

Scottish Social Housing Charter Update

The Scottish Government's Social Housing Charter came into force in April 2012. The Charter sets out the standards and outcomes that:

- Tenants can expect from social landlords in terms of the quality and value for money of the services they receive, the standard of their homes and opportunities for communication and participation in the decisions that affect them.
- Homeless people can expect from us in terms of access to help and advice, the quality of temporary accommodation and continuing support to help homeless people access and keep a home.

As a social landlord we have to fill in an annual return to the Scottish Housing Regulator to make sure that we are providing landlord services that meet the standards set out by the Charter.

We have now completed our second annual return and look forward to receiving our report from the Regulator. This report will be available to our tenants and other customers through the Regulator's website.

Further to this, we will be publishing our 2014/15 performance information in much the same way as we did last year. The Annual Performance Report to Tenants was well received and we would like to thank all of you who took the time to give us feedback.

If you have any thoughts or ideas or would like to be involved in developing our next performance report to tenants please contact us on **0300 123 4566** or by emailing housingpolicy@moray.gov.uk.

Important change to our emergency contact details

Our emergency out of hours number has changed to **03457 565656** so that we meet a new Government directive. The new number will mean that the cost of calling us is made clearer to our tenants and other customers.

When you call us you will be charged the same as it would be to call a local landline. If your tariff or call package offers free or inclusive calls to landlines, our new emergency number will be included in the same way.

For more information you can visit the UK Calling website at www.ukcalling.info or speak to your telephone provider.

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CONTACT US

If you need to contact us or need information please call our **Contact Centre on 0300 1234566**

or visit our website

www.moray.gov.uk.

Alternatively you can visit one of our access points.

BUCKIE

Buckie Access Point,
13 Cluny Square, Buckie, AB56 1AJ.

ELGIN

Elgin Access Point,
Council Office, High Street, Elgin,
IV30 1BX.

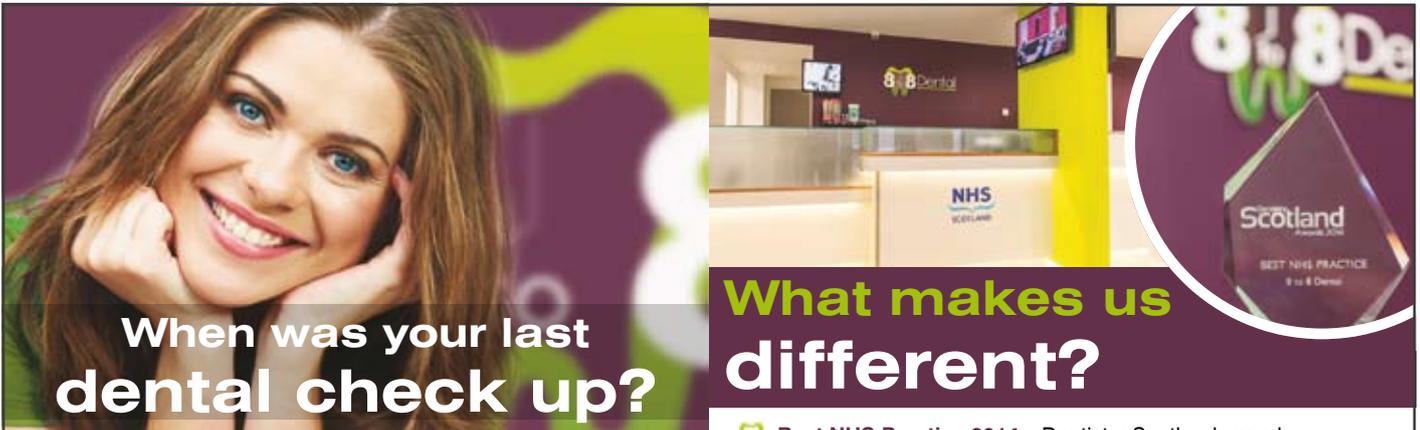
FORRES

Forres Access Point, Auchernack,
High Street, Forres,
IV36 1DX.

KEITH

Keith Resource Centre, Mid Street,
Keith, AB55 5AH





When was your last dental check up?

REGISTERING NEW NHS PATIENTS

Visiting the dentist every six months for a thorough examination and clean is vital to ensure your teeth and gums stay healthy for life. This enables us to pinpoint any potential problems before they become serious. Our dental examination includes a **FREE** oral cancer screening as well as a full dental health review.

We offer a full range of NHS and Private dental treatments for children and adults of all ages

Call now to register

01542 833087

What makes us different?

- 🦷 Best NHS Practice 2014 – Dentistry Scotland awards
- 🦷 Late night, early morning and lunchtime appointments from 8am to 8pm
- 🦷 Gentle, caring and experienced dentists who help nervous patients with their fears
- 🦷 Same day emergency appointments available
- 🦷 Modern, purpose built dental practice
- 🦷 Ground floor access to all surgeries
- 🦷 We also offer private cosmetic treatments so make you smile



OPENING HOURS

Monday to Thursday 8.00am to 8.00pm
(NOT closed for lunch)

Friday 8.00 am to 5.00 pm (NOT closed for lunch)

32 WEST CHURCH STREET, BUCKIE AB56 1HL • WWW.8TO8DENTAL.CO.UK Best NHS Practice Scotland Awards 2014



NEUTER YOUR CAT FOR £5

- Are you on income based benefits or low income?
- Are you a full time student?
- Are you in receipt of a state pension or pension credit?

