

Tenants Voice



EDINBURGH TENANTS
FEDERATION

Issue 101 - March 2017

HOUSING RIGHTS IN PRACTICE

At Scotland's celebration of International Human Rights Day at the Scottish Parliament in December 2016, tenants from Edinburgh took centre stage talking about human rights in housing. Heather Ford, a tenant from West Cromwell, Citadel and Persevere Court Residents Association (WPCRA) in Leith introduced a film in which local residents spoke about their right to adequate housing.



Heather Ford introducing the film at the Scottish Parliament

As part of Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights, the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) produced a series of case studies profiling how communities in Scotland are using human rights to tackle poor housing, challenge poverty and improve health. Our Housing Rights in Practice Project is

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a partnership with the SHRC and the Participation in the Practice of Rights, to support residents in Leith to take action practically to reframe housing as a human rights issue.



We are delighted with the positive feedback we have received on the film

Action Plan for Human Rights – is taking international human rights standards and supporting people to apply them in their everyday lives – realising the right to housing, the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to health.”

We are delighted to report that good progress is being made – with regular meetings taking place with City of Edinburgh Council officers and residents to put in place a programme of works to improve housing conditions in the area by the end of the year.

There will be a further update in the next edition of *Tenants Voice*.

The project is about making human rights real for people. It aims to empower residents, increase participation and improve housing conditions.

As part of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights “everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing”.

Judith Robertson, Chair of the Commission, said, “When talking of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Eleanor Roosevelt stressed that human rights must have meaning in the ‘small places, close to home’. These projects show how the work taking place through SNAP – Scotland’s National



Ken Macintosh, MSP, Angela Constance, MSP and Judith Robertson, Chair, SHRC with members of ETF and WPCRA

LEARNING TO LEAD, CREATING COMMUNITY IMPACT

Struggling to think of examples of good leaders in the world right now? Then you might be happy to hear that you only need to look to our tenants’ groups in Edinburgh to find inspiring leaders... although they may not realise it.

Starting in January this year, 16 tenants’ representatives came together to discuss, share and explore their leadership strengths and values in a brand new community leadership programme. Over the next three months they will start to develop community action ideas and learn tools to help improve engagement within their community groups. The programme is about working to support and empower tenants’ groups to engage, motivate and communicate even more effectively on behalf of residents.

“With over 1000 years of experience in the room, the knowledge and wisdom that is being shared is phenomenal. We provide the framework of the programme, however it is what the group puts in that makes the difference.” Luci Jones, Social Enterprise Academy Tutor.

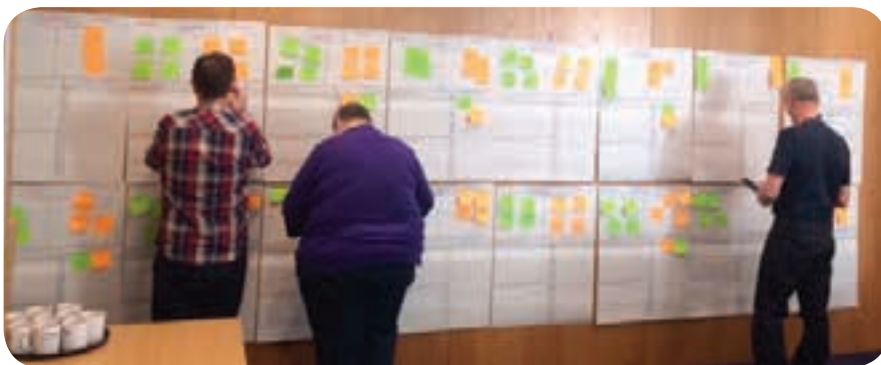
The group quickly identified some recurring key themes including a growing number of elderly people living in isolation and issues of negativity, complacency and lack of engagement within their tenant communities.



