

Welcome from

Jacqui McKenzie

Chief Officer for Early Intervention and Community Empowerment Jacqui McKenzie welcomes you all to this summer edition of Newsbite.

Jacqui said: "I am delighted to welcome you all to our latest edition of Newsbite and to introduce myself as the new Chief Officer for Early Intervention and Community Empowerment.

"Aberdeen City Council is committed to ensuring that our tenants remain at the heart of our housing service and that we hear the thoughts and views of those living in our city to ensure that we are able to provide quality services to you.

"2023 will see an increase in how we communicate with our tenants, starting with the introduction of four walkabouts a year in each Council Ward with Senior Officers from the Council in attendance. Residents will further be able to share how they feel through our Resident Led Inspections, and I encourage all tenants to attend both events to help improve the service.

"It is important to us that we allow you all the opportunity to tell us what is important to you, and we will continue to do this arranging more participatory budgeting events which allow everyone to vote on what they feel money should be spent on.

"This year we will be introducing a new 'Choice Based Letting' model for applying and allocating our homes and this will enable anyone to select the home of their choice in their preferred area.

"I hope that you enjoy reading this edition of Newsbite and I hope to see some of you soon at one of our walkabouts. I would also like to thank the Events and Communication Group for their continued support in producing this copy of Newsbite."

HELLO EVERYONE

On behalf of the Communication & Events group, I hope you enjoy this edition of Newsbite. It is great to read about the support being provided to tenants who require it but also the annual visit for all tenants has started – something which this group has wanted to see implemented.

Well, we all thought Covid was bad but now we have the cost of living crisis where we are all struggling to heat our homes not to mention the weekly increase in our food bills. There is a lot of information in Newsbite for those of us who are trying to make ends meet! And remember there is always someone there to help you.

I hope you and your family have a wonderful summer and please think about joining the Community Led Walkabouts and/or the Resident Led Inspections.

Enjoy the sunshine - I hope!

norma



Choice Based Lettings

From Summer 2023, we are changing the way we allocate housing. Choice Based Lettings, or CBL, allows you make an informed decision about where you would like to live by bidding (registering interest) on our available properties online. We will advertise available homes on our website each week (called a bidding cycle).

Each week we will publish details of our available homes, including photos, and you can choose whether to bid on a property. You will be able to bid on up to 10 properties each week. If you are looking for rehousing, there are a few things you can do to get ready for CBL:

1. Create a Housing Online account:

You will need a Housing Online account. For more details on how to register, please visit our website at: www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/housingonline

2. Submit a housing application:

If you don't already have a housing application with us, you will need to submit one. You can do this on Housing Online. You won't be able to bid on any properties until we have assessed your application and placed it on one of our housing lists, so make sure you submit it as soon as possible!

3. Update your housing application:

If you already have a housing application which has been placed on a housing list, make sure it's up to date before Choice Based Lettings launches. You can do this on Housing Online. The information in your application will determine if you are eligible for a property. This includes criteria such as whether you have a pet and property types and areas you have told us you will consider. We encourage you to add all letting areas in Aberdeen City to your housing application.

This will allow you to bid on any property that meets your needs. The more areas you have on your application, the more choice of properties you will have! To update your application, log into Housing Online and select My Submitted Housing Applications. By using the Actions menu next to your application, you will be able to amend the details in your application.

COMMUNITY LED WALKABOUTS

Community Led Walkabouts have been taking place all over the city by Council Officers from various services, including Housing & Support, Roads, Environmental and Building Services, Community Safety, Communities, Housing Associations plus Partners along with tenants and residents from the local area.

These have been a great way to meet you and to listen to what matters most to you and how your local area can be improved. The walkabouts have a set route and take no more than two hours. You can also enjoy some refreshments from various community centres along the way. Each walkabout has a Senior Manager who will lead the session, and all issues/suggestions are recorded. An action plan can then be emailed to all community participants showing which service is responsible and time scales if available.

