

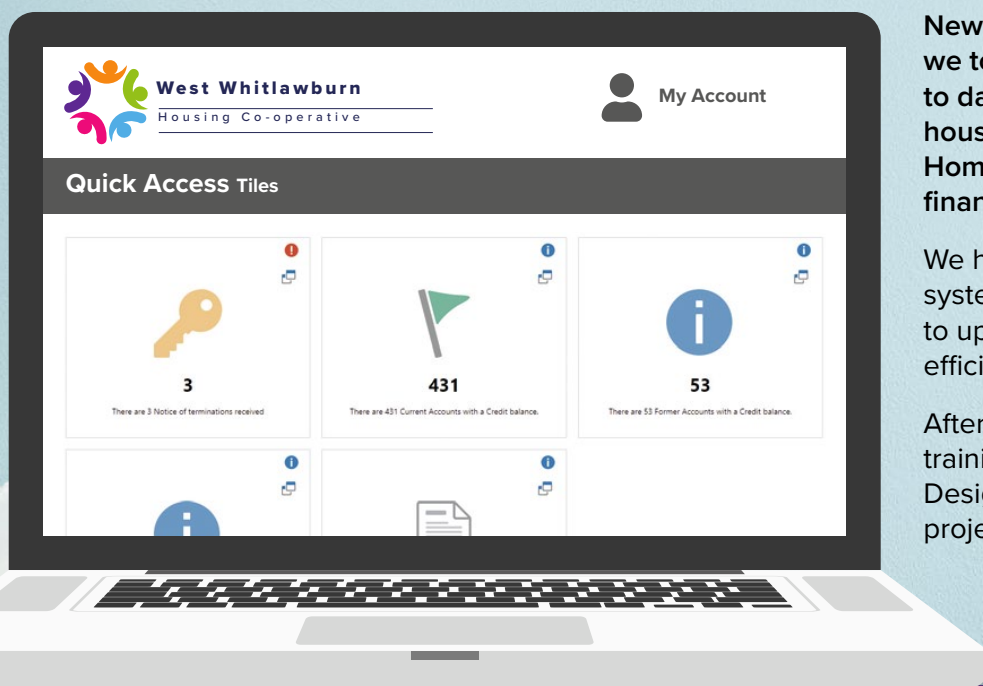


West Whitlawburn  
Housing Co-operative

# Newsletter

Spring 2024 edition

# The Launch of HomeMaster



New year, new software. During 2023, we took on one of our biggest projects to date as we moved from our separate housing and finance applications to HomeMaster, an 'all-in-one' housing and finance system.

We had been working with our previous systems for over 10 years and we decided to upgrade them to make things more efficient for our staff, tenants and members.

After several months of hard work, staff training and ongoing support from the Designer Software team, we delivered the project, on time, in February 2024.

**Continues overleaf...**

## Upcoming Public Holiday Office Closures

The WWHC Office will close on the following dates:

- Monday 6th May 2024
- Friday 24th May 2024
- Monday 27th May 2024



If you have an emergency repair please contact Concierge using your handset or by calling **0141 646 1924**.



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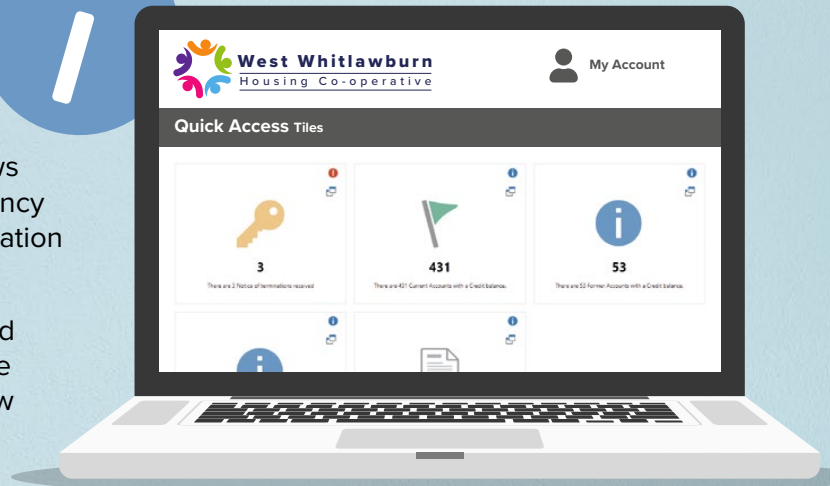
# The Launch of HomeMaster

## What does our new system mean for you?



HomeMaster is a cloud-based system that allows us to bring even more functionality to your tenancy and adapt our services by improving communication between staff, contractors and tenants directly.

