

# Tenants Voice



EDINBURGH TENANTS  
FEDERATION

Issue 100 - December 2016

## SHELTERED HOUSING CONFERENCE



The Sheltered Housing Liaison Group (SHLG) held a very successful first Conference on Wednesday 12th October 2016 at the City Chambers. In partnership with ETF and the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC), the event saw over 50 sheltered housing tenants from a number of schemes attend.

Sheltered housing tenants were treated to stalls from Our Power, Local Opportunities for Older People Services (LOOPS), Living It Up Scotland, ETF, CEC Tenant Participation Service, Health and Social Care and Police Scotland.

The event had presentations from Derek McGowan, Families and Household, CEC; Katie McWilliam, Health and Social Care, CEC and Police Scotland. Discussion groups centred on the theme of what sheltered housing means to you and your family. The event

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The fitness demonstration

ended with delegates participating in a seated fitness demonstration which everyone thoroughly enjoyed.



Ken providing some entertainment

Sheltered housing tenant (and ETF supporter) Ken McKay provided the lunchtime entertainment by singing some songs.

Nicol Johnstone, Convenor of the Sheltered Housing Liaison Group said, “This event was absolutely fantastic. The response from tenants was immense – people came from all over the city to get involved. I want to thank everyone who was involved in planning the day, people on the stalls, the entertainment and the keep fit instructor who had us all in fits of laughter. Thanks also to Councillor Cammy Day, Justine Bradd from ETF and Yvonne McWhirr from the Council who made the day a huge success. It just goes to show that tenants working together with the Council can really make tenant participation work.”

Yvonne McWhirr said, “I’ve thoroughly enjoyed working with the Liaison Group over the last two years. The success of the conference shows what we can achieve when we work in the spirit of partnership.”

Councillor Cammy Day, former Vice Convenor, Health, Social Care and Housing, City of Edinburgh Council said, “I was delighted to see such a great turnout at the first ever Sheltered Housing Conference. I thoroughly enjoyed chatting to residents and taking part in the activities, particularly the exercise class! Thanks to everyone who helped to organise this successful event. I look forward to continued discussions going forward.”

The SHLG has come a long way since 2014 and we at ETF are proud of the achievements so far; well done to all those involved.



The Sheltered Housing Liaison Group

# CO-PRODUCTION OF TENANT PARTICIPATION SERVICES

Progress has been made in the co-production of tenant participation and engagement services since the last edition of *Tenants Voice*. Our Development Coordinator, Clare MacGillivray gives a bit of background to the work that has been done so far.

## Definitions:

**Tenant participation and engagement services:** *services to support tenant participation work.*

Currently these services are provided by:

- Edinburgh Tenants Federation staff citywide (to support RTOs at their local level, provide learning opportunities, carry out Tenant Led Inspections, and to bring tenants together to influence issues citywide);
- Neighbourhood Alliance staff in the East.

**Co-production:** *Professionals and service users working together as equals to jointly develop services to achieve positive change.*



Clare explains the steps that have been taken over the last few months:

## End of the Co-Production Process

ETF was involved with a number of organisations, including the Neighbourhood Alliance, Tenants Information Service and Tenant Participation Advisory Service in a co-production process to come up with ideas about a new service specification for tenant participation and engagement services in Edinburgh. This ended in August 2016 and a draft service specification was produced.

## September Federation Meeting

At the September Federation Meeting, ETF members were presented with the draft specification for tenant participation and engagement services.

Members were very concerned that the first time they had seen this, was the night before Councillors were due to decide on the content of the service specification. This meant that Members did not have enough time to read and consider views collectively in time for deputations with Councillors. The information had also not been provided to the Tenant Advisory Group who had been involved in the process.

ETF Members at the meeting highlighted the following points that they asked Betty Stevenson, Convenor of ETF, to make on their behalf to Councillors. These were; that:

1. Members had not had enough time to consider the report in order to make comment on it.
2. Members had not received enough information from CEC about the co-production process and it was not clear that this was about services currently provided by ETF.
3. There were specific points on the draft service specification that ETF Members were concerned about including:
  - a. Whether the focus should be on tenants influencing housing or wider issues;

- b. The HRA should not support non Council tenants to participate;
- c. The service should not be providing professional advice to the Council;
- d. The perception that 'control' of the service specification would lie with CEC, with a perceived loss of control by tenants;
- e. The role of support to ETF in 'holding the landlord to account' must be strengthened;
- f. Concerns about the provision of 'objective' information to tenants, and whether this means "information provided by the Council".