It will also show what cannot be done and why. From these walkabouts, we will organise Participatory Budgeting events so that your community can decide what money is spent on. These walkabouts are going to be planned four times a year in all 13 Council wards. Please speak to your Housing and Support Officer for more details.

We look forward to meeting you during the summer holidays – a great way to keep the kids active and walk your dog – let's hope the sun shines! As one community member said; "I really enjoyed speaking to all the Council Workers and it was a great way to increase my steps". Another said; "It was great to get a cup of hot tea at the end of the walk – it was such a freezing day."

Find out more at: www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/walkabouts

Annual Visits

WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT WE ARE KEEPING IN REGULAR CONTACT WITH ALL OUR TENANTS. TO HELP US DO THIS, OUR HOUSING & SUPPORT OFFICERS WILL BE CARRYING OUT YEARLY HOME VISITS WITH ALL TENANTS.

Each year, your Housing & Support Officer will contact you in order to arrange a suitable time for a home visit. This will include a visual inspection of your property and a check-in with you about how you are managing your tenancy, to find out if there is any support we can provide.

These visits can take place at any point in the year, and you should have had your first yearly visit by the end of 2023. If you need to speak with your Housing & Support Officer out-with the yearly visit, you can contact them via Housing Online, or via our Customer Contact Centre.

Register for Housing Online

More and more people are continuing to register for Housing Online and experience the benefits of using the online portal.

By using Housing Online you can:

- Check your rent account and make payments at any time;
- Get housing advice by completing a housing options checker;
- Submit a housing application or amend an existing application, and;
- ► Update your contact information.

You can also contact us if you want to:

- transfer or add someone to your tenancy;
- > apply for the garden maintenance scheme;
- ▶ tell us you want to end your tenancy;
- ► tell us you want to change your name;
- request additional communal door keys or fobs;
- request permission to sub-let your property;
- request permission for a pet;
- request housing support;
- request information about your mutual exchange;
- report flytipping and graffiti within a communal garden or block, and;
- ► Apply for landlord consent to make changes to your home.

Later this year we are launching Choice Based Lettings (CBL) which allows you to place bids on our available properties. To take part in CBL you must have a housing application on one of our housing lists and ensure that it includes all of the letting areas you would consider living.

You can find out more about CBL on page 3.



By signing up for a portal account you can access housing services at a time most convenient to you.

If you haven't signed up for Housing Online, you can find our short video explaining how to register on:

www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/housingonline



MEMBERSHIP OF ABERDEEN CITY LIBRARIES IS FREE FROM BIRTH TO ALL WHO LIVE, WORK OR STUDY IN ABERDEEN OR ABERDEENSHIRE.

Membership gives you access to books; audio books; eBooks; eAudiobooks; eNewspapers; eMagazines: online databases; DVDs (charges apply for DVD loans). Staff are happy to help show you how to navigate the online library catalogue or to download the Library, BorrowBox or PressReader apps on your mobile device.

Every library has PCs, including for children, and free Wi-Fi. Printing facilities are also available including the ability to print from your mobile device with Princh.

Libraries also offer customers access to a wide range of information and support, including for Local Heritage, Family History research, Business, Employability & Careers and Health & Wellbeing. Visit the Central Library Information Centre or any of our community libraries to find out how we can help.

The library service delivers an all-year-round calendar of events and activities designed to encourage people of all ages including children, young people and families to explore all that our libraries have to offer while having fun. In-person Bookbug sessions for families are returning to libraries. View and book upcoming sessions on our events page or call your local library to find out more.

If you are interested in reading and sharing your thoughts with likeminded people, why not join a book group? There are a number which meet in libraries and community venues across the city. Alternatively, we can also provide advice and support to people who would like to set up their own group.