Moray Cats Protection may be able to help you with the cost of neutering your cat.

Neutering is good for your cat:

- It stops unwanted kittens & costly vet bills when the pregnancy goes wrong
- Your cat is less likely to fight, reducing the risk of catching life-threatening diseases
- Neutered cats are less likely to wander and get run over
- Neutered male cats are less likely to display territorial behaviour such as spraying

Let us help you and your cat.

Please contact us for more information:

Tel: 07837 342 646 or email: moraycp@hotmail.com

Visit our Facebook page: Moray Cats Protection



Dear tenant,



Welcome to the summer edition of the Tenants' Voice.

Recently the Moray Tenants Forum met with Moray and Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership Tenants Association (MAHPTA) to build a forum in Moray to share good practice and learn from each other's experiences. This new forum will be known as the Moray Tenants Partnership. This edition contains more information about the Tenants Forum and the Moray Tenants Partnership.

I bring some sad news of the passing of Michael Pirie who was the treasurer of Moray Tenants Forum. Michael made a significant contribution to tenant participation in Moray and will be sorely missed.

We have started work on our investment programme and in this edition you can see an update of what improvements will be carried out over 2015/2016.

There is also an update on welfare reform and the roll out of Universal Credit in Moray.

I hope you enjoy reading your Tenants' Voice newsletter and find the information useful. We would like you to tell us about any news or information you would like to see featured in future editions. If you have any ideas, please get in touch with the Housing Policy Team on 0300 123 4566 or email housingpolicy@moray.gov.uk.

Finally I would like to say have a safe and wonderful summer.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric McGillivray". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Councillor Eric McGillivray

Have your say...

Tenants Voice is put together for YOU, the tenants and customers of Moray Council, so it is important that it contains the information you want to know about.

If you have any ideas or comments on what you would like to see in the newsletter, please tell us.

We have introduced this section to give you the opportunity to have your say.

I would like the Tenants' Voice to include more about :

- Repairs & Maintenance
- Tackling antisocial behaviour
- Community projects
- Housing Issues
- Issues affecting young people
- Housing and other benefits
- Applying for a house/transfer
- Issues affecting disabled tenants

Any other ideas or comments:

.....

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Name.....Contact No.....

Address.....

Please return all completed forms to: Housing and Property, The Moray Council,
PO Box 6760, Elgin IV30 9BX

Moray Tenants Forum



Moray Tenants Core Group have updated their constitution and relaunched as the Moray Tenants Forum. Moray Tenants Forum recently held their Annual General Meeting (AGM) which marked the end of the first year as a group.

The aim of the forum is to represent all council tenants, and to make sure that they get the best service possible from the council whether it be from allocations to repairs. The forum has representatives who sit on a number of groups and committees within the Council. Three representatives sit on the Communities Committee along with Councillors to discuss housing issues, and when required these representatives are also entitled to a vote on housing related issues. Moray tenants are also represented

at other groups outwith Moray such as the Northern Lights regional network. The forum are also currently working with the tenants of Moray and Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership to build a joint forum in Moray so that we can share good practice and learn from each others experience, this new group is known as the Moray Tenants Partnership.

Any Moray Council tenants who wish to join the forum will be made most welcome. We can be contacted via our facebook page at www.facebook.com/moraytenantsforum

or you can contact the Housing Policy Team on **0300 123 4566** who will pass your details on to us.

Obituary

Michael Pirie

On Saturday 25th April 2015, Michael Pirie, the treasurer and long-time member of Moray Tenants Forum sadly passed away in Dr Gray's Hospital following a short illness. Michael was a much liked and respected member of the forum, and he had been involved in Tenant Participation for 10 years. He was a gentle giant with a wicked sense of humour and will be sadly missed. During his time as a tenant representative he had attended various events across Scotland and had numerous friends from other tenant groups. Responsible for administrating the forum website as well as the finances, Michael was one of the senior figures in Moray's tenant participation circle. He will be sorely missed by all his friends and colleagues and our condolences are with his family at this sad time.

Do you car where you

Getting involved is the best way to help us improve the services that you receive, and your voice improves our performance and development in areas that matter to you.

We want to work together with our tenants in a real partnership to improve the services we offer.

The Moray Tenants Forum represents the interests of tenants like you and by getting involved you can be at the heart of decision making. It doesn't have to be all about attending meetings as there are lots of ways you can get involved.

It can also be fun and can help you gain useful experience, and even a qualification. There are lots of opportunities for training and chances to learn new skills and meet new people.

The Forum meetings are currently held in Elgin once a month but if you want to you can do more. Travel costs are covered so there's no financial cost to you and there's free tea, coffee and possibly a biscuit.