4. Resources for supporting future tenant participation and engagement services are not clear.

### What's in the Service Specification?

- A single service citywide;
- For Council tenants to influence housing services and public services.

To provide:

- Information;
- Consultation and participation opportunities;
- Informal and formal learning opportunities;
- Development and administrative support;
- Communication.

During the co-production process, ETF representatives highlighted:

#### Things ETF didn't agree with in the service specification

- Provide professional advice to Council on its compliance with regulatory tenant participation requirements.

#### Things ETF wanted but are not yet included:

- Service to continue to be controlled by tenants (work set and monitored by tenants);
- Specific support for the representative role and governance of ETF.

## Deputations to Council Meetings (September 2016)

Betty took these points to elected members in two deputations in September.

The Health, Social Care and Housing Committee and Finance and Resources Committee agreed that more time would be required to speak to tenants and:

- Extended funding arrangements for ETF for an additional six months (to September 2017). This will allow more time for consultation on the representative role of ETF and how this could be supported;
- Approved the specification that has been informed by the Co-production Working Group.

Betty also invited elected members to meet with ETF Members in a specially convened meeting in October.



Betty and ETF volunteers at the Council deputation

## Meeting for tenants and elected members (October 2016)

ETF Members and Councillors had an open space to chat about the future of tenant participation in Edinburgh at a very successful event in the City Chambers. Much of the dialogue was about the role of Council housing officers in patches and how this could strengthen participation opportunities.

Feedback from this event has been very positive, with tenants valuing the open and transparent discussions with Councillors who listened to their ideas.

At the meeting there was strong support for:

- Improved communication between the Council and tenants in local areas;
- New patch working arrangements for housing officers;
- The Federation providing support for tenants' groups, bringing tenants together collectively and giving independent information to tenants;
- An annual event like this, where tenants can meet elected members and talk face to face.

A report from this event will be produced and presented to the Council as a first step about what happens next for tenant participation and engagement services for Council tenants in Edinburgh.

For more information, please contact Clare MacGillivray at the ETF office by email at [clare@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:clare@edinburghtenants.org.uk) or call 0131 475 2509.

## SCIO UPDATE

ETF Members will be aware that at the Federation Meeting in May, you voted for ETF to consider changing its legal status to become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). This is to protect Executive Committee (EC) members from personal liabilities on behalf of the organisation.

The EC has carried out a lot of work over the past few months to further develop ideas. Here's a flavour of what's happened since and some of the next steps.

When?	What?
September 2016	Federation Meeting held to discuss membership options for ETF in the new SCIO constitution. Members felt at this meeting that time should be taken to develop the constitution and wanted more information about becoming a SCIO. The draft timetable has been amended to take this into account and ETF Members were invited to attend Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council (EVOC) training on 'Becoming a SCIO'.
October 2016	ETF Development Group met with EVOC to draft options in ETF's constitution for membership to increase individuals' role, whilst retaining the collective/ representative function of ETF. This meeting also considered ideas about the number of EC members, how long individuals should be able to serve on the EC and other operational issues for the new constitution.
December 2016	The EC will meet again to consider legal and constitutional issues relating to becoming a SCIO. ETF Members will be sent options for the constitution to complete by January 2017. Results will be discussed more fully in February 2017.
January 2017	Members' views on the constitution to be collated and a report issued.
February 2017	Federation Meeting to consider report following members' feedback, agree principles of the new constitution and outline steps towards becoming a SCIO.
March 2017	Finalisation of the draft constitution, before Members vote about whether to become a SCIO.

For more information, please contact Clare MacGillivray at the ETF office by email at [clare@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:clare@edinburghtenants.org.uk) or call 0131 475 2509.

# HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT

Our joint project with the Scottish Human Rights Commission and Participation in the Practice of Rights in Belfast to support West Cromwell, Citadel and Persevere Courts Residents Association (WPCRA) achieve improved living conditions by linking their issues to international human rights standards, has received glowing endorsement from a UN adviser.