2023 sees the launch of a couple of exciting partnerships as we work with *One Seed Forward* to deliver seed banks at our libraries offering a variety of vegetables, herbs and flowers as well as seed potatoes. Central Library will also feature an exciting new *Lend & Mend* hub later this year, giving communities free access to repair, reuse, rent & upcycle everyday items - keeping them in use for longer, rather than being thrown away. We are pleased to partner with *CFINE* to provide free period products at all our libraries and you can also pick up free food waste bags on your visit.

The opening hours and contact details for individual libraries can be found on the library website. If you are unable to visit your local library due to disability, illness or because you are caring for someone then the home library service is a free service available to people of all ages. Our friendly staff will visit you at home to drop off and collect library items. Contact the Home Service Library on 01224 498930 for further information or ask at any library.

Find out more by visiting www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/library

RENTCONSULTATION

Our current rent policy ends in March 2024. Aberdeen City Council has a duty to consult with all our tenants about a new policy and any changes to your rent. We will be consulting with you this year to get your views. We will be contacting you after the summer holidays either by post or e-mail, with information about the consultation.

If you take part in this consultation you will be entered into a prize draw for the opportunity to win $6 \times £50$ of shopping vouchers your views are important to us so please participate and good luck in the draw.

If you would like more information or assistance in registering, please contact your Housing & Support Officer.









Aberdeen City Events

Enjoy a selection of fantastic events this summer!

Get excited for summer by coming along to one of our fantastic events that the whole family can enjoy!

Following on from the success of the King's Coronation Family Celebration, the Aberdeen Highland Games returns to Hazlehead Park on Sunday 18th June where you can enjoy traditional Highland Games events, quality trade and charity stalls, stage entertainment, fun activities and the Bancon Homes Mascot Challenge.

Find out more information about the Highland Games, including ticket information here: www.aberdeencity. gov.uk/highlandgames

The excitement will continue the following weekend when Aberdeen hosts the 2023 European Pipe Band Championships for the first time since 1981! Taking place at the Duthie Park on Saturday 24th June, pipe bands from across Europe and beyond will travel to Aberdeen to take part in one of the largest piping events in the world!

The day will also feature a range of fun activities, as well as a selection of food and drink from local producers.

Please note that there will be no parking available on site or in the area surrounding Duthie Park but you can use our FREE shuttle service from the City Centre or a paid for (£6) park and ride service from Altens Farm Road.

Find out more about the European Pipe Band Championships, including tickets and travel information, here: www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/ pipebandchamps

Have we got your up to date email address?

The Council wants to reduce its carbon footprint and is also looking at how we can improve our communications to our tenants and residents. Our Citywide Multi Storey Group have agreed to stop Multi Matters as they felt that receiving information every 6 months was not ideal. To replace this, it was agreed the Council would instead send a Gov.Notify email every month with useful information about Multi Storeys to those living there. The first email went out at the end of March 2023.

As well as producing Newsbite, we will also be sending out monthly Gov. Notify emails to all our tenants in all properties. We have email addresses for nearly 60% of our tenants but have we got your one? Please let us know by contacting **03000 200 292** or when you see your Housing & Support Officer.

We appreciate that not everyone will have an email address, and all this information will be available on our Notice Boards where applicable but also from your Housing & Support Officer, local library or Community Centre.

We're here to help

Advice Direct Scotland provides free, practical and impartial advice to anyone in **Scotland**. Scotland's national advice service is here to support tenants.

advice direct scotland

If you are struggling with money or debt, worried about paying your energy bills or you need advice about a scam – we are here to help.

Our services include:

- ▶ advice.scot: Scotland's national advice hub can help with employment, housing and benefits. We also have a free benefits checker, which can make sure you have all the support you are entitled to. Get in touch by calling 0808 800 9060 or contacting us online.
- > consumeradvice.scot: Free advice on issues such as scams, holidays, utilities, travel, deliveries, insurance, and refunds. Get in touch by calling freephone 0808 164 6000. You can also report scams online.
- ▶ moneyadvice.scot: We offer free, impartial and practical debt advice. Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Free advice and support is available by calling 0808 800 9060.
- energyadvice.scot: Free, practical advice and information on your energy, including billing and meters, complaints, grants and assistance, and loss of energy supply. We can also help you apply for support like the Scottish Government's Home Heating Support Fund.