To make it work we need to have a diverse membership from across Moray. We are looking for members from all areas and particularly need young tenants to get involved.

Interested? Or just want to chat about it... give us a call on **0300 123 4566** or email **housingpolicy@moray.gov.uk**

Katie Holmes

Treasurer of the Moray Tenants Partnership



I joined the Moray Tenants Forum and now the Moray Tenants Partnership to meet other tenants and council staff. It's nice to be able to speak to people face-to-face rather than over the phone or by email and get your voice heard.

It gives me the opportunity to know what's going on within Moray, be able to put my views forward and get my point across.

I found the forum very welcoming, interesting and rewarding to be part of. I have been part of the Moray

Tenants Forum for over a year and have recently become the vice chair and also the treasurer of the Moray Tenants Partnership of which I am very proud.

I would recommend that people come along and see what happens at the meetings. You can be as involved as much or as little as you want and I'm sure that you will find it as informative and enjoyable as I do.

e about

live?

The truth is we need **your** help



Tenants Scrutiny



This is your chance to participate in a brand new project and with your help and commitment we can make it a huge success.

We are looking for volunteers to help monitor, improve and influence the services that we provide.

The aim of the project is to develop ways in which our tenants and other customers can conduct hands on and detailed assessments about how we look after our customers. We want to involve as wide a range of people as possible.

Getting to Grips with Scrutiny

As part of our commitment to tenant participation we are looking for tenants who would be interested in having a say in the way we manage our homes and to make sure we're providing the best and most cost effective services. **Could that be you?**

Would you like to work with a group of local people to check how well we are performing in key areas such as repairs? If so, you may be interested in joining a Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

How does a Tenant Scrutiny Panel Work?

As a member of a Tenant Scrutiny Panel, you will work with us to make sure agreed standards are met, and work towards implementing service improvements. You will be able to challenge our performance and contribute ideas about how we can improve the way that we do things.

How much of time is needed to be a Tenant Inspector?

As much time or as little time as you can give. Most meetings that are held last about around one hour and an inspection could last from an hour to half a day depending on what time you can give. We will work with you and try to arrange inspections on days and at times that are convenient to you.



What will you get in return?

In return for your time and commitment we will offer you a chance to learn new skills and to be part of the shaping of future services. You will also be rewarded in the knowledge that you have contributed to making changes to the services that thousands of people in Moray receive.

Who can join?

As a tenant, you will have valuable insight from a tenant's perspective. Some additional qualities that would be useful are:-

- a genuine interest in helping us to improve housing services
- an ability to look at the way services are delivered and tell us the good and not so good
- talk about solutions and contribute ideas
- be objective, honest and open

Mystery shopping

Mystery shoppers can help us to test the quality of our services. Posing as customers, they can test the Contact Centre and Access Points by visiting or ringing in with a query, or even by looking for information on the website.

Mystery shoppers will help us to identify which services are performing well and which areas need improving. They also help us answer basic service delivery questions, such as whether customers can always access a particular service and how well enquiries are dealt with. All of our tenants and prospective tenants can take part in mystery shopping.

Want to know more?

If you are interested and want to know more please contact: Housing Policy Team Tel: **0300 1234 566** or email: **housingpolicy@moray.co.uk**

Robbie Donaldson



Plumber Robbie Donaldson has pulled the plug on a council career stretching back 44 years.

Robbie was given a send-off by colleagues at the DLO depot in Mosstodloch where he was presented with retirement gifts and his wife Liz with a bouquet.

Raised in Lossiemouth where he still lives, Robbie started as an apprentice plumber with the local town council only four days after leaving Lossiemouth High School in 1971.

He landed the job after his technical teacher happened to be golfing with the Lossiemouth burgh surveyor who mentioned he was on the lookout for a plumbing apprentice.

Council New Build Update

The Council is pressing ahead with its ambitious programme to build 500 new council houses over the next 10 years. Construction work is already underway on sites throughout Moray with new housing being delivered in Elgin, Dufftown, Buckie, Forres and Keith.

In Elgin, we are on site with two projects at Thornhill Drive, Glassgreen and Bain Avenue, Linkwood. The Thornhill Drive project will provide 32 amenity bungalows designed for people with mobility issues. The bungalows will have level access showers and easy to maintain gardens and will be particularly suitable for older people. The houses are due for completion in September 2015.

The project at Bain Avenue will provide 18 new homes with a mix of 3 and 4 bed family houses and 1 bed cottage flats. The houses will be complete by October 2015.

Work started at Hill Street, Dufftown in February 2015 with the first handovers expected in late November 2015 and overall completion scheduled for February 2016. The project will deliver 19 houses with a balanced mix of 3 and 4 bed houses, accessible bungalows and 1 bed flats. We will begin letting the houses in August 2015.

In March 2015, work commenced on two projects at Colvin Court, Keith and Alba Road, Buckie. The Keith project, which will mark the final phase of the Council 31 house development at Colvin Court, will deliver 6 new homes with a mix of 2 and 3 bed amenity bungalows and two 4 bed houses. The houses are programmed for completion by December 2015.