You may have already received texts, emails and emailed documents direct from our system – we hope to use this feature more as we get to know the system better.



## New Ways to Contact WWHC

With this new system we will only ever send out messages which are important to our tenants. These messages may include information about:

- Your rent account and messages from your Housing Officer
- Repairs raised by you
- Updates from WWHC
- Support and services that may benefit you
- Feedback surveys on our services

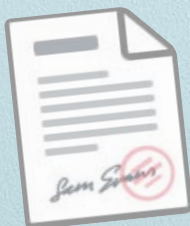
Text messages will come from this number:  
**+447908671194.**

Please note that phone calls to this number will not be answered. To speak with us over the phone you must use the main office telephone number below.

Texts and emails will be monitored on a regular basis and we aim to respond within 2 working days. If you have an emergency repair please call the office as soon as possible on **0141 641 8628 (Out of Hours: Concierge 0141 646 1924)** to report this. This will ensure that emergency repairs are responded to within the correct timescale.

## Scam Awareness

If you are ever in-doubt about the sender of a text or email message or its contents please contact the office to have the message verified. Do not give out your personal information or click on suspicious links.



## HomeMaster Future Plans



Next on our plan to improve our services will be to roll out the Tenant and Contractor Portal. This feature is still under development and when launched, it will allow you to check your own rent account, update your details, report repairs and access documents using your own login. Keep an eye out for future updates.

# Staff Changes at WWHC

As the new financial year starts, we have seen some changes to our staff team at WWHC.

## Director

Our Director Stephanie Marshall, has decided to leave the Co-operative after almost 35 years. She has worked as the Senior Officer in Housing Management and Development before becoming the Deputy Director in 1999 and the Director in 2020.

The Management Committee will be working through a recruitment process to find our new Director over the coming weeks. Stephanie will remain in post until this process has been completed to make sure there is a smooth handover.

## Housing Services

### Lauren Miller

After nearly 16 years of service, Lauren has moved on in her career. Lauren first joined WWHC in 2008 on a temporary basis as a Receptionist. She soon moved into Housing Services where she has spent the majority of her time as a Housing Officer.

*"I have enjoyed my time at West Whitlawburn and I have made some lifelong friends. Although leaving isn't easy, I'm excited for what lies ahead."*

– Lauren Miller

We wish Lauren all the very best for the future.

### Teresa Burns

Teresa has retired after nearly 34 years at West Whitlawburn. As one of the first members of staff to join the Co-operative, Teresa is well known to most tenants and will be sadly missed.

We wish Teresa a long and happy retirement.

### Kelly Semaan

We are delighted to welcome Kelly back as a Housing Assistant on a temporary basis. Kelly will assist Fiona and Kerry Anne.

These changes within our staff team mean that you may have a new Housing Officer. You should contact the designated staff member below regarding all aspects of your tenancy including rent and arrears, antisocial behaviour and estate management:

Fiona Heeps	Kerry Anne Elder
Arkle Terrace	Ailsa Tower
Arran Tower	Albany Terrace
Belmont Road	Benmore Tower
Buchan Terrace	Brown Place
Gartmore Terrace	Bute Tower
Iona Place	Clifton Terrace
Kintore Tower	Hilton Terrace
Morven Road	Jura Terrace
Roslin Tower	
Tiree Way	

## Property Services

### Noreen Currie

Noreen is currently a member of the Corporate Services team who handles finance and health and safety duties. From March 2024, Noreen will also be joining our Property Services team on a part-time basis to manage repairs and maintenance.

### Jackie Wray

Jackie previously worked in our Housing Services team as a Housing Officer. In April 2024, Jackie will join Property Services on a part-time basis to manage repairs and maintenance.



# Rent Consultation 2024/25 Outcome

Between December 2023 and January 2024, WWHC consulted all of our tenants about our rent increase proposal. Following consideration of all of the responses, Management Committee agreed a 5% rent increase for the year 2024/25 which is significantly below CPI (4% at January 2024). Thank you to everyone who replied to the consultation.

