

Tenants Voice



EDINBURGH TENANTS
FEDERATION

Issue 102 - June 2017

FEDERATION OPPOSES THE RAPE CLAUSE

Edinburgh Tenants Federation was delighted to briefly see the First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon MSP in Norton Park as she met with organisations opposing the “Rape Clause”.

The Federation’s Executive Committee recently approved a statement on behalf of its Members opposing the introduction of the “Rape Clause” saying *“Edinburgh Tenants Federation is disgusted by the introduction of the “rape clause”. This is an inhumane policy that should never have been approved. We call for the UK Government to rethink this law. Women should never have to disclose that their child has been conceived as a result of rape or coercion in order to receive state benefits.”*



The First Minister signing ETF’s visitor book

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The “Rape Clause” relates to the Child Tax Credit (Amendment) Regulations 2017 in which Child Tax Credit is limited to two children (widely known as the “family cap”). Exemptions are made for children conceived as a result of rape, where this can be evidenced, and the law came into force on 6th April 2017.

Maud Wylie, Vice Convenor of ETF said, “We appreciate that the First Minister took time to speak to voluntary organisations opposing this clause, and look forward to welcoming her to the Federation in the future.”



The First Minister with members of ETF's Executive Committee and staff

ETF has also written to all party leaders at Holyrood requesting a meeting to discuss this policy.

LEADERS IN OUR COMMUNITY

In our last edition of *Tenants Voice*, we reported that tenants’ representatives from across Edinburgh had begun a new community leadership learning programme. We are delighted to report that the leadership programme is now complete and has been well received by learners. ETF’s Convenor Betty Stevenson was invited to the celebration event at the end of the programme to present participants with their awards. Congratulations to all the tenants’ representatives who completed this programme.



Our future inspiring leaders with their awards

The leadership course did not however finish there, as a few weeks later, a reconnect day was held, for learners to plan community engagement days to share their action ideas with their communities. Some of the ideas include:

- Inter-generational work with Citadel Youth Centre;
- Connecting communities;
- Holding effective meetings.

ETF has been granted £1,500 to assist the groups with funding for venues and transport for these community engagement days.

The Scottish Government has provided funding to expand the programme, which includes funding the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) qualification. As a result of this funding ten of the participants are aiming to complete the ILM qualification.

The Social Enterprise Academy is keen to run the course again and will commit Scottish Government match funding for this. ETF will submit further grant applications to support this. Watch this space for further details.

This programme was delivered by the Social Enterprise Academy in partnership with Edinburgh Tenants Federation and Trust Housing Association. We also give thanks to OneCity Trust and the Scottish Government for enabling us to provide bursaries and the Registered Social Landlords who funded their tenants' places.



UPDATE FROM ETF'S TENANT LED INSPECTION TEAM

We are pleased to report that progress continues to be made with ETF's latest Tenant Led Inspection (TLI). The Inspectors have been carrying out fieldwork to assess the effectiveness of communication methods used by the Council when collecting rent. This has involved:

- Face to face interviews with Council staff;
- A desk top exercise to review and evaluate rent collection communications;
- A benchmarking exercise comparing Edinburgh with other local authorities.

The next stage in the fieldwork process is to hold discussion groups with Council tenants about their experience of rent collection communication. There will be a further update on the TLI work in the next edition of *Tenants Voice*.



