

NEWSLETTER

Fife Housing Group | Issue 86 Autumn/Winter

**Make a
difference**

Have you ever thought about becoming a member of Fife Housing Group? Our members are important as they help us to shape the future of the organisation.

**Why not join us? Find out how
on page 7**



at home with...

fife 
housing
group

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Readability

Can you read our other articles ok? If not, you can ask for your newsletter to be provided in a large print format. Or, if you know of a tenant who does not have English as their first language and might struggle to read information from us, did you know that we can arrange to translate it for them?

Contact our newsletter editor, Alex McCue, on **07970 801007** or via **alex.mccue@fifehg.org.uk** to request a large print copy or enquire about alternative copy formats.

Festive Hours 2022/23

Please note, that although our office will be closed over the festive period, colleagues will be available and providing services as detailed below:

Friday 23 December: 8:30am - 4:30pm (office open)

Monday 26 December: Closed

Tuesday 27 December: Closed

Wednesday 28 December: Closed

Thursday 29 December: 8:30am - 5:00pm

Friday 30 December: 8:30am - 4:30pm

(our office will remain closed on both of these days, however, a reduced number of colleagues will be providing services from home)

Monday 2 January: Closed

Tuesday 3 January: Closed

Wednesday 4 January: Closed

Thursday 5 January: Normal office opening hours resume

Spend well and save more this Christmas

**Thursday 24 November
3.00pm to 5.30pm
St Agatha's Church Hall,
160 Methil Brae**

**Free event –
all welcome!**

**FREE pre-prepared meals, kindly donated by
Super Lean, for the first 100 guests!**

**Advice available on reducing food costs, fuel costs,
energy costs and much more.**

**Also on offer, cost-effective Christmas tips, money-
saving prizes and lots of fun activities for the kids.**

Acts of kindness

To celebrate 25 years of Fife Housing Group, our colleagues undertook 25 acts of kindness, chosen to benefit a range of different groups including our tenants, our communities, colleagues and many of our local support services. The acts of kindness supported a variety of causes such as the environment, mental health, combatting loneliness and giving back to the community.

These acts of kindness have been taking place since the start of 2022. You may have seen some of our colleagues out and about in your community carrying out litter picks to help improve the area around your home or perhaps your child goes to one of the local nurseries that received items from our colleagues for the children to enjoy. Our team also generously donated to local food banks, animal shelters and our Charity of the Year, Andy's Man Club.



Our longest-standing tenant and a tenant whose birthday fell on our anniversary both received a gift of flowers and a hamper full of goodies.



We are also excited to be in the early stages of trialling a befriending service and have contacted a number of tenants who may benefit from this type of support.

Not only have many of our tenants benefitted from these acts of kindness, but, valuable relationships which will help to facilitate future partnership working, were also formed with local community groups. Additionally, our colleagues' personal and professional goals were harnessed, through one-on-one coaching and training.

Taking part in our acts of kindness programme proved to be a rewarding experience for everyone involved and one that made us recognise that often, even a small act of kindness can make a big difference.

We want to play our part in helping to improve the lives of you, your fellow tenants and the communities you live in. We hope that these acts of kindness have demonstrated this and we will continue to build on these.

Resident VOICES

Your Resident VOICES tenant panel are back into the swing of things, having recently submitted their first report since the pandemic hit, to the Board. The report focused on whether Fife Housing Group is doing enough to encourage, engage and support tenants in understanding ways in which they can contribute to reducing their carbon footprint.

Resident VOICES chose this topic for scrutiny following the work done to raise awareness of the climate emergency as part of last year's Scottish Housing Day.

Research for their project involved examining relevant legislation and publications, accessing related environmental programming and resources and meeting with Fife Housing Group's Asset Manager. After a number of successful meetings, their findings were collated and recommendations were made by members to the Board of Management for their consideration.