Speaking about the project after a trip to Scotland advising on human rights issues where she met ETF staff and members, Professor Alicia Ely Yamin, from Georgetown University praised the work of the project. She said, “It was a privilege to hear about the work of ETF. There is a very strong relationship between adequate housing and the ability to enjoy physical and mental health, but too often a human rights-based approach can remain abstract and theoretical. In this case I was impressed and deeply inspired, by the application of rights principles of dignity and equality, and by how they were capturing the meaning of those principles in real people’s lives.”



ETF representatives with Alicia Ely Yamin

Our human rights project supports residents in WPCRA to carry out research about their living conditions and link these to international human rights standards. Reports on the human rights issues identified by residents have been presented to the Council, which is now working on an action plan with residents to help resolve the issues.

WPCRA has set targets around the improvements to housing conditions they think will help progress their human rights and will continue to monitor the Council’s progress against these targets over the next year.

Tenants have been filming progress on the project over the last six months, documenting their housing conditions, and the film will feature at a national event to celebrate International Human Rights Day at the Scottish Parliament in December. WPCRA will update us on the findings of their second monitoring report in the next edition of Tenants Voice. To find out more about the project, contact Justine Bradd at [justine@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:justine@edinburghtenants.org.uk) or 0131 475 2509.

# PAUL LAWRENCE VISITS SOUTH EDINBURGH



Paul and Suzanne on the walkabout

Director of Place, Paul Lawrence visited South Edinburgh recently with ETF Convenor Betty Stevenson and Outreach Worker, Justine Bradd.

Paul met with Suzanne from the 21st Century Gracemount Residents Group to find out about the group's issues. The area has been suffering from a number of anti-social behaviour problems including walls being damaged and bricks being thrown at properties, parking and the overall maintenance of the area.

Paul also visited Southhouse and Burdiehouse to check out reports of fly-tipping in the area.

Paul is keen to continue these walkabouts, so if you have a particular problem in your area please contact Justine Bradd at the Federation Office on 0131 475 2509 or email [justine@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:justine@edinburghtenants.org.uk) and perhaps the next walkabout could be in your area.



Some of the bins in the area

## FROM MOSCOW TO EDINBURGH: A TALE OF TWO CITIES

ETF was delighted to host a visit from Elena Shomina, Professor of Social Sciences at Moscow University. Elena was the key note speaker at the International Union of Tenants Conference in Glasgow from 14th-16th October 2016. Before the Conference Elena and her son Sergey visited Edinburgh as part of a study visit and tour. Elena and Sergey are both representatives of the Russian Tenants' Union and it was very interesting to hear their comparisons of Russia and Scotland.

The first stop on the tour was Leith, where Elena and Sergey met with ETF's Convenor Betty Stevenson. Betty was very impressed with the work that was being carried out by the Russian Tenants' Union. "It was a privilege to meet Elena and Sergey and it was a very fruitful experience; hopefully they felt the same way. It was great introducing them to traditional fish and chips (pub grub) and then going on to tour the city."



ETF's Convenor Betty and Development Coordinator Clare with Elena and Sergey

The next stop was Wester Hailes where Elena and Sergey met the Hailesland Park Neighbourhood Council (HPNC). This part of the visit involved a tour of the Community Room and the Concierge Office.

The Chair of HPNC and Vice Convenor of ETF, Maud Wylie, was delighted to meet Elena and Sergey. "It was a pleasure to welcome Elena and Sergey to Hailesland Park. They were very interested in our Community Room and how it's funded. We took them on a short walkabout and explained to them that tenants look after the garden. They also had a chance to visit the Concierge office and were very impressed with how clean it was. It's just a pity they couldn't stay longer."



Elena and Sergey with representatives of HPNC in their Community Room

Elena took some time out of her visit to give us her thoughts on the similarities and differences between housing in Scotland and Russia. Elena said, "We spent a very short but exciting day in Edinburgh recently, with many really good impressions. One of the most important things we noticed was the real respect shown to tenants by the Council and we could feel it everywhere. That is the most serious difference between our countries, as in our case we have very few municipal tenants (about 5-10-15%) in different regions of our country.

All over the world rental housing is seen as a natural, essential tenure of housing stock. Worldwide rental housing, particularly in urban areas, seriously prevails over ownership and the tenants are usually quite ordinary, quite distinguished and respected residents, neighbours and clients. The slogan of the International Union of Tenants; the largest organisation representing the interest of tenants all over the world is "Tenants make Cities!"