The Inspectors and ETF staff meet with Council staff

Heather Ford, Convenor, ETF Tenant Led Inspections

ANOTHER ROUND OF SUCCESSFUL ETF LEARNING SESSIONS

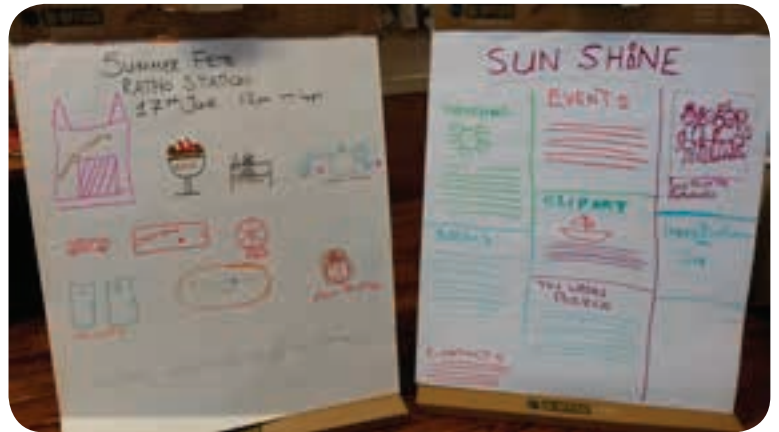
Getting Your Message Across

There were cheers from Norton Park Conference Centre when the five delegates received their certificates for completing the learning session on *Getting Your Message Across*.

Delegates at the session learned about different ways to spread the word about their groups' successes. The programme included:

- Using the internet;
- Using social media;
- Designing newsletters and posters;
- Writing Press releases.

Justine Bradd, ETF's Outreach Worker said, "I was impressed by the amount of talent in the room. When I facilitate learning sessions I am a true believer in learning from each other and this was certainly the case on the night. From sharing experiences of webpage design to the artistry of designing posters and newsletters; there were a lot of healthy discussions taking place during the interactive activities."



Delegates design a poster and newsletter

As well as learning these sessions are an opportunity to meet likeminded people.

"Very informative, lots of suggestions and interactions".

"Very informative, I picked up lots of hints and information which would never have happened otherwise. Thank you".

Some of the feedback from the session included



Delegates receive their certificate for completing the course

Balancing the Books

On Saturday 22nd April 2017, ETF held the 'Balancing the Books' learning session in the Norton Park Conference Centre. The aims of the day included:

- Increase delegates confidence in book-keeping;
- Increase delegates understanding of financial jargon;
- Increase delegates skills in book-keeping;
- Enable tenant networking.



Discussions taking place at the learning session

By the end of the session, learners reported increased confidence and understanding about how to run their group's finances.

"It was over and above my expectations".

"It re-iterated what I knew and I learned some useful tips".

Some of the feedback from the session included

If you have an idea for a learning session, why not let the office know?

HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING



EC members and staff enjoying themselves at the human rights training

Members of ETF's Executive Committee (EC) and staff recently took part in a training session hosted by the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC). The aim of the training session was to provide EC members and staff with a better understanding of human rights and how it impacts on our everyday lives. The exercises were very interactive and fun and feedback from the session was very positive. We would like to thank Chloe Trew from the SHRC for providing a very thoughtful and insightful training course.

TENANTS SCRUTINISE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT



Discussions taking place at a recent HRA Scrutiny Group meeting

City of Edinburgh Council tenants involved in a working group with Council staff to scrutinise the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) have been brushing up on their housing finance knowledge in a series of sessions aimed at increasing their understanding of how rent money is spent. Featuring a mix of quizzes, presentations and workshops about the HRA, the latest meeting was described as “one of the best afternoons I’ve had in ages” by Harry Woodward, a Council tenant from Maidencraig Court. Harry said, “There’s never been a better time for tenants to find out more and

influence how their rent money is spent and I’d encourage tenants to come along and get involved in the HRA Scrutiny Group.”

Ada Yiu, who is leading on the project with the Council said, “We have learned so much as a group since it started last year. The group is a great way for tenants and officers to work together. It allows us to see each other’s perspective through open and honest discussion and makes sure tenants are at the heart of improving the services we provide to them.”

Betty Stevenson, Convenor of ETF said, “This working group is a great opportunity for tenants to really understand how your rent money is spent, ask the questions that you’ve long thought about and help to check where services are providing value for tenants’ rent money.”

If you would like to get involved in the HRA Scrutiny Group, please contact Ada on 0131 529 7232.

EC REVIEW DAY

The Edinburgh Training and Conference Centre in St Mary’s Street was the setting as the Federation’s Executive Committee (EC) held their six month Review Day. The purpose of the day was to:

- Review progress in delivering the Work Plan set at the Annual General Meeting in June 2016
- Identify any gaps and actions to address these gaps;
- Identify future priorities for ETF.