## How did we consult with you?

- The full consultation and survey form was delivered to every household alongside the winter 2023 newsletter. It was also published on our website.
- The consultation included information on how income is spent, how we support our tenants and the community and our future maintenance plans.
- Where we had mobile numbers and email addresses, we contacted tenants using our customer engagement tool CX Feedback to gather opinions. We were particularly pleased with the number of people who responded using this method as it encourages more and more tenants to participate online every year.
- We held two tenant focus group drop-in sessions on 8th January 2024 to review the rent consultation alongside our allocations policy.
- Overall, we received 83 (11.7%) responses. This was lower than last years' response rate of 91 (13.6%) however, we are still pleased with the overall increase in responses over the past 2 years thanks to our digital participation methods.

**Of those who responded, 80.72% understood the need for a rent increase and 57.8% agreed that a 5% rent increase was reasonable.**

**We asked for views on what projects and/or services could be reduced. We have outlined some responses to the most common answers:**

## Maintenance Contracts

Respondents felt that WWHC could look to renegotiate our maintenance contracts in search of better value for money. Others also felt that the ground maintenance contract was not performing well. We have been monitoring this issue for some time and have withheld funds where we felt that services were not up to the agreed standard. We published a tender for both reactive maintenance and ground maintenance contracts in January 2024 alongside East Kilbride Housing Association and Rutherglen and Cambuslang Housing Association. We will provide more information on the outcome of this later in 2024/25.

## Laundries and Associated Costs

Some respondents felt that the laundry services were costly and only accessible by tenants in our multi-storey flats and could therefore be reduced to create savings for the Co-operative overall. We aim to consult all of our tenants during 2024/25 on the services offered by us to ensure a fair and affordable service for all. However, we also recognise that these services are vital to other tenants and we will take this into consideration during any future consultation.



## Energy Costs

Respondents felt that energy (heating, hot water and electricity costs) could be reduced to support tenants overall. We understand that the cost of living crisis is having a negative impact on tenants, making it difficult to plan and budget your finances. Whilst we have no control over electricity costs, staff will continue to access any available funding to assist tenants with their household bills as much as possible. For additional support and advice about energy please contact your Housing Officer who can check if you are entitled to further support or refer you to other agencies.

## Newsletters and Other Publications

Some respondents felt that we could reduce the number of newsletters published by us. We are required by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to report on our performance on a regular basis and to keep tenants up-to-date with our activities and therefore this suggestion is harder to implement. We will, however, review the way in which newsletters are delivered in 2024/25 and we will look to reduce these costs in the meantime – our new IT system will help with this.

## Affiliates

Other respondents suggested that we cancel or reduce our annual subscriptions to bodies like the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA), Glasgow West of Scotland Forum (GWSF) and Employers in Voluntary Housing (EVH). These organisations provide legal, regulatory, HR and other support services where we cannot provide these internally (in some cases, to do so would mean additional costs for the organisation e.g. employing a HR Manager/ Advisor). They also work with the SHR and Scottish Government to advocate on issues that affect tenants directly like welfare benefits, energy costs, rent affordability, regulatory engagement and other housing-related issues. We have taken this feedback on board and the Management Committee will continue to review all subscriptions and affiliates on an annual basis.

## Staff Costs

It was also suggested that overall staff costs (Office and Concierge) could be reduced. Since 2021, we have done our best, where possible, to cover staff vacancies internally. This has helped to save money on recruitment fees and allows us to maintain our normal levels of service. A reduction in the number of staff may lead to a reduction in services received by tenants overall.

We aim to consult with all of our tenants on the services provided by us during 2024/25.

# Allocations Policy Consultation Outcome



We wish to say a sincere thanks to those who took part in the review of our allocations policy. Detailed below is a summary of actions, which led to the Policy, Risk Report and associated Equality Impact Assessment being considered and approved by Management Committee on 29th January 2024.

## Background to the review

Research and review work commenced in 2019/20. The process was placed on hold throughout 2021 and 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In April 2022, our services fully resumed. We looked at alternative housing software and restarted work on the proposed policy.

In June 2023, an Allocations Working Party was established – formed by members of our Management Committee and staff. Full discussions took place regarding proposed amendments to the policy.

In November 2023 at the Performance, Assurance and Risk Sub-Committee meeting, Management Committee considered the proposed changes and agreed in principal to all the proposed changes.