Tenants' representatives taking part in the leadership programme

These issues provide challenges, as well as opportunities and through this programme the tenants will focus on positive strategies and build upon the strengths of their communities. One tool that Luci will help the group to make use of is a community based approach called 'Appreciative Inquiry'. This is based on four key areas:

1. Discovery – inquire into the best of what has happened in the past and the present. Look at the positives of what has worked well in each of your communities and its strengths.
2. Dream – use these findings and each other's stories and experiences to create a compelling, memorable and ambitious picture of the ideal future.
3. Design – determine what the future could be and work out how to get there through the sharing of ideas, experience and problem-solving.
4. Destiny – put your plan into action and use the tools you've learned along the way to encourage people within your community to get involved.



Leadership programme in full flow

Sitting in on the first morning of this programme it was clear there is real enthusiasm and positive ideas on how to create change within our local communities. One of the key goals of leadership is empowering others to find their voice but first of all it is important to ensure that we are supporting our active community members to recognise themselves as leaders. Looking around the room it was great to see such a diverse group, who are of all ages and have seized the opportunity to develop themselves, as well as use this experience to unlock the potential of their community at the grassroots level.

Marie Duguid, Social Enterprise Academy

This programme is delivered by the Social Enterprise Academy in partnership with Edinburgh Tenants Federation and Trust Housing Association. We also give thanks to OneCity Trust and the Scottish Government for enabling us to provide bursaries.



EDINBURGH SHELTERED HOUSING LIAISON GROUP



After the success of the Sheltered Housing Conference, in October 2016, we are delighted to announce that the City of Edinburgh Council Sheltered Housing Team won the Honesty and Transparency category at the Council's Outstanding Achievement Awards Ceremony, for our joint work in planning the Conference. The award was received by Yvonne McWhirr,

City of Edinburgh Council Compliance Officer, Nicol Johnstone, Convenor of the Sheltered Housing Liaison Group (SHLG), John Fayrer, SHLG representative and Justine Bradd, ETF Outreach Worker.



Yvonne, Nicol, John and Justine receive the award.

Ongoing discussions have been taking place in the SHLG meetings. There has been some concern expressed about faults with the Community Alarm Telecare Service, which deal with alarm cords in sheltered housing complexes. There have been some interruptions to the service recently and it is hoped that these issues will be resolved soon.



John and Nicol with the award

It is also hoped that the number of Housing Support Officers (HSO) will be made clear to tenants living in sheltered housing complexes by the end of March. It has been quite stressful for some tenants; not knowing who their HSO is and how often they are going to attend the complex. We understand that the Council is in the process of recruiting staff. In the meantime we are concerned the service is being compromised.

Talks have been taking place on the urgently required replacement laundry facilities in complexes and it is to be hoped that a resolution will be reached soon.

We also hope that some more tenant representatives will join the SHLG, especially from the North-west and South-east of the city, both of which are not represented on the group. If you are interested in joining this group please contact Justine Bradd at justine@edinburghtenants.org.uk or phone 0131 475 2509. Watch this space for further details.

John Fayrer, SHLG Representative

UPDATE FROM ETF'S TENANT LED INSPECTIONS TEAM

Insulating External Walls Inspection

Progress continues to be made in the Tenant Led Inspections (TLI). The recent TLI focussed on the way the Council insulates external walls. Tenants made ten recommendations and we are very pleased to report that the Council has now agreed an action plan to put these recommendations into practice. Recommendations centered on:

- The Council following up on any outstanding repairs caused by the insulation process;
- More consultation and information provided between the Council and tenants;
- Information sent to tenants should be in plain English and have no jargon;
- Improved communication with tenants that have literacy problems and whose first language is not English;
- Notifying tenants if alternative heating and cooking supplies are available whilst the gas supply in properties is turned off.

If you would like a copy of the TLI report and action plan, please contact Mark Henry at the Federation office on 0131 475 2509 or email mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk.

The Inspectors who were involved in this inspection and Council staff will shortly be taking part in an evaluation exercise identifying; what has worked well in this inspection, what if anything can be improved and what lessons can be learned for future inspections?

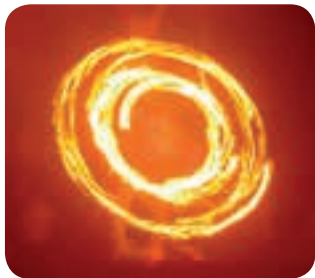
Rent Collection Communication Inspection

The scope, purpose and methods for the Rent Collection Communication Inspection have been agreed between ETF and the Council and it is hoped that the fieldwork will start in the next couple of weeks.