During the last few decades, the situation in housing in Eastern Europe became new and unusual, as after a massive privatisation process in urban areas, the largest part of the housing stock (mainly municipal) became the ownership of former sitting tenants, and a core group of residents became owners of flats. Rental housing got an image of being indecent and the tenants often became unrespected residents and neighbours.

The evaluation of tenants as less successful people, unfortunately, fairly typical for countries in Eastern Europe, has now become typical for Russia. Although the total number of tenants in Russia is many millions of people, they remain our housing minority.

Following our meeting with your Convenor Betty and the group of tenants at Hailesland Park, as well as reading your *Tenants Voice* newsletter, which is so full of good news, plans and expectations, it makes us a little bit jealous. One of the most interesting parts of our visit was going to the Hailesland Park Community Flat and Concierge office. We saw firsthand how the everyday activity of your neighbours is organised, that they have comfortable space for meetings and discussions, how neighbours worry about each other and help each other!

In your case "community" has real meaning and we were happy to see it. We took many photos, which show that some things are the same (small community library), while others are really very different but useful and interesting. Thank you very much and we wish you a lot of success. Our warm regards to Justine, Clare, Betty, Maud, Mark and all the wonderful residents and tenants we met."

# UPDATE FROM ETF'S TENANT LED INSPECTION TEAM

If I had to use one word to describe the Tenant Led Inspections (TLI) in the past few months, it would be 'busy'. Although it has been a busy time for our TLI Team, it has also been very productive too. Firstly our Inspectors attended an equalities training session facilitated by Positive Action in Housing.

The session was very interesting and we managed to pick up good tips for when we carry out future inspections.

We are currently in the process of planning our forthcoming inspection looking at the Council's communications with tenants in the Rent Collection Process. We have held a number of meetings with the Council to firm up on the purpose and methods which will be used in the inspection. We are hoping to start carrying out the fieldwork by the beginning of December; this will include interviewing staff and speaking to tenants to find out if they have any suggestions for improving the Council's ways of communicating. There will be an update on our progress in the next edition of *Tenants Voice*.



Inspectors taking part in the Equalities Training Session



Our TLI Team planning for the Rent Collection Communication Inspection



We have finalised our report on the Council's Approach to Insulating External Walls and the Council will shortly be producing an action plan to show how they will be taking forward our recommendations. We look forward to receiving a copy of the action plan.

Elsewhere, myself, Sharon Robertson and Maud Wylie spoke at a Housemark event about our Repairs Reporting Inspection and how landlords can deliver better services for tenants.

I'm sure 2017 will be just as busy a year for our TLI team, but we're looking forward to it. Bring it on!



Inspectors speaking at Housemark event

**Heather Ford, Convenor, ETF Tenant Led Inspections**

# A HISTORY OF *TENANTS VOICE*



This edition of *Tenants Voice* is very special in that it's the 100th edition. Who would have thought that when the Network of Edinburgh Tenants sat down to write their first edition away back in the Spring of 1986 that it would still be going strong 30 years later! There is no doubt that housing and indeed the tenants' movement as a whole has greatly changed over the last 30 years but there are still many similarities too.

## 1986

Gordon Street Tenants' Association are busy campaigning on the maintenance of gardens and proper play areas.

The Muirhouse Damp Group founded in 1984 gave an update on their work as there was a serious problem with dampness in the area.

The Hailesland High Flats Action Group reported there were problems with asbestos in some of the buildings.

***Tenants Voice, Issue 1, Spring 1986***

Niddrie House Residents wanted the following points to be considered:

- Continue the insulation programme;
- Install central heating in all houses;
- Fit all stairs with a door entry system;
- Soundproof all houses.

Flats Fight Back – a city wide organisation of high flats' tenants from all over Edinburgh expressed concern on the following:

- Poor maintenance of flats;
- Bad security;
- Antisocial Behaviour;
- Graffiti and vandalism.

Hopetoun Crossroads Tenants Association, a recently formed group had just elected a committee and are working on a survey to identify the main housing problems in the area.

Kirkgate House Tenants Association spoke about the breakdown and general condition of the lifts as well as the car parking facilities.

Campaigning for tenants' rights and having a safe warm home are still as prevalent today as they were 30 years ago. In this edition we've looked at the major stories from the 1st and the 99th edition. Can you remember some of the headlines from the spring of 1986? Enjoy the memories!

