

# Tenants Voice

Issue 122 - September 2024



EDINBURGH TENANTS  
FEDERATION

## Convenor's Report

The last few months have been busy with lots of phone calls from people having problems with rent and repairs, which I thankfully managed to work out for them. I had my regular meeting with the Convenor for Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work discussing the housing crisis and cost of living.



I have been out assisting projects across the city, one where they are growing their own food with the support of people with learning difficulties and one where they are helping adults with literacy. Another, where they give women who are pregnant what they need for their babies. Those three projects were given grants from the One City Trust.

I had a walkabout meeting with Paul Lawrence and Derek McGowan in the Muirhouse area where the retrofit is ongoing, it was a very fruitful meeting. I had a visit to Oxfords House with Councillor Meagher, which had quite a few issues that the councillor took onboard.

Betty Stone, Convenor

## Dates for your Diary

- **ETF Challenge Poverty Week 2024 Event - Monday 7th October**  
1pm to 5pm Norton Park Conference Centre
- **Shelter Money and Debt Advice Workshop - Monday 21st October**  
1pm to 3pm Norton Park Conference Centre
- **Pre-Round Table Meeting – Date TBC**
- **AGM – Friday 15th November 6pm to 11pm** Leonardo Murrayfield Hotel
- **High Flats Meeting - Monday 18th November 6pm to 8pm**  
Birnies Court Community Room
- **Round Table Meeting - Tuesday 26th November 6pm to 9pm** City Chambers
- **Christmas and New Year - Office closed from Friday 20th December**  
and reopens on Monday 6th January

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## Next Edition

If you wish to contribute an article to the next edition of Tenants Voice please send us your articles by Friday 31st January 2025.

The Newsletter of Edinburgh's Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations

Edinburgh Tenants Federation is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) SC048236, regulated by the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

### Edinburgh Recovery Activities (ERA) Café Drop In

ETF staff Shona and Rosanna were pleased to be invited to the Recovery Cafe run by ERA to meet those attending the cafe and talk all things housing. ETF are looking forward to further partnership opportunities with ERA in the future. Thank you to ERA for the invite. For more information on getting involved with ERA if you are in recovery then please check out their Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/EdinburghRecoveryActivities> or email Mick at [mickmccarron@cyrenians.scot](mailto:mickmccarron@cyrenians.scot)



### Leith Gala Day

ETF were delighted to have a stall at Leith Gala Day on Saturday 8th June 2024. ETF were able to talk to lots of attendees about the work of ETF, how ETF can support people and the different ways in which people can get involved. There was a wide range of stalls at the gala, including local food vendors, small businesses and charities. It was a great way to spread the work of ETF and connect with other organisations.

### Pre-Round Table Meeting

ETF worked with 25 tenants at the Pre-Round Table meeting in June, where 6 topics were chosen by the tenants as being priorities to address with Housing Councillors at the planned Round Table meeting. There was a great turn out and ETF want to thank all of the wonderful tenants who give up their time to make these events happen. ETF staff will be in touch later in the year about the next pre-meeting and Round Table, so watch this space.

### Round Table Meeting

ETF held their Round Table Meeting on Tuesday 25th June at the City Chambers with City of Edinburgh councillors and council officers present. The topics discussed at the meeting had been decided upon by attendees in a pre-meeting based on the most common concerns and issues that tenants encounter. The topics included Communications, Housing Standards & Investment and Repairs & Maintenance. ETF would like to thank tenants, councillors and council officers for attending. The next Round Table Meeting is Tuesday 26th November at 6pm in the European Room at the City Chambers.



# City of Edinburgh Council City Plan 2040

ETF held an online session to generate an organisational response to a City of Edinburgh Council survey on the City Plan 2040. The local development plan is at the very early stages of preparation. The survey considered the best ways to keep people informed and involved in different stages of the plan's development. ETF hope to hold more online events going forward to allow further opportunities for participation.