The Chair of Resident VOICES, John Bell, finished off the scrutiny project by presenting their findings to the Board of Management, who have subsequently accepted all of the recommendations being made.

The group were delighted with the feedback they received and have already scoped out the next topic which they wish to investigate, which relates to how satisfied tenants are with the quality of their homes. They are in the early stages of this activity and would welcome any new interest from tenants who feel they would like to become involved in making a difference. They are a friendly bunch and eager to hear the views of you, their fellow tenants.

Should you be interested in becoming involved with Resident VOICES, please contact Helen Miller on **01383 608127** or via **helen.miller@fifehg.org.uk**.



Get on Board

Ever wished you had the opportunity to influence the decisions we make?

Thought about getting involved to ensure tenants' voices are heard?

Then now is the time to get on Board and start making a difference!



We are committed to improving the services we provide and recognise the need for tenant representation at the highest level in order to accomplish this.

This being the case, we are currently looking for motivated tenants to join our Board of Management, who are responsible for setting the strategic agenda and agreeing all major decisions affecting Fife Housing Group.

As a Board Member you will:

- Play an important role in major developments and shaping the business
- Bring your experience so that decisions are made in the interest of tenants
- Monitor our progress and performance

You should be:

- A tenant of Fife Housing Group
- Interested in housing issues and tenant participation
- Able to provide a voice for our tenants and their communities, but, understand business constraints

Our Board meets six times a year with an additional Annual General Meeting and strategic event.

The post is voluntary but offers an excellent opportunity to gain additional career skills or enhance your knowledge of business and social housing as, although no previous experience is necessary, full training and support will be provided.

If you think you might be interested in this role you can arrange an informal chat with our Chief Executive, Nicki Donaldson, or request an application pack. To do this please contact our Chief Executive and Governance Assistant, Laura Grieve, at **01383 608175** or by emailing laura.grieve@fifehg.org.uk.

Become a member and make a difference

Have you ever thought about becoming a member of Fife Housing Group? Our members are important as they help us to shape the future of the organisation. If you are interested in the work of the organisation and want to help influence change, why don't you join us?

Being a member means you can attend our Annual General Meeting allowing you to interact with our Chair, Chief Executive and Auditors and ask them questions on specific topics that interest you. It also gives you the chance to vote on important issues and have your voice heard.

In addition, it is an excellent first step to becoming a member of our Board or other tenant groups such as Resident VOICES, which allow you to be involved in decision making and address key areas within the business.

Anyone can become a member of Fife Housing Group, as long as you are aged 16 and over if you are a tenant, and over 18 if you are not a tenant. All you need to do is purchase a £1 share in Fife Housing Association Ltd and have your application agreed by our Board of Management as meeting the essential criteria detailed in our Membership Policy and aligning with our Model Rules, copies of which are available on request.

We are keen to ensure that membership is representative of the communities in Fife that we serve. Therefore, we welcome applications for membership from tenants of both Fife Housing Association Limited and its subsidiary, Yourplace Limited. We would also welcome membership from tenants' and residents' organisations that operate in those communities.

Should you be interested in finding out more about becoming a member or any other opportunities that we offer, please do not hesitate to contact a member of our team directly on **01383 606162** or via info@fifehg.org.uk.



Customer satisfaction survey

Your feedback is important to us as we seek to continuously improve the service we provide. So, to help us find out what you think about the home you live in, the services you receive from us and the opportunities that you have to get involved with what we do, we have commissioned independent market research company, the Knowledge Partnership, to carry out a customer satisfaction survey on our behalf.

The survey will take place during November and December 2022.

If you receive a visit or a call from one of our researchers, please help us by taking part – it should take no longer than 10 minutes to answer their questions.

This is an ideal opportunity for you to have your say in how we do things now and to influence how we shape our services in the future.

Cost of living crisis



The cost of purchasing goods and services is increasing due to a range of political and social factors including the impact of Brexit, the war in Ukraine and economic recovery in a post-Covid world.