Congratulations ETF on your 100th edition of *Tenants Voice*. Keep up all the great work.  
Best wishes

**Laichfield Community Association**

Gateside Tenants and Residents Association were crowned Tenants' Group of the Year at the Tenants Information Service Annual Conference.

ETF paid tribute to Lynne Tait who stepped down from the Federation's Executive Committee after nearly 20 years.

Human Rights Issues in Leith were reported to the Council.

***Tenants Voice*, Issue 99,  
September 2016**

The ETF Tenant Led Inspection Team reported that progress was being made with regards to both the Insulation and Rent Collection inspections.

ETF reported back on what tenants thought about the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

ETF welcomed the end of the Right to Buy.

Plans were well underway for the first Sheltered Housing Tenants' Conference.

**2016**



## Volunteers wanted

In our previous edition of *Tenants Voice*, we reported that we launched the ETF blog at our AGM in June and we are delighted with the response so far. The blog appears on our website and e-newsletter and will feature stories, reflections and contributions. In order for the blog to be a 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;
- Work in housing;
- Interested in community development;
- Passionate about where you live.

Previous blogs have included:

- “From Geneva to Leith: Bringing Human Rights Home” by Judith Robertson, Chair, Scottish Human Rights Commission;
- “Build it and they will come!” by Bill Walker, Chair, Gateside Tenants and Residents Association;
- “Rents and Value for Money” by Kirsty Wells, Housemark Scotland Manager;
- “Your Home, Your Neighbourhood, Your City” by Councillor Cammy Day, former Vice Convenor of Health, Social Care and Housing.

The blogs can be found on our website at

<http://www.edinburgh tenants.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@edinburgh tenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburgh tenants.org.uk). Some useful hints and tips for writing blogs can be found on our website at <http://www.edinburgh tenants.org.uk/draft-blog>.

# ETF'S LEARNING SESSIONS KICK OFF WITH A BANG!

ETF hosted its first of three Learning Sessions on Saturday 5th November 2016.

Nine tenants attended the Committee Skills Session with the day focussing on a number of activities:

- What is a committee?
- Roles and responsibilities of committee members;
- Preparing for meetings;
- Agenda setting;
- Minutes;
- Group dynamics;
- Constitutions;
- Conflict.

Here is some feedback from those who attended:

"I came to the learning session with an open mind and was surprised how much I did learn."

"Well presented and organised."

"I now understand more about the ins and outs of committee meetings and hopefully carry on to learn and understand more."



Participants in the Committee Skills session

ETF will be holding two further learning sessions. **Getting Your Message Across** on Thursday 19th January 2017, 5.15pm-9.15pm, venue to be confirmed. This is ideal if you want to learn about putting a deputation to the Council or want to write a press release or article. Full details will be out soon.

The **Balancing the Books** Learning Session will take place on Saturday 4th February 2017, 9.30am-3.30pm, Volunteer Centre, 222 Leith Walk. This session is ideal for Treasurers or anyone who wants to know more about basic booking keeping skills. Places must be booked in advance.

If you have any suggestions for training or want to book a place on one of the above sessions please contact the Federation Office in 0131 475 2509 or [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk).

Calling all  
RTOs



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

I have a story,  
I'm just not sure  
how to write one...



**Not sure how to write an article?**

Fear not, we can provide assistance with writing an article. If you want to know more or want to run an idea past us, please contact Mark on 0131 475 2509 or email [mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:mark@edinburghtenants.org.uk).

# IT'S UP TO THE PEOPLE TO SAY AND DO

This is a call for help from a tenant of Drylaw. The area has, in the past two months, lost Easter Drylaw Tenants and Residents Association and Drylaw Community Council. This was as a result of insufficient interest in the area. Both organisations fought tooth and nail for certain things and gave their all and more. The community left them on their own to fight for the area, with no or very little support.

The election of Drylaw Community Council took place last month and very little interest was shown by community people. As a result, the Community Council was dissolved. I could go on forever on the good work both organisations have done for the community to pull lots of things together. Everything from speeding to dog fouling and many more action points have been brought up by the community and actioned by both groups.

At some point all tenants whether private, Council or rented must stand up and give account to their area.