## Background to the Policy

Our points-based Allocations Policy, introduced in June 2007, sets out the criteria for letting our properties. Applicants are awarded points specific to their individual or family circumstances which are then added up and an applicant is placed on one of our housing lists. When a property becomes vacant applicants are then considered depending on their circumstances and preferences as noted within their application form.

## Tenant consultation

The consultation started on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023, and information was posted on our website with a direct link to the online survey. It was also issued by text or email to all housing applicants where we had a contact details, issued by email to relevant community stakeholders and partner organisations and paper copies were available in our office, where visitors were encouraged to participate.

In addition, an article on the consultation was included within the Winter 2023 newsletter which was hand-delivered to all tenants.

Tenants were invited, along with Management Committee members, to in-person discussions on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 with two sessions arranged – afternoon and evening. There was a low level of attendance with only Management Committee members present.

Following the meetings on 8<sup>th</sup> January, consultation methods were: responses could be received online, in writing, by telephone, email or on the website contact form.



## Consultation Responses

All responses were verified against our tenant and applicant database. No responses were received from partner agencies or stakeholders.

Number of invitations issued	914
Number of responses returned	95
Response Rate	10.4%

Of the 95 responses, **68** (71.6%) were received from tenants and **27** (28.4%) were received from applicants, with the following summary:

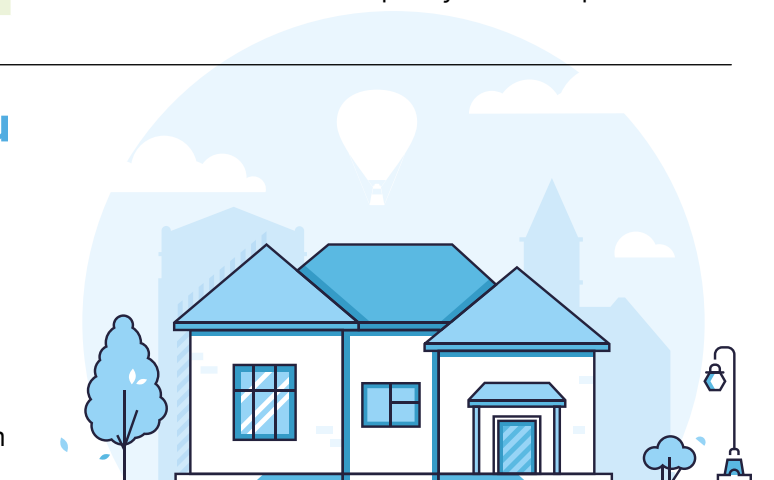
	Yes	No
Do you agree with the aims of the policy?	89 (93.7%)	6 (6.3%)

Questions within the consultation also requested feedback and other suggestions. All feedback was presented to the Management Committee in an anonymised format, and responses summarised as follows:

- More adapted properties are required.
- The proposed policy benefits tenants, applicants and WWHC. The policy is straightforward.
- Consider adults who have access to children on a part-time basis (requiring additional bedrooms to support this).
- There are challenges regarding both over-occupancy and under-occupancy.
- The current allocations policy is a slow process.

## What this may mean for you

These updates to the policy mean that we must re-assess current applications. We intend to start the re-assessment by reviewing transfer applications which have medical priority points. To ensure that you receive the correct *new* award, we may need to contact you to ask specific questions. We will call you first, and if you are not able to take part in the phone call we will arrange to speak to you in-person at the office.



# Our Performance

October to  
December  
2023



## Complaints

As part of the Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP), we are required to share information about the complaints we receive and what we have learned from them.

During the period we received:

- 6 Stage 1 complaints
- 2 Stage 2 complaints

Complaints received by us were varied and related to topics like contractor performance, approaches taken by staff and lack of (or perceived lack of) action taken by staff on complaints in general and other tenancy issues.

3 (37.5%) complaints received during the period were partially upheld during the quarter which highlight the importance of:

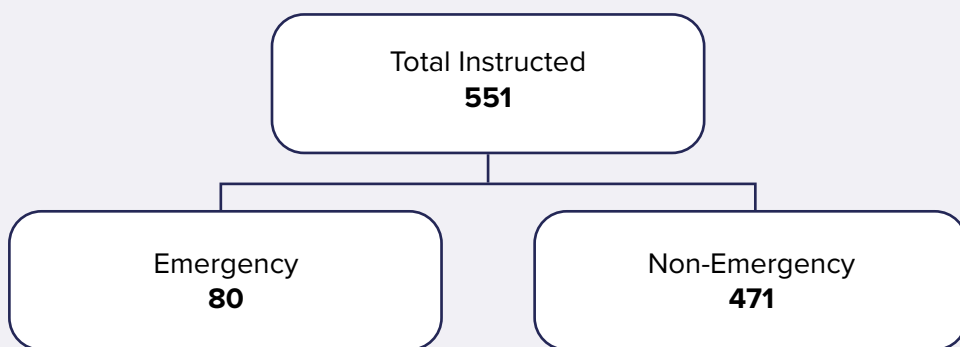
- good communication internally and externally
- recording accurate information and updating it as soon as possible
- following procedures
- making sure the language used by us is easy to understand for everyone

To date, we have received **44** complaints; **18** of these were upheld in whole or part. When responding to complaints, **95.4%** of these complaints were responded to within the timescales agreed.



# Property Services

## Reactive Repairs



The average time taken to complete emergency repairs was **3.5 hours** (Scottish Average: 4.2 hours).

The average number of working days to complete non-emergency repairs was **3.58 days** (Scottish Average: 8.7 days).

## Housing Services

### Turnover and Allocations

	Housing List	Transfer List
Number of applicants	237	213

During the period we let 11 properties, of these:

- **41%** to direct applicants
- **20%** to transfers
- **38%** to South Lanarkshire Council referrals
- **0%** to others

The average re-let time was **35.8 days** which is above our target time of 21 days. We aim to improve our re-let times during 2024/25 as we continue to navigate the current economic challenges and through procurement of our maintenance contracts.

### Rent Collection and Arrears

- Current and former tenant arrears were sitting at **4.62%**.
- **97.2%** of rent was collected during the period. This is lower than the Scottish average rate of **99%**.

### Estate Management

	Anti-Social Behaviour	Abandoned Tenancies
Number of cases	8	6

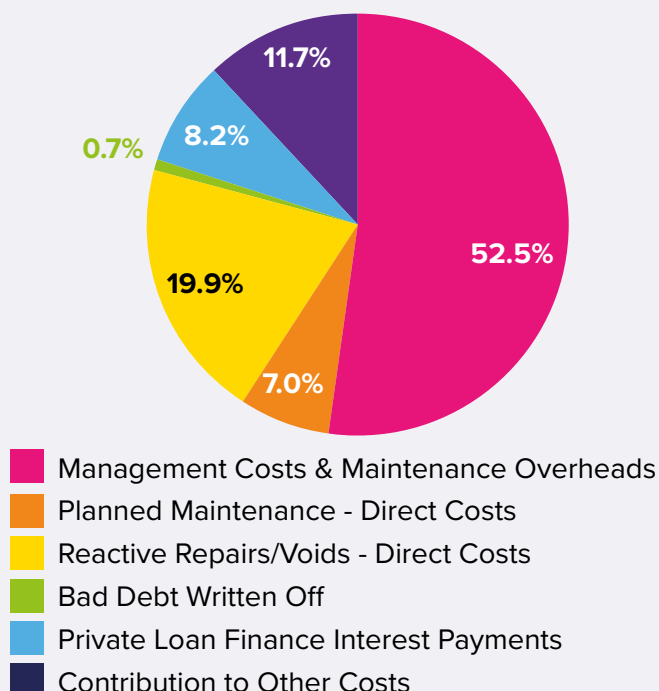
Concierge staff also manage the housing alarm service and they responded to 2 emergency calls.

### Finance

(April to December 2023)

Revenue Income	£	%
Net Rents Charged	£2,834,166	70.1%
Grants Released	£806,712	20.0%
Grants Received	£43,464	1.1%
Energy Centre Income	£268,037	6.6%
Other Income	£38,788	1.0%
Bank Interest	£49,631	1.2%
<b>Total Revenue Income</b>	<b>£4,040,798</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### How was Total Rental Income Spent?