Advice is available at www.energyadvice.scot and on freephone 0808 196 8660, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Don't take risks Advice Direct Scotland offers a range of services that can help if you are struggling, and our team is on hand to help.

Don't miss out on help with your energy bills

Almost a third of people in Aberdeen have not redeemed their energy rebate vouchers. The vouchers are issued to people on prepayment meters so they can get money off their bills through the Government's energy support scheme.

The vouchers are worth £400 over six instalments – but are only valid for 90 days. According to the latest figures, 11,200 people in Aberdeen haven't claimed.

Follow our tips to make sure you aren't missing out if you are on a prepayment meter.

- Check unopened mail and junk email, in case the vouchers have been missed.
- Contact energy suppliers, using details found on bills, statements, and official websites.
- Contact energyadvice.scot if there are any difficulties getting through to suppliers or resolving issues. The team can be contacted on 0808 196 8660 (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm), or through www.energyadvice.scot

Stay safe in your home

Advice Direct Scotland have previously offered warnings about the dangers of house fires and carbon monoxide amid the cost-of-living crisis.

It follows dangerous "cost-cutting hacks" circulated on social media including a makeshift heating device fashioned out of terracotta pots and tealights, and using barbecues and camping stoves indoors.

Our key safety tips include:

- ▶ If using candles, be extra careful. Don't leave lit flames unattended, especially with children and pets around. Keep candles away from loose clothing, curtains and other furnishings that can catch fire.
- ▶ If using electronic candles with small button batteries, keep these out of the reach of children, as these present choking hazards.
- When using electric blankets, make sure wires are in good condition and undamaged. Unplug blankets before you get into bed, unless it has a thermostat control for safe all-night use. If your blanket gets wet, don't use it and never switch it on to dry it. Store electric blankets flat, rolled up or loosely folded to prevent damaging the internal wiring.
- Check your hot water bottle for any signs of wear and tear and if there is any damage to the rubber or to the seals, dispose of it immediately. It is recommended that hot water bottles are replaced at least every three years.



Sorting your recycling and avoiding contamination

Much has hit the headlines in the last year regarding how our waste and recycling is processed. In summer 2022, the Council's mixed recycling sorting facility at Altens was taken out of action following fire, which led to temporary arrangements being put in place. Later this year our general waste will be processed differently when the NESS energy from waste facility opens.

It's understandable that as these changes are reported, some residents may wonder if there will be an impact on how they should sort their waste and recycling. The first thing to note is that the materials that go in each of your bins hasn't changed, and residents with wheelie bins, and those using communal street bins, should continue to sort their waste between their mixed recycling, general waste and food and garden waste bins as normal.

In areas with shared street bins, this remains particularly important, and residents are encouraged to refresh themselves on which bin to use for the things they throw away. When too much of the wrong type of waste is put into a shared mixed recycling bin it can lead to the whole bin being rejected due to contamination, causing some correct materials not to be recycled. To help ensure yours and your communities recyclables are sorted properly, you can check what materials are accepted in all bin types in Aberdeen using the recycle sorter tool at https://wasteless.zerowastescotland.org.uk/recycling-sorter

Some common incorrect items that are found in mixed recycling bins in Aberdeen include electricals, wood, textiles from clothing and items made of a mixture of plastics, metals and other materials such as toys and baby equipment. Good quality items are suitable for reuse and residents are encouraged to visit www.aberdeencity.gov. uk/services/bins-waste-and-recycling/reuse-facilities

- facilities for information on locations of charity shops, clothes banks, and other schemes. This page is also intended to highlight upcycling and repair schemes you could use to help breathe new life into your old items and reduce the need to buy new. Items unsuitable for reuse can be taken to Household Waste and Recycling Centres for disposal as recycling or general waste.

