



December 2009

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A 21st Century Solution to an Age Old Problem

What can be done to provide increased safety for the elderly and disabled within their own homes? More and more throughout the Highlands, the answer is “Telecare”.

Telecare is the 21st century equivalent of the old “Helpcall” system which comprised of either a pull cord or pendant button which would send a signal to a base unit which would, in turn, call through to an answering centre which would then call out a “good neighbour”.

That basic principle is still the same but with all calls going to a **dedicated 24 hour Call Centre** in Aberdeen. The difference now is that additional safety sensors can be wirelessly linked to the system.

The basic package incorporates the Lifeline box that sends the call to the Call Centre via the telephone line, a button to activate the unit and a wireless smoke detector. Buttons may still be worn on a **pendant** or on a **watch strap**. The Fire Service can conduct a **free Home Fire Safety Check** if required.

There are additional sensors that may be added to the Lifeline unit. The most popular of these are **Bed and Chair Occupancy Sensors** and **PIR Movement Sensors** for

fall detection. The settings on many of these sensors can be configured to fit in with the daily living habits of the individual.

Those who suffer from hearing loss can be provided with a pager system and vibrating pillow alert to indicate when any of the sensors, such as **Smoke Detector** or **Carbon Monoxide Detector**, are activated. This pager system can also be used by carers or family members living in the same house as the elderly or disabled individual to indicate sensor activation as an alternative, or in addition, to the Aberdeen call centre.



The **Telecare Service** is co-ordinated by **The Highland Council Care at Home Service**, with all equipment being supplied free of charge but with a maximum weekly service charge of up to £5.00 which is financially means tested. All the sensors, with the exception of the Smoke Detectors, are fitted and programmed by the Association’s Handyperson Services staff.

For more information on Telecare, please contact **Handyperson Services on 01478 612035**.



Rent Setting Policy Consultation 2010/2011

The Association is required to regularly review its rents and service charges and this is your opportunity to comment on our proposals for the charges that will apply from 1st April 2010.

What does your rent pay for?

All rental income received by the Association is set aside to pay for the cost of the services we provide to tenants.

Included within these costs are:-

- The management of our housing stock, including items like staff costs, insurance premiums and office expenses.
- Day-to-day repairs, e.g. faulty heating systems, electrical problems, burst pipes, etc.
- Cyclical Maintenance which includes our external painting and ground maintenance programmes.
- Planned Maintenance involving installing replacement kitchens, bathrooms, doors, windows and heating systems.
- Loan charges on the money we borrow to construct our properties.

How do our rents compare to other similar landlords?

As part of our Policy, we need to ensure that our rents are comparable to the rents charged by similar social landlords in Scotland and we have consistently managed to achieve this. A comparison of our rents and those of the other main housing providers in the Highlands and Islands area is shown below.

	2 Apt	3 Apt	4 Apt	5+ Apt	All Units
Orkney Housing Association	51.76	56.63	59.96	66.61	55.43
Pentland Housing Association	40.59	46.53	57.86	66.42	55.59
Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association	51.33	55.75	61.55	65.34	56.57
Lochaber Housing Association	60.74	54.17	59.06	64.34	56.97
Albyn Housing Society	51.08	58.63	65.15	74.47	58.33
Hjaltland Housing Association	53.32	63.27	67.43	79.11	60.44
Aberdeenshire Housing Partnership	51.76	58.93	69.35	74.87	61.36
West Highland Housing Association	52.07	63.26	72.95	86.84	61.38
The Moray Housing Partnership	50.33	59.96	69.10	74.31	62.95

What is the proposed rent increase in 2010/2011?

The Association is proposing to increase rents from 1st April 2010 by +2%. This is the increase we calculate that we require in order to continue to provide the level of services that tenants require.

Why the increase?

The Association's costs are subject to inflationary pressures and many of our costs are increasing by more than the rate of inflation, particularly insurance premiums, repair charges and building costs.

Will Service Charges increase?

Yes. It is proposed that these increase in line with the change to rents.

What happens next?

We are inviting all our tenants to respond to this consultation exercise by **31st January, 2010**. All comments and submissions will be considered by our Management Committee who will take the final decision on rent levels for 2010/2011. We will then advise tenants of their new rent figure no later than the **end of February 2010**.

**PLEASE LET US HAVE YOUR VIEWS
NO LATER THAN 31st JANUARY 2010**



Digital Switchover: Communal Systems for Flats

Tenants may be aware of the major changes to television reception in our area in July 2010. The Association currently makes provision for Digital Satellite and Terrestrial reception in blocks of flats. We will maintain the Digital Satellite reception but following the Digital Switchover, the terrestrial reception will no longer be available in analog form.

