

the tenants' VOICE

CONTACT US

Summer 2023

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Our Elgin reception point is open Monday to Friday 8.45 am to 5 pm. Our other reception points remain closed.

The InfoHub service has now launched in all libraries across Moray. Residents can visit their local library to find out more about Council services and access a wide range of resources to support their enquiries – find out more on page 23.

Phone: 0300 123 4566

Email:

housing@moray.gov.uk

Web: www.moray.gov.uk

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

hello SUMMER



EMERGENCY OUT OF HOURS: 03457 565656

LARGE PRINT

Did you know we can provide you with a large print copy of the Tenants' Voice? You just need to let us know by contacting us on the details below:



Housing and Property

Moray Council
PO Box 6760
Elgin IV30 1BX



Phone: **0300 123 4566**



Email: **housing@moray.gov.uk**

Losing your keys can be a nightmare...

If you haven't got
Home Contents cover.



If your keys are lost or stolen, your landlord may look to charge you should your external door locks need changing.

Call: **01343 563899**

www.moray.gov.uk/tenantsinsurance





Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Summer 2023 edition of the Tenants' Voice

I have now been in post as Chair of Housing and Community Safety Committee for over a year and it has been fantastic to find out as much as I can about how we look after the housing stock and also meet some of our tenants.

It was particularly great to get out to see the new builds at Banff Road in Keith recently where a tenant so kindly showed me around her home. You can find out more about our New Build properties in the update on **page 14**.

In this hot weather it is important that we keep safe and well. Whilst we may hope it continues, it does pose a great deal of risk. The Summer Safety article on **page 16** has a great deal of information on how we can look after ourselves and others.

Arguably the most important thing for our tenants this year is the upcoming Rent Setting Review. It is important that our rent levels are fair for all and this review will allow us to ensure this. I would encourage you to engage with the consultation on this as much as you can so that as many voices and opinions are possible are heard. The information on this can be found at **page 22**.

We try to maintain your homes to the best of our ability, but this is more difficult when we have a number of staff vacancies in the Direct Labour Organisation (DLO). If you know anyone looking for a job in a trade please point them in the direction of the council. An article on this is available at **page 17**.

If there are any issues you need to raise about your home, please get in touch with us and we will do what we can to assist.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amber".

Councillor Amber Dunbar (Elgin City North)
Chair of Housing and Community Safety Committee
amber.dunbar@moray.gov.uk

A day in the life...

Maxine Horne is a Business Co-ordinator in the Building Services DLO department. Her job keeps her very busy but she kindly managed to find some time to answer our questions:

Can you tell us what your job involves and how it fits into the housing service?

I provide operational support to the Senior Management Team with the help of three Technical Assistants that I line manage. Our department undertakes emergency and planned repairs, upgrades and any work required in void properties between tenants. My team process costings and invoices for void properties and work to tight deadlines in order that suppliers and trades staff are paid promptly. We are also responsible for admin associated with recruitment, payment of wages and annual leave/sickness monitoring of over 150 multi trade staff. I also have to provide financial and key performance information including procurement activity and recharging of clients for some repairs.

What does an average day look like for you and did it have to adapt and change due to the Corona virus pandemic?

That's quite hard to answer. I try and plan my day ahead before I arrive at work but quite often my plans don't work out. Normally I start with logging any staff absence and checking current vacancies to see how many applications have been received. My day then varies due to our department being quite 'finance based' as we are constantly working to dates and deadlines so tasks can be dictated by those. During the pandemic we were classed an 'Essential Service' so we had to continue working throughout to make sure that essential repairs and legal safety requirements such as annual gas checks were carried out. This meant that the way we worked had to change. Office staff, including myself, started working in the office 1 or 2 days a week and the rest of the week at home in order to reduce the number of people in the building. Although some people still work at home on occasion, I'm thankfully back to working in the office 5 days a week. Although home or hybrid working suits a lot of people, it doesn't fit in with my family life – I prefer work to be work and home to be home.

What are some of the main challenges you face in your job?

We use a lot of different computer systems which on occasion run slowly and 'freeze' which I find very frustrating.

What is your favourite part of the job?

I absolutely love analysing and balancing figures – it's really therapeutic.

If you had a magic wand, what would you change?

All the unrest in the world.

What would you like to be doing for a job if you were not doing this?

I'd like to work out doors – perhaps in a Garden Centre.

What do you enjoy doing when you are not at work?

I like spending time with family and friends, travelling abroad, and seeing different cultures, cooking and reading.

How would you describe yourself in three words?

Enthusiastic, confident & friendly.

Finally, if there was to be a movie of your life, who would play you?

After discussion with my colleagues we decided it should be Diane Keaton ... because I'm old and whacky!!



Get involved with tenant participation

You might not realise it but you've probably already taken part in tenant participation in one form or another. Whether completing a survey about your home, taking part in a rent consultation, or responding to a post on the Moray Council Tenant Facebook group about a new initiative. There are lots of different ways tenants work in partnership with us and influence decisions about housing services.

Ways to get involved

- Not got much time to spare? Sign up to our **register of interested tenants** who we contact when we need to gather feedback on housing services.
- Join your friendly tenant-led group **Moray Tenants Forum** and represent the interests of tenants in Moray.
- Come along and share your views in-person at **consultation** events or on paper by filling out a **survey** or **feedback** form.
- Take part in **estate walkabouts** to identify projects and improve the area you live in.
- Join the **Service Improvement Panel** to help review our services and tell us how we can make improvements.

Find it difficult to attend in-person meetings?

Hybrid meetings mean attendees can join either in-person or online via a link. We don't want technology to be a barrier so if you need help to use Microsoft Teams or Zoom, or are struggling to access the technology, we may be able to help so please get in touch.

Not sure if it's for you?

We appreciate sitting on a committee or joining a tenant group isn't for everyone. That's why there are a variety of ways, formal and informal, to get involved, have your views heard and make a difference to your communities. It's up to you how you get involved and what level of commitment you make. You may just want to dip in and out as opportunities take your interest or maybe you'd like to make a regular commitment to go to Moray Tenants Forum. We value all your contributions no matter the shape or size.

Suggestions welcome!

