

Westworld

Official Newsletter of West of Scotland Housing Association

February 2022 Edition

Our Values

We know we don't always get it right and we want to do better.

That's why we have created new values with the help of tenants and staff. To ensure our values meet the needs of customers and staff, we set up a group of staff, tenants and Board who were instrumental in developing our consultation and values.

- **Respect** - we treat everyone with empathy and kindness
- **Inclusive** - we aim to meet individual needs and recognise diversity
- **Integrity** - we act with integrity and honesty at all times
- **Improvement** - we aim to continuously improve what we do to benefit our customers, staff and stakeholders
- **Support** - we will be supportive in our approach with customers, staff and stakeholders



Our values will be reflected in everything we do and we have created a Values Framework which outlines the behaviours expected of our staff, managers and Board. Our values are also the basis for our new Customer Care Charter which you can find out more about on page 3.

To find out more and watch our short video about our new values and what they mean to tenants please visit our website <https://westscot.co.uk/about-us/>

Welcome



Welcome to our first Westworld of 2022. We are all excited about the year ahead and continuing to deliver our key business priorities whilst making some positive changes to improve our services.

We are delighted to launch our new Values and Customer Care Charter which involved a lot of work with tenants and staff to make sure we got it right. In the coming months, you will see a number of changes as a result of this work including the creation of our new Customer Service Team who you can find out more about on page 3.

You will read more on page 4 about the result of our rent consultation. We know that many of our tenants are facing a significant rise in living costs so that's why we have made sure our annual rent increase is one of the lowest in the housing sector. With energy bills rising it is a good time to remind all of you about our Energy Advice Service. You can find out more about how they can help and their contact details on page 11.

Remember you can also hear our latest news and updates on our Facebook page (WSHAScotland).

Best Wishes,

Brian Gannon
Chief Executive

Coming soon... Customer App

We want to ensure we provide access to our services in a way that suits the needs of our customers and many of you told us you would like to have access to an app.

We are currently working on our new Customer App with an external company which was chosen with the help of tenants.

Our new Customer App will go live in Spring 2022 and will give 24/7 access to a range of services such as paying rent and reporting a repair.

We will be in touch once it is ready to let you know how you can sign up.



Key Highlights

Customer Care Charter 3

Ayrshire Board Member 3

Customer Service Team 4

Energy Saving Tips 11

Customer Care Charter

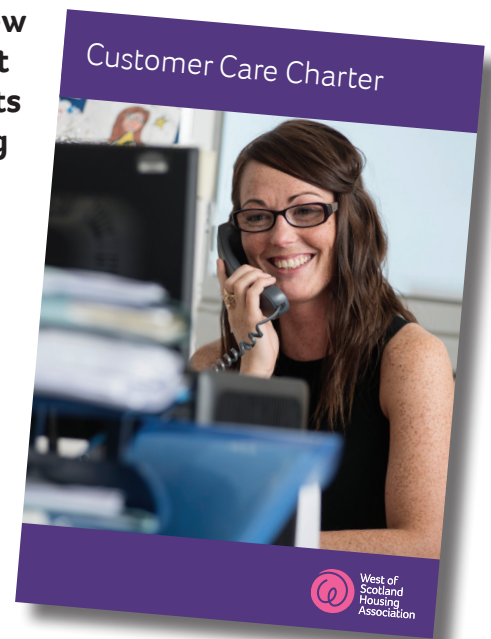
We made a commitment in our Corporate Business Plan to review our customer service and develop customer care standards. Part of this involved creating a new Customer Care Charter which sets out the standards you should expect to receive when contacting us or asking us to do something for you.

We updated our Charter following consultation with our Tenants Advisory Group and feedback from other tenants, as well as taking into account staff views.

The Charter sets out response times for general enquiries as well as setting out specific standards you can expect when accessing a range of our services.

We will report on our performance in achieving these standards on a quarterly basis via our website and in Westworld.

We have included a copy of our Customer Care Charter with this edition of Westworld or you can also view it on our website.