## Federation Meeting

ETF held its quarterly Federation Meeting at Norton Park Conference Centre on Tuesday 6th August 2024. The topic presented to the members was the City of Edinburgh Council Local Housing Strategy (LHS). The group were able to gain information about the results of the recent survey and find out more about opportunities to feed into the LHS before it was finalised. Consultations will be carried out with tenants and residents, partner organisations and other stakeholders relevant to the LHS. If you wish to find out more about getting involved contact the Local Housing Strategy team by emailing [localhousingstrategy@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:localhousingstrategy@edinburgh.gov.uk).



## Broomhouse Street Party

ETF were delighted to have a stall at Broomhouse Street Party for the second year running on Thursday 8th August. There was an amazing turnout from the local community, ETF were so busy we ran out of promotional items. It was great to speak to people about how to get involved with ETF and more generally on housing related issues. There were a variety of stalls from other organisations and charities, as well as performers throughout the day, which created a vibrant atmosphere. We look forward to having a stall again next year.

## TIS Member Gatherings

ETF staff were delighted to attend two TIS Member Gatherings over the past couple of months. These events are great for knowledge building and connecting with other organisations. The two gatherings focused on the topics of 'tenant participation and scrutiny' and 'youth engagement'. They were both highly informative and provided ETF staff with inspiration for projects and ways to engage going forward. If you would like to find out more about the TIS programme please visit their website at [www.tis.org.uk](http://www.tis.org.uk).





# Tenancy Rights and Support Services

Needing a repair done? Landlord raising your rent? Facing eviction? Whatever you are dealing with, the Tenancy Rights and Support Service is here to help.



The Tenancy Rights and Support Services project is here to support and empower migrant and ethnic minority tenants in the private rental sector, helping them navigate their housing issues. We conduct workshops that educate tenants on specific housing issues they may encounter and provide drop-in sessions to provide face-to-face advice and support for tenants in need. We will do our best to support tenants who have difficulties with English, providing advice in languages that they are fluent in where possible.

If you or someone you know is having issues with their private rented home, please get in touch, either contacting us at [tenancysupport@elrec.org.uk](mailto:tenancysupport@elrec.org.uk) or 0131 556 0441, or attending our weekly drop-in session:

- ELREC Office - 14 Forth Street, EH1 3LH
- Wednesdays - 10:00-13:00



You can find us at <https://www.elrec.org.uk/home-2/our-work/our-projects/tenancy-support-rights-services/> or scan the code to take you there.



## Welcome

The most inclusive welcome at

# ◆ EDINBURGH ◆

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

WelcoMe is the most person-centred tool to share access needs, helping us deliver more for you with enhanced communication and instant training for our teams, **bespoke to your needs.**

- Share anything that you would like us to know about your accessibility needs and preferences
- Staff receive **personalised** hints and tips to meet your needs
- Discretion and **dignity** - just great service all about you

@cs.welcome

@welcome\_cs

@welco-me

@WelcoMe\_CS



Scan this code to know more

### Help us to help you

WelcoMe specialises in making your customer experience as informed, anxiety-free and friendly as possible.

You can share information, your needs and reasons for visiting our locality offices, then the web tool delivers unique, in-the-moment training to our teams who will be welcoming you, bespoke to your needs.

This means our team can discreetly identify what you need to deliver your best possible customer experience.

## Your Stair Cleaning Service

Help us keep an eye on the service by providing feedback on the cleaning standard:

- return the feedback form if you receive one through your door
- complete the online feedback form <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/staircleanform>
- email [stair.cleaning2@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:stair.cleaning2@edinburgh.gov.uk)
- call 0131 529 6695

The stair cleaning service helps tenants and other residents to keep their common stairs clean and deals quickly with emergency cleans.

### Each time the cleaners attend they should

- sweep and remove dust and litter from hard floor surfaces
- use a spray to clean and disinfect
- wet scrub stairs, landings and deck access areas when required
- wipe down the handrails and window ledges
- sweep / wash the front and back steps.

Please note walls, windows and the stair spindles are not included in the clean.

All residents have a responsibility to keep their common areas clean and tidy. Private owners in stairs where Council tenants receive the service are also able to join the service - the more properties there are in the service in your stair, the more frequent the cleaning.