We aim to encourage as many tenants as possible to have a voice in shaping our services. If you have a suggestion for a tenant participation activity or would like to get involved please get in touch.

Email: tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk

Phone: **0300 123 4566**

Moray Tenants Forum



What is Moray Tenants Forum?

The Forum is a group of council tenants who get together every few months with the aim of improving housing services and conditions for all our tenants. Their gatherings are informal and friendly with guest speakers invited along to talk about housing topics of interest to the group. We regularly consult with the Forum on changes to our service, housing publications and other housing issues. Most recently consulting with them on current reviews of the Tenant Participation Strategy (page 7) and our rent and service charges (page 22). We support them through grant funding and members can get help with expenses such as travel or childcare costs.



Guest Speakers

Recent guest speakers have included David Munro, Housing Services Manager in January and Tracey

McKie, Acting Asset Manager in June. David spoke about the wide remit of the housing management service including rent collection and arrears. Tracey oversees the programme of work on tenants' homes for which £21 million was identified for this year. The team of 8 cover a huge remit including planned works, response repairs, heating, garage upgrades, landscaping, servicing, insulation, and disabled adaptations. The team are also responsible for landlord permissions, boundary disputes, shared costs, technical repairs, property restoration and the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH).

Tracey also highlighted the proposed estate walkabouts coming up in September which are a practical way to get involved in improving the area you live. If you'd like to take part in a walkabout please get in touch to register your interest.

Dates for your diary

The Forum next meet in Elgin on 5 September and again on 14 November. New members are always welcome. It's a great way to meet people and make new friends, gain experience and learn new skills. If you'd like to find out more or come along to a meeting then please get in touch.

Email: tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk

Phone: **0300 123 4566**



Moray Tenants Forum



Come along to our next meeting and find out how you can influence housing services in Moray



Tuesday 5 September at 2 pm

Elgin



Guest Speaker from the Policy team

Topics for discussion include:

- Rent Setting Policy review
- Annual Performance Report to tenants

To find out more contact



tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk



0300 123 4566



Moray Council Tenants

the tenants'
VOICE

Tenant Participation Strategy Review

By law, all social landlords must have a strategy which sets out how they will involve tenants in their decision making processes.

We're reviewing our Tenant Participation Strategy which sets out how we will encourage, involve, and support tenants to influence decisions about housing services over the next 5 years.

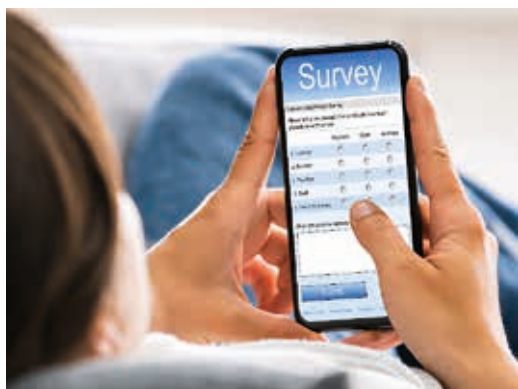
Have your say

You can share your views and help shape the next strategy by filling in our short online survey at

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/tpstrategy> or by scanning the QR code right:



If you'd prefer a paper survey to complete, we can send one to you. Get in touch via the contact details at the bottom of the page.



Your feedback will help us to improve the participation opportunities available to tenants.

COMPLETED SURVEYS WILL BE ENTERED INTO A PRIZE DRAW FOR A CHANCE TO WIN £50 OF SHOPPING VOUCHERS.

This survey will close on Monday 14 August. We'll then review your comments and present a draft Tenant Participation Strategy to our Housing and Community Safety Committee on 21 November 2023. We'll keep you updated on further opportunities to get involved and have your say before the strategy is finalised.

For more information on tenant participation visit our website at www.moray.gov.uk/tenantparticipation

Like us on

facebook 

Did you know you can keep updated on tenant participation opportunities by joining our Facebook group?

Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/groups/MorayCouncilTenants or scan the QR code right.



Contact us:

Email: tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk

Phone: **0300 1234 566**



co wheels

Co Wheels Car Club

Co Wheels Car Club is a car sharing project offering members in Elgin access to two electric cars for hire by the hour or day. The project aims to provide an alternative to car ownership as well as giving access to EVs which are still an expensive buy for a lot of motorists.

The two cars are an MG4 EV, recently voted Car of the Year 2023, which is a 5-seat hatch back and is based on Pinefield Crescent. The second car is based at Lossie Green Car Park and is an MG5 EV Estate car.

Members pay a £5 a month minimum use charge (£25 if they are younger drivers under 26) and can hire the cars from £5.95 - £6.70 an hour, depending on which car they choose. There's also a mileage charge to cover electricity usage (12p a mile) and drivers can top up the car on their journeys using the national Charge Place Scotland Network.

New members are sent a Smart Membership Card which is used to unlock the car door and activate their hire after having first booked it on the members' website/App.

The Car Club provides access to a car when you occasionally need one rather than ownership and is ideal for those who don't want to maintain a car themselves or those whose households may need an occasional second car.

Co-wheels has cars across Scotland, from the Orkney Islands to the Lothians and across England and Wales. Moray members can also access all



these making it easier to travel by train or coach to another location and pick up a pre booked car club car there for their onward journey.

Hire rates include insurance and breakdown cover and anyone over 19 with at least 2 years full licence can apply to join as a member.

Co wheels is offering an introductory membership offer for Moray residents which includes no joining fee & £25 free credit on new accounts. To get this join online at www.co-wheels.org.uk or download the Co Wheels app and use the promotion code **FREEJOIN25**.

Find out more about the car club at www.co-wheels.org.uk or download the app from your app store.

Please tell us what you think

We'd like to know if tenants are interested in using a car club like Co Wheels car sharing project. To find out if there is enough demand to pilot a project we're asking tenants to complete a short online survey at

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/EVcarclub

or by scanning the QR code right..

The survey will close on Friday 15 September.



the tenants'
VOICE

Moray tenants are seeing the **fun side of participatory budgeting**

If you live in the Letterfourie area of Buckie or the Allt Na Coire area of Tomnavoulin you may be aware that your local play area has been identified for a participatory budgeting project.