The Buckie project will see the completion of our development of the site adjacent to Seafield Hospital in Buckpool. This final phase will deliver 29 new homes. The mix will include 23 amenity bungalows suitable for older people and people with mobility issues. The bungalows have been located on a discreet area of the site for the security and privacy of residents. The project will also deliver six 3 and 4 bed family homes. The first phase of house handovers is expected in December 2015 with all houses being complete by May 2016. The letting of the new homes will begin in October 2016.

In Forres, works started in May 2015 on the construction of eight 1 bed cottage flats at Corries Way in the Thornhill area. Completion expected later in the year. Also in Forres, plans to build 16 homes at Burdshaugh are progressing well. The proposals for this site will include a mixture of 1 bed cottage flats and amenity bungalows. It is expected that the project will start on site later in the year.

All our new homes have been built to the highest standard of energy efficiency to save tenants money on fuel costs. The houses are bright and spacious with dining kitchens and their own car parking spaces.

The first let of all our new houses is decided under a New Build Lettings Plan. Applications for Council housing can be made via the Apply4Homes website www.apply4homes.org.uk or by contacting us on **0300 123 4566**.

More details of these new developments can be found on our website at www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_84428.html

Dufftown New Builds under construction



The Council has begun construction on 19 new homes in Dufftown.

The homes are being built on the site of the former Mart, Hill Street, Dufftown. There will be a mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom properties built to the highest standards of energy efficient design. We expect the new homes to be completed during winter 2015/16.

You can apply for the new housing online using the "Apply4Homes" website www.apply4homes.org.uk. Interested applicants should make sure they have included Dufftown as an area of choice. Applicants should check that their housing application is up to date, especially any information about medical needs.

HOUSING MIX	NO.	Car Spaces
Type A: 2bed Bungalow	08	16
Type B: 2bed House	06	12
Type CACS 1bed Cottage Flat	08	08
Type E: 4bed House	02	06
Additional Parking Spaces		04
Totals	24	44

FOR COMMENT

1049 AL(0)10 G

anderson bell + christie architects

Downsizing Incentive Scheme for Moray Council Tenants

Is your home too large?

Does your home have 3 or more bedrooms?

Do you have a spare bedroom?

Would you like help to move?

Would you like to reduce your household bills?

Is your garden too big to manage?

Our downsizing incentive scheme can help.

The downsizing incentive scheme is a scheme introduced to support tenants who live in housing that is now too large for their needs to move to a smaller house by offering practical and financial help. It is a voluntary scheme which means that you do not have to move if you don't want to. Our aim is not just to help people wanting to transfer to a smaller home but also to release properties that are in the highest demand in areas of greatest need.

To check if you are eligible or if you want more information on the downsizing incentive scheme, please contact your housing officer.

Investment – How we are spending the money you pay for rent

We use your rent money to invest in your homes and neighbourhoods and the rent increase we've just introduced will make sure we can pay for improvements now and in the future.

This year we will spend around £10.3m on maintaining, upgrading and modernising our housing stock. Some projects have already started with others due to be carried out throughout 2015 and in to 2016.

KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS £1.75m

Around 400 Kitchens will be replaced fully or partially upgraded during 2015/16. As part of this project we will also upgrade bathrooms where required. Tenants will have the opportunity to have showers fitted as part of the work. We expect 75 people taking up this opportunity.



OTHER UPGRADES £1m

As part of our Housing Investment Strategy we will also carry out a range of other upgrading works prioritising re-roofing and re-rendering properties, internal refurbishment and replacing guttering and down pipes.

YEARLY MAINTENANCE £1.2m

The budget of £1.2m is mainly spent on the annual servicing of gas, coal and oil fired heating systems. The servicing of gas appliances in particular is an important legislative requirement, one which we give a high priority.



The budget also funds a regular six yearly programme of pre-paintwork repairs and external paintwork to make sure that the external elements of our homes are in good condition.

The new Energy Efficiency Standard for Scottish Social Housing (ESSH) has been introduced by the Scottish Government. The ESSH sets targets for energy efficiency which your homes (our stock) have to comply with. All the work we plan to carry out helps us to meet these targets.

The majority of our projects will continue to be delivered in partnership with the Council's Building Services Direct Labour Organisation. You will know them if they knock on your door as we will have contacted you beforehand. Don't forget to ask to see proof of who you are letting in to your home just in case.

If you would like to know more about our improvement plans you can find details on our website www.moray.gov.uk or you can contact your local Housing Office or Capital Programmes Team on 0300 1234566.

HEATING £1m

Our most recent Tenant Survey highlighted that our tenants in some locations were having problems with heating their homes. We will continue to spend money on heating replacements which will make it cheaper to heat their homes and will improve the energy efficiency of our properties. Around 200 heating systems will be replaced this year with the majority of properties receiving new gas heating systems. For tenants living off the gas main network we will continue to install a small number of energy efficient, renewable heating systems.

WINDOWS £0.6m

Our window replacement programme will provide new windows for around 200 homes this financial year.