Overall it was a very positive day with lots of ideas being generated and discussed. A report from the Review Day was discussed by the EC and some of the new emerging themes included:

- Supporting Council tenants through anti-poverty initiatives;
- Highlighting disabled tenants’ issues;
- Influencing the Council’s new localities service;
- Expanding and developing ETF using a human rights based approach

A Work Plan for 2017-2018 will be approved at our Annual General Meeting on Friday 16th June 2017. Come along to have your say on the future work of the Federation.



Identifying priorities for ETF at the EC Review Day

THE IMPACT OF ETF ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES



Kirstin Gray, a 4th year Community Education Student at Dundee University recently finished her placement with ETF. As part of her placement she completed a report which looked at the impact ETF has on local communities. Here is Kirstin's reflection on her placement.

"Recently, I carried out a piece of small-scale research for my final year university project. Not only has this placement allowed me to learn new skills and develop my research techniques, it has opened my eyes to really interesting and exciting community development work and shown me a whole new side of Community Learning and Development (CLD) that I was not aware excited me as much as it does now.

Throughout the four years of my CLD course, we are required to go out on placement and work with different organisations to learn about new areas of work and find out what we are interested in. Each placement I have been on has focussed on youth work, however this year I decided to leave my comfort zone and let

the university pick my placement at random. Although this decision could have made my final year project more difficult for me as I don't have much previous experience in community development, I have thoroughly enjoyed learning about some of the work ETF carries out and witnessing a whole new side of CLD that has hopefully equipped me with new skills for my future work!

For my final project I looked at the impact ETF has on communities and began to do a small comparison on the personal impacts and also environmental impacts that individuals have noticed. Although it has been a small-scale research project I have had the opportunity to meet some really interesting people and learn about exciting and inspiring stories and experiences.

One of the most exciting things I have learnt about has been how passionate people are about their communities and making a change in their local areas. It's been so inspiring to hear about some of the changes that have happened not only in personal lives but also in groups because of the determination and passion people have for the areas they live in and the people around them! Now that I have completed the report I have learned more about the importance of participation within communities and what being a part of an organisation such as ETF can do in personal lives.

What's really surprised me from my research is the diverse nature of ETF and how every individual within the organisation takes something different away and makes it their own. Although I have mainly focused on my research throughout my placement, I have learnt so much on a broader level about community development and some of the processes groups go through to make real changes."

Kirstin Gray

LOCAL GROUPS



Murrayburn Residents Organisation

For the past 18 months or so, Murrayburn Residents Organisation (MRO) has raised a number of complaints regarding waste services in the area. Some of the issues highlighted at their meetings included:

- Communal bin collections ignored if only half full, resulting in bins overflowing later in the week;
- Faulty bin stock;
- Bins not being put back into stores after emptying, leaving them in undesignated areas;
- Refuse not being picked up after it had fallen from the bin lorry;
- Bin crew not reporting tipped items or general waste to relevant services.

MRO took our complaints to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and they upheld the following complaints:

1. The Council has failed to provide a reasonable refuse collection service, in line with their obligations;
2. The Council has unreasonably delayed in responding to requests for bin repair or replacement, in line with their obligations;
3. The Council has unreasonably failed to respond to the group's complaint, in line with their obligations.

The group has a good working relationship with staff within the Council. Street cleaning and litter picking has improved as well as seeing a reduction in dumping and fly tipping. Nearly 90% of dumped items are household items including couches, beds, children's toys and TVs to name a few. Recently the Council changed charges for large items from £26 for six items to £5 per item (or £26 for six items still). This is currently under review and at our last meeting we discussed whether the £5 per item was being promoted enough. Waiting times for large items is also a concern, which we will investigate further.

We have been working with Union Canals to arrange a litter pick along the canal; this area is a trap for litter and is quite unsightly. We hope to involve local shops and schools with this. The Council will be involved in this clean up as well.

Vermin is a continued concern for residents, as being so close to the canal the water attracts them to the area. This is not helped by the waste issues.

We look forward to working with the Council to continue making improvements in the area.