The term Participatory Budgeting (PB) sounds like something really technical but it's actually a great way for you to get involved in making decisions about your local area.

Participatory Budgeting (PB) originated in Brazil in the 1980s, spread worldwide and is a method of giving local people the opportunity to decide how public money is spent in their communities. PB operates at many different scales, from very small budgets within villages or streets, to multi-million pound citywide processes.

PB is a great way to involve tenants in decision making processes.

Residents in the Allt Na Coire area of Tomnavoulin have recently been sharing their views about what should go in to a small play area within the street. There have been lots of different ideas about how the budget should be spent and officers at the council are just arranging a date to go back and visit residents to present local views and discuss what options should progress.

Once priorities are agreed, designers will work up illustrations of what the space could look like and tenants will get the final vote on what should go in to the space.

Residents in the Letterfourie area of Buckie are just at the start of their process and a small group of local people have

supported the production of a community survey which is live until the end of the summer holidays. If you live in the local area, it would be great to hear your views on how you would improve the park.

The funding grant for both these parks has come from the Scottish Government's Local Authority Play Park Renewal Programme.

Letterfourie Play Park and Allt Na Coire were selected for funding through an independent play park condition-scoring exercise, which is carried out across all play parks in Moray annually. The same scoring method will determine where future play park upgrade funding should be spent.

If you have any questions about these PB processes or would like to find out more, please get in touch at csu@moray.gov.uk



Estate Walkabouts

Our annual estate walkabouts are planned for September 2023. This is a chance for all tenants and residents to join elected members and housing staff for walks in their area. These walks provide an opportunity to identify areas for improvement and discuss any projects that may be needed in your local area.

Identified projects are then prioritised to form a list of works which are then costed. Once the costs are known, a decision is made on which works will be funded from the 2024/25 budget for estate improvements.

Register your interest in a walkabout in your area

A final walkabout schedule is still to be confirmed but you can register your interest in taking part. We'll get back in touch with those interested in taking part once timings are confirmed.

Please register your interest in a walkabout by phoning **0300 1234 566** or emailing tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk

National Panel of Tenants and Service Users

About the Panel

The Scottish Housing Regulator's (SHR) National Panel of Tenants and Service Users was set up in 2013 and is a way for tenants and service users to share their views, experiences and service priorities with the Regulator. There are currently over 400 Panel members who are invited to give feedback via short surveys and sometimes by interview.

Examples of recent topics the panel have been asked about include rent affordability and value for money, heating their home, safety in the home and homeless services.

Speaking about their most recent research, Helen Shaw, SHR's Director of Regulation, said: "Our work with the National Panel is an important way for us to better understand the priorities, concerns and thoughts of tenants and service users of social landlords in Scotland. This year's report once again highlights that tenants are facing significant cost of living challenges, and that pressures on household finances have heightened. We hope the research is helpful to everyone with an interest in social housing."

You can find more about the work of the Panel at SHR's website
www.housingregulator.gov.scot/for-tenants

Who can join?

If you're a tenant or you use the housing or homelessness services provided by councils, housing associations, co-operatives and other social landlords, you can join the Panel. Membership is diverse and includes people from urban and rural areas, across age bands, local authority and Registered Social Landlords (RSL's).

Join the Panel

If you'd like to join the Panel contact:

Engage Scotland

Tel: **0800 433 7212**

Email: natpan@engagescotland.co.uk

Annual Return on the Charter

We are responsible for a wide range of housing services which affect the quality of life for our tenants here in Moray. As a social landlord we must fill in an annual return to the Scottish Housing Regulator to make sure that our services meet the standards set out in the Scottish Government's Social Housing Charter. We must submit an Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) every May to the Scottish Housing Regulator so they can monitor and assess our performance. The Regulator protects the interests of those who use social landlord's services including tenants and homeless people.

We have submitted our Annual Return on the Charter for 2022/23 and look forward to receiving our landlord report from the Scottish Housing Regulator in late August. The Regulator uses the ARC submissions to report on all landlords' performance.

The Scottish Housing Regulator has a section for tenants on their website at www.housingregulator.gov.scot/for-tenants. This includes videos and factsheets for tenants and information about reporting significant performance failures.

Annual performance report

We must produce an annual performance report for our tenants and customers every year. Our 2021/22 report is on our website at: www.moray.gov.uk/housingperformance

Our 2021/22 annual performance report was well received and we would like to thank everyone who took the time to tell us what you thought about it.

We are now using your feedback to develop our 2022/23 annual performance report in partnership with our tenant representatives. If you would like to be involved in developing our next annual performance report we would love to hear from you.

Our annual Assurance Statement is now being developed and will be published in the coming months. This document reassures the Regulator, our tenants, and customers that we comply with our regulatory and statutory obligations.

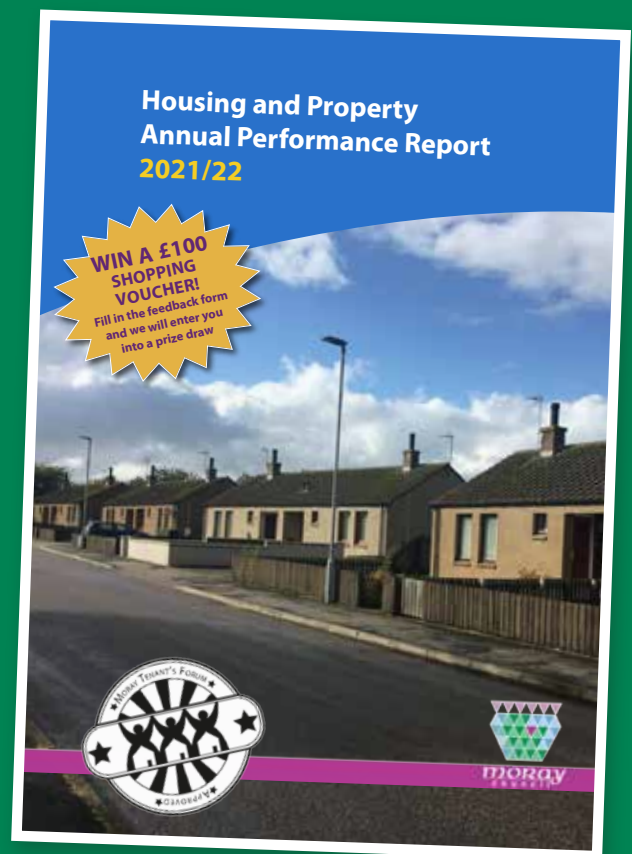
If you would like a paper copy of our 2021/22 annual performance report then please let us know. You can either:

- email us at tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk to ask for a copy or
- fill in the pre-paid card that came with this newsletter and send it back to us.