Live in Ayrshire? Passionate about your community? Join our Board!

Being part of our Board is an excellent opportunity to be involved in making a real difference to your community. This is an exciting time for us as we play our part in tackling climate change by implementing our first Green Strategy and continuing to put customers at the heart of service delivery by implementing our new values and Customer Care Charter.

Your role as a Board member will involve attendance at meetings, attending training sessions, and contributing to decision making.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD BOARD MEMBER

We are looking for Board members from Ayrshire who share our values and has the following skills and experience:

- A genuine passion for social housing and commitment to helping tenants and communities.
- Ability to actively participate and contribute their views on Board matters.
- Ability to represent tenants and communities on the Board in relation to strategic issues.

HOW TO APPLY

For an informal chat and to find out more, please contact Jennifer Cairns, Director of Corporate Services on 0141 550 5600 or Jennifer.cairns@westscot.co.uk

Customer Service Team

We have recently introduced a new Customer Service Team who will be the first point of contact for many general and housing related enquiries. We know that our tenants want to see our staff out and about in our communities and the restructure will free up our housing teams to do this.

The friendly and helpful Customer Service team will also support our approach to customer engagement, ensuring you have more opportunities to have your say about how we deliver services.

The team was introduced at the start of February and are undergoing intensive training to allow them to respond effectively to your enquiries.



Rent Consultation Update

We recently asked for your view on our proposed rent charge from April 2022 onwards.

We know that tenants are facing increasing pressures on their budgets, and that an increase in the rental charge would not be popular. However, our Board had to consider the increasing costs we face as a housing association, as well as the need to continue to invest in our homes to make them more energy efficient for our tenants.

Our Board asked us to consult with tenants about a proposed increase of 2.5%. and we sent a letter to every tenant explaining what the proposed increase would mean for them, and advertised our survey via text, email and our website. We received fewer responses to our consultation activities than in previous years, and just over half of respondents did not agree with the proposed increase.

At their meeting in January, our Board made the difficult decision to proceed with the proposed increase as it will allow us to continue with our investment plans to improve your homes. The current rate of inflation is 5.4% however we are increasing our rents by an amount well below this figure (2.5%) in recognition of the current cost of living crisis facing our tenants. The increase is also below the average of other Housing Associations and we will continue to drive down our costs to ensure future increases are kept lower.

If as a result of the proposed increase you face any financial difficulties, then please get in touch with our Welfare Rights Team who might be able to provide support or advice. You can contact them on 0141 550 5600 or welfarerights@westscot.co.uk

Service Charges

We also undertook a survey in January to gather feedback about how we apply service charges. Over 75% of tenants supported a proposal that means that we will apply the same service charge for each service received depending on the type of property you live in. We will also reduce the administrative charge from 5% to 2.5%. We'd like to thank all of those tenants who took the time to respond to the above surveys.

Café with its Heart in the Community

Following a competitive application process the Halliday Foundation Charity have been successful in securing the Café lease within the Barrowfield Community Centre. The aptly named 'Communitèa café opened in January and has a reduced waste theme where they make excellent use of supermarket surplus that is both safe and delicious as well as promoting recycling in all of its work.

All profits from the Café will be used to support the wider work of the charity in supporting people and reducing homelessness and poverty.

Their menu includes varied breakfast and lunches, with daily specials being made available to keep the menu fresh and interesting.

You can pre purchase tokens which can be used to purchase goods from the café – just like gift vouchers! An array of affordable paying options is on offer including an option to 'Pay It Forward' by paying £2 extra for your item and allowing someone else in the community, who is perhaps finding times difficult, to eat out.

Considerable thought has gone into the pay it forward scheme to ensure dignity and confidentiality. The scheme will use the same tokens/gift vouchers as the prepayment options. No one will ever know if someone is using a pay it forward or a pre-paid gift voucher!