Kerry Quinn, On behalf of Murrayburn Residents Organisation



Some of the problems regarding waste services in the area



EDINBURGH TENANTS
FEDERATION

AGM
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday 16th June 2017
7.00pm-11.00pm

Registration and Tea and Coffee available from 6.30pm

**Boroughmuir Rugby and Community Sports Club,
2 Meggatland Wynd, EH14 1AS**

The AGM will be followed by a social with a buffet



You can't afford to miss out!

For bookings contact 0131 475 2509, email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk
or book online at www.edinburghtenants.org.uk

Please use public transport where possible

Assistance with childcare and transport may be available

Please book your place by **Friday 9th June 2017**

FAREWELL TO SIR JOHN LANG MACPHERSON FAYRER, 4TH BARONET



ETF was saddened by the recent passing of activist and volunteer John Fayrer. John had been involved in tenant participation and ETF for a number of years. He was involved in his local group Meadowfield, Lady Nairn and Paisley Residents Association and regularly attended Federation meetings and events. More recently John was a Tenant Led Inspector, Convenor of the ETF Rent Group, member of the Rent Matters Working Group and Sheltered Housing Liaison Group.

John's mother was a Lang from Selkirk (there is a family connection to Andrew Lang the writer). His early childhood was spent with his sister on a farm in Ireland before the family returned to Edinburgh where John attended Edinburgh Academy. John's mum sadly passed away in 1961 when John was still a schoolboy.

John's father was a seaman and was the Captain of a minesweeper during the war. When asked as a child, John would say he wanted to go to sea, but John didn't really get

on with his father and later admitted he had never really wanted to go to sea and had only said it to keep his father off his back. What John really wanted was to read History at University but instead took a more practical course and studied for a Diploma in Hotel Management at the University of Strathclyde. Whilst at Strathclyde, John was an active member of the Dramatic Club.

John's catering career took him to the Castle Hotel in Taunton as a Catering Manager, he also continued his amateur dramatics. He had learned enough French and Spanish to enable him to further the skills in his profession and from the mid 1970's John was in Zambia managing a hotel.

Around this time, John's father died and John inherited the title which many people did not know about (we at ETF were certainly surprised, although we always knew he was a gentleman). John did use the title occasionally, especially when writing letters to the Scotsman.

When John returned to Scotland, he was the manager of a small hotel for a number of years. A career change then ensued and John was based at the University of Edinburgh as Library Supervisor for the Tourism and Recreation Research Unit. In the early 1990's, some of John's workings on 'The Child's Right to Play' were published. He was profiled at this time in the Evening News' First Person Column, citing his greatest achievement as "teaching an African Chief how to make mint sauce!" And his best friend being "Cornelius, my pet rat!"

With John's varied career, we also know he had a keen interest in local affairs. As well as this, John produced jams, chutneys, liqueurs and sweets. We didn't have the pleasure to sample these but have heard that they were delicious.

John – we will miss your smile, humour and knowledge.

Our thanks to Richard Smith for the detailed background on John's family life.

Here are some photos of John from his work with ETF



FEEDING THE COMMUNITY

Tenants and Residents in Fidra Court (TRiFiC) run a very successful, regular community kitchen in the ground floor communal room of Fidra Court, Pennywell Medway, Muirhouse (entrance is via the Cafe buzzer on the front door or via the back door at the opposite side of the block). Open every Wednesday and Friday from 9.00am – 2.00pm, the kitchen serves full hot meals and hot snacks like egg and bacon rolls.

Fabulous fruit salads painlessly boost the users towards their five a day! And nutritious soups keep the winter cold at bay. In the summer the kitchen benefits from fresh produce from the local West Pilton community gardeners.

The kitchen operates on a donation basis, to ensure that no-one is excluded through lack of money. Regular users include many Fidra Court residents, other locals from neighbouring blocks such as May Court and Gunnet Court, and the council workers who clean and maintain the building. All are welcome.

A tenant in Fidra Court gave his view on the kitchen, “The kitchen is a big contribution to the community here. Without the cafe there are people in the block who wouldn’t eat. The food in the cafe is an enjoyable home-cooked meal which I would never normally get to eat.”