It does not take a bully or a loudmouth to help, it just takes a person with heart and community spirit, to help improve most aspects of daily life in Drylaw. Just a few hours per week or month could see better progress in various sections of the area, i.e. OAP, Youth clubs and many other things. But to do this we need the help of people in the area. Just a few hours of your time is required to make Drylaw a better and safer place to live. I have lived in Pilton/Drylaw for about 30 years or more and I have run youth clubs and other projects. However, I can see the area needs a wakeup call from the people. We need your help once more, so I am asking for any volunteers to come forward and see if we can reinstate a good working Tenants Association.

If you think that you may be able to help, even for a small amount of time, to make our area a safe and better place to live in, please let us know. If you would be interested in helping or volunteering, please contact Jimmy Galloway on 0131 476 3783.

**Jimmy Galloway, Easter Drylaw tenant**

## HELP TO GET 'OOT THE HOOSE' WITH LOOPS



As we get older, the risk of social isolation becomes greater, which can also affect our mental and physical health. LOOPS (Local Opportunities for Older People) was set up to combat this. We run a city-wide phone line to help over 65s get out the house, meet like-minded people and enjoy everything Edinburgh has to offer. Over 65s, their families, friends and healthcare professionals can call 0131 603 8311 for free, to speak to a friendly LOOPS advisor about clubs and activities in their local area. We do all the research to provide you with the information you need, and can also organise transport to and from activities. Tailored to your individual requirements and interests, LOOPS has already connected over 600 older people to laughter, fun and friendships.

# NATIONAL NEWS

## ETF Responds to the Social Security for Scotland Consultation

ETF would like to thank those tenants who contributed to ETF's response to the Social Security for Scotland Consultation.

Here are some of the main points ETF made on the Social Security Consultation:

The principles of the social security system:

- The **principles of dignity and respect** that underpin the new social security powers for Scotland **should be enshrined in legislation**.
- These principles should also be **linked to international human rights obligations** so that individuals as rights holders can claim these rights from the state.
- Having the principles in law will help to **challenge the negative and dehumanising stigma** of the UK Government approach to benefits and make a statement that the Scottish system has the potential to hold **compassion and humanity** at its heart.

Ensuring communications are designed with dignity and respect at its core:

- **Communication should be easy to understand**, in plain language and with no jargon.
- The language in written communication should be **non-judgemental**. Tenants at our focus group said that the system needs to "treat people like human beings not second class citizens. This should be evident in **every communication with every individual**."

Improving people's experience of the social security system in Scotland:

- People must know **where and who to go to for advice**.
- An opportunity should be made for **face to face contact** with advisors who can speak in plain language and can show empathy and understanding which will make a positive difference.
- People should be able to speak to advisors who **know what they are talking about** who can tell all claimants what they are entitled to.
- Tenants want a system that **gets things right first time** and is **fast and accurate**.
- Where mistakes are made, an **apology** should be offered, **mistakes rectified** first time, and quickly. This will increase public confidence in the system.



Discussions about Social Security in Scotland

Providing benefits in cash or kind:

- Benefits could be provided in goods or cash could be offered, depending on the circumstances and **choice of the individual**. Key to this is that **citizens have dignity**, and as long as the goods are not offered in a way that would stigmatise the individual, they would be welcomed.

A copy of ETF's response to the Social Security for Scotland Consultation can be downloaded from our website at

<http://www.edinburgh tenants.org.uk/etf-response-social-security-consultation/>. You can phone Clare at the Federation Office on 0131 475 2509 or email [clare@edinburgh tenants.org.uk](mailto:clare@edinburgh tenants.org.uk).

## Sustainable Development Goals in Scotland

Our Development Coordinator Clare MacGillivray, recently attended a Conference run by the International Association of Community Development (IACD) in Glasgow, looking at how the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be achieved by community developers in Scotland.



Clare explains, “The SDGs are big goals set by the UN that countries globally want to achieve by 2030. The goals all link together, and countries have to report to the UN on how they are helping to achieve the goals. But where do local communities fit in to that? Well, from what I can see, tenants in Edinburgh are already working towards some of these goals in the activities they do in their local communities.

Just a couple of examples of how tenants' groups are moving towards these goals include West Cromwell, Persevere and Citadel Courts Residents Association's work on identifying human rights issues in their living conditions. Their work directly contributes to the goals:

- No poverty;
- Good health;
- Innovation and infrastructure;
- Reduced inequalities;
- Sustainable cities and communities.