If you have any queries, please contact the stair cleaning team using the contact details above.



## Milan SWO Your Rights Matter Project

Milan SWO, a registered charitable organisation, providing city wide services to South Asian communities in Edinburgh and Lothian to make positive differences in their lives through daycare, information and advice, unpaid carers support and outreach services.

We are delighted to promote our 'Your Rights Matter' project, providing support and assistance in community languages to both private tenants and landlords in a wide range of matters relating to housing.



Our housing support worker, Ambareen Ahmed has up to date trainings and experience in this field and you can contact her on 0131 475 2307 for telephone support or a face-to-face appointment.

# The City of Edinburgh Council – Lightning Reach

## Find financial support this winter

Trying to keep your home warm with rising energy bills can bring added worry in winter. This year, the Council has launched a trial with the Lightning Reach service to help residents find the support that they need. So far, nearly 300 Edinburgh residents have used the service to find financial support.

Lightning Reach matches users to 2500 financial support schemes from charities, organisations and councils. Over £15m has already been awarded to individuals and households, with the **successful applicants receiving £1070 on average**.

Under their Winter Warmth Network, there is a wide variety of support available including:

- energy and bills
- home improvements and energy upgrades
- furniture and white goods
- warm clothing and essentials.

Visit their website today to find and apply for tailored support.

[www.lightningreach.org/application-portal](http://www.lightningreach.org/application-portal)

## Case study

### Darren, Montrose, Scotland

*"There was so much support on the portal that no one had told me about, which is fantastic."*

Struggling with rising energy bills and living costs, veteran Darren saw his mental health decline. His debt and increasing expenses triggered his PTSD, making it difficult to support himself and his two children.

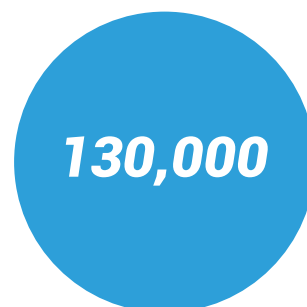
Through Lightning Reach, Darren applied to a grant from the Royal British Legion. Within a week, he received energy vouchers that helped him pay off his debt and keep his account in credit. Darren also accessed other support, including disability payments and assistance from his local council and energy provider.

*"It's really made a big improvement on my life. Without the portal, I would have never had help like this."*

Full story here: [www.lightningreach.org/stories-darren](http://www.lightningreach.org/stories-darren)



in support has been awarded through the Lightning Reach portal so far



individuals are already using Lightning Reach to find support



# Muirhouse Neighbourhood Garden

# Get Growing!

**Come along to our Community Gardening Sessions with Sylva. Everyone is welcome.**

Grow fruit, veg & flowers, meet your neighbours and be a part of a local community project!  
No experience necessary. Just come along!

**Wednesdays (9.30am–12.30pm)  
Sundays (1–4pm)**

Find us next to Fidra Court  
on Pennywell Medway  
EH4 4SE

Contact:  
sylva@edibleestates.scot  
07549431528



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TOGETHER**

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**LEVELLING  
UP**



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## ***Introducing Family and Household Support***

My name is Scott Watson, I'm a Family & Household Support service (FHS) manager. Our work includes helping new tenants settle into their home, offering tenants help to improve their financial situation, supporting families, helping neighbours resolve disputes, and dealing with antisocial behaviour, including complaints about antisocial noise.

The Care Inspectorate regulates our service to make sure we're meeting the National Care Standards for Housing Support Services, and all our staff must meet Scottish Social Services Council requirements to be registered to provide Housing Support. There's a lot of checks on our service and we must work to a high standard.