Contact us:

Phone: **0300 1234 566**

Email: tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk



Northern Tenants Partnership (NTP) and North East Tenants Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT)



Northern Tenants
Partnership



North East Tenants Residents
and Landlords Together

We are members of Northern Tenants Partnership (NTP) and North East Tenants Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT). Both groups are a space for tenants and housing staff to share ideas, good practice and resources. Meetings take place online so you can get involved from the comfort of your home.

NTP and NETRALT are hosting a joint online event on 15 September from 11 am to 2.30 pm via Zoom. The conversation café style event will highlight some of the good practice happening across our region. Presentations will give a flavour of some current projects with topics including: scrutiny, community growing, participatory budgeting, and youth engagement. There'll also be the opportunity to ask questions after each presentation. If there's demand further events can be arranged to explore topics of interest in more depth.

If you're interested in attending the event in September or would like to get involved in either group please get in touch with us. You can read more information about the event at: www.ntp.netralt.org.uk

Email: tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk
Phone: 0300 123 4566

GREAT NEWS

North East Tenants Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT) and the Northern Tenants Partnership (NTP) have partnered to host a FREE interactive session.

Local Authorities, Housing Associations and Tenants across the North East, Highlands and Islands will talk about their ongoing tenant and community engagement work through presentations and discussions about various hot topics. These include community gardening, participatory budgeting, scrutiny, and regional networks.

We will also hear from the Chairperson of the Scottish Housing Regulator, George Walker, and will host a fun quiz at the end of the session!

WHERE: Virtual event using Zoom – please visit our webpage ntp.netralt.org.uk to complete a booking form and access the Zoom link

WHEN: Friday 15th September 2023

TIME: 11am till 2.30pm

Come along to chat with staff and tenants, or just enjoy listening about the work being achieved and how you can get involved!

Look forward to seeing you!

If you have any queries, please email info@ntp.netralt.org.uk

Sheltered housing news

Sheltered housing helps people to continue to live independently in their own home but with the support of a warden service. In this edition of the Tenants' Voice we hear what the residents at Gurness Circle Coffee Club have been up to.

Recent discussions between residents revealed that people thought an emergency defibrillator was a much needed piece of equipment which could be of great benefit to all living in the area. It was suggested that it could be stationed outside the office/lounge building and from there it would be able to be accessed and used by anyone in need.

Back in February one of our tenants, Hilda Gray, suggested that we try to raise funds towards purchasing and maintaining one ourselves, a suggestion that received 100% support from the residents. Every Monday morning, from 10am to 12 noon, we host our coffee club. We decided to start having a raffle then to start the ball rolling. On the last Tuesday of the month we have a Quiz and Bingo night which is good fun and is very well attended. We have also held various other fundraisers such as a Burns Night, Easter Bonnet competition, Car Boot Sale and Coronation Party.

Our latest fundraiser was a sponsored walk.... well more of a sponsored 'shuffle' with scooters, wheelchairs, sticks, banners and balloons. Unfortunately it rained on the day but this could not stop us, not even one of our oldest tenants, 95 year old James Bremner!

We put leaflets through surrounding doors to let people know why we were walking. Appreciating that this could save the life of one of their loved ones, lots of people stopped and put money in our tins.



Since we started fundraising in February we have raised a whopping £1227! This will increase further as sponsor money continues to come in. We hope to continue our fundraising and have a few more fun quiz and bingo nights which everyone is welcome to attend.

Thank you.

Gurness Circle Coffee Club.

Contact us:

For more information on sheltered housing, including information on how to apply, you can:

Visit our website at www.moray.gov.uk/shelteredhousing

Phone us on **0300 123 4566**

New housing stock

We have bought empty properties in Pinegrove, Elgin from the Ministry of Defence. These were formerly RAF married quarters and have been unoccupied for some time. The properties need to have gas and electrical safety checks, and need varying levels of repair. Once this has been done, the properties will be allocated to households on our housing list in line with our Allocations Policy.

Most of the properties have 3 bedrooms but some have more. They all have garages and large gardens.

Acquiring properties in this way helps us to increase the supply of affordable housing quickly, as well as bringing empty properties back into use.



Tenants move into houses in Keith

We officially accepted 33 new build houses at Banff Road in Keith on Monday 29 May.



From left to right: Springfield Partnerships Managing Director, Tom Leggeat; Moray Council's Head of Housing, Edward Thomas; Cllr, Donald Gatt; Chair of Moray Council's Housing and Community Safety Committee, Cllr Amber Dunbar; new tenant Nicola Thain, with her sons Tobi (left) and Rory (right); Cllr Theresa Coull; Cllr Tracy Colyer; Fiona Geddes, Moray Council's Housing Strategy and Development Manager; Springfield Partnerships Development Manager, Neil Smith.

The mixture of one-bedroom flats, two and three-bedroom accessible bungalows, and three-bedroom houses, built by Springfield, is a boost to our housing stock for affordable rent.

Most of the properties are already providing much-needed homes for local residents.

New tenant, Nicola Thain, said the move to the property was "life changing" for her and her young family.

The 40-year-old mum, who moved in three weeks

ago with her partner, Neil Bowie, and sons, Rory (10) and Tobi (8), after relocating from Den Crescent in Keith, said: "I just love it here, the space in this house is amazing, and we have a big back garden. "It's so peaceful. It has definitely been life-changing for us."

Chair of our Housing and Community Safety Committee, Cllr Amber Dunbar, said the new homes are a welcome addition to the local housing market.

"We're delighted to accept handover of another phase of this development.