Edible Estates has been working with a number of RTOs in Wester Hailes with gardening and food growing projects is contributing to these goals:

- No poverty;
- No hunger;
- Good health;
- Good education;
- Innovation and infrastructure;
- Reduced inequalities;
- Sustainable cities and communities;
- Responsible consumption;
- Protect the planet;
- Life on land.

We just don't realise sometimes, that the community activities going on round Edinburgh, have a bigger impact on the world. Maybe we need to think of ways that communities can better recognise the brilliance and significance of their efforts in the bigger picture and learn more about how the local fits into the global?"

To chat with Clare about how your group is contributing to the SDGs contact her at [clare@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:clare@edinburghtenants.org.uk) or give her a call on 0131 475 2509.

## Scottish Housing Regulator Report on Rent Consultations

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR), the independent regulator for 200 social landlords in Scotland has issued a report called *How Social Landlords consult tenants about rent increases*. The report highlights good practice in the ways landlords consult tenants about rents, as well as making recommendations for the future. Here are some of the recommendations:

Social landlords should consult tenants about rent increases in ways that enable them to express informed views on options for different rent levels with clear information on what they mean for services and investment in homes. Landlords should:

- Consider the best ways to involve tenants about proposed rent increases;
- Give tenants easy-to-understand information to help them express informed views;
- Give tenants genuine options for proposed rent increases and spell out what they mean for levels of investment in homes and the level of services offered;
- Discuss with tenants the level of service they want;
- Talk to current and prospective tenants about what level of rent is affordable for them;
- Be transparent about how they determine affordability; and
- Show tenants how their views were taken into consideration in decisions and give them feedback on the consultation process.

You can access the report online at [www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk](http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk).

Council tenants in Edinburgh were involved in how the Council consults about rents and will soon be comparing the Council's processes with the Regulator's recommendations. Read more about this in the next issue of *Tenants Voice*.



With great sadness we pass on the news that Mary Smith, Development Worker with the Dundee Federation of Tenants Associations (DFTA) passed away on 2nd November 2016.

Dundee born and bred, Mary always had a strong sense of social justice which meant that she enjoyed a long career in helping people and local communities to be heard. Mary had worked with Dundee City Council and DFTA for over 13 years, working tirelessly for the DFTA to be the voice for tenants across Dundee. Prior to working with the DFTA Mary worked with the Carolina House Trust and other voluntary groups, helping young people with troubled backgrounds get the best possible start in life.

Her happy go-lucky approach and casual straightforward ways always put people at their ease. However, Mary was no pushover, she said what she thought, always held out for what was right and was a wise counsel for all that she helped.

# ETF'S DEVELOPMENT WORKER RECEIVES LEADERSHIP AWARD



ETF's Development Worker Mark Henry recently achieved his SVQF Level 9 Award in Leadership from the Social Enterprise Academy. The six day course involved Mark completing an essay about leadership in ETF. Mark commented, "I'm delighted that I've achieved this award. It was a pretty intense course, which allowed me to think outside the box. The course has given me a lot of confidence in my current job and I would encourage anyone who is interested in this course to apply."

Mark with his certificate

## COUNCILLOR GRIFFITHS

**Vice Convenor, Health, Social Care and Housing, City of Edinburgh Council**

I am delighted to have been appointed as Vice-Convenor for Health, Social Care and Housing, taking over from Councillor Cammy Day in October this year. There is a lot of exciting work going on across the city and if the last month is anything to go by, the next six months are set to be busy, but really exciting!

Edinburgh has one of the most ambitious Council house-building programmes in the UK. During my first month in post, I have been out and about seeing the outcome of some of this investment. It was great to visit the Council's Leith Fort development to see the work that is underway to deliver 94 new affordable homes. I have also been down to the new Dunedin Canmore development at Muirhouse to mark the start of work on site, which will result in 80 new affordable homes within the next year. This is a great example of partnership working between the Council and our housing association partners. These are just two examples of some of the fantastic work taking place all over the city.