Anyone struggling a little and wishing to make use of the pay it forward programme should contact the Barrowfield Community Hub Coordinator, Christine Papworth, on 0141 550 3600. All calls will be treated in confidence.

Find out more about the café on their Facebook Page @ communitèa21



Funding Success



Willowacre Trust, our charitable subsidiary, have secured funding from Santander UK Foundation Limited to enhance the digital and financial support services we provide in our communities.

It is important that our tenants benefit from the positive impacts of being digitally and financially skilled and these services will help to give tenants the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to access online services and make better financial decisions to help save money.

We will offer one to one appointments and a wide range of workshops including:

- Basic digital skills – confidence with using a computer or other devices, browsing the internet, email, internet safety, social media and device borrowing.
- Budgeting/money management skills – online banking, payment types, household bills, saving and budgeting.
- Energy advice - tariff/supplier switching, debt management, complaints, reducing energy consumption.

To find out more about how we can help you please call 0141 550 5664 or visit www.willowacretrust.co.uk

Getting Involved

Customer Satisfaction Survey

We are committed to listening to our customers and using your views to improve our services. To help us with this, we have appointed an independent market research company, Research Resource, to carry out a customer satisfaction survey on our behalf.

The survey, which will be carried out over the phone, asks about your views on the services that we provide, how we communicate with you, your priorities and how happy you are with your home and neighbourhood. Research Resource interviewers are aiming to interview 800 of our tenants spread across all the areas where we provide housing. All interviews will be carried out by Research Resource's fully trained interviewers. The surveys will take place throughout February and March.

If you are contacted by Research Resource, we hope you will be able to spare the time to take part. Your feedback is important, and it really does make a difference. Research Resource will only share your details with us if you give them permission to do so. If you have made a comment or given an answer that you would like someone from WSHA to investigate further, then the surveyor will ask for your permission to share your details with us. To allow us to investigate your issue please do give permission.

Once all the surveys have been completed, Research Resource will provide an independent report on the findings and we will share the results with all tenants. If you have any questions about the survey, please call William Easton at Research Resource on 0141 641 6410. All tenants who take part in the survey will be entered into a prize draw to win a Tablet. The winner will be drawn by Research Resource, so to be in with a chance of winning, please take part in our survey!

If you would like to speak to someone at WSHA about any aspect of the survey process, please contact Alistair Reid on 0141 550 5600 who will be happy to help

Key Business Objectives Consultation Results

Each year we develop a Corporate Business Plan which sets out our Key Business Objectives (KBOs) for the year ahead. These objectives are the subject of detailed discussion between staff, our Board and our tenants. The objectives we have agreed for our new business plan are:

- To deliver a successful Transfer of Engagements from Charing Cross HA to WSHA and begin to deliver our Business Case commitments
- Review our Factoring Services
- Deliver our Green Strategy
- Prepare for Management of Mid Market Rent
- Review Digital/IT Strategy
- Develop Investment Strategy for Existing Homes to meet EESSH2
- Work collaboratively with our Reactive Repairs contractor to improve service delivery for customers
- Implement new Willowacre Trust Business Plan Business Objectives
- Review partnership approach to homelessness & tenancy sustainment/support
- Implement new regulatory requirements and low carbon technologies for new build housing

As part of the rent consultation mentioned above, we sought the views of tenants on these objectives. 85% of tenants who responded to the consultation felt that the KBOs were the right objectives for us to focus on. Tenants who responded felt it was particularly important that we focus on improving the condition of our existing homes which will be covered under the KBO relating to EESSH2.

Annual Consultation Plan

Each year, we consult with you on a number of different policies, procedures and other topics where we want your views on how we can make improvements. This year will be no different as we have a range of policies, procedures and strategies that need to be reviewed, as well as consultations that take place on an annual basis. We thought it would be useful to set out what some of these topics are so that any tenants who have a particular interest can get involved in informing these consultations.