For householders, the cost of energy, food, petrol and diesel is on the increase. The government have already announced payments to some householders to assist in tackling the cost of living crisis and we hope more announcements will follow now that the new Prime Minister is in office.

However, if you are struggling there are also lots of individual agencies and charities that can help, depending on what assistance you might need.

Energy costs

Through 2021-2022, we worked with Cosy Kingdom and Greener Kirkcaldy to deliver £33,500 in assistance to tenants, providing debt-relief, advice and energy-saving

measures. While this fund has now come to an end, assistance from local charities is still available and we will continue to apply for funding opportunities as they arise.

Council Tax

After rent, Council Tax is often one of the biggest bills for tenants. It is a legal requirement to pay your Council Tax bill, though discounts are available for qualifying householders. Failure to make Council Tax payments can result in bank account arrestment (where money is withdrawn from your account to pay a debt). This court usually adds a 10% charge to this, leaving you with additional debt. If you are struggling to make payments, contact Fife Council who will be able to assess if you have any discount qualifications.

Broadband

Many broadband providers are offering broadband services to tenants on specific benefits. Sky, Virgin, BT and NOWTV all offer packages at a lower cost if proof of certain benefits can be provided.

Cost of Living Payment

The first instalment of the government's £650 Cost of Living Payment started reaching recipients in mid-July.

The second instalment of £324 will follow in November.

The payments are made automatically to those who qualify so there is no need to apply.

Further payments as part of the scheme include:

- £150 in September for people receiving disability benefits
- An extra £300 in November for households entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment.

These payments have no effect on your existing benefits and some people may be eligible for more than one type of payment.

What you were paid		When most payments were/will be made
Benefits or tax credits	Cost of Living Payment	
Universal Credit	£326	Between 14 and 31 July 2022
	£324	Autumn 2022
Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)	£326	Between 14 and 31 July 2022
	£324	Autumn 2022
Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)	£326	Between 14 and 31 July 2022
	£324	Autumn 2022
Income Support	£326	Between 14 and 31 July 2022
	£324	Autumn 2022
Pension Credit	£326	Between 14 and 31 July 2022
	£324	Autumn 2022
Tax Credits	£326	Between 2 and 7 September 2022
	£324	Winter 2022

Fire safety this winter

House fires and casualties increase during winter, with many incidents happening over the Christmas period.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) want you to join their fight against fire this winter and have compiled some information to help you be prepared.

Here is their advice, as well as some excellent practical tips to keep you and your family safe:

- **Smoke alarms** – Make sure you have working smoke alarms and a heat alarm in your kitchen. Test your alarms weekly.
- **Take care when cooking** – Especially if you suffer from any illness or disability or are taking prescribed medications that make you more forgetful.
- **Look out for older people** – Whether it be your grandparent, parent, aunt, uncle, neighbour or friend. You can call the SFRS for more advice on this using the contact information below.
- **Alcohol and drugs** – Drinking or taking drugs can make you less alert to signs of a fire. You are more likely to fall asleep, less likely to wake up should a fire start (especially if you don't have working alarms) and also likely to be more disorientated, making it difficult for you to escape.
- **Smoking** – Smoking is the number one cause of death from fire in the home. You are more likely to die in a fire if you have been smoking and drinking. In many fires caused by cigarettes, the person has also been consuming alcohol and has fallen asleep. Never smoke in bed and, if you are tired or have been drinking, do not smoke while on your sofa. Instead, go outside or smoke at an open window or door.
- **Cooking** – Do not cook if you are tired, have been drinking or have taken drugs. Never leave cooking unattended in any circumstances.
- **Portable heaters** – Keep these away from furniture, bedding and your curtains. Don't sit too close to them and remember to switch them off before you go to bed.
- **Fairy lights** – Turn off your Christmas tree lights when you go to bed or when you leave the house.
- **Christmas trees** – Real trees are pretty but they can be hazardous. It's vital that you keep the tree stand filled with water to minimise the risk.
- **Candles** – Keep them away from anything that could catch fire and remember to blow them out when you leave the house, go to bed or even when you leave the room!
- **Keep in touch** – With friends, neighbours and loved ones who you think may be at risk. A phone call or visit can make a difference.