Storage heaters

We have recently become aware of an issue with some types of storage heater installed in tenant's homes, particularly the area around the top outlet grille. This area can reach a high temperature and lead to the possibility of scalding or burns. This is particularly of concern where children or vulnerable people are in the home.

We have identified all properties where this may be an issue and sent out an advice note to tenants whose homes are currently fitted with storage heaters. The advice note

contains some general information on the operation of these types of heaters and suggests a few simple steps that can be taken in order to safeguard anyone in the home from harm.

If you require any further information, a copy of the advice sheet, or want to talk about any particular issues with the storage heaters in your own home please call **01343 823064** and a member of our Capital Programmes Team will answer any questions that you have.

Summer Security Tips

With summer now here there are a few security tips to help you feel secure. Securing your home needn't be expensive, there are lots of simple things you can do to deter both the opportunist and the determined thief.

Remember, someone attempting to break into a house tries to do so quickly and with the minimum of noise. Keep your doors and windows locked at all times, even when you are in the house. This will prevent an opportunist thief from sneaking into your home.

Houses that appear empty are more at risk than houses that appear to be occupied. Packing for a summer holiday or leaving your home unattended for any length of time?

Avoid advertising your holiday dates on social network sites – you never know who is reading it.

It is a good idea to leave a set of keys with someone you trust so they can keep an eye on your home while you are away. Use timer switches to switch on internal lights automatically, to make it look as if there is someone at home.

Move any valuable items (such as computers) out of view and hide your car keys in a safe place if you're not taking your car.

Remember to cancel all deliveries and if possible, have a trusted neighbour collect mail daily to prevent it piling up behind the door.

As additional security measures, you may wish to fit intruder alarms or exterior lighting which activates when movement is detected. Prior to fitting these features you should contact us to get permission.

Sheds should be fitted with a good quality hasp and lock and non-returnable screws or coach bolts to the hinges.

Why not consider joining or setting up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme? This is a partnership where people and organisations, including the police, come together to make their communities safer. It aims to help people protect themselves and their properties and to reduce the fear of crime by means of improved home security, greater vigilance, accurate reporting of suspicious incidents to the police and by fostering a community spirit.

For more information have a look on the Neighbourhood Watch website:

www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk

Remember, you must NEVER challenge someone behaving suspiciously or put yourself at risk. If you see something that concerns you, contact:

Police Scotland on **101** or in an emergency, dial **999**.

Alternatively, the registered charity Crimestoppers can be contacted on **0800 555 111**. Crimestoppers are independent of the police and government. Callers don't have to give their name or any personal information and calls cannot be traced.



DO YOU HAVE A WORKING SMOKE ALARM AT HOME?

IF NOT YOU ARE FOUR TIMES AS LIKELY TO DIE IN A FIRE



Around 250 people die each year in fires in their homes, caused by smoking materials, candles, and other factors such as cooking appliances.

You can reduce the risk of fire in your home by following some simple fire safety steps.

1



Fit smoke alarms on each level of your home.

2



Test your smoke alarms weekly. Never remove the batteries.

3



Put it out. Right out! Make sure you put cigarettes out properly and never smoke in bed.

4



Plan an escape route and make sure everyone knows it and where door and window keys are kept

Social Housing landlords have a responsibility to you and your home and must ensure that gas and electrical appliances they supply are safe and in good working order. Your landlord may also fit smoke alarms in shared accommodation and communal areas. Speak to your landlord if you have any questions or concerns.



In the event of a fire
Get out, stay out and call 999
Don't attempt to tackle a fire yourself

www.facebook.com/firekills

Pest control

Sometimes the design of a building or its condition can contribute to a pest problem. Pests and vermin may cause damage to your home and belongings and sometimes make health problems or allergies worse.

If your home has a minor or one off problem, please try to take action. Poisons, insecticides or traps will tackle most problems but you must follow the manufacturer's instructions. Examples of minor infestations could include:

- **Ants**
- **Earwigs**
- **Woodlice**
- **Silverfish**

For more serious or recurring infestations please contact us for advice on how this should be dealt with. In some cases we may need to refer you to pest control and

you may have to pay for this service. Examples of more serious infestations include:

- **Rats**
- **Wasps**
- **Bees**
- **Fleas**

We will give high priority to infestations of rats where they are detected in the property, or where there is a possibility of them being present within the property.

Where wasps, bees or fleas are present in a property and are affecting the wellbeing of children, elderly or the infirm, high priority will be given.

Some species, such as bats and sometimes birds, are protected and should not be disturbed.



Antisocial Behaviour

Antisocial behaviour is difficult to define and means many different things to many people. We have a robust antisocial behaviour policy and we will respond promptly to any complaint of antisocial behaviour from or involving a tenant.

It is often best in the first instance to speak with your neighbour to let them know how their behaviour is affecting you. They may not be aware that it is causing a problem.

However, although irritating, some types of behaviour are not classed as antisocial behaviour and cannot be investigated by us.