A woman who lives in neighbouring Gunnet Court told us, “The only time I really eat is when I come to the kitchen. I really like to come and have a chat with the volunteers here.”

The kitchen also boasts a small free shop which has toys, household goods and other items, plus free books and DVD’s. People bring what they no longer need and can take whatever they find useful.

Computers have been donated to the kitchen via the Community Renewal Project, who plan to set up broadband access and run a drop-in for people to get assistance with CV’s and job searches. There is also an information section with free leaflets, such as on local activities and events, from local community groups and on benefits advice.

Totally run by volunteers, the kitchen meets an important community need, supplying healthy nutritious food, promoting the community and helping overcome isolation. Organisations such as City of Edinburgh Council, Scotmid, Pilton Community Health Project and ETF have generously donated and given support but now funds are running low and the kitchen is seeking new funding to enable it to continue.

If anyone has any ideas or would simply like more information, please contact TRiFiC via the Secretary Mike Vallance by email at mike92@riseup.net or via ETF on 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk.



The community kitchen has proven to be very popular

Mike Vallance, Secretary, TRiFiC

NEWS FROM CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

Antisocial Behaviour in Edinburgh



The City of Edinburgh Council in partnership with Police Scotland developed the Antisocial Behaviour Strategy (ASB) 2016-2019 by incorporating feedback from consultation and engagement with those who suffer the effects of antisocial behaviour, as well as the practitioners and agencies who deal with it. Two events were held by the Edinburgh Community Safety Partnership (ECSP), inviting the Key Stakeholders including ETF to identify issues, provide feedback on experiences and suggest improvements for the future direction of the strategy.

A number of common themes were identified from the Key Stakeholders events and public consultation, which were collated and used to inform the ASB 2016-19 Strategy's priorities to:

- Increase/Improve partnership working;
- Consistent approach to tackling ASB;
- Increase awareness of ASB, services and support available;
- Increase public feeling of safety and security.

These priorities will help to deliver the strategies core elements used to address ASB, those being; Prevention; Communication; Intervention and Enforcement.

Local Solutions

The proposed approach of the next ASB strategy is to focus on reducing ASB citywide by focusing on local solutions which are planned and implemented using the new Locality model.

The four Localities will each have responsibility to manage and deliver more services for their area than ever before, and part of this approach means they will also be responsible for coordinating a locality response and action plan for this Antisocial Behaviour Strategy. The new locality boundaries have been aligned to include the existing twelve Neighbourhood Partnerships, and Police Scotland and Fire and Rescue Scotland have also realigned boundaries to fit the new Locality model.

This will allow localities to adopt a truly local approach, building on previous successful models such as Stronger North, to deliver coordinated cross agency partnership working to address antisocial behaviour.

If you are interested in reading the full ASB Strategy 2016-19 please call Rachael Craik on 0131 469 3504 or email Rachael.Craik@edinburgh.gov.uk for a copy.

Rachael Craik, Community Justice Development Officer

Update on Council patchworking

• EDINBURGH •

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

Housing Officers will be out and about more and more over the coming months helping to make your home and neighbourhood the best it can be for you and your family.

Housing officers are dealing with a wide variety of work every day, for example:

- Signing up new tenants;
- Providing advice on communal repairs;
- Attending estate inspections and arranging work that needs to be done;
- Offering assistance when tenants have problems paying their rent;
- Listening to tenants who have ideas about improving their homes and communities.

They each have a 'patch' of around 200 homes to look after. The majority of the time housing officers will be out of the office and may not be at their desk to speak to you directly, but they do have mobile phones so you will be able to contact them and leave a message if they are busy, if they are already talking with another tenant, for example.

It will take some time for us all to get used to this new way of working but over time we expect you to see real benefits from this approach. Please contact your local office if you don't know who your patch housing officer is and want to find out. If you want to report a repair, contact Repairs Direct on 0131 200 2345 or if you have a repair emergency, outwith 8am to 8pm or at the weekend, call 0131 200 2000.