Anyone who has experienced antisocial behaviour will know just how upsetting this can be. It can have a huge impact on our lives. But rarely does anyone start out to be disruptive when they move into a home, we often find that people just need support to be the good neighbour we all want each other to be. At FHS our biggest source of complaint is about noise. In some ways this is not surprising as is in Edinburgh the style of housing means that many of us live in close proximity to our neighbours. The challenge is to distinguish what is often referred to as 'daily living noise' and what is antisocial noise. The same noise at one point in the day might be considered as 'daily living noise', but at another time of day might be considered as antisocial noise. Daily living noise can be anything from music to DIY, from children playing to the noise of a washing machine. It's about the day-to-day, normal activities of daily life. In FHS we recognise that 'prevention is better than cure' and we try to offer our service as early as possible, this includes mediation for neighbour disputes. Mediation is when someone from FHS helps people to make an informal and confidential agreement to improve understanding between each other. It can help to resolve disagreements in all sorts of situations.

If you need to speak to someone about a noise matter, you can contact the FHS Team in your local area. Details are below. The FHS Team operate during office hours. The Team will pick up any calls or emails from over the weekend or evening and get back to you to discuss the situation.

If you need assistance with a situation of noise outside of office hours, you can call Police Scotland on 101 and report the matter to them. In some circumstances the Police will contact FHS and inform us that you have called. A member of the Team will then follow that up by contacting you. Police have a responsibility to respond to Antisocial Behaviour including antisocial noise. The Police have powers to act where there is a situation of on-going noise.

**If you want to talk to someone in FHS, email or call using your locality contact below**

[northeast.familyandhouseholdsupport@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:northeast.familyandhouseholdsupport@edinburgh.gov.uk) or 0131 529 7168

[southeast.familyandhouseholdsupport@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:southeast.familyandhouseholdsupport@edinburgh.gov.uk) or 0131 529 5123

[northwest.familyandhouseholdsupport@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:northwest.familyandhouseholdsupport@edinburgh.gov.uk) or 0131 529-5014

[southwest.familyandhouseholdsupport@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:southwest.familyandhouseholdsupport@edinburgh.gov.uk) or 0131 469 5051



# The Changing Face of Tenant Engagement

By Fraser Campbell, Senior Tenant Engagement Consultant, CX-Feedback

From my work in recent years with around 100 social landlords up and down the country, I have seen tenant engagement evolving rapidly, with a noticeable shift from traditional face-to-face involvement methods to online methods. This transition is providing huge opportunities for social landlords and tenants to work together more closely, enhancing accessibility and enabling more tenants to participate in decision-making processes. Previously, attending in-person meetings could be challenging for many due to time, mobility, or other constraints. Now, online platforms allow tenants to engage from the comfort of their homes, making the process more inclusive and representative of the entire community.



Online engagement tools such as surveys, forums, and virtual meetings have reduced barriers to participation. Tenants with busy schedules, mobility issues, or caring responsibilities can now get involved more easily, making the engagement process more inclusive and representative of the community's diverse needs. This increased accessibility has democratised the tenant voice, enabling social landlords to gather feedback from a wider cross-section of the tenant population. This inclusivity is crucial for making decisions that really reflect the needs and preferences of all tenants, not just those able to attend scrutiny meetings.

The move to online engagement also offers better value for money for tenants. Traditional face-to-face activities can be costly, involving venue hire, travel expenses, and printed materials. By shifting these activities online, social landlords can reduce costs and reinvest the savings into improving services and facilities for tenants. For example, funds saved on meeting logistics can be redirected towards maintenance, upgrades, or community projects.

One client of mine in particular, a Scottish RSL, went from including a mere 6 involved tenants in their repairs scrutiny process to considering the views of over 450, simply using digital involvement methods.

The benefits of online engagement are clear: more opportunities for tenants to have their voices heard, greater convenience, and better service outcomes. For social landlords, it offers a more efficient, cost-effective, and insightful way to engage with their communities, leading to stronger, more vibrant communities. The Edinburgh Tenants Federation, along with other tenant organizations, plays a vital role in this ongoing evolution, fostering dialogue and advocating for tenants' rights in this new era of engagement.



# Locality Updates



**Drumbryden** There has been a request for support to set up a residents group in the Drumbryden area, so ETF staff are working on this with local residents.