Antisocial behaviour includes causing, or being likely to cause, alarm, distress, nuisance or annoyance to people or causing damage to people's property. It covers a broad range of different issues from unacceptable noise levels, litter problems and dog fouling, to more serious incidents such as threats or violence.

To make a complaint about one of our tenants phone us on 0300 123 4566

For complaints against a private owner or tenant of another landlord phone the antisocial behaviour 24 hour reporting line on 0800 5877 197

Examples of antisocial behaviour include but are not limited to:

Making excessive noise from televisions, hi-fis, radios, musical instruments and DIY tools, especially late in the evening

Vandalising or damaging our property or any part of the shared areas or neighbourhood

Allowing your children to cause nuisance to or annoy other people by failing to take reasonable control of them

Allowing visitors to your home to be noisy or disruptive

Harassing or assaulting any person in your home or vicinity of your home for whatever reason (this includes that person's race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, sex, sexuality, disability, age, religion or other belief, or other status)

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

WHAT IS IT? HOW CAN IT HELP US?

Mediation is a way of trying to resolve difficulties that arise between neighbours. The service is provided free of charge with no strings attached. The mediator is independent of Moray Council and all information given by you is confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone without your permission. Mediation is a private process involving the mediators and the parties to the dispute. While mediation usually involves a discussion of issues around past events its main focus is on what is going to happen and how people behave towards one another in the future.

WHAT DOES THE MEDIATOR DO?

A mediator will contact you to hear how things are from your point of view. The mediator will listen to everyone equally without taking sides.

WHY SHOULD I TRY MEDIATION?

Quite simply because it works! It gives everyone the opportunity to have their say in a non-threatening way. Someone independent who is not involved in the difficulties can often help the people in dispute step back and look at things more objectively.

I'VE BEEN IN DISAGREEMENT WITH MY NEIGHBOUR FOR AGES AND NO ONE HAS BEEN ABLE TO HELP SO WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE THAT MEDIATION WILL WORK?

Sometimes a disagreement over something fairly trivial can develop into a major row. It can seem almost impossible to resolve without someone feeling that they have lost the argument or will have to back down. Mediation can help people move away from the past and find agreements for the future without the feeling that they have 'given in'. Chances are that everyone is sick of being in a dispute.

I'VE DONE NOTHING WRONG SO WHY SHOULD I GO TO MEDIATION?

Mediation is completely voluntary so you don't HAVE to go. However assuming that you will be living alongside your neighbour for some time to come, it is in your interest to try and resolve the difficulties between you, even if you feel that none of it is your fault.

I CAN'T IMAGINE MY NEIGHBOUR AND ME AGREEING ABOUT ANYTHING SO HOW CAN MEDIATION WORK?

Once the issues at the root of the dispute are identified, the mediator will encourage both parties to come up with possible solutions. The aim is to come up with an agreement that works. Sometimes there is a general improvement in relations but that is not the main goal of mediation.

I DON'T BELIEVE MY NEIGHBOUR WILL STICK TO AN AGREEMENT EVEN IF WE REACH ONE SO WHAT'S THE POINT?

There are no guarantees but experience has shown that if people have helped to make the agreement themselves they are more likely to abide by it rather than one that has been imposed on them. If you don't put your case people can assume anything.

I WANT TO LEAVE IT JUST NOW / I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS.

Things don't generally improve without assistance. There is always the possibility that unless you do something things could get worse. If you don't put your case people can assume anything. It might take up a few hours of your time but it is well worth investing the time to try and gain a solution to the problem.

CAN I GO TO MEDIATION WITHOUT ACTUALLY HAVING TO MEET MY NEIGHBOUR? / WHAT IF I'M TOO FRIGHTENED TO SIT IN THE SAME ROOM AS THEM?

It is best to meet directly. The mediator will not suggest a mediation meeting should take place if there are concerns that you will be at risk. It is the mediator's job to make sure that the meeting environment is safe and will end the session immediately if there is any cause for concern. If you really don't want to meet your neighbour face to face, you can discuss other options with the mediator.

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

Anyone can choose to opt out of mediation at any stage. The mediator will help you decide on next steps at every stage in the process.

Mediation has a high success rate. Talk it over with the mediator and then decide. You are not committing yourself to anything by having a chat.

If you like more information on what we do, you can visit our website at: www.sacro.org.uk

Advice for dog walkers



Owning and caring for a dog can be very rewarding, but it is also a big responsibility and long term financial commitment.

The majority of dog owners take responsibility for their dogs and pick up after their dog's done its business, but it's the careless few that fail to pick it up that give dogs and give all owners a bad reputation.

It is illegal to leave your dog's mess lying around in a public area. If a dog is in your care for any length of time, it is your responsibility to clean up its mess, even if you are not the owner.

The Dog Fouling (Scotland) Act 2003 is in place to make sure that owners pick up immediately after their dogs if they foul in a public place. The council's Community Wardens receive numerous complaints regarding dog fouling throughout the whole of Moray.

Those who are witnessed failing to clean up after their dog are liable to receive a fixed penalty notice of **£60** under the legislation.