In the next 10 months we will be seeking your views on the following:

| Consultation Topic | What it is about? | When will we seek your views? |
|---|---|-------------------------------|
| Void Management Policy | This policy sets out how we manage our homes from when a tenant advising they are leaving until the home is let to a new tenant | February 2022 |
| Income Management Policy | This policy sets out how we will maximise the rent and other charges that we collect from customers | February 2022 |
| Review our Digital and IT Strategy | This Strategy sets out how we will improve our IT systems and processes to deliver more efficient services for customers | April 2022 |
| Review our partnership approach to homeless and tenancy support/sustainment | Explore options for improving how we engage with other agencies (local authorities/charities) around the support we provide to those tenants who have previously been homeless to assist them to maintain tenancies | Autumn 2022 |
| Allocations Policy | This policy sets out how we will allocate our homes | August 2022 |
| Key Business Objectives 2023 / 2024 | We will review progress against our current objectives and look to agree new objectives for the year ahead | September 2022 |
| Rent Consultation 2023/2024 | We will seek tenant views on a proposed rent increase for the year ahead | November 2022 |

If there are any of these topics you are interested in sharing your views on – please do get in touch and when we are in a position for the consultation to start we will get in touch to find out how you wish to be involved.

Building for the Future

New Homes Update

Doonfoot - South Ayrshire

In November 2021, we completed phase 2 of our development in Doonfoot, South Ayrshire which saw the creation of 61 new affordable homes in partnership with Mactaggart and Mickel Homes. The £9million development, located in our established community at Greenan Views, comprises a mix of amenity flats and 2 and 3 bedroom family homes, and is the 3rd development in which we have worked with Mactaggart and Mickel to deliver affordable housing. The development was supported by South Ayrshire Council and funded with £4.8m from the Scottish Government.

We are excited to continue our partnership with McTaggart & Mickle at Greenan to provide a further 31 two and three bed family homes which are expected to be completed by the end of 2022. The new homes include a “no gas” low carbon heating system to help reduce our carbon emissions and tackling climate change which is a priority of our Green Strategy.

We are in the process of negotiating the purchase of the 6 two and three semi-detached homes with CALA Homes at Greenan. This is the fourth and final affordable development to fulfil South Ayrshire Council’s affordable housing requirements. All going well we expect the new homes to be completed early 2023. We are in the process of negotiating with CALA homes to purchase 6 two and three semi-detached homes, which subject to successful negotiations we expect the new homes to be available in early 2023.



St Andrews Church, Hamilton

Working in partnership with Apsis (Construction) Ltd, the construction is progressing well and the building is now wind and watertight. Built over four storeys with stunning views over Hamilton, the development consists of 12 spacious two bed flats with attractive shared gardens and a private parking courtyard that will be Electric Vehicle enabled. The flats are due for completion in December 2022.

Dalmarnock Station, Glasgow

Construction is progressing well at our 114 home project located next to Dalmarnock Train Station in East Glasgow. In partnership with Springfield Partnerships, the development will consist of three 6-storey blocks and will include our first 54 mid-market rented homes along with 60 for social rent. The first homes are expected to be ready in summer 2022.



Springfield Cross, Glasgow

Good progress is being made to deliver our first, and Glasgow’s largest, Passivhaus development. In partnership with Hub West Scotland and CCG (Scotland) Ltd, the six-storey development consists of 36 two and three bed flats and includes four wheelchair adaptable and 12 flats designated for over 55’s. A communal WIFI system is being piloted to provide tenants with low costs broadband to promote digital inclusion among our tenants which is particularly important now that many services are accessed online.

The flats will come with a mechanical ventilation & heat recovery system that delivers health benefits through consistent clean air and even temperatures being circulated and has low running costs. This is important given the developments proximity to a busy main road. The project is scheduled to complete early Summer 2022.

New Homes Update

Dundashill, Glasgow

Planning consent was granted in January 2022 for us to create 90 mid market rented flats at Dundashill. The homes will be built to Passivhaus standard and consist of a mix of 1 to 3 bedroom flats, including wheelchair adaptable with high quality landscaping, urban play area and cycle and walking route to the city and surrounding areas. These new homes are part of a bigger redevelopment proposal for the former Diageo Distillery which will see around 600 new homes being built.