Five simple steps to help you stay safe during severe weather

With winter officially on the way and snow likely at some point, it's worth taking a few minutes to do a little preparation **BEFORE** any potential severe weather hits.

As well as creating a household plan for emergencies we suggest taking these five simple steps to help to keep you and your family safe:

1. Keep a mixture of salt and sand and a shovel handy to put on steps or paths in icy weather
2. Stock up on your basic cold, flu and sore throat remedies and order repeat prescriptions in plenty of time
3. Store three days-worth of water and basic food items in the cupboard or freezer in case you cannot get out to go shopping
4. Ensure you have a battery-operated radio, torch and spare batteries handy in case there's a power cut
5. Have a list of emergency numbers, such as your utility companies, by your home phone or store them in your mobile

You can find lots more advice about preparing for and dealing with emergencies, such as severe winter weather, on the Ready Scotland website (readyscotland.org)

For more information visit –

Website: firescotland.gov.uk

Social media: [@SFRSYourSafety](https://twitter.com/SFRSYourSafety)

For advice or to book a free home fire safety visit you can -

Call: 0800 0731 999

Text: 'FIRE' to 80800

If you are worried about an older person and fire safety you can contact the SFRS or Age Scotland –

Age Scotland: 0800 12 44 222

Website: ageuk.org.uk/scotland

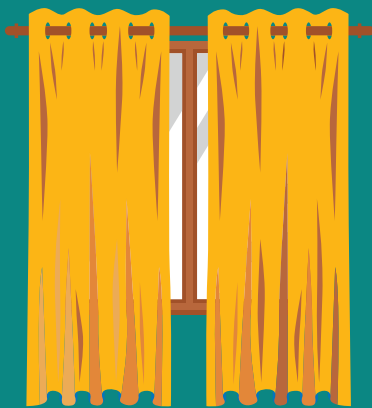
Keep cosy this winter with these top tips

Everyone would like their home to be warm and cosy this winter, particularly as many of us will find ourselves staying in a lot more than usual, but, increasingly expensive energy bills can make this difficult. There are, however, steps you can take to help reduce these costs and our partners at free and impartial energy and debt advice service Cosy Kingdom, have kindly shared their top ten tips to help you stay warm and save money this winter.

1. Use your heating controls

Using your heating controls effectively can help you warm your house efficiently and save you money this winter. Turning your thermostat down by just one degree can save up to £85 a year and using all of your heating controls, can cut your fuel use by up to 42%, ensuring you're getting the benefit of your heating when you need it most.

2. Consider thermal curtains



3. Do some draught-proofing

Draughts account for around 10% of heat loss in our homes. Consider using draught-excluders at your doors, you don't even need to buy one, you can easily make one out of old clothes, find out how on the Cosy Kingdom website - cosykingdom.org.uk

4. Switch your furniture around

Moving furniture out of the way of radiators is an easy way to help your home heat more efficiently as it lets the warm air circulate.



5. Shut doors between rooms

6. Opt for a slow cooker



7. Look at your lighting

Lighting accounts for around 18% of the average electricity bill. If you haven't already, get some low-energy lighting (LEDs) which use 90% less energy and can last up to 25 years! Remember to switch lights off after you leave a room as well.



8. Wrap up warmly

9. Apply for the Warm Home Discount

If you haven't done so already, check if your supplier offers the Warm Home Discount. This is a grant for £150 towards your electricity bill if you're on qualifying benefits or struggling with your heating costs.