It is an all too common problem that can seriously affect communities - not only is it extremely unpleasant for residents it can also be a health risk.

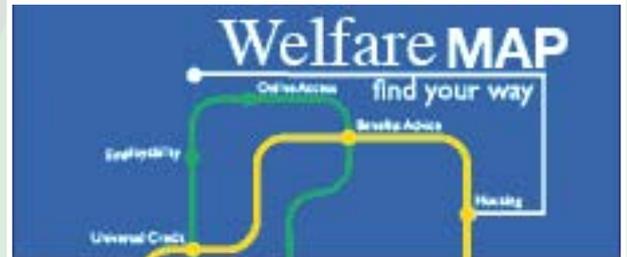
The following points need to be remembered by all dog walkers to make sure they abide by the law, and keep their local community clean and safe:

- **Plastic fantastic:** Always carry a plastic bag so you can pick up your dog's mess. You can use any plastic bag to 'bag and bin' your dog's mess.
- **Bag It! Bin It!:** Dispose of tightly tied bags in a dog waste bin, any public litter bin or your green refuse bin at home. Hanging poo bags on tree branches is a littering offence and fines are enforceable.
- **No sign, no excuse:** If there is no sign to stop dog fouling, it doesn't mean you're off the hook. You must pick up after your dog wherever it does its mess if there is a sign or not, bin or no bin
- **Garden training:** If you have a garden, train your dog to do its mess there and make sure you clean up and put it in your refuse bin straight away. Never put animal mess in your garden bin.



Affected by changes to Welfare/Benefits?

VISIT THE WELFARE MAP –
<http://welfaremap.moray.gov.uk>



A QUICK AND EASY WAY TO FIND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN HELP.

Benefit changes are coming to Moray which includes the introduction of Universal Credit.

There is a central resource that the Moray Council has created that can help with debt advice, finding work, assistance with money management and online skills.

As the changes are implemented they will affect those claiming income-based jobseeker's allowance, income-related employment and support allowance, income support, child tax credits, working tax credits and housing benefit.

The changes are about who qualifies for benefits, how much they might receive and the way in which people claim. This means people will have to be able to access the internet. It is really important that everyone knows how and where they can access the internet whether this is at home or going to places such as the local library

The 'Welfare MAP' is an online guide to help you find advice and assistance with all these issues.

<http://welfaremap.moray.gov.uk>

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Universal credit is intended to help people to become more independent. It should simplify the benefits system by paying a range of working-age benefits together as one single payment. It will be paid monthly, in arrears, to one person in the household.

In the majority of cases, housing benefit will no longer be paid directly to the landlord. Instead, it will be paid directly to you and you will have to budget and pay the rent to your landlord yourself.

Universal credit will replace:

- income-based jobseeker's allowance
- income-related employment and support allowance
- income support
- child tax credits
- working tax credits
- housing benefit

The UK Government recently announced plans to speed up implementation for single claimants making a new claim (i.e. claimants without a partner or children). It is expected that **Universal Credit will start in Elgin between September and November 2015**, initially it will be for new claims only and in time, those currently receiving the above benefits will be contacted by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and transferred over to this new benefit. When it does start and you apply for help with housing costs, your claim will be for Universal Credit and not housing benefit. All existing housing benefit claims will change over to Universal Credit by 2017.

If you are likely to be affected, here are some key things you should know to help you manage this change:

- you will be required to make the claim online – you will be able to do this at the Jobcentre Plus, from home or using other trusted internet access such as the library
- Universal Credit is paid monthly at the end of each qualifying month – your first payment is received 5-6 weeks after submitting your application
- the payment you receive will include a payment to help with housing costs – you will be responsible for making sure your rent is paid on time as the payment no longer goes directly to us
- it will be paid directly into an account, so you must have a bank, post office or credit union account that can receive this payment

INFORMATION & SUPPORT

While many tenants may welcome this change and be confident about managing their income and paying their rent, for others these changes may cause concern. **The Moray Council and local support organisations are committed to providing support to help tenants through this change.** This includes help with making a claim online, help accessing a bank or other account, budgeting support, information about paying your rent, and help to overcome any debts that you may be struggling with.

IF YOU DO NOT PAY YOUR RENT YOU MAY RISK LOSING YOUR HOME.

The following services can provide you with further information and support relating to these changes and help that is available:

Benefits Advice:

Moray Citizens Advice Bureau
6 Moss Street,
Elgin, IV30 1LU
(outreach services also available)
T: 01343 550088
E: bureau@moraycab.casonline.org.uk

Moray Council Revenues Section
Elgin, Buckie, Forres and Keith access points
T: 01343 563456
E: revenues@moray.gov.uk

Managing your money:

The Money Advice Service
T: 0300 500 5000
E: enquiries@moneyadvice.org.uk
www.moneyadvice.org.uk

Debt advice and assistance:

Moray Council Money Advice Team
T: 0300 123 4561
E: money.advice@moray.gov.uk



Be Prepared! If you are concerned about how these changes might affect you, please contact one of these organisations now!