Safe battery disposal has also been highlighted in recent times. It's very important that batteries are never thrown in the bin as they can combust and lead to fires. To find your nearest battery recycling point you can visit www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk/how-to-recycle-electronics/what-electronics-can-be-recycled/recycling-batteries-2/

There's lots more information on the Council website at www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/
services/bins-waste-and-recycling should vou wish to find out more.

Getting qualified in the Chartered Institute of Housing

My name is **KATHERINE MATHIESON** and I have worked in Housing at Aberdeen City Council for 17 years. I started out as an Administrator at the Homeless Unit on Bon Accord Street, before becoming a Housing Officer, which I have been for the last 15 years. I am currently acting up as a Senior Housing & Support Officer which I believe my qualifications in the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) has helped me to achieve.

I wanted to further my knowledge in housing and spoke with my senior to see what I could do to help with this. My senior suggested the CIH Level 3, a one-year course covering six different topics, as I had already completed my CIH Level 2 qualification. After looking into this, I decided that this course would be beneficial to both my work and my tenants, as well as furthering my knowledge. This course challenged me and through assignments I studied a range of different topics which included looking at ways to bring communities together and how best to establish a great working



relationship with residents. One of the assignments was studying anti-social behaviour in housing, which I found to be very relevant and beneficial to my current post and I hope to bring the skills learnt into my work in order to ensure that this issue is tackled.

I would highly recommend the Chartered Institute of Housing to anyone with an interest in housing or working in a housing setting as it has benefited my knowledge greatly and helped me do my job better than I could have without having done the qualification. I enjoyed it so much that I have continued to complete CIH Levels 4 and 5.

Sheltered Housing Housing & Support Meetings

To improve communication with our sheltered housing tenants, all our sheltered housing complexes will have monthly meetings with their Housing & Support Officer and their Bon Accord Support staff.

These meetings will be held in the common room with the dates and times for the year until Dec 2023 all posted on the notice board in the complex. This is a great opportunity for our tenants to engage and suggest ways to improve their complex.

Wi-Fi is also being installed in all common rooms and various organisations have offered to assist tenants to get online if they wish to.

Our New Housing and Support Officer

As a tenant of a Multi Storey in Seaton I am delighted to highlight the positive experience our new HOUSING & SUPPORT OFFICER has brought to our building.

SONYA WALKER is in our building on a regular basis speaking to all the tenants she meets.

When Sonya first started, she walked around the building, noting repairs and just getting to know the multi. Tenants find she is very approachable and is happy to help us with our tenancies. I feel comfortable being able to speak to Sonya and she is very supportive.

Regular drop-in sessions for tenants to attend in the common room and residents can just pop in for a chat. There is a notice on our notice board telling us when she is coming as well as being posted on the Facebook Page. She also participates in our resident led inspections and tries to get more tenants to attend.

One of the issues that we had was with our drying rooms, but because Sonya is in the building checking these rooms are kept locked and not used for storage everyone is much happier.

Having a Housing & Support Officer in our building on a regular basis has certainly made a difference not only to our multi but also all tenants have got to know her so they feel comfortable being able to approach her and get the support they need.

Service - SVQ Qualifications

The 14th of March marked the first anniversary of the new Housing and Support Service. In the past year, the service has undergone major changes and none more significant than the merging of the traditional Housing Officer and Support Officer role.

Aberdeen City Council's housing support service has made the training and development of all staff a priority. Attention was immediately focused on ensuring all staff were supported to achieve the level 3 or Level 4 SVQ in Social Services and Healthcare.

The qualification is being delivered in partnership with Bon Accord Support Service and the first cohorts of staff started to undertake their relevant qualification in September and October of last year. Over the coming year and beyond additional cohorts of staff will begin the process of completing their qualification.