I have also really enjoyed meeting lots of our tenants over the last few weeks. Working with our tenants is a really important part of this role, and an aspect that I am particularly looking forward to. The engagement we have with our tenants is key to ensuring that our services continue to improve, and it is really important that everyone is able to have their say. The annual Housing Budget Consultation is a great way for tenants to tell us their views and I am delighted that many of you got involved in making this year's consultation a success. I had a great time meeting the Rent Matters Working Group, a group of tenants who have given up their time to help plan and deliver the consultation. They have done an absolutely fantastic job, so well done to all involved.

Another highlight from my first month in post has been the Good Neighbour Awards. This was the perfect opportunity to meet some of our inspirational tenants from across the city who really go above and beyond to help their neighbours and to make their communities a better place. There were so many inspirational stories and the award ceremony was a great way to celebrate their contributions and to recognise those who had taken the time to nominate them. Congratulations to our winners and a big thank you to everyone involved in making the awards such a success.

I am really looking forward to getting to meet more of you over the coming months and to work with you to make Edinburgh an even better city to live in.



# NEW ETF STAFF

Over the past few months, we have been delighted to welcome new personnel to ETF.



Hi, I'm Kirstin Gray a fourth year Community Learning and Development student from Dundee University. I am spending the next six months with Edinburgh Tenants Federation carrying out research looking at the impact the organisation has on communities, whether it be a personal impact or an environmental impact. I will be holding a few focus groups and interviews to find out community members' thoughts and views just before and after Christmas. I'm really looking forward to learning more of the work that happens in Edinburgh and meeting some of the communities here as all my previous work has been in Dundee and also learning about the work of ETF!



My name is David Kyle and I am delighted to be working with ETF as the Admin Assistant. It has been an excellent experience so far; learning new skills and assisting all the staff here who are all extremely nice and have been very welcoming.

*(Note from other staff – David has been a welcome addition to the team and everyone is impressed with him).*

## CONVENOR'S REPORT



Welcome to the final Convenors' Report of 2016. It has certainly been an eventful year for ETF. We are delighted that we received an extra six months funding to our Service Level Agreement which will now continue until September 2017. I would like to thank all our EC members, volunteers and member groups that have supported ETF over the last year by attending deputations, Federation Meetings, the Co-Production Advisory Group Meetings and many other events. Your support and encouragement is greatly appreciated by ETF.

This year I attended a number of walkabouts around the city with Paul Lawrence, Director of Place, City of Edinburgh Council. These walkabouts have enabled Paul to gain a better understanding of some of the issues that are facing tenants throughout the City. It also shows that ETF works well with the Council to ensure services for tenants are improved.

I was delighted to attend the first Sheltered Housing Conference back in October. I particularly enjoyed listening to the guest speakers and taking part in the various workshops that were held. Feedback has been very positive and well done to everyone who was involved in the planning of the Conference.

I would like to pay tribute to Councillor Cammy Day who has been the Vice Convenor for Health, Social Care and Housing for the Council for the past four and a half years. I have known Cammy for many years and ETF has built up a great working relationship with him over the years. We wish Cammy all the very best in his new role as Education Convenor and we very much look forward to working with the new Housing and Community Safety Leader, Councillor Joan Griffiths.

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

## ETF Repairs Group Meeting

Wednesday 7th December 2016, 7.00pm-9.00pm, Goodtrees Neighbourhood Centre, 5 Moredunvale Place

## Neighbourhood Partnership Meet the Funders

Thursday 8th December 2016, 11.00am-2.00pm, Gorgie Suite, Heart of Midlothian Football Club

**The Federation Office closes on Wednesday 21st December 2016 for the Christmas and New Year holidays. We reopen on Thursday 5th January 2017 at 9.00am.**

## Getting Your Message Across Learning Session

Thursday 19th January 2017, 5.15pm-9.15pm, venue to be confirmed. Places must be booked in advance

## Balancing the Books Learning Session

Saturday 4th February 2017, 9.30am-3.30pm, Volunteer Centre, 222 Leith Walk. Places must be booked in advance

## Federation Meeting

Monday 27th February 2017, time and 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.

## 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 to the next edition, please do so by the following deadline:

Monday 23rd January 2017

## 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](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk) for more information.

## Thoughtful Quote

*"Doing what you like is freedom.  
Liking what you do is happiness."  
Frank Tyger*



***We would like to wish everyone  
a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year and  
all the best for 2017.***



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Print and Design by Graphic Impressions, Unit 27/2 Hardengreen Industrial Estate, Eskbank, Dalkeith EH22 3NX  
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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of ETF.