There will be a further update on the TLI work in the next edition of *Tenants Voice*.

Heather Ford, Convenor, ETF Tenant Led Inspections

FIRESTARTER FESTIVAL



For one week in January this year, ETF, along with a host of organisations in Scotland took part in events in the FireStarter Festival (FSF), a week-long festival of collaborative learning events, illuminating creative, disruptive and innovative ways in which we can all transform ourselves, our organisations and the wider system.

The First Minister has provided a clear commitment to empowering individuals and communities to become involved in designing public services. Many people across Scotland are currently lighting their own small fires by exploring genuine, participatory methods of engagement and creating innovative and transformative changes.

The Fire Starter Festival provided a unique opportunity to share the stories of these fires of change, as well as deepening the knowledge and skills that underpin transformation. It allowed people from all aspects of public service to share the innovative and creative ways that we are all making a difference to Scotland.

Sarah Davidson, the Director General of Communities from the Scottish Government said, “We’re currently going through a period of significant global change, and it’s tempting to feel a bit powerless in the face of that. However, we also know that the kind of change that can improve the quality of public services and outcomes for people in our communities, is very often brought about by ordinary individuals who decide to do something different and to make things better. The initiatives and ideas we heard about during the FSF were fantastic examples of people demonstrating that, one by one, we have the power to change things and that we can make a difference.”

ETF Development Coordinator, Clare MacGillivray gave a lightening input at the Launch of the Festival about our Housing Rights in Practice Project.

At an event about *Measuring What Matters* in public authorities in Scotland, input from Clare and Heather Ford, ETF Executive Committee Member challenged public authorities to think on how using a human rights based approach could help to identify and measure what really matters for communities.

Dot McLaughlin from the Improvement Service said, “The Performance - what matters to you?” event went really well. The whole session came alive when we heard from Heather about the work that she and her fellow residents had been doing in taking a human rights approach to the housing issues they were facing. That example set the tone for an honest and deep discussion about what and why we measure things and what impact this actually has in terms of improving the lives of people in communities.”

Clare MacGillivray explains more, “Being involved in the Firestarter Festival, with our work highlighted as beacons of light in Scotland was an incredibly powerful experience. Sometimes when you’re lighting fires of change, you’re not popular, because it challenges ‘the way things have aye been done’. Well, maybe it’s time to burn that thinking. It was fantastic to be with igniters of change who are saying all across the country ‘let’s free ourselves and our organisations from deficit thinking’ and ignite new fires so we can all really transform ourselves, our work and our public systems.”

You can check out Clare’s blog about our Housing Rights in Practice Project A *Pebble in the Pond or Igniting the Fires of Change?* on our website at www.edinburgh tenants.org.uk.

As Karen Lawson from the Scottish Government explains, “At the Fire Starter Festival launch event 140 people from all areas of public service – from public bodies to social enterprises were invited to burn (metaphorically) all the things that are barriers to creating positive change as well as sharing the actions that they wanted to take – “to create small fires of change”. The Launch provided an opportunity to highlight the different ways that people are already changing and shaping the way public services are being delivered. The festival will be back next year in January 2018, and we will be hosting events throughout 2017 to ‘fan the flames’. Fire Starter Festival is open to anyone interested in creating the kind of public services we want for the future.”

I, DANIEL BLAKE FILM SCREENINGS



Over 100 people came to our free community screenings of the highly acclaimed Ken Loach film, *I, Daniel Blake* in February. Telling the story of Daniel, a joiner who finds himself out of work and negotiating the benefits system after a heart attack, the film poignantly exposes the UK welfare system as impersonal and degrading.

ETF got involved in organising the screening with the Albion Trust to expose the harsh realities of the welfare system to a wider audience.

After the film there was a question and answer session which was chaired by ETF’s Development Co-

ordinator Clare MacGillivray. The Panel included Maddy Kirkman, Public Policy Officer, Cyrenians, Betty Stevenson, Convenor, ETF and Chloe Trew, Participation Officer, Scottish Human Rights Commission. Betty said, “That was reality. I’ve come across Daniel Blakes personally. I think this film sends a strong message that needs to go direct to politicians that this is reality. There are too many Daniel Blakes.”