10. Book a home visit with Cosy Kingdom

Anyone in Fife can book a free and impartial home visit with a Cosy Kingdom energy advisor by visiting their website (cosykingdom.org.uk), calling 01592 807930, emailing info@cosykingdom.org.uk or texting 'COSY' then 'YOUR NAME' to 88440. You can also find them on Facebook and Twitter - @CosyKingdom.

Repairs statistics



3hrs

Average time to attend an emergency



4hrs

Expected timeframe

8 Days

Average number of days to complete non-emergency repairs

15 Days

Expected timeframe

953

appointments made

92%

of appointments kept

94%

of repairs resolved first time

How to heat yourself... not your home

Despite the government's price cap, this year, a lot of us will be drastically cutting down on our energy usage to save money, but, we still need to keep warm, for both our physical and mental health.

We would always recommend using your heating system when you can and it is important to have it on at points throughout the day to keep things in good condition (for example, to avoid dampness or frozen or burst pipes which have huge cost implications).

IMPORTANT For those who are older, have asthma or other medical conditions, please ask your GP about how you should keep warm this winter.

For the rest of us, the team at Money Saving Expert have come up with some options if you want to limit your usage.

We agree that it is shocking and upsetting that we even have to consider options like these, however, we understand that people can't afford to turn on their heating as often and so these options will help to keep you healthy and warm even when the heating is off.

1. Hot water bottle or USB gloves?

Money Saving Expert have created a list of options (and their costs) so that you can choose what is best for you. We advise you to do your own research on these items.

These methods include using things like heated insoles, wheat bags, electric blankets and even an electric gilet. The list includes the initial cost of purchase as well as what it costs to run each item.

For the full list visit this link - moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/heat-the-human-not-the-home-save-energy/

3. Eat throughout the day and have a hot meal

– The NHS recommend drinking hot drinks and eating throughout the day to keep warm. At least one of your meals should be a hot one. Cheap options include soup (store-bought or batch-cooking your own to save money) or good old porridge (you can get 1kg of oats from your local supermarket for under £1).

If you are struggling to afford food please speak to your Housing Officer or visit one of the many local foodbanks or community pantries throughout Fife that offer free food parcels.

2. Layer your clothes to keep the heat in

– A great trick for staying warm indoors is to follow the advice given to those spending time outside in cold, wintery conditions. This advice is to layer up.

You may find that you can do this with clothes you already have, but it is worth investing in some typically 'outdoor' clothing to keep as warm as you can. And you don't have to spend a lot of money to do this.

Stores such as Decathlon, Sports Direct and Mountain Warehouse offer some of the cheapest outdoor clothing for you to layer up and not break the bank.



Ideally, you want three layers:

A base layer

It should fit well, lock in heat and wick away sweat. Avoid cotton as this traps moisture and will cool you down.

Men's and women's thermal long-sleeve tops cost around £6 at Decathlon and Sports Direct. Thermal leggings at the same shops cost between £4 and £8.50.

£4-£8.50

An mid layer

A lightweight fleece is a good option for this.

Again, Decathlon and Sports Direct have cheap versions of these for men, women and children.

£5-£8

An outer layer

A second jumper, fleece or even a padded jacket are the best options for this layer.

Both Mountain Warehouse and Sports Direct have the best value options for padded jackets. Don't forget to check out their sale options too.

£11-£20

4. Use slippers and rugs to keep your feet warm

– If your feet are cold, it's more difficult to warm up the rest of your body. Layer socks and make sure you have slippers with hard soles to keep the heat in. Supermarkets have great options for affordable slippers.

Having a small rug in areas where you regularly stand is another great way to keep warm. At the side of your bed or in the kitchen are good places as well as a bathmat in the bathroom. Bargain stores have small rugs for under a tenner.

5. Buy the right socks

– Layer up your own socks or invest in a pair of thermal or ski socks which will do an even greater job of keeping your feet cosy. If you can afford to invest in a pair of these it's worth it. Sports Direct, Decathlon and other sports shops sell them for around £4.