North East Locality

101 Niddrie Mains Road,
Edinburgh, EH16 4DS
eastteam@edinburgh.gov.uk
0131 529 3111

249 High Street,
Edinburgh, EH1 1YJ
citycentreteam@edinburgh.gov.uk
0131 529 7061

8-30 Ferry Road,
Edinburgh, EH6 4AE
leithcitycentreteam@edinburgh.gov.uk
0131 529 6170

North West Locality

8 West Pilton Gardens,
Edinburgh, EH4 4DP
northteam@edinburgh.gov.uk
0131 529 5050

The Drum Brae Library Hub,
81 Drum Brae Drive,
Edinburgh, EH4 7FE
westteam@edinburgh.gov.uk
0131 529 7440

South West Locality

10 Westside Plaza,
Edinburgh, EH14 2ST
southwestteam@edinburgh.gov.uk
0131 527 3800

South East Locality

40 Captain's Road,
Edinburgh, EH17 8HQ
southteam@edinburgh.gov.uk
0131 529 5151

For further information on Localities visit <http://www.edinburghcompact.org.uk/localities/>

Sam Reeves, Senior Housing Development Officer

Developing our Services

Since last year, the Council has been asking individuals and community groups for their views on local priorities and services. We're now focusing on specific areas to further help us develop Locality Improvement Plans (LIPs) by October 2017.

The Council, Police Scotland, Fire and Rescue Service, NHS Lothian, Edinburgh College, the voluntary sector and other key partners, are working more closely within Edinburgh's four localities – South East, South West, North East and North West – to develop services together.

We're developing the way we work to put customers' needs at the heart of everything we do, listening to people to better understand their aspirations and their priorities across these areas, particularly focusing on those areas of greatest need. We want to achieve better outcomes for our people and communities.

We have been asking for people's views to help us to do this, as it's vitally important that our citizen's views are at the heart of the Locality Improvement Plans. We've carried out the first phase of engagement, listening to those people living, working or visiting the wider locality about their views on how each area could be improved in the next five years around the following five themes: place; health, social care and wellbeing; children, young people and families; community safety; and employability.



A consultation event held to discuss developing LIPs

During the next stage, we will have further discussions with people from the smaller geographic areas and communities where we have identified the greatest needs. We'll look at issues in-depth and possible solutions that would make a real difference.

Over the coming months we'll be using that feedback, as well as existing good practice, to set out clear priorities, and by early autumn we'll agree our short, medium, and longer-term objectives and actions. We'll also highlight what resources are needed to do this, including looking at when and how the community can be involved in or lead on the activities.

These plans will cover the next ten years, but we'll continue to measure, monitor and develop them over the coming years to reflect the changing needs of the community and the partners' objectives and plans.

If you want to find out more, contact your locality office. Details are on page 14.

Sam Reeves, Senior Housing Development Officer

Over the past few months, we have had a wide range of contributors to our ETF blog, including a tenant activist, a student and a housing professional. We need your input if the blog is to be a continued success, so if you are a tenant, work in housing, interested in community development or passionate about housing then why not contribute a blog? The blogs can be found on our website at <http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk/category/guest-bloggers/>.

If you are interested in contributing a blog or would like more information, please contact the Federation Office on 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk. Some useful hints and tips for writing blogs can be found on our website at <http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk/draft-blog>.

BOGUS CALLERS, WHAT CAN YOU DO?



How do we recognise a bogus caller? They call at your door, wear a bright yellow or orange jacket, have a clipboard, a bag of tools, they have an identity badge round their neck. Perhaps it's a respectful looking couple as appearances can be deceptive.

Recently I experienced an unusual approach. There was a card behind the door indicating someone would call again regarding a problem with the Central Heating gas supply. The card looked professional, it had a phone number so, what was suspicious? Your probable answer? It didn't have the Company name on it? wrong. The card had a **mobile phone number on it**. Reputable companies usually have a free-phone number or have sent you a letter giving notice of why they will call and asking you to phone to arrange a suitable time and date.

Perhaps if you contacted your landlord, they would arrange to have their appointed contractor(s) put a sticker on their Gas or Electric equipment to confirm who services your equipment.

There are numerous methods of bogus callers trying to gain entry to your home but it's **you** who should be protective and positive and '**don't let doorstep callers in your home**'.