Chloe Trew from the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) said, “The film showed Daniel’s sense of fairness and his common good. He is let down by the system which does not match up to the standards that citizens should expect from the state.”

Maddy Kirkman from Cyrenians said, “The power of the film is from the start to the very sad end. We need to think about some of the collective responses to some of the issues in the film. We have values of our own.”



The Panel answering questions after the *I, Daniel Blake* screening

To get involved in the campaign for advocacy rights in supporting people to negotiate the welfare system, please phone 0131 557 6242 or email ecap@lists.riseup.net.

Jimmy Galloway, a Tenant Led Inspector with ETF wrote a personal reflection after seeing the film:

World of Make Believe

How would you like to live in a perfect world, where everything is nice and rosy, people help each other and no one has a problem that cannot be fixed? Not the one we live in at this time, but with the help of a few good people we could make it fixable.

What, no more staff, no more jobsworth staff, no more rules that only apply to a few, food banks, homeless people and to top it all people who do not give a hoot about your circumstances. Just how do I get rid of this problem?

Yes, you have guessed it, I have just watched *I Daniel Blake*, the most honest film I have ever had the privilege of watching. Facts speak for themselves. Most of us have at one time had some or all the problems he had and the result was much the same.

It is now time for the people to get behind the system. Transform a system that does not work for the people, to one which has compassion and sympathy for the ordinary person. People will respond more to a member of staff who will help him/her.

Please remember that some of us do not have the capabilities or the way to use computers. I know that it saves time and effort for the staff but it can be a problem for other people.

Please could common sense prevail in the workforce? We, the ordinary people must take the bull by the horns and complain about the system which seems to be all for the staff and not for the customers.

You can make your feelings known by joining your local tenants' group, the CEC Tenants Panel or ETF, at least we will have a voice, we the ordinary people who vote. You do not need money, all you need is the passion to correct a system that is in dire need of a change for a few hours per month. Can we at least try; all we need is you, you and more of you. Please help. It is your right.

PEOPLE KNOW HOW LAUNCH

ETF representatives recently took part in a launch event organised by People Know How (PKH), a social innovation charity that has acquired a community Hub in Ocean Terminal. The Hub has meeting space and facilities for community groups, charities and members of the public. The event was held on Friday 27th and Saturday 28th January 2017 in the 'Community Hub', at Leith's Ocean Terminal. There were numerous stalls to interest the public including Leith Neighbourhood Partnership, Food Sharing Edinburgh and Living Memories. The event featured presentations from Edinburgh University, SMART Recovery, and Leith Lives, as well as a wide range of exciting activities from break dancing courtesy of The State, a drama workshop and even bike building thanks to RUTS.



ETF representatives meet with participants in one of the workshops

ETF held two workshops with residents from West Cromwell, Citadel and Persevere Court talking about housing as a human rights issue. The residents presented their Housing Rights in Practice Project film and representatives from 11 countries took part in the conversations over two days. Discussions centered on human rights in their own lives including about worker's rights, health and justice. This talk was well attended and amongst those present was Ben Macpherson, MSP who gave an excellent presentation on the issues.



Sheila at ETF's stall

YMCA Edinburgh, Food Sharing Edinburgh, Leith Neighbourhood Partnership, Pilmeny Development Project, Grace Church, Leith were just a few of the many groups that were represented. ETF representatives including Executive Committee (EC) members Maud Wylie, Sheila Rutherford-McCallum, Heather Ford, Davie Thomson and ETF Development Co-ordinator Clare MacGillivray ensured that ETF highlighted the various issues affecting tenants.

Look out for our ETF/CEC Housing Roadshows in your area...worth a visit! Watch this space for further details.

Davie Thomson, ETF EC member

Calling all RTOs



We want to share stories from your area with our readers, good or bad.

Not sure how to write an article?

Fear not, we can give you help. If you want to know more or run an idea past us, please contact Mark on 0131 475 2509 or email mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk.