6. Try the hot water bottle in a sleeping bag trick

– Many people have reported this as their favourite way to keep warm. So consider getting your sleeping bags down from the attic and give this a go.

7. Warm up by moving around

– A walk at lunchtime will get the blood pumping and warm you up. Avoid strenuous exercise that will make you sweat as this will quickly cool down your body.

Energy efficiency planning

We continue working to make your homes more energy efficient and our Asset Management team have appointed a new consultant, M-4, to help us achieve this goal. M-4 will be issuing new and replacement Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) and the information provided by these is very important to target improvements relevant to your home.

The Scottish Government have set ambitious targets for social housing landlords (under the Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing - EESSH) to ensure all properties are sufficiently energy efficient. For us to meet these targets, we must understand the current energy rating of your home. Knowing this will allow us to make improvements to your home and decide on how best to upgrade our properties so they are more energy efficient.

It is also important for you as a tenant, as making these changes will hopefully lower energy consumption in your home and therefore reduce your fuel bills. With the current cost of living crisis and energy bills continuing to rise at unprecedented rates, we want to help you with this as much as we can.

Fuel poverty is a serious issue now more than ever across the whole of the UK and we are committed to the long-term investment of making our properties more energy-efficient. Over the next three years, M-4 will be delivering a programme of new EPCs across Fife Housing Group homes. We ask that if you receive a letter informing you that a survey needs to be done on your home, you allow us access to carry it out. The more information we have on our properties, the better we can plan and manage the work that needs to be done and the closer we will get to saving you money on your energy bills. It is worth noting, however, that the improvements identified in these surveys may take several years to implement depending on the rental income received from tenants and any financial support from the government.

Stock Condition Surveys

In addition to carrying out a planned programme of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) for us, our contractor, M-4, has also been appointed to carry out the next full round of Stock Condition Surveys.

These surveys will look at all aspects of your property and assess their condition so that we can establish the correct time to make replacements.

Parts of your home that will be looked at include:

- Kitchens
- Bathrooms
- Windows
- Doors
- Heating systems
- Roofs
- External wall finishes

Having this information allows us to ensure that the budgets we allocate each year are accurate to the level of work we require to undertake. Again, this will have an impact on when you will receive improvements to your home, so we would encourage you to allow access to your home to have this survey completed.

We will soon be deciding which properties to look at first and M-4 will contact you directly to schedule an appointment. Your co-operation in this is much appreciated.

Preventing frozen and burst pipes

Frozen and burst pipes are often an issue during the winter months, and could be an even bigger concern this year as we all try to reduce our heating bills and manage our energy costs. However, given the inconvenience and damage they can cause, it is important to follow the advice below to prevent these problems from occurring in the first instance, or to manage the issue should these measures fail to be effective.

Prevention is better than a cure:

- If possible, keep your heating on at a low setting rather than turning it off
- Make sure all taps are turned off and are not dripping
- Know where your stopcock is to turn off the water in an emergency
- If you are taking a winter trip, turn off your water, drain the system and leave a key with someone who can check your property regularly
- Call us if you need any additional information or advice

If you do find a frozen pipe:

- Turn off the water at the stopcock as soon as possible
- Turn on all cold taps to drain the system – never turn on a hot tap
- Thaw out the frozen pipe using a hairdryer or warm cloth on the pipe - do not use an open flame
- Call us for advice

If you have a burst pipe:

- Turn off the water at the stopcock as soon as possible
- Call our emergency plumber on freephone 08000 274 007

If you are planning a winter break please make sure you let us know and make sure we have an up-to-date number for you in case we need to get in touch while you are away. We would also like to remind you not to flush toilet wipes, toilet paper or sanitary pads down the toilet, even if the packaging states they are flushable. Several blockages have been reported recently due to these items.