# Committee Spotlight



**Susan Anderson**  
*Chairperson*

**Q:** How long have you been a tenant at WWHC?

**A:** *I have lived in West Whitlawburn for all of my life and have been on the Management Committee for over 12 years.*

**Q:** What do you do in your spare time?

**A:** *I like to spend time with family and friends, going shopping and out for a meal. I also like to read and watch Netflix.*

**Q:** Tell us 3 facts about yourself

- A:**
- *My favourite time of year is Christmas*
  - *I really like Disney movies*
  - *I have been in my career for over 20 years*

**Q:** Are you a member of any other board or voluntary organisation?

**A:** *I am a member of Whitcomm and Whitlawburn Community Resource Centre.*

**Q:** What has been the most enjoyable part of being on committee?

**A:** *Seeing satisfied tenants and learning how the Co-operative works on a daily basis. Being a part of the Committee has also given me the opportunity to represent West Whitlawburn and the Co-operative at 2 award ceremonies.*

**Q:** What piece of advice would you give to future committee members?

**A:** *Give it a few months - it might seem a lot at first with all the information and jargon but it does get easier. You live in the area and want the best for your family and other tenants so joining the Committee can help you do this.*





# Management Committee

## - Are *YOU* interested?

West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative is a fully mutual co-operative run by a voluntary Management Committee.

We are proud to be tenant controlled. Co-operative members or prospective members are generally eligible to stand for election, or the Management Committee can co-opt non-members.

The Co-operative's Management Committee currently has 11 members and are looking to add new members to complement our existing skills set to ensure a well-rounded Committee.

WWHC welcomes all interest. We are very keen to speak to any of our tenants who may be interested in joining the Committee.

You should be able to commit to 11 meetings per year, normally held on the last Monday of the month

at 6.30 pm. In addition to these meetings, the Co-operative has Sub-Committee meetings for items requiring monitoring or further discussion. Other participation and training opportunities are available throughout the year. We will provide you with induction and support along with online and in person training.

Positions on the Management Committee are voluntary. By joining the Committee you will play a key role in helping WWHC meet its objectives. You will also have the opportunity to build on your existing experience, develop new skills, expand your knowledge and grow your network.

For more information please visit our website <https://www.wwhc.org.uk/our-committee/> or contact the office to speak to a staff member.

Meanwhile thank you for your interest.



# Are your debts causing you

## If they are then you are not alone

Citizens Advice Scotland's recent campaign 'Stressed about Debt' encouraged people to seek advice from the Citizens Advice network if they were worried about their bills or stressed about debt.

They highlighted the analysis of polling from research company YouGov that suggested around 665,148 of people in Scotland have seen their mental health and wellbeing affected by debt.

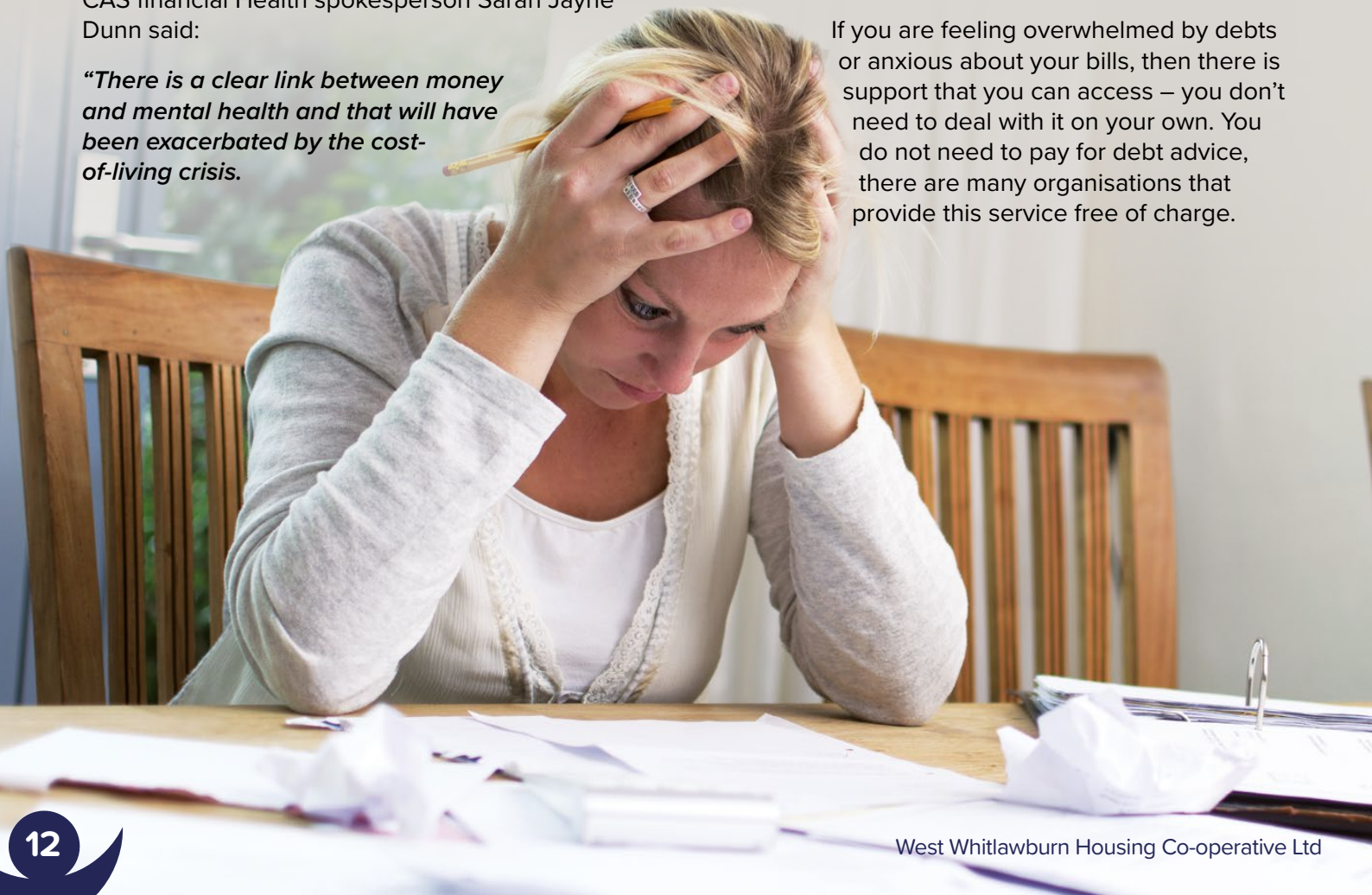
CAS financial Health spokesperson Sarah Jayne Dunn said:

*"There is a clear link between money and mental health and that will have been exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis."*

*Hundreds of thousands of people across the country, through no fault of their own have fallen behind on bills and find themselves in debt. Some people will be in debt for the first time, others will have seen their existing debt get worse.*

*There is no shame in having debt, and it's completely understandable to be stressed and anxious about it. For many people, debt is something they ignore until it builds up and becomes overwhelming."*

If you are feeling overwhelmed by debts or anxious about your bills, then there is support that you can access – you don't need to deal with it on your own. You do not need to pay for debt advice, there are many organisations that provide this service free of charge.



# debt stress?

You can find help from one of the following agencies:

## Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS)



You can access advice about help with debt from the CAS website [www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk) there is also the Money Map tool that directs you to online help finding ways to make the most of your money, decrease your bills and meet the cost of daily living.

You can also contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau to access specialist debt advice.

As well as having a drop-in service at their main bureau Main Street, Cambuslang, the Rutherglen and Cambuslang CAB also have an outreach service in the Whitlawburn Resource Centre. For outreach appointments or further information contact Rutherglen & Cambuslang CAB on **0141 646 3191**.

## Christians Against Poverty (CAP)



CAP provides free, expert debt help, advising on the best routes out of debt and offering different types of support to help you become debt free. The size of debt doesn't matter, and you do not have to be religious to access their help.

Debt help from CAP is available in this area. Contact the new enquiries team on **0800 328 0006** to confirm that you are eligible for debt help and arrange for you to meet with your local debt coach. You can find further information on the CAP debt help process on their website at [www.capuk.org](http://www.capuk.org).

## moneyadvice.Scot



moneyadvice.Scot provides free, practical money and debt advice to the people of Scotland. Their specialist debt adviser can work with you, assess your current situation, your income and outgoings and help you consider what you can do next. They are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). Help can be accessed via their website [www.moneyadvice.scot](http://www.moneyadvice.scot) and you can request a call back. Alternatively, you can call them directly on **0808 196 2316**.

## Money Matters Advice Service – Rutherglen and Cambuslang

This service provides free, independent and expert advice, working with you to deal with your debt issues by discussing all your options and coming up with a plan together. You can contact this service via a general enquiry form on the South Lanarkshire Council website or by contacting Money Matters Advice Service on **0300 029 0041**.

## Step Change



For 30 years Step Change has been providing free, expert debt advice. You can complete the whole debt advice process online or you can call them if you prefer to speak to them.

Their online services are available 24 hours per day and 7 days per week [www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org) and the telephone contact is **0800 138 1111**.