INSPIRING VOLUNTEER

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS 2017



Do you work with or know a volunteer or a group of volunteers that are helping to make a difference in their local community? Then why not nominate them for the **2017 Lord Provost's Inspiring Volunteer Achievement Award**? Nominations are now invited for this year's awards and can be submitted online at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/MGSGHCK>. Don't forget that there is also an award for Housing/Tenant Participation Champion, so if you can think of someone

who deserves this award then why not nominate them? **Organisations are welcome to nominate up to three volunteers and /or a team of volunteers.** Edinburgh's Volunteering Ambassador, Lord Provost, Donald Wilson will honour some of the dedicated volunteers who give their time, energy and commitment to the people of Edinburgh at a special awards ceremony to take place on **Wednesday 7th June 2017 at the City Chambers**. Nominations close on **Monday 27th March 2017 at 10.00pm**.

For more information please contact Lara Celini or Tyler Norrie, Volunteer Centre Edinburgh, email events@volunteeredinburgh.org.uk or phone 0131 225 0630.

The Awards have proven to be very successful for ETF. Here are some of our past winners.



Betty Stevenson, Convenor of ETF and Inspiring Volunteer Winner 2014



Davie Thomson, ETF Executive Committee Member and Tenant Participation Champion 2014



Maud Wylie, ETF Vice Convenor and Tenant Participation Champion 2015

Mark Henry, ETF Development Worker

REMEMBERING MOYRA THOMAS



It is with deep regret that we have to announce that Moyra Thomas who was one of our committee members for many years has passed away. Moyra was our Treasurer for many years and only resigned when she was not well enough to continue. She was very involved with a number of community projects in the area, which included a gardening club and raising money through coffee mornings for gardening tools. As a result of Moyra's work, Hailesland Park won Scotland in Bloom and we are pleased to report that the garden is still up and running. She had us spellbound at times with her story telling but she never got any stories printed. Moyra will be very sadly missed in the community but she is at peace now. God Bless.

Hailesland Park Neighbourhood Council.

NATIONAL NEWS

Consultation on Universal Credit (Claims and Payments) (Scotland) Regulations 2017



The Scottish Government is currently carrying out a consultation on their plans to increase the frequency of Universal Credit (UC) payments and offer to pay housing benefits direct to all landlords. New applicants who live in the Universal Credit Full Service areas – local authority areas where a digital claiming system has been established by the UK Government – will be given two options:

- Having the option of being paid Universal Credit twice a month rather than once a month;
- Having the option of any UC housing element being paid direct to landlords.

It is hoped that these changes will provide more choice and control over UC payments. Although Universal Credit itself remains reserved to Westminster, Scottish Government ministers will use new powers to give claimants the option to be paid fortnightly instead of monthly. As a result tenants will have the option to pay housing benefits direct to landlords.

Betty Stevenson, ETF Convenor commented, “We at ETF have long campaigned for tenants to be given the option to pay housing benefit direct to landlords and we are certain that it will benefit both tenants and the landlord.”

There are a number of differences between UC and other welfare benefits:

- UC is available to people who are in work and on a low income, as well as those who are out of work;
- Most people will apply online and manage their claim through an online account;
- Claimants will usually receive just one monthly payment per household, paid into a bank account;
- Support with rent will go directly to the claimant in most cases as part of their monthly payment.

ETF wants to hear your views, so we could present our members' opinions to the Scottish Government. We would be grateful if you could complete the survey on the link <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SKSXXF3>. The survey should take around five minutes to complete should be completed by **Friday 10th March 2017**. The following link provides more information on Universal Credit (UC):

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/universal-credit-toolkit-for-partner-organisations>.

Inquiry into housing for disabled people

In December 2016 the Equality & Human Rights Commission launched a formal inquiry into housing for disabled people. The inquiry is examining the provision of accessible housing or housing that can be adapted to increase accessibility. It will also examine tenancy support services, and the effect that they have on disabled people's right to live independently.

Securing accessible housing and associated support is the foundation of independence for many disabled people. Without this it is much harder to access employment, education, leisure and recreational opportunities, things that are often taken for granted by non-disabled people.