Team news

We were delighted to have three new colleagues join our team this quarter. A big welcome to John Noble (Plumber), Ben Martin (Plumber) and Dyanne Arthur (Finance Assistant).

Colleagues who have left us recently are Dean Armstrong (Apprentice Joiner), Rodger Pirie (Plumber) and Siobhan Smith (Operations Advisor). We wish them all the best for the future in their new roles.

Glen Albyn playpark

As you may already know, we are working in partnership with building contractor, The JR Group, to deliver 49 much-needed energy-efficient homes in Kirkcaldy. As part of the community benefits and planning requirements for the project, we agreed to revamp the local playpark to help preserve the natural environment around the new development.

Usually, additional commitments such as these are completed towards the end of the construction phase, however, both teams were keen to give local children the opportunity to enjoy the playpark over the summer months and so decided to accelerate the upgrade, installing four new pieces of equipment and finishing the project in early August.

To celebrate the completion, Fife Housing Group's Clerk of Works, Douglas Smith (middle), The JR Group's Senior Site Manager, Chris Turley (left), and Construction Administration Manager, Gayle O'Hear (right), came to cut the ribbon with guest of honour, Cody, Chris' spaniel and resident site dog.

Douglas commented, 'It's terrific we were able to bring the construction of the new playpark forward. Doing something like this is an important part of our 'Giving Something Back' ethos and it's also just really nice being able to give the local kids some new play equipment that they can enjoy for years to come'.

Our Glen Albyn homes are due to be completed next spring and will be allocated through the Fife Housing Register.



Pitches, prizes and pizza at fun-filled community event

Our commitment to 'Giving Something Back' to tenants and local communities continued with a fun-filled event to celebrate the recipients of the £20,000 of grants being distributed this year.

Set up last year to recognise and support some of the incredible organisations making a difference across Fife, these grants are made possible by the generosity of contractors who join our charitable framework, donating 2% of their invoiced costs to benefit good causes.

The response this year was incredible and we received 64 grant applications in total from organisations all across Fife and for a variety of different causes.

Successful Giving Something Back Grant applicants were invited along to a community event to 'pitch' their project to local residents and a panel of judges who would then determine the amount of funding they would receive.

Following the pitches, we were delighted to be able to award 13 community organisations with funding. The well-deserved recipients were:

The Cottage Family Centre, EATS Rosyth, Crombie Resident's Association, West Fife Woodland's Group, Valleyfield Community Club, Food For Your Future Community Pantry, Linton Lane Centre, Re-engage, Dunfermline Men's Shed, Real Life Options, Nourish Support Centre, Rock Trust and The Karate Initiative.



Other highlights of the evening included delicious pizzas and bagpipe music, provided by Piping Hot Pizza, garden games for the kids courtesy of The JR Group, bingo with prizes and a live demonstration from students of The Karate Initiative.

Our Director of Housing, Beverley Graham, who was also one of the judges on the panel, commented, 'This was a fantastic event and the pitching was a brilliant way to hear from these groups in person, providing a fun and informative opportunity for them to showcase the inspiring work that they do in our communities. This format really complimented the ethos of our Giving Something Back Grants and we are looking forward to building on this success again next year.'

The next round of Giving Something Back Grants is expected to launch in Spring 2023 so, if you are involved in a group that could do even more with a little extra investment, please look out for their launch. More information will be available on our website and social media channels closer to the time so be sure to like and follow us there.

Our Giving Something Back Grants are made possible thanks to the generosity of the contractors we work with including; MAC Roofing, Rogerson Plumbing, QAPM, Moffat, Electrical Projects, Bell Decorating Group, Eurojet (Scotland), Pankhurst Decorators, Saltire Facilities Management, Shine Cleaning Services, Belac, Virtue Services Group, RB Grant, Forth Plasterers, Mitie Property Services, Metro Rod and City Technical.

Find 'Yourplace' – our private lets subsidiary has a new name

Our private let subsidiary company has recently changed