"The majority of these properties have been allocated to households already living in Keith or in the surrounding area. We use a local lettings plan to help us decide who should be allocated one of our new build homes. This plan also helps us make sure our new developments create sustainable communities and ensures we make best use of housing stock."

Springfield Partnerships Managing Director, Tom Leggeat, said: "We are pleased to have been involved with the design and delivery of a collection of highly efficient homes in Keith, in partnership with Moray Council.

"We have a varied portfolio of house styles to suit a range of families, each that can be adapted to meet specific needs. It was heart-warming to hear first-hand the impact our involvement has made for Nicola, and we are delighted to have helped make a difference for her.

"We've delivered over 670 homes with Moray Council over the years, including these at Keith, and are looking forward to continuing to build quality homes with them across the region."

The local lettings plan can be viewed on our website at: www.moray.gov.uk/housingpolicies

Keeping you safe is our priority!

Faulty gas appliances and gas pipework, poor gas fittings and blocked chimneys or flues can be life threatening. That is why it is so important that we carry out an annual gas safety check at your home.

During the checks we will service and repair all of our gas appliances, and point out any faults on any of your appliances so that you can arrange any necessary repairs. It is your responsibility to arrange any necessary repairs to your own gas appliances such as cookers.

We will contact you when you are due to have your annual gas safety check to arrange an appointment. If we are unable to contact you after three attempts, we will go ahead and schedule an appointment for you and advise you by letter of the time and date. If the appointment time is unsuitable it is important that you let us know so that we can rearrange a mutually convenient time. **Please allow us access and don't put your family, your home or your neighbours at risk!**

If you do not get in touch with us and we cannot agree a suitable appointment time we may force entry to your property and charge you for any repairs. You **must** allow us to access your home to carry out this important safety check. It is a **legal requirement** and a condition of your tenancy agreement.

We will need gas and electricity to check your heating system. If you have pre-payment meters it is important that you make sure there is credit in the meter when we call to carry out the inspection. If there is no gas or electricity and we cannot check the heating system, we will have to turn the gas supply off temporarily for your own safety.

If you smell gas at any time it is important that you know what to do:

- Turn off your gas supply immediately.
- When the gas has been turned off, open your windows and doors to let in the fresh air.
- Do not use any electrical switches.
- Do not use any lighters or matches.
- Do not smoke.
- Contact the **National Gas Emergency Service** straight away on **0800 111 999**. They will come to your home quickly and make it safe.
- Visit our access point or phone us on **0300 123 4566** if any repairs are needed.

You can find out more information about gas safety on our website at:
www.moray.gov.uk/gas-safety





Summer is here at last! We have been looking forward to it more than usual this year, after months of following Government guidance to stay inside. It is important to stick to the Scottish Government's advice on social distancing when outdoors. Make sure that the excitement of getting out and about to enjoy the weather, does not mean you forget basic summer safety as well. Have plenty of fun without any of the dangers this time of year can bring.

1. Sun protection. Make sure you apply sun creams and lotions carefully to cover all exposed skin. Application is more important than sun protection factor numbers and stick to a spray-based sunscreen which is easier to apply than an oily lotion. Sun creams should be applied even when the sky is cloudy as the sun can still reach your skin.

2. Mosquito protection. As well as being annoying, mosquitos carry disease and should be avoided whenever possible. Use a good quality repellent all over your arms and legs, especially if you are near open water.

3. Water safety. If you are enjoying pool activities or water sports, always make sure children are supervised and have proper floatation devices. Even adults should go in pairs to take part in water sports and all water sports equipment should be in good condition.

4. Keep hydrated. Make sure you drink plenty of water in warm weather. If it is particularly hot, make sure you spend time in the shade and drink regularly to prevent dehydration which can make you seriously ill.

5. Food safety. Keep food sealed and covered up until it is ready to eat. If you are out for a picnic, try and keep your food out of the sun, perhaps leaving it in the shade or the boot of the car until you are ready for it. When having a barbecue, make sure any meat is properly refrigerated before use and cooked all the way through. Always wash your hands before you prepare or eat food to prevent contamination.

6. First aid. Make sure you have a 'ready to go' first aid kit. This should include basic items such as plasters, antibacterial gel or foam, antibiotic ointment, sterile gauze, clean washcloths, cold pack, thermometer and antihistamine tablets. These basics mean you will be able to deal with minor accidents and ailments.

7. Dress appropriately. Babies and children should be dressed to protect them from the hot weather and avoid sunburn. A sunhat with a wide brim or a flap at the back will protect their head and neck and a parasol should be attached to pushchairs to keep them out of direct sunlight. Make sure older children wear t-shirts when out in the sun or in the water for long periods to prevent sunburn.

We are **recruiting**

Our direct labour organisation (DLO) employs over 150 multi trade and specialist support staff to provide building maintenance and improvement services to our 6,300 houses. They also provide reactive and planned maintenance to other Council buildings such as schools, offices and libraries. We often have opportunities for apprenticeships as well as vacancies for qualified Plumbers, Painters, Joiners, Electricians and Air Source Heating Engineers.

If you are seeking challenging, diverse and rewarding work, where your experience, commitment and talent can make a real difference, then our vacancies may be for you.

Other key employee benefits include:

- 28 days annual leave, rising to 33 days after 5 years' service, plus 7 days public holidays;
- Flexible working (that includes alternative shift patterns that facilitate compressed hours and a 4 day working week);
- An opportunity to work overtime and participate in the out of hours stand by rota;
- Vehicles, tools and equipment supplied together with appropriate clothing, PPE and training in trade/industry specific requirements; and
- All other Local Authority benefits including the Local Government Pension Scheme.



To see currently advertised posts and find out how to apply visit our website at:

www.moray.gov.uk/DLOjobs

All Council vacancies are advertised on myjobscotland at:

www.myjobscotland.gov.uk/councils/moray-council/jobs



Get a **LIFT** onto the property ladder!

“LIFT helped us buy our first home. Council rent was £416 a month, our mortgage is £230 a month. We will be able to pay more mortgage off, repay government money, and own our own home.” – Kevin, LIFT buyer and previous social rented tenant.