Equally, tenancy support and advice, such as help with debt and budgeting, can be vital in

ensuring people are able to stay in their rented homes. These services are particularly important for some groups, such as people with learning disabilities. Reductions in funding for housing providers may mean these necessary services are taken away, risking more failed tenancies.

Over the next few months the Commission will be gathering evidence from a wide range of individuals and organisations across Scotland, England and Wales. This will include disabled people, disabled peoples' organisations, government bodies, local authorities and housing providers.

Central to the inquiry is the lived experience of disabled people since 2014. The Commission would particularly like to hear from disabled people, their families and carers and have produced a questionnaire which focuses on the main areas of interest. The questionnaire will be published on the Commission's website and can be completed either:

- On-line using a link on the Commission's website
- By leaving a telephone response to the survey on a voicemail system
- By submitting a BSL response on DVD or video
- By downloading an Easy Read version of the survey from the website and either posting or emailing it to the Commission.

The questionnaire and full details of how to submit evidence will be published on the Commission's website soon:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/inquiries-and-investigations/inquiry-housing-disabled-people>.

If you require a hard copy of the questions, please leave a message and your details on the voicemail line: 0161 829 8878.

All the responses received will be treated as confidential and no individual or organisation will be identified in the final report without their consent. The Commission aims to publish a report and findings in early 2018.

Neil Martin, Inquiry Analyst, Equality & Human Rights Commission



Volunteers wanted

We are very pleased to report that our blog continues to go from strength to strength. The blog appears on our website and e-newsletter and features stories, reflections and contributions. In order for the blog to be a continued success we need your help to tell the story about what is happening in housing in Edinburgh. If you are one of the following then why not become one of our guest bloggers?

- Tenant;
- Interested in community development;
- Work in housing;
- Passionate about where you live.

Our previous bloggers have included Marie Duguid, Business Development Officer, Social Enterprise Academy who focussed on ETF's Community Leadership Programme and Clare MacGillivray, ETF Development Co-ordinator who asked whether we're lighting fires of change by talking about housing in human rights terms. The blogs can be found on our website at

<http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk/category/guest-bloggers/>.

If you are interested in contributing a blog or would like more information, please contact the Federation Office on 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk. Some useful hints and tips for writing blogs can be found on our website at <http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk/draft-blog>.

CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

BUDGET STRATEGY

This February the City of Edinburgh Council agreed to continue ambitious plans to build more affordable homes, invest in the quality of homes and introduce new innovative services to boost tenants' income and help reduce their cost of living.

More tenants than ever before took part in the consultation. Over 80% of tenants who responded said that they supported the current investment plan, funded by a 2% rent increase, with nearly one in three voting to increase rents even more to speed up investment.

Tenants on the Rent Matters Working Group also took an increasingly important role this year in developing the consultation. The group of tenants met regularly with Council officers to decide together how, where and what tenants would be consulted on. Tenant to tenant conversations were incredibly successful at getting more views than ever before shared.

Housing Leader, Councillor Griffiths said: "I'd like to thank all the tenants who took part in the budget consultation. Your feedback and responses showed overwhelming support for plans to build more homes, invest in the quality of our homes and develop innovative approaches to help save you money. It's great to see this work getting underway and tenants will continue to be fully involved as we take this forward."

In the past year the Council has already partnered with Our Power, a new, low cost, not for profit energy provider, and launched the Tenant Discount Scheme. It has also accelerated the number of new kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems it has installed. In the coming year the housing service will continue to drive investment in the efficiency, quality and safety of homes and neighbourhoods. It will also pilot low cost broadband and a new energy advice service and continue to expand the network of community gardens so more tenants can grow their own fruit and vegetables. More support will also be provided to tenants and their families to remove barriers to employment and help them get jobs.

If you would like to find out more about the plan or get involved in shaping the new services email tenant.panel@edinburgh.gov.uk or call 0131 529 7805.