The delivery of this qualification is an integral aspect of ensuring that officers are trained and qualified to deliver support and achieve positive outcomes for those tenants who may benefit from housing support.

Debbie was one of the first Housing and Support Officers to complete her Level 3 qualification and said:

> "The SVQ in Health and Social care allows staff to reflect on what they do and why they do it. It gave me an understanding of my strengths and areas for development within my role as a Housing & Support Officer."







Residents Celebrate the King's Coronation

THE TENANTS IN BRIMMOND COURT ENJOYED A DELICIOUS TEA IN CHINA CUPS, WITH SANDWICHES AND CAKE TO CELEBRATE THE KING'S CORONATION!

Isabell, Chair of the Tenant group, said: "The cake was donated from the Council, so we didn't even have to bake!!! King Charles has even seen us celebrate his day in May, we have a friend who knows his Personal Assistant so these photos were emailed!

You never know, one day he might drop in to see us on his way to Balmoral!!" Another tenant said:

"It was really great to get dressed up and enjoy this special day – I have now seen two coronations, but I was only a youngster at the last one!"

Boogie in the bar

Boogie in the bar has expanded again!

We now have a central boogie held at DEE SWIM CLUB on the second Wednesday of every month.

This has been running for three months now and has been immensely popular. This now ensures that there is a boogie in the bar every week:

The First Friday of every month	Sunnybank FC, Northfield
The Second Wednesday of every month	Dee Swim Club Gerrard St
The Third Thursday of every month	Foundry Bar Holburn St
The Fourth Thursday of every month	The Abbot Bar, Kincorth

Boogie in the bar continues to be one off the most popular events with some individuals attending everyone!

Email swsc@aberdeencity.gov.uk with any enquiries.



Help & Support

Help and support is available to anyone concerned about the rising cost of living via our dedicated website: -

HELP WITH THE COST OF LIVING

https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/help-cost-livingTimes and places to collect emergency free food

TIMES AND PLACES TO COLLECT EMERGENCY FOOD

https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/housing/homelessness/times-and-places-collect-emergency-food

WARM SPACES

https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/people-and-communities/warm-spaces

FREE PERIOD PRODUCTS

https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/people-and-communities/access-period-products/free-period-products

Customer Service, Repairs, Housing and Support Officers

Please telephone the Customer Contact Centre. Telephone: 03000 200 292

Contacting Us

The quickest way that you can contact us is through the Housing Online Portal, which allows you to manage many aspects of your tenancy online at a time that suits you. Visit www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/housingonline for more information.

If you are contacting us by telephone, our Customer Contact Centre is open **Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm**. The Customer Contact Centre receives around 23,000 calls each month and sometimes you may have to wait longer than we would like for your call to be answered. We know how frustrating this can be and we have introduced a new system which offers you a call back if you have waited more than 5 minutes for your call to be answered.

Our Customer Contact Centre is busiest on Mondays and Tuesdays, and so unless your enquiry is an emergency, we recommend calling towards the end of the week to avoid longer wait times.

We carry out regular recruitment exercises to find enthusiastic and customer focussed individuals to join our Customer Contact Centre team. If you, or anyone you know may be interested in a career as a Customer Care Officer, please keep an eye out on our website and social media pages for advertised opportunities.

This document is available in various formats and languages Please call 01224 522839.

ادا كنت بود الحصول على هذه الوبيقة بالخط العريض أو البريار أو الأشرطة الصوتية المدمجة أو كنت تود ترجمتها الى لغة أخرى فالرجاء الاتصال بنا على الهاتف أدناه.

আপনি যদি এই দলিলটি ব্রেইলে, বড় ছাপার অক্ষরে বা শোনার জন্য সিডি, অখবা দলিলটি অন্য কোন ভাষায় অনুদিত চান তবে অনুগ্রহ করে নীচের টেলিফোন নম্বরে ফোন করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

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