - yes
- 4 people (8%) - don't know
- 4 people (8%) - no
- 2 people (4%) - no option chosen

Comments:

- "Homes and landscaping need to be kept to a good standard"
- "Everything gets fixed on time"
- "I'm happy, definitely. I love my home"
- "Compared with market rent and private landlords, yes"
- "Cracking wee flat, warm energy efficient"

Do you agree to changing the rent charge from fortnightly to monthly?

Answers:

- 30 people (63%) - yes
- 13 (27%) - no
- 5 (10%) - no option chosen

Most of the 'no' answers were because people wanted to be able to continue to pay weekly or fortnightly and we can reassure everybody that you can continue to do so.

Do you agree that a charge of £8.45 per fortnight for stair cleaning and communal garden maintenance would be good value for money?

Answers:

- 15 people (31%) - yes
- 13 people (27%) - no
- 15 people (31%) - don't know, doesn't apply to me
- 5 people (11%) - no option chosen

Comments:

- "Shrubs at the front of the houses are never cut"
- "Too expensive"
- "Important the stairs are kept clean and the gardens tidy"



Congratulations Beata!

Every year we hold a prize draw to win £50 shopping vouchers open to everybody who gives us feedback about the rent increase. This year the lucky winner is Beata, pictured with Susanne. Congratulations!

Obviously, we want everybody to think all our services provide good value for money so we have followed up on all the comments and feedback you gave us and will continue to monitor the standard of our service. If you have any issues or concerns then please contact your Housing Officer who will be happy to help.

Passion4Fusion

Awarded Community Chest Grant



There was great excitement in the Passion4Fusion camp when we turned up with a giant cheque for £5,000 from MHA's Community Chest fund! We were delighted to award them a grant for all the fabulous work they do in the community.

Passion4Fusion (P4F) work in Muirhouse, Armadale and Wester Hailes providing a safe place for Black and Minority Ethnic young people to take part in weekend sports sessions. They also organise community social occasions using sports, music, dance and food to celebrate cultural diversity.

With their Community Chest grant, P4F will target young people aged 14 and above to get involved in sport and peer leadership. This will raise the profile of these teenagers assisting the sports coaches in managing teamwork during training, and offering accreditation through awards and Duke of Edinburgh to create a culture of pride in learning.

For more information, check out their website at passion4fusion.com

What is the Community Chest? The community chest is a fund available for community groups to apply for a grant to carry out projects which benefit our tenants and our local community.

Where does the money come from? The money comes from our subsidiary company Muirhouse Homes who manage our private rented flats and houses. The Board of Muirhouse Homes has agreed to gift any profit the company makes to MHA to be used for the benefit of the community.

Who can apply? We encourage applications from local groups/ voluntary organisations who provide services with a direct benefit for our tenants, their families and the wider community in Muirhouse.

How to apply for a grant from the Community Chest: If you would like to find out more about the community chest fund or ask for an application form and guidance, then please contact Ainan on **0131 336 5282** or AGroat@muirhouseha.org.uk

Pictured above: The P4F group receiving a Community Chest fund grant from Ainan Groat, Housing Services Team Leader. Below: The young ones make sure the giant cheque is in safe hands!



Universal Credit Comes to Edinburgh!

What is Universal Credit?

Universal Credit is a payment to help with living costs, replacing six benefits:

- Child tax credit
- Income support
- Income-based jobseeker's allowance
- Income-related employment and support allowance
- Housing benefit
- Working tax credit

If you lose your job or have a change in circumstances (new baby, child turns 5, partner leaving/joining household, move from sick to out of work) then you will have to claim Universal Credit.

What does this mean?

You will need to fill in an online claim form to make a claim for Universal Credit. There is no paper form you can fill in.

You will be asked to attend an interview and you will need to bring along evidence to support your claim, such as wage slips, medical certificates and proof of your savings. You will also need to bring proof of identity such as your passport or birth certificate, and proof of your rent such as your tenancy agreement or letter from us with how much your rent is.

At the interview, you will be interviewed by an adviser who will ask you to agree to a number of conditions. These conditions will be detailed in a claimant commitment which you will normally need to accept to get Universal Credit. If you don't accept your claimant commitment, your claim will be closed.

Your Universal Credit will be paid to your bank account once a month in a lump sum and will include the money for your rent. You will have to pay your rent as soon as you get this so you don't fall into rent arrears.

So, are you ready?

Do you have the internet at home? If so, are you confident about filling in on-line claim forms? We can help with where to find computers and advice.

Do you have a bank account? Are you used to being paid monthly? We can help with advice about how to budget and make your money stretch further.

If you are worried about being able to afford to pay your rent you should ask for advice now. If you don't pay your rent you could lose your home, so talk to us.

Call Steph, Susanne or Chris on **0131 336 5282** or:

Steph: **07506 920006** Email: SSedstrem@muirhouseha.org.uk

Susanne: **07946 530398** Email: SConnell@muirhouseha.org.uk

Chris: **07946 582016** Email: CPurnell@muirhouseha.org.uk

Have your say!

Come to our meeting on Monday 29th April to talk about how we let our houses, how we deal with antisocial behaviour and how we serve our customers.

We will be reviewing our Allocations Policy and our Antisocial Behaviour Policy to make sure they are up-to-date and relevant and will be asking for your views in a variety of ways. We're also working on a Customer Service Charter so that our services meet your needs and expectations.

You can let us know your views by coming to our meeting on Monday 29th April between 2pm and 4pm in the Muirhouse Millennium Centre.

We will let you know about the changes to our policies through our newsletter, by social media and on our website.