The Scottish Government’s Low-Cost Initiative for First-Time Buyers (LIFT) Open Market Shared Equity (OMSE) scheme helps first time buyers, and other priority groups, by providing an interest-free loan of up to 40% towards the cost of a home, which is repaid when the property is sold. Buyers fund the remaining share with a mortgage and normally a cash deposit required by the lender.

Example:

A single parent, who had been renting through a social landlord, bought a two-bedroom property in Moray for £130,000.

Buyer deposit: £7,000

Buyer mortgage: £71,000

Scottish Government contribution: £52,000

In this example, the Scottish Government holds a 40% share in the property and will get 40% of the sale price back when the property is sold. Or the buyer can increase their stake at any time.

Priority for the scheme is given to:

- First-time buyers
- Social renters
- People with a disability
- Members of the Armed Forces
- Veterans who have left the Armed Forces within the past two years or partners of service personnel who lost their life while serving in the Armed Forces within the last two years.
- People aged over 60 in housing need

Properties must be advertised publicly (e.g., on a website or on social media) and be within the price threshold for the area. The size of property you can buy depends on how many people are in your household.

Visit www.linkhousing.org.uk/LIFT for more information or text LIFT to **66777**



Get a **LIFT** onto the property ladder.

Buyers can get up to 40% towards the cost of a home with the Scottish Government's LIFT scheme*.

Text 'LIFT' to 66777
www.linkhousing.org.uk/LIFT

*Eligibility criteria applies.

LIFT

Are damp and mould causing problems in your home?

Many of us have problems with damp and mould in the home. Moulds are caused by too much moisture or condensation. Preventing moisture in your home is important, especially in the colder months. By working together, we can keep our houses in good condition and keep your household healthy.

What is condensation?

Condensation happens when there's too much moisture in the air. The warm moist air comes into contact with a cold surface and cools quickly. This causes drops of water to appear, especially where there is very little air circulation. Condensation becomes a problem when it builds up and causes mould on walls, furniture or soft furnishings.

What is mould?

Mould is a fungus that grows in damp conditions. It is important to control the condensation in your home and stop any mould growing. It can cause allergic reactions, breathing problems and trigger asthma.

The two main causes of moisture and damp are:

1. Something in your home is broken or leaking. This could be leaking pipes, roofs, windows, guttering, walls, damaged or blocked drains,

garden features or decking, rising damp in basements or ground floors or ground water that has not dried out in a newer build.

Please report any repair issue to us as soon as possible. Give us as much detail as you can, to help us assess the problem. We may need to arrange an inspection of your home at a suitable time.

Phone us on **0300 123 4566** or email housing@moray.gov.uk

2. Daily activities in your home are causing too much moisture, such as:

- steam or moisture from cooking, boiling the kettle, showers, baths, drying washing, washing floors, sleeping, pets and plants
- high or low temperatures in different rooms. Heating one room and leaving others cold can cause moisture to build up
- not enough ventilation
- portable paraffin and bottle gas heaters (each litre burnt produces one litre of moisture)

See how much moisture you and your family make. Use this simple online tool from the UK Centre for Moisture in Buildings (UKCMB)

ukcmb.org/2020/03/05/moisture-balancecalculator



What can you do to stop the problem?

The only way to stop mould is to get rid of any moisture in the air. Follow these simple steps to help control condensation.

- Wipe away any condensation on your windows, window sills and surfaces daily, using a dry sponge or cloth.
- Air your home as much as you can, letting moist air out and drier air in. Leave a small window open slightly, upstairs and downstairs, for even 10 - 30 minutes every day, on opposite sides of your home. Leave internal doors open to allow the air to move and open window vents as much as possible, especially bedroom vents overnight.
- Open windows or use extractor fans and hoods when cooking and showering.
- Leave gaps between your furniture and walls so air can move.
- Keep lids on pans and turn the heat down.
- When filling the bath, use cold water first then add hot. This will reduce steam by 90%.
- Try not to dry washing on radiators, heaters or near a fire. Hang washing outside when possible or make sure your tumble dryer is vented outside.
- Use a dehumidifier, especially if you dry your clothes indoors.
- Try to keep your heating on at a low and constant heat in winter (ideally between 15-21°C), rather than putting it on a high heat for a short time and then turning it off.

How can I get rid of the mould?

Please take action as soon as possible to stop mould growing and spreading. The best way to clean mould is:

Bleach or disinfectant. Chlorine in bleach can help remove surface mould but it will not always get to the root of the mould or kill it, as it may be deep in plaster or wall paper.

Fungicidal mould sprays. These vary in strength and price. If you are trying to remove mould in your home, please make sure you follow our 'Removing Mould Checklist' below in line with the World Health Organisation (WHO) Guidelines:

- Make sure the product you use is Health & Safety Executive approved (HSE).



- Follow the instructions on the bottle and wear protective gear to protect yourself.
- Cleaning will release mould spores into the air so open windows and close doors to stop the spores spreading to other rooms. Leave windows open during and after cleaning.
- Prepare a bucket of warm water with mild washing up liquid or laundry detergent, and some rags that can be thrown away after cleaning the mould. Have a big plastic bag ready to take away any cloths, clothes, curtains or rugs for cleaning, in case they have mould spores in them.
- Keep children and pets away.
- Wipe any visible mould or black spots off walls, ceilings and paintwork, then wipe with a dry cloth.
- Once you have removed the mould from the problem areas, thoroughly clean all surfaces in the room, and Hoover it, to remove any stray mould spores.
- Place everything in the plastic bag for either the bin or deeper cleaning.
- If you redecorate, use a good quality anti-mould paint or fungicidal wallpaper paste instead of standard products.

Once you have removed the mould, you can stop it from coming back by following the above tips.

Read our leaflet for more information on how to keep your home free from damp and mould.

www.moray.gov.uk/condensationdampmould

Electrical Safety

Electrical faults are a major cause of fire and injury in homes every year. According to Scottish Government statistics, 69% of all the accidental fires in Scottish homes (more than 3,400 annually) are caused by electricity.

Every electrical installation deteriorates with use and time so it's important that they are periodically inspected and tested by a competent person.