The Association is currently upgrading all satellite systems to enable tenants in flats to receive Sky Plus and Freesat (Sky Multiroom will not be available). Tenants living in a flat can upgrade to Sky Plus; you will be responsible for the cost of the additional connection from the Satellite Dish to your set top box as well as any arrangement fees required by Sky. Contact Sky for this package.

Freesat will be available through the current communal system if you have the correct reception equipment. You will require either a Freeview compatible television or set top box.

If tenants are upgrading their reception equipment and a connection is required to Association equipment other than the wall socket provided, the tenant must inform the Association prior to work being carried out.

With regard to redundant terrestrial reception systems, we may be able to use these systems to provide Freeview. If the standard of cable used in the initial installation is suitable, we will provide an aerial to upgrade to Freeview. Depending on the size and configuration of the block of flats, it may be possible to install new cable and this will be considered where appropriate.

Assistance is available to tenants living in properties other than Flats who qualify either by age or disability and the Association is currently gathering information from Digital UK and the BBC with regard to the qualifying criteria. Further advice on this will be available once we have consulted with these organisations.

Tips to Keep Warm this Winter

Wrapping up warmly is very important. Several layers of thin clothing rather than one thick layer will keep you warm. Clothes made from wool, polyester or fleecy synthetic fibres are usually warmer. **Thermal underwear** can really help beat the chill.



If you have radiators under your windows, don't let the curtains hang in front of them. **Tuck them behind the radiators** so that the heat flows into the room.

Draw your curtains as soon as it gets dark – windows lose a lot of heat. **Hang door curtains over**

your doors – you can buy a net curtain wire and hang it from the door frame. This is cheap and easy, yet it makes a surprising difference.

Try not to sit down for long stretches - get up and move around a bit. Any kind of activity, even doing the vacuuming, gets your circulation going and makes you feel warmer.

A **hot water bottle** will warm up your bed, as will an **electric blanket**. Do not use the two together as this can be dangerous.



Have a **warm bath** just before you go to bed. This will warm you up and will also help to make you sleepy.

Wearing the right clothing to bed is important - **thermal underwear** or **pyjamas and bed socks** will all help keep you warm right through the night.

A **warm, milky drink** before bed can also help and, if you sometimes wake during the night feeling cold, you could keep a **flask of hot drink** by your bedside too.



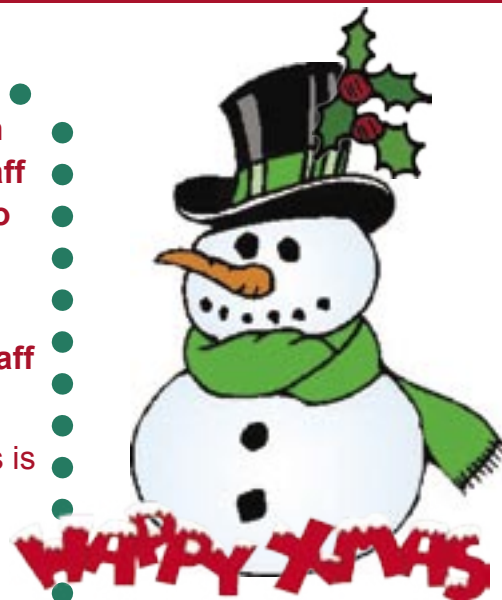
Christmas and New Year Holiday Dates

The Association will be closed for Christmas and New Year on Thursday 24th and Friday 25th December 2009. Reduced staff numbers will be in the office from Monday 28th December to Wednesday 30th December.

The Association will also be closed on Thursday 31st December 2009 and Friday 1st January 2010, with reduced staff numbers in the office on Monday 4th January 2010.

The Emergency Contact phone number for Out of Hours Repairs is 08457 002005

We would like to wish all our tenants
A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



Highland Housing Register Allocations Policy Consultation

Since the Highland Housing Register was introduced in May 2008, the partner landlords involved have been watching the operation and outcome of the Allocations Policy to see if it is working in the way that it was intended to.

The Allocations Policy sets out:-

- > How to apply for social housing from any of the partner landlords
- > How applications for housing will be assessed
- > How the partner landlords will allocate empty houses

The Highland Housing Register partner landlords are The Highland Council, Albyn Housing Society, Cairn Housing Association, Lochaber Housing Association, Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association, Pentland Housing Association.

The partner landlords have identified 6 areas of the policy where some change will either improve or clarify what we do. You will find enclosed with this edition of Homefront, a Consultation Questionnaire on the proposed changes. The Questionnaire is also available on our website at www.LSHA.co.uk for you.

If you would like further information on the proposed policy changes, please contact our Housing Services staff who will be pleased to assist you. The closing date for responses to this consultation is Friday, 12 February 2010.



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**Lochalsh
& Skye
Housing
Association**

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