For more information please contact us on **0131 336 5282**, email info@muirhouseha.org.uk, speak to your Housing Officer or visit our website www.muirhouseha.org.uk

CommunityMatters

Apprentice Courtney

Featured in Scotland
Apprenticeship Week 2019!

Our very own Courtney Wilson was featured in the ezine 'Housing Scotland Today' as part of Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2019 which ran from 4th to 8th March. To mark the week and to celebrate the benefits Modern Apprenticeships bring to housing and to young people, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations featured articles with photos and quotes from the apprentices themselves.



Courtney said: "The benefit of my apprenticeship with Muirhouse Housing Association is that I can work while I learn and do it at my own pace. It also builds my confidence and skills for future opportunities. I am very enthusiastic about learning more about housing. In the future, once I'm fully qualified and experienced in my admin role, I hope to get a permanent job in housing."

Reading and Writing

Would you like to brush up
on your communication skills?

There are lots of fun, informal and free courses available:

- Build your confidence in a small friendly group
- Get tips for dealing with forms, mail, budgets and stress!

Everyday Reading and Writing Course for Adults

- Join us on Mondays from 10am - 12pm at the Royston Wardieburn Community Centre

Creative Writing Course (coming soon)

- No experience needed
- Build your confidence writing short pieces
- Have fun with language
- Read and listen to poems

Let's Get Critical 6 week Course: Thinking Critically About Language and Power

- What influences the things we say and think?
- What affect does language have on the world?
- How often do we stop and think about this?
- Starts Tuesday 7th May, 1.30pm - 3.30pm at the Muirhouse Library

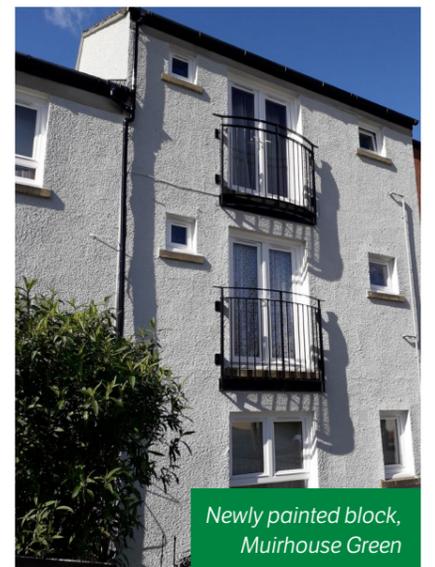
Why not meet up with Lorraine for a chat, call **0131 552 5700**, email Lorraine.borwick@ea.edin.sch.uk or ask your housing officer for more info.

Do you know of a special occasion coming up? Let us know!

Call **0131 336 5282** Email info@muirhouseha.org.uk
Visit MHA, 11 Muirhouse Medway, EH4 4RW

Planned Maintenance

It's been a busy year for our staff and contractors, who have been working hard to improve your homes



Newly painted block,
Muirhouse Green

In 2018 to 2019 we are pleased to say we installed 46 brand new kitchens and boilers. This year in 2019 to 2020 we will be busy again replacing 86 bathrooms in Muirhouse Green.

Our buildings and communal stairs in parts of Muirhouse Green, Park, Close and Terrace are looking great with their smart new coats of paint. We've had lots of positive feedback about these works from very satisfied customers.

We are pleased to report our window replacement programme is coming to an end. In total 109 houses and flats will have had all windows and patio doors replaced with more energy efficient, higher quality pvc windows. With cavity wall insulation to retain heat in the property and keep fuel bills down.

We are also putting in new electrical heating systems in parts of Muirhouse Green, Park and Muirhouse Avenue North and expect this work to be finished by the end of April. One satisfied customer has said 'The workmen were fast and I am over the moon with my new heating'.

Watch out for the satisfaction surveys in the post and we look forward to hearing your thoughts on all the work. Your views are very important to us so we can keep improving our service!

Calling all Green Fingers!

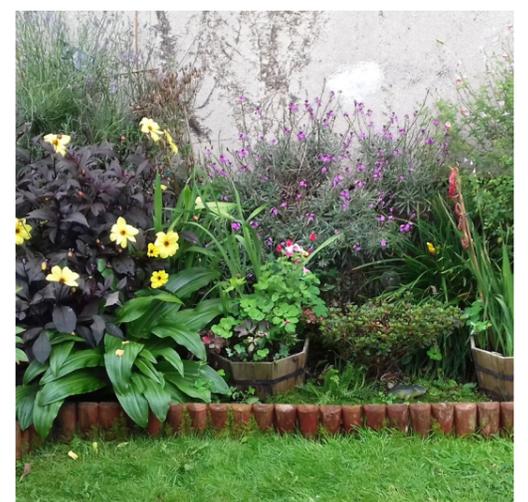
Our garden competition is back for 2019

Could you have a prize-winning garden? If you're proud of your patch, however big or small, why not enter our annual garden competition.

It doesn't matter whether you have a tiny space or even just a few containers, if you're proud of your garden we'd love to hear from you.

Let us know your name, address, contact phone number. Or you can nominate a friend or neighbour. Phone us on **336 5282**, pop into the office or speak to your Housing Officer.

Every year, as part of looking after our area, we have a quick check to make sure all the gardens are in good condition. If you have a garden for your own use, please make sure that you keep it clear of rubbish, weeds and long grass. Help us keep the area and neighbourhood looking pleasant and well-looked after for everyone!



Pictured: The winning garden 2018 which is lovingly tended by Margaret & Terence Logan of Muirhouse Terrace.