Our responsibility to you

As a landlord we have a legal duty to make sure the electrical installations in your homes are safe and in working order. As part of this, we must carry out an electrical safety inspection on your home at least every 5 years and make sure that anything failing to pass the inspection is replaced or repaired immediately. This does not include checking your appliances.

What is checked at an electrical safety inspection?

A registered electrician will carry out an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) to check the following:

- Installations for the supply of electricity,
- Electrical fittings, including:
 - The consumer unit (or fuse box)
 - All switches
 - Socket outlets
 - Light fittings, and
 - Any visible wiring.
- Fixed electrical equipment, including:
 - Fixed electrical heating equipment
 - Boilers and other heat producing equipment, and
 - Hard-wired smoke and fire detectors.

You'll be given a copy of the EICR to show your home has passed its electrical safety check.

Arranging your electrical safety inspection

We'll contact you when you're due to have your electrical safety inspection to arrange an appointment. If we're unable to contact you after three attempts, we will go ahead and schedule an appointment for you and advise you by letter of the date and time. If the appointment time is unsuitable it is important that you let us know so that we can rearrange a mutually convenient time. Please allow us access and don't put your family, your home or your neighbours at risk!

How you can help us to keep you safe

- Ensure you give us access for all electrical safety checks. It is a legal requirement of your tenancy agreement. If we cannot access your home then we may have to force entry and you will be charged for repairs.
- Do not overload plugs and extension cables.
- Do not attempt to carry out any electrical works yourself, except plug changes.
- Switch off chargers when not in use and check for overheating. As well as keeping you safer, switching off and unplugging things at the wall will save you electricity and money!



Reporting Repairs

During office hours **0300 123 4566**

Emergency out-of-hours repairs **03457 565656**

Electricity supply disruption call **105**

Rent & Service Charge Review

We're reviewing the way that our rents and service charges are set. It's been over 15 years since our Rent Setting Policy was reviewed and we're aware there are inconsistencies in the way we charge rents. The aim of the review is to make our system for setting rent fairer so that the same rules apply to all tenants.

We recently contacted tenants and invited them to give feedback by filling in a survey about rents and service charges.

You can access a full version of our current Rent Setting Policy on our website at www.moray.gov.uk/housingpolicies

Tenant consultation events

We're now inviting you to come along to a tenant consultation event, run by an independent consultant, to tell us what you think.

- Hear feedback on the results of the recent Rent & Service Charge survey.
- Discuss the principles that should be used to set rents and service charges.
- Discuss how we implement change if it's agreed that we go ahead with the proposal.

You can choose to give your views either at an in-person or an online event and select the session time that is most convenient to you.

In-person event

Tuesday 15th August

The Inkwell, Elgin Youth Café

Session 1 10.30 am - 12.45 pm

Session 2 2.30 pm - 4.45 pm

Session 3 5.45 pm - 8 pm

Online event

Thursday 17th August

Online via Teams

5.45 pm - 8 pm

Transport to and from the event can be available for those who require it.

If you'd like to attend one of the sessions please contact tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk or call **0300 1234 566** to confirm your preferred session. We will send you a meeting link to access an online session.

It's important that you confirm your place as numbers at each event will be limited. Confirmation will also assist us with organising transport for those who require it.



InfoHubs at Moray Libraries

The Infohub service has now launched in all libraries across Moray. Residents can visit their local library to find out more about Council services and access a wide range of resources to support their enquiries. With 11 libraries across Moray, some open to 8pm and at weekends, you can access information and support at a time and in a place that works for you. Every library has staff able to offer advice and support whether it's access to a computer to fill out a form, assistance making a phone call, or a copy of a bin collection calendar that's required.

What can you access?

Every library provides a free phone for contacting Council departments, internet access, and a mail drop service. So whether it's renewing a bus pass, submitting an application form, making a payment, or sending supporting documents for an application you can make use of your local library.

Reception Point on Elgin High Street

As well as the Info Hubs at all library locations, you

can also drop off mail/evidence and documents at the Reception Point on the High Street in Elgin. If you have a prearranged face to face appointment then these will be in the Reception Point as well. Opening hours there are Monday to Friday between 8.45am-5pm.

Did you know?

Your local library provides a range of support alongside the Info Hub service:

- Bus Pass renewals and enquiries at every library
- IT Help Hub at Elgin – Wednesday afternoons
- Regular Job Clubs at Elgin and Buckie for job seeking support
- Bookbug Songs and Stories for 0-4's and parents/carers at some of our libraries.
- Free access to books, magazines and information for all ages.

For more info find us on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/moraylibraries

or get in touch using the details below:

ADDRESS	OPENING HOURS					
	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
ABERLOUR - 94 High Street, Aberlour, AB38 9QA Tel: 01340 871693 Email: aberlour.library@moray.gov.uk	10-12	2.30-5 5.30-8	10-12	2.30-5 5.30-8		10-12
BUCKIE - Cluny Place, Buckie, AB56 1HB Tel: 01542 832121 Email: buckie.library@moray.gov.uk	10-8	10-5	10-8	10-5		10-12
BURGHEAD - Burghead Primary, Grant Street, Burghead, IV30 5UQ Tel: 01343 830186 Email: burghead.library@moray.gov.uk		2-5		4-7		10-12
CULLEN - Seafield Road, Cullen, AB56 4AF Tel: 01542 841140 Email: cullen.library@moray.gov.uk		2-5 6-8		2-5 6-8		10-12
DUFFTOWN - 26 Balvenie Street, Dufftown, AB55 4AB Tel: 01340 820272 Email: dufftown.library@moray.gov.uk		10-12		2-4 6-8	2-4	10-12
ELGIN - Cooper Park, Elgin, IV30 1HS Tel: 01343 562600 Email: elgin.library@moray.gov.uk	10-8	10-8	10-8	10-8	10-8	10-4
FOCHABERS - Milne's High, West Street, Fochabers, IV32 7DJ Tel: 01343 821434 Email: fochabers.library@moray.gov.uk		5-8		2-5	1-3	10-12
FORRES - Forres House, High Street, Forres, IV36 1BU Tel: 01309 672834 Email: forres.library@moray.gov.uk	10-5	10-8	10-5	10-8		10-12
KEITH - Union Street, Keith, AB55 5DP Tel: 01542 882223 Email: keith.library@moray.gov.uk	12-4	10-7		10-7	10-4	10-12
LOSSIEMOUTH - Couldardbank Road, Lossiemouth, IV31 6JU Tel: 01343 811919 Email: lossiemouth.library@moray.gov.uk		4-7	10-1 2-5	10-1	2-4	10-12
TOMINTOUL - Tomintoul School, Tomintoul, AB37 9HA Tel: 01807 580755 Email: tomintoul.library@moray.gov.uk	12.30-3 6-7.30		10-1		10-12 1-3	

Temporary Accommodation Charging Policy

We are reviewing the way we charge for temporary accommodation used by homeless households.