**Dumbiedykes Working Group** Dumbiedykes Working Group have been meeting every month and are inching closer to getting both of their key aims, a bus service and access to the Braidwood Centre.

**Hailesland Park Residents Association** Hailesland Park Residents Association are looking into setting up a monthly meet up for tenants and residents to do a litter pick and some light weeding and cleaning around the blocks, this will be the last Sunday of every month starting at the end of September, and residents can meet at the Community Room at 11 am.

**Laichfield Working Group** After making the difficult decision to fold the formal community association, several residents of Laichfield have been meeting with ETF staff to spend the remaining funds on trips and activities for the residents in the Sheltered Housing complex. The group have already had a carvery meal out and a chippy night in the community hall, and are now looking at booking activities to keep residents busy until Christmas.

**Maidencraig Court** Maidencraig Court residents have been in touch with ETF recently through the High Flats meeting and ETF will support the residents to set up a working group meeting to look at local issues.

**Nisbet Court/Hawkhill Court** There is some interest in trying to set up a residents group for the Nisbet and Hawkhill Court High Flats, ETF are looking into setting up an initial meeting for this.

**Oxgangs (North) Community Association** Oxgangs (North) has completed their Committee Roles training recently and will be looking into applying for funding as soon as possible. They will be looking to open the first part of their monthly meetings to Oxgang (North) tenants and residents and invite guest speakers in the coming months. They hope to hold their meetings on the second Tuesday of every month at Oxgangs Neighbourhood Centre.

**Parkgrove Bank & St Kentigern's View Working Group** Parkgrove Bank and St Kentigerns View have continued to get monthly updates from council and Omega staff regarding their ongoing repairs work.

**Westfield Court Working Group** Westfield Court recently held its first meeting for tenants and residents, and some residents spoke at a Deputation at the most recent Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee meeting about the impact that their heating system has on them, as it is not fit for purpose.

**Prestonfield/Priestfield** ETF staff are supporting an open meeting for all Prestonfield/Priestfield residents to discuss restarting the residents association for the area.

**North Sighthill** Residents of North Sighthill have expressed interest in forming a residents association for the area. ETF staff hope to support this group going forward.

**Willowbrae and Duddingston Residents Association** Willowbrae Sheltered Housing were delighted to have an 8-week drop-in session for digital inclusion run by the reconnect team from People Know How. Those who attended the drop in learnt a lot from the team and were very thankful for their advice.

If you live in one of these areas, or live elsewhere but would like information on how to set up a tenants and residents group in Edinburgh, please contact ETF at 0131 475 2509 or email [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk). You can also follow us on X (Twitter) or Facebook for our latest news and updates.



We want to talk to you about some changes to grassland management within our greenspaces. We are committed to enhancing biodiversity, supporting pollinators and tackling the nature crisis.

So, we are testing an adapted mowing routine in select areas: Sighthill/Gorgie, Forth, and part of Pentlands

## What's Changing?

Our residential plots will now be mown once every 4-6 weeks instead of twice monthly. Edges to grass plots will still be cut twice a month.

## How Can You Learn More?

Scan the QR code below or visit the dedicated page on [Thringreenspaces.scot](http://Thringreenspaces.scot)



## Grass Grows Biodiversity Shows



## Why Does It Matter?

Pollinators like bees and butterflies, help keep our environment healthy. When we support them, we're promoting nature to stay in balance.

More flowers provide more food for pollinators. This makes our greenspaces more interesting and helps nature thrive.

Using machines less often to cut grass means we are putting less pollution into the air. That's good news for everyone and for the planet.

This will also allow a reallocation of resources and staff time towards other biodiversity and maintenance tasks.



### **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](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk) for more information.

*Tenants Voice* is usually published three times a year and is distributed to nearly 3,000 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 ETF.

Produced by Edinburgh Tenants Federation,  
Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh, EH7 5QY  
Tel: 0131 475 2509 Email: [info@edinburghtenants.org.uk](mailto:info@edinburghtenants.org.uk)  
[www.edinburghtenants.org.uk](http://www.edinburghtenants.org.uk)

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



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