Council help for people in debt



Moray Council's money advice service has welcomed Scottish Government changes that help people with debt problems.

The changes are being promoted using a website www.helpoutofthehole.org which points people to approved money advisers who, in the case of Moray, are in our Money Advice Service.

The Debt Arrangement Scheme could help you repay what you owe at a rate you can afford. The Money Advice Service would help you put together a Debt Payment Programme which tells your lender how quickly you can repay your debts without paying more than you can afford each month.

WHAT IT CAN DO FOR YOU

- Lower your monthly payments towards debts
- Stop all contact from your creditors
- Freeze interest and charges

The government-backed repayment plan is not the best solution for everyone, but there are a range of other solutions to improve debt situations so people don't need to struggle on with a seemingly impossible situation. Please get in touch with us to see how we could help you.

There are many companies who charge for money or debt advice. Many of these companies claim 'no upfront charges' but care is needed. The choice is yours, but we advise using a free, independent service such as ourselves or the national agencies that can be found on our website.

The advice is **FREE** and **CONFIDENTIAL**, call today on **0300 123 4561** for an appointment with a Money Adviser.

Or call in to:

**The Moray Council Money Advice Service
HQ Annex, High Street, Elgin**

or

**Moray Citizens Advice Bureau, 6 Moss Street,
Elgin, IV30 1LU**



SUMMER QUIZ

G	B	S	U	I	C	R	S	L	K	P	G	U	S	A
N	P	H	P	L	B	E	B	P	K	S	G	Y	M	Z
I	M	O	L	P	E	M	I	J	B	L	A	M	B	S
L	T	R	S	E	F	M	R	A	R	D	M	A	S	T
C	I	T	T	T	D	U	D	T	I	V	S	E	R	A
Y	S	S	Y	J	M	S	S	L	O	J	L	N	O	Q
C	S	P	O	R	D	W	O	N	S	R	I	I	O	O
P	J	C	J	N	W	H	X	E	P	Y	D	H	D	V
G	I	A	F	D	R	I	Z	Z	L	E	O	S	T	Z
N	M	S	Q	D	J	A	A	K	O	T	F	N	U	F
I	V	G	D	E	Z	E	E	R	B	W	F	U	O	T
R	X	P	H	U	G	T	K	I	X	W	A	S	Y	S
P	F	G	W	V	O	L	E	I	V	E	D	L	A	D
S	H	C	A	E	B	L	Y	H	H	L	S	H	C	Q
J	T	R	B	K	T	T	C	V	A	G	O	K	M	Y

Find all these words:

BEACH	DAFFODILS	SHORTS	BIRDS	DRIZZLE
SNOWDROPS	BREEZE	HOLIDAYS	SPRING	CLOUDS
LAMBS	SUMMER	CYCLING	OUTDOORS	SUNSHINE

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode..... Telephone Number.....

Email Address.....

Please return to: **Housing Policy Team, Moray Council, PO Box 6760, Elgin, IV30 9BX**
or drop into any Access Point

CONGRATULATIONS

to Mrs Patricia Bitters who was the winner of the £20 gift card for successfully completing the Tenants' Voice winter word search competition.

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The Springboard Charity helps young, unemployed and people facing barriers to work improve their prospects in life through sustainable employment and vibrant careers in the hospitality, leisure and tourism industry.

In doing so, Springboard equips people with the knowledge and skills they need to achieve their potential in the exciting world of hospitality, leisure and tourism.

One of the many projects Springboard runs is **Face2Face**, working in partnership with Barnardos, the project offers tailored support and training for young people aged from 15½ to 24, who have had experience of the care system and/or the criminal justice system. This project deals with all avenues of employment and further training, including hospitality, leisure and tourism due to the strong links in the Highlands.

The project aims to prepare these young people for successful independent living and take advantage of job and further educational opportunities in the Highlands.

The project is funded through the Big Lottery Fund (Scotland) and Highland Council.

This year marks Springboard's 25th Anniversary and to celebrate there will be a range of events occurring across the country.

Springboard also have an exciting recruitment opportunity for a Regional Manager for the Highland Region. For more information on this please contact Kelly Johnstone on Kellyj@springboarduk.org.uk. For more information on Springboard or the Face2Face project please contact Lorna Ferguson on **01463 232100** or visit our website <http://springboard.uk.net/>



WE ARE VOLUNTEERS WHO PROVIDE EMOTIONAL AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT TO THOSE INVOLVED WITH CANCER

- Emotional Support, Friendship, Companionship & Understanding
- Share Anxieties and Experiences
- Information & Advice
- Telephone Contacts
- Special Events & Fun Times
- Transport To & From Appointments (when volunteers are available)
- Membership is free and informal

MEETINGS ON LAST WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH

at 7pm

in the lounge of Burnside Court, Buckie

If you require any assistance outside the normal monthly meetings please phone

Buckie and District Cancer Support Group
2 Cluny Terrace, Buckie AB56 1JL

JHSMITH1@btinternet.com

Tel. Margaret: **01542 832329**

Dorothy: **01542 834297**

Frances: **01542 835187**

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