What we must do by law

By law, we have a duty help applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. This is set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended. These duties include the provision of temporary accommodation until such time as we have determined the outcome of their homeless application.

Where we provide temporary accommodation, housing law states that the tenant should pay a reasonable charge, which is decided by the local authority. When deciding what a reasonable amount to charge is, we must make sure that we cover all of the costs for providing this accommodation. This includes the cost of management, service delivery, maintenance and repairs and void periods of the accommodation.

Temporary accommodation charge

The temporary accommodation charge is set by calculating a rent and a homeless service charge:

- the rent is equivalent to the average council house rent based on the size of the property; and
- the homeless service charge is equivalent to the cost of providing temporary accommodation to homeless households.

The following table shows how we work out the temporary accommodation charge, by the size of the property:

Size of property	Average mainstream rent per week	Homeless service charge per week	Temporary accommodation charge per week
1 bedroom	£61.70	£179.04	£240.74
2 bedroom	£72.70	£179.04	£251.74
3 bedroom	£84.15	£179.04	£263.19

Affordability

When setting the charge for temporary accommodation, we will charge every household the same level, regardless of income. However, we will always make sure that temporary accommodation is an affordable option to all. To do this we will only seek to recover the cost from a household that we think they can reasonably pay.

It is the tenant's responsibility to pay the full amount that we seek to recover.

We will make sure that tenants get up to date information about benefit entitlement and where relevant, help fill in housing benefit application forms.

Housing Benefit

Where a tenant gets full Housing Benefit, we will recover 100% of the temporary accommodation charge.

Partial Housing Benefit

If a tenant only gets some Housing Benefit, we will recover a reasonable amount. This will be the average Council house rent, plus 25% towards the homeless service charge.

- If the amount of Housing Benefit the tenant receives is more than the reasonable amount, the Council will recover all of the Housing Benefit awarded.
- If the amount of Housing Benefit the tenant receives is less than the reasonable amount, the tenant will have to pay the difference.

No Housing Benefit

If a tenant is working and/or is not eligible for Housing Benefit, we will recover a reasonable amount. This will be the average Council house rent, plus 25% towards the homeless service charge.

The following table shows how we work out what is a reasonable amount to recover, by the size of the property:

Size of property	Average mainstream rent per week	25% of homeless service charge per week	Amount we will seek to recover per week
1 bedroom	£61.70	£44.76	£106.46
2 bedroom	£72.70	£44.76	£117.46
3 bedroom	£84.15	£44.76	£128.91

Arrears

We will aim to minimise the level of arrears in a sensitive but effective manner. The way that we will manage arrears recovery is a process called escalation. This process starts when a tenant gets into arrears and ends when we have taken all the action we can.

We will aim to keep arrears low by taking early action. For example, we will agree an affordable payment amount to reduce the arrears in realistic and regular instalments over a set period of time. Any repayment agreement will be based upon a detailed assessment of the tenant's finances and ability to pay.

Legal action is the last stage in the arrears process. We will keep tenants informed of and fully involved in the legal process at all stages of legal action. Legal action may include a payment decree and/or ejection decree to evict the tenant.

Reviews of decisions

We have a review process for tenants who do not agree with the amount of temporary accommodation charge to be recovered, the level of arrears or any repayment plan. In the first instance, tenants can ask for an explanation from the Supported Accommodation Officer. If the tenant is not satisfied with the explanation given, they can ask for an appointment with the Supported Accommodation Manager. The Supported Accommodation Manager will review the case and in the event of any dispute they will refer the case to the Housing Needs Manager.

Policy consultation

As part of the policy review, we had a public consultation to make sure that we take into account the views of all stakeholders. The comments and feedback that stakeholders give will be considered and a final Temporary Accommodation Charging Policy will be presented to our Housing and Community Safety Committee on 12 September 2023.

Children's summer **colouring competition**



**The best colouring, as chosen by our judges, will win a £25 shopping voucher.
Please send your entry to us by no later than 31 October 2023.**

You can take a photo of your entry and email it to tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk
or post it to us at Summer Colouring Competition,
Housing & Property, PO Box 6760, Elgin, IV30 1BX.

Name:.....Age:.....

Address:.....

.....Postcode:.....

DON'T MISS OUT ON A CHANCE TO WIN!

Sadly there were no entries for our winter 2022 colouring competition so
no winner to announce this time.

Don't forget to send us your entries to be in with a chance of winning!



SUMMER

WORD SEARCH



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

HOLIDAYS | SUNSHINE | BICYCLE | SWIMMING | PICNIC | GARDENING
 SWEAT | ANTS | HIKING | HOT | AUGUST | ICE CREAM | FLOWERS | BOATING
 BEACH | CAMPING

To be entered into our prize draw for a £25 shopping voucher please send your completed word search to us before the closing date of 31 October 2023.

You can post it to us at Summer 2023 Competition,
Housing & Property, PO Box 6760, Elgin, IV30 1BX.

Name:.....

Address:.....

..... Postcode:

Phone number:.....

Email address:.....

CONGRATULATIONS

The winner of the Winter 2022 word search competition was Ms Jane Miller. Jane was delighted to hear that she had won the £25 high street shopping voucher saying "I can't quite believe it". Enjoy spending your voucher Jane!



WINNER!

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WINNERS

**Annual performance report 2022/23 feedback survey -
£100 high street shopping voucher.**

Ms Backx from Elgin was very happy to win the £100 shopping voucher in our prize draw after she provided feedback on our 2021/22 Annual Performance Report.