Each flat will have a balcony with stunning views over Glasgow City Centre and access good walking and cycle routes from the Canal. The development is also being Electric Vehicle enabled through future proofing the infrastructure and network. Fibre broadband will also be provided.

Mid Market Rent Homes

Mid market rent (or MMR) is an initiative from the Scottish Government to provide quality, affordable homes for low to moderate income households. MMR tenants are typically those who would not qualify for social housing but cannot afford to pay market rent or buy a property.

Our subsidiary, Westscot Living, will launch our first MMR homes at Dalmarnock in Autumn 2022 and so far we have received over 500 enquiries. If you or someone you know would be interested in our MMR homes please visit our website for more information and to register your interest www.westscotliving.co.uk

To find out more about our new homes please visit www.westscot.co.uk

Charing Cross Transfer

As well as building new homes, we also look for other opportunities to grow as a housing association and increase the positive impact we can have on communities.

As we announced at the end of last year, we are delighted to have been chosen as Charing Cross's preferred transfer partner. It is a fantastic endorsement of our organisation as a modern progressive housing association that has much to offer current and future tenants. We are working closely with Charing Cross' Management Committee, staff and other partners to gain the support of tenants and bring about a successful transfer to WSHA. If Charing Cross Tenants vote yes in the transfer ballot, they will become tenants of WSHA. This will benefit current WSHA tenants by improving our economies of scale and helping to keep future rent increases as low as possible. We will keep all tenants updated about this in the coming months.



About Charing Cross Housing Association

Charing Cross Housing Association is a registered social landlord, property factor and a Scottish charity. The Association was registered in 1976 and operates mainly in the Woodlands and Garnethill areas of Glasgow. It was set up to address pre-1919 tenemental disrepair and during the 1980s and 1990s the Association carried out a comprehensive programme of improvement schemes to help protect the Victorian red and blonde sandstone tenements.

From 1987, the Association also completed a number of new build developments on gap sites in the area that sought to complement the existing buildings and retain the character of the community and environment. Factoring services are also provided to private homeowners.



Electric Vehicles and Charging Points

Our Green Strategy shows how we will play our part in tackling climate change. We have been making changes to the way we work to achieve a greener future.

As part of our commitment to our Green Strategy we now have two electric cars which will be used by our staff when out and about in the community. These will reduce mileage for those staff that are able to leave their own cars at home and reduce carbon emissions. To support our Electric Cars we have also installed Electric Vehicle Charging Points at our office with the help of funding from the Energy Savings Trust. The charging points are available to use for our tenants and if you would like to find out more about how to use them, please contact us.

Estate Management Policy Update

We have updated our Estate Management Policy so that tenants and staff have a better understanding of what we are responsible for, what tenants are responsible for, and what other agencies such as local Councils are responsible for. The Policy covers areas such as:

- Estate inspections
- Communal cleaning
- Fly tipping
- Parking
- Grounds Maintenance
- Graffiti
- Infestations



We asked tenants to give their views on the policy and over 80% felt it provided clear information about what to expect. Thank you to those of you who completed our survey. You can read the Estate Management Policy on our website.

Fight the Rising Cost of Gas & Electricity

As we face huge increases in Energy bills, our Energy Advice Team gives some tips on how you can reduce your energy costs in the home:



- Ensuring that the curtains are drawn in the evening to prevent heat loss
- Check all the radiators to ensure that they are working efficiently. If it feels cold at the top and warm at the bottom, then you need to bleed them. Find out how to bleed your radiators at <https://sse.co.uk/help/home-services/bleeding-a-radiator> or contact us.
- Use the timer to control, if you have one, when your heating comes on. You are wasting money if the heating is on when no-one is home! Contact our Energy Advice team if you need help in setting this up.
- Turn down radiators in rooms that you are not using and close the door.
- Don't leave appliances/gadgets on standby and don't leave devices on charge overnight.
- For households on billing/credit meters, check your gas and electricity bills.
- Are the bills estimated? Take a reading and register it with your supplier to ensure that the balance is correct. This helps the supplier ensure that your payments are matching your usage.