IF IN DOUBT.....KEEP THEM OUT.

Davie Thomson, ETF EC Member

NATIONAL NEWS

Tenants with disabilities contribute to national enquiry

In April, ETF hosted a joint session with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to hear tenants' views on housing for disabled people.



The EHRC is carrying out a formal inquiry on housing for disabled people in Scotland, England and Wales and ETF wanted to help tenants with disabilities to get involved in contributing their views. The EHRC inquiry will look at whether the availability of accessible and adaptable housing and the support services around it, is fulfilling disabled people's rights to live independently. A report will be ready at the end of the year.

Fifteen tenants attended our session and said the main issues for tenants with disabilities were:

- A lack of choice in housing options;
- Homes that are not currently suitable to people's needs;
- Homes that will not be suitable to needs in the next few years;
- Difficulty in accessing suitable adaptations and a perceived lack of staff skills in proper needs assessments;
- Lack of suitable homes for disabled people in the social sector;
- Lack of properties for disabled people in the private sector, limiting choice and concentrating disabled people's living in the social sector;
- A lack of support for people with mental ill health (e.g. housing vulnerable people at risk of suicide in high rise blocks), and in providing suitable "dementia friendly" accommodation.

The group also came up with a range of recommendations which ETF will report to the Integrated Joint Board for the Lothians. Helen Miller, Senior Associate, EHRC said, "We are using our unique legal powers to examine the lack of accessible housing for disabled people as well as adaptations for specific needs. It was great to meet the tenants from ETF and hear their views which have been fed into our Inquiry and help shape the recommendations of our Inquiry."

Tenants at the event would like to get more involved in influencing discussions about housing for disabled people, with one commenting, "This was only the start but we need more meetings. I found this event very enlightening and would like these meetings to become a regular fixture. I would like more action." The Federation's Executive Committee will consider this as part of the development of the next work plan. George Melville, a Dunedin Canmore tenant who took part in the event said, "The main conclusion I took away from the meeting was, tenants have many different problems, but it sounded like they were all being dealt with in the same manner. Disablement is a personal thing and not one cap fits all."

Chartered Institute of Housing Conference



Betty Stevenson (ETF Convenor) and Clare MacGillivray (ETF Development Coordinator) recently attended Scotland's Housing Festival – the Conference run by the Chartered Institute of Housing. Here are some of their highlights:

Conference Stalls and Networking

Central to the Conference is the opportunity for networking, through stalls and fringe events. Betty Stevenson said, "We met with a wide range of agencies and made connections that will really benefit the Federation. It was great to see what's happening in housing across Scotland."

Housing Minister Kevin Stewart MSP

The Minister for Local Government and Housing, Kevin Stewart MSP was a keynote speaker at the Conference and used his address to announce 50,000 new affordable homes for Scotland. This was warmly welcomed by the Conference. In a question and answer session, Betty asked the Minister about defining the “affordability” of housing and raised concerns about the cost of social rent. Following the Conference, the Minister invited Betty to discuss affordability concerns with him and this meeting has just taken place at the Parliament. There will be more on this in the next edition of *Tenants Voice*.



The Minister also launched the Toolkit for Tenant Scrutiny, saying “I am delighted that our ‘Stepping up to Scrutiny’ Programme has empowered tenants to work collaboratively with their landlords and develop their skills, knowledge and confidence in performance monitoring to continually improve service standards.” The Toolkit is available online at www.cih.org.

Universal Basic Income Debate

Universal Basic Income (UBI) is an idea gathering pace in some parts of Scotland whereby working age benefits would be replaced by a basic income for citizens.

There was a cracking debate at the Conference about the pros and cons of UBI. Contributions came from Fife Council who are responding to an action in the Fife Fairness Commission to trial a UBI pilot in Fife. The arguments for a UBI included reduced administration costs for the welfare system and by valuing a range of contributions to society, freeing people up to be more flexible and entrepreneurial.

The points against a UBI were that the benefits system is too complex to actually make this work, and since more than half of all benefits go to pensioners, a UBI is too simplistic in reality. There was also discussion about whether a UBI would actually reduce income for the poorest since middle income earners may be able to access it.