Douglas Alexander, Housing Development Officer, City of Edinburgh Council



Members of the Rent Matters Working Group worked closely with the Council in this year's rent consultation

RENT DEPUTATION

At the beginning of February, Edinburgh Tenants Federation took a deputation to the Council meeting to seek a rent freeze for one year. Federation members had raised concerns at a meeting in November about:

- The affordability of rents. Increasingly members reported hearing about the devastating impact of poverty in Edinburgh;
- That the City of Edinburgh Council still has the highest local authority rents in Scotland –

between 15% and 41.5% above the Scottish average, with tenants in 4 apartment properties in Edinburgh paying £42 per week on average more than neighbouring local authority tenants;

- That the City of Edinburgh Council has achieved 75.7% delivery of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) compared to the Scottish average of 92.8%. Even though tenants paid increased rents for six years (at RPI+2.7%) to be fully compliant by the SHQS delivery date of 2015;
- That service standards have dropped – particularly in relation to the service tenants receive from Repairs Direct.

Although these points were made, elected members increased rents by 2% from April 2017.

ETF will continue to work with the Council to ensure tenants get value for money for our rents.



Betty Stevenson, Convenor ETF and EC member Heather Ford at the deputation

MEAL MAKERS

Meal Makers is a project that brings neighbours together through food. It was launched last year in Edinburgh and is now looking for new people to take part.

Meal Makers is a community food-sharing project that connects people who love cooking ('cooks'), with older neighbours who would appreciate having some delicious home-cooked food delivered to them ('diners'). Originally launched as a pilot in Dundee in August 2014, it proved to be an instant hit across the city and has since been launched in Glasgow, Perth and Kinross, Renfrewshire, Stirling and Edinburgh.

It is very simple to get involved. Cooks sign up online. They can view the profile of diners in their area, find out what they like to eat and select a diner to cook for. Meanwhile, diners can join the service by phoning the Meal Makers free phone number 0800 783 7770 and giving a few details, or alternatively, family and friends can refer a diner to the service. The only requirement is that diners have to be over the age of 55.

Once a cook and diner have been matched the cook will prepare an extra meal in their own home and deliver it to their diner at a mutually convenient time. Meals are commonly shared on a weekly basis, but they can occur fortnightly, monthly or just now and again. How often meals are shared, and when, is decided between the cook and diner. No money changes hands. It is simply a donation of food between neighbours. The only cost associated with Meal Makers is a £5 annual fee for diners to become members.

Hundreds of matches have been made through Meal Makers, and thousands of meals have been shared, with some great friendships being made.

"I would recommend it to anyone who has a spare hour in their week to share their time... and dinner!" said Kirsty Reid, one of the recent volunteers in Edinburgh. "My diner Pat and I chat about our love of holidays and about her life working in a school in Edinburgh. It's like just popping in on a friendly neighbour - no hassle, just very casual and informal."

It is such a simple idea that brings communities together, creates friendships, and most importantly, gets people enjoying good food!

To find out more about Meal Makers, contact Robert Peacock, Development Officer, on 07710 703528, or visit the Meal Makers website, www.mealmakers.org.uk.

Robert Peacock, Development Officer, Meal Makers



Two of the Meal Makers participants

MY SCOTLAND

Whit does Scotland mean to me?

Hud oan a minute and I'll tell ye....

It's all the lovely times me and my Gran go doon tae the Gardens and look up at the castle.

It's about watching the thrilling Andy Murray tennis matches wi our haggis, neeps and tatties.

It's about having a laugh wi yer pals in the summer and trying not to be terrorised by the thousands of midges that attack you out of nowhere.

It's about William Wallace, Mary Queen of Scots, Robert Burns and many more icons that make you smile and proud tae be Scottish.

It's about going up to Corstorphine Hill and having a sledging race doon the hill wi yer pals.

It's about reflecting on the past year and celebrating Hogmanay wi all the fireworks that just make ye smile and be happy.

It's all about the glens, lochs and hills that are absolutely beautiful in the sun, Scottish rain, sleet or snaw that we often get all in the one day!

It's about the tartan kilts and the bonnie Hi'land dresses for the Highland Games.

It's about the traditional haggis, neeps and tatties and reading Burns poems on 25th January.

It's about climbing the mountains, exploring the forests and canoeing at Laggalia and appreciating the beauty of the land.

It's all this and more.... Its my Scotland.



Leanne Miller

HPS CONNECTIONS



'Would you like to get out more, meet new people or build confidence?'

'Do you feel you have lost confidence getting out and meeting people?'