How we can help

Our Energy Advice Service offers support and impartial advice with the following:

- Reducing your energy costs
- Understanding your fuel bills
- Confirming who your supplier is and help setting up a new account
- Emergency Top ups & Grant applications for energy debt
- Handling energy complaints
- Managing your fuel debt
- Comparing energy tariffs and helping to switch suppliers
- Understanding your heating controls

To find out more or make an appointment please call 0141 550 5664 or email kevin.bonaccorsi@westscot.co.uk

Performance/Complaints

Complaints and Customer Satisfaction

We are committed to listening to your views so we can deliver services more effectively, or where we can do more things that you want us to do. To support us to do this we regularly monitor the complaints we receive, and also have an independent company Research Resource undertake monthly satisfaction surveys. Where an issue comes up as part of a complaint, or is fed back to us by Research Resource we will look to make changes to how we work.

Complaints Update - October – December 2021 (quarter 3)

We received a total of 34 complaints – 29 at stage one (frontline resolution) and 5 at stage 2 (investigation). We resolved our stage 1 complaints in an average of 2.24 days, and at stage 2 in an average of 9.4 days.

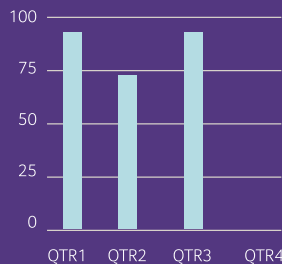
The areas that we received most complaints about related to our day-to-day repairs service, mainly to do with poor communication from our contractor in terms of appointments. We will continue to work with our contractor to improve their performance in this area.

The second area related to the implementation of our policy on items being left in communal areas. Our Housing Teams undertake regular inspection of closes and where items potentially pose a fire risk, tenants are asked to remove these items. We are unfortunately unable to change this policy as it relates to tenant safety.

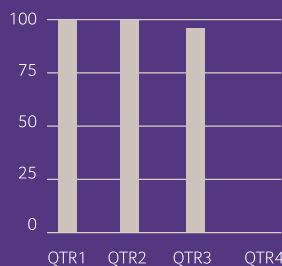
If you are unhappy with any aspect of our service then you can report a complaint by emailing haveyoursay@westscot.co.uk or calling **0141 550 5600**.

WSHA Customer Satisfaction 2021/22

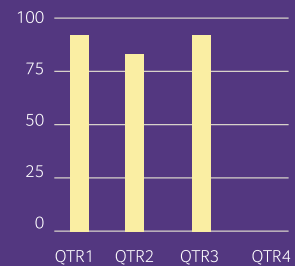
Overall, how satisfied were you with the repairs and maintenance service received?



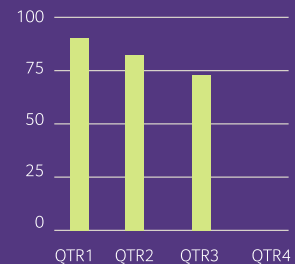
% of tenants satisfied with planned maintenance



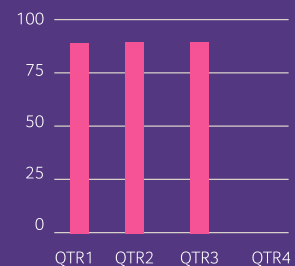
Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall service provided by West of Scotland Housing Association?



Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the landlords's management of the neighbourhood you live in?



Taking into account the accommodation and services your landlord provides, do you think your rent for this property represents good value for money?



For more information please contact:

t: 0141 550 5600

w. westscot.co.uk

e. customer.service@westscot.co.uk

f. WSHAScotland

t. WSHAScotland



West of
Scotland
Housing
Association