Housing First in Finland



Juha Kaakinen from the Y Foundation in Finland said that “housing is an ethical issue, a rights issue and makes economic sense.”

His presentation centred on the transformation of homelessness in Finland over a 20 year period, and the thinking that the Housing First approach (making good quality affordable housing for all, the nation’s first priority) is a national strategy not a local project. Finland has successfully almost eradicated homelessness by increasing the supply of permanent homes, reducing the number of temporary accommodation units, whilst intensively supporting those who have been homeless to live well.

Housing and Health

Scottish Public Health Network (ScotPHN) produced a practical guide which is designed to help people working within the public health and housing fields to be more effective in getting good health and housing. This seminar, chaired by Gerald McLaughlin, Chief Executive of NHS Health Scotland kicked off with the statement that “affordable housing is crucial for good public health” and highlighted that using a rights based approach, linking data on health to poor housing conditions “can lever change in decision makers.” Copies of the report are available at www.healthscotland.scot.



Housing as a Human Right



Judith Robertson, the Chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) closed the conference with a presentation highlighting that housing is a human rights issue and asked delegates to think about how housing in Scotland is meeting those rights – particularly in relation to the availability, affordability and accessibility of housing. Judith highlighted that living standards for Gypsies and Travellers and housing for disabled people are not meeting human rights standards.

Judith presented the film of the Federation's Housing Rights in Practice work with tenants in West Cromwell, Citadel and Preserve Courts, showing how using a rights based approach in practice can empower tenants to think and act on housing as a human right.

CONVENOR'S REPORT



I would like to start my Convenor's Report by congratulating everyone who completed the Community Leadership Programme. I was delighted to attend to help present certificates to the participants and they should be very proud of the work they have done. I hope we can extend this programme to other inspiring leaders in the future

We would like to pay tribute to Kirstin Gray and Stefan Holt who recently completed their student placements with ETF. We would like to thank them for all the work they have done for us and wish them all the very best for the future.

I recently visited the Niddrie area of Edinburgh with Paul Lawrence, Director of Place, City of Edinburgh Council. The aim of the visit was to make him aware of the issues around the city. Paul has agreed to visit another area of the city with us in the very near future; if you would like us to visit your area, please get in touch with the ETF office.

Preparations are well underway for ETF's AGM. We do hope you will be able to attend as it's the highlight of the year for ETF and it is a fantastic opportunity to meet and network with other tenants from across the city. We will be sorry to lose Sheila Rutherford-McCallum from the Executive Committee. Sheila has served on the EC for many years and has contributed well to our work.

We are extremely proud of the commitment our volunteers continue to show in improving housing services. However we need to build on getting younger tenants more involved and encourage other people to join us, so we can make tenants' influence even stronger. If you have any ideas on how ETF can do this, please let us know.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

ETF Annual General Meeting

Friday 16th June 2017, 7.00pm-11.00pm.

Registration from 6.30pm with refreshments available.

Boroughmuir Rugby and Community Sports Club,
2 Meggatland Wynd,
EH14 1AS

Places must be booked by Friday 9th June 2017

Comments, compliments, complaints

Please give us feedback on this publication. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints we would like to know. Just contact us at the ETF office.

About Edinburgh Tenants Federation

Edinburgh Tenants Federation is the umbrella organisation for tenants' and residents' groups in Edinburgh and a Registered Tenant Organisation. Tenants' and residents' groups can become members of ETF and individuals can become Associate Members. Just contact the ETF office on 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk for more information.

Thoughtful Quote

*"The first row, the first shout has to come for you,
because if you don't say you matter, no one else will"*

Inez McCormack

Copy Deadline



Tenants Voice is usually published four times a year and is distributed to nearly 4,000 tenants, residents, decision makers and other interested individuals throughout Edinburgh. We always welcome contributions from our readers, though we stress that material included in *Tenants Voice* does not always represent the opinions of Edinburgh Tenants Federation. If you would like to contribute an article, please do so by the following deadline:

August 2017 edition – Monday
24th July 2017.



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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of ETF.