# What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous material that was widely used in the construction industry between 1950 and 1980, to increase the performance of other building materials. It was also commonly used as an insulator and has good fire protection properties. Asbestos has been banned from use in building materials in the UK since 1999.

## Why is asbestos dangerous?

Asbestos containing materials, are not a significant health risk if they are in good condition and not disturbed. They can cause health problems if they are disturbed and cause the fibres to be released into the air (and you inhale these).

Asbestos is safe if it remains mixed, bound or sealed with other materials i.e. within a textured coating like Artex and paint.

## Is asbestos present in my home?

Asbestos is present in WWHC properties. However, we have taken all the necessary steps to make sure your home and common areas are safe. Most commonly, Asbestos is present within the textured coatings (Artex) on the ceilings throughout the estate, excluding the new build properties. Also, in the multi storey properties there is an Asbestos Insulation Board (AIB) above the living room fire door.

## Asbestos and DIY

You are reminded that as part of your tenancy agreement, you are required to obtain permission from us before making alterations or improvements to your home. Further details can be found in the tenancy handbook.

You should contact us before doing any DIY work which would disturb the fabric of the building. Standard decorative work, such as scraping wallpaper or painting, is perfectly safe.

In order to ensure your safety when carrying out any DIY please follow the guidelines below:

✗ **DO NOT** drill a hole through any asbestos boards

## What is our policy on asbestos?

WWHC has a robust asbestos policy and management plan which fully complies with legislation and best practice.

The main parts of the policy are:

- To fully investigate all reports of possible asbestos.
- To actively survey our housing stock (and all other WWHC owned buildings).
- To help identify and monitor materials which contain asbestos.
- To keep a register of all known asbestos and maintain regular checks on its condition.
- Not to remove asbestos where it does not constitute a hazard.

## What should I do if I think I have found asbestos?

If you think you have found asbestos in your home it is important that you do not disturb or damage the area in question and report it to the Property Services team at the office. We will arrange to have the area inspected and will provide you with further advice – it is important that you follow this guidance.

- ✗ **DO NOT** cut or break off any parts of asbestos products
- ✗ **DO NOT** rub down asbestos panels or Artex with sandpaper
- ✗ **DO NOT** use wallpaper scrapers on asbestos products
- ✗ **DO NOT** remove asbestos panels to gain access to services
- ✗ **DO NOT** cut any asbestos products with power tools or break

If you are unsure if a product contains asbestos it is safest not to carry out any works until you have contacted us for further advice.



# FREE FAMILY DROP-IN

## AFTER SCHOOL DROP-IN FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**3 days a week from 3pm – 5pm**

Fun Activities include; arts & crafts, board games and movies. A snack and drink will also be available.

Location: Whitlawburn  
Community Resource Centre

The drop-in will run for a 6-week trial and will start on Tuesday 23rd April 2024.

Spaces **MUST** be booked in advance. To book a space, or for more information, please contact Claire on 0141 641 5005.

**TUESDAY**

**THURSDAY**

**FRIDAY**

# Disposal of rubbish



When disposing of your bagged rubbish in the bin room, please do not leave rubbish directly at the cage door. This causes a trip hazard and could potentially be a fire hazard.

## South Lanarkshire Council Bulk Uplifts

SLC have removed the free bulk uplift service for households. As of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, there will be a £40 charge to all standard bulk uplift requests. Other charges apply for non-standard uplifts. For more information please visit SLC's website.

# Parking

Please **do not** park any type of vehicle in the yellow boxes at the rear of the towers. This blocks the fire hydrants, and should there be a fire or any type of emergency situation, could lead to a delay in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service response.



# How To Use Less Energy and Save Money



Visit the Smart Energy GB <https://www.smartenergygb.org/smart-living/smart-energy-tips> for some energy saving tips to use around your home including using low energy bulbs or radiator panels, and avoiding having your appliances on stand-by mode.

If you do not already have a smart meter, you can go <https://www.smartenergygb.org/about-smart-meters/get-a-smart-meter> to request one at no cost to your household.



West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative, Belmont House,  
57 Belmont Road, Whitlawburn, G72 8PG. Tel: 0141 641 8628  
Email: [enquiries@wwhc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@wwhc.org.uk) Web: [www.wwhc.org.uk](http://www.wwhc.org.uk)

Registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator No. 203

Registered Charity No. SCO38737, VAT Registration No. 180223636

Registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014



HAPPY TO TRANSLATE