'Please get in touch – we can help!'

HPS Connections supports people living in South or East Edinburgh who are feeling lonely and are struggling with their health and wellbeing.

They can match you up with someone to help you find out what is on locally and to support you to take part or access other services. This can include taking part in groups, learning to self-manage your mental or physical health, supporting you to feel more confident getting out and meeting new people, and accessing other services. HPS is a free service that can provide support for two to three hours a week for up to six months. We are also able to provide home visits if required.

We currently have spaces and we aim to meet someone within two weeks of them getting in

touch with us. We are a small and friendly team. If you would like to find out more, please contact Gareth Jones at Health in Mind on 0131 225 8508 or e-mail gareth.jones@health-in-mind.org.uk. Alternatively visit us online at www.health-in-mind.org.uk/services/HPS.

Gareth Jones, Health in Mind

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL – EARLY WARNING NOTICE

It's nearly the time when we ask all our members to renew their membership of the Federation. Renewal forms will shortly be sent to all members. All member organisations wishing to vote at ETF's Annual General Meeting (AGM) must have renewed their membership by Friday 2nd June 2017. There will be more information about our forthcoming AGM in the next edition of *Tenants Voice*.

CONVENOR'S REPORT



Welcome to the first Convenors' Report of the year and its certainly been a very busy start to 2017. Throughout the year; ETF will be holding many meetings and events and it would be good to see as many tenants as possible there. This will allow us to continue to represent your views and ensure that we are doing this effectively.

I would like to pay tribute to Susan Mooney and David Lyon who recently left their roles within the Council. ETF representatives had built up an excellent working relationship with Susan and we are very sorry to see her go. We look forward to working with Susan's replacement.

I would like to congratulate ETF's Tenant Led Inspection Team who have finished the inspection of the Council's approach to insulating external walls and agreed an action plan with the Council. I know the Inspectors have been working hard to finalise plans for the Rent Collection Communication Inspection and we wish them the best of luck in their work and look forward to hearing about their findings.

I have been very impressed with the ongoing work that West Cromwell, Persevere and Citadel Court Residents Association, ETF, the Council and the Scottish Human Rights Commission have done to help tenants and residents communicate with the Council to raise human rights issues that involve and affect the whole community. We look forward to greater things being achieved in the area.

ETF is built on very strong foundations and I know that we will be able to welcome all the recent and ongoing changes, embrace them as opportunities and become an even more flourishing organisation. Dealing with change is never easy but we must move forward or get left behind. I would like to thank all our volunteers and staff for the wonderful support they give to ETF and we must look forward to continuing this work over the coming months.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Deadline for nominations for Inspiring Volunteer Achievement Awards

27th March 2017

Getting Your Message Across Learning Session

Wednesday 29th March 2017, 5.15pm-9.00pm, venue to be confirmed. Places must be booked in advance

The Federation office will be closed on the following public holidays

Monday 10th April 2017

Monday 1st May 2017

Friday 14th April 2017

Monday 22nd May 2017

Monday 17th April 2017

Balancing the Books Learning Session.

Saturday 22nd April 2017, 9.30am-3.30pm, venue to be confirmed. Places must be booked in advance

Federation Meeting

Wednesday 17th May 2017, 7.00pm-9.00pm, venue to be confirmed

Comments, compliments, complaints

Please give us feedback on this publication. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints we would like to know. Just contact us at the ETF office.

About Edinburgh Tenants Federation

Edinburgh Tenants Federation is the umbrella organisation for tenants' and residents' groups in Edinburgh and a Registered Tenant Organisation. Tenants' and residents' groups can become members of ETF and individuals can become Associate Members. Just contact the ETF office on 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk for more information.

Thoughtful Quote

"I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love"

Mother Theresa

Copy Deadline



Tenants Voice is usually published four times a year and is distributed to nearly 4,000 tenants, residents, decision makers and other interested individuals throughout Edinburgh. We always welcome contributions from our readers, though we stress that material included in *Tenants Voice* does not always represent the opinions of Edinburgh Tenants Federation. If you would like to contribute an article, please do so by the following deadline:

May 2017 edition – Monday 10th April 2017.



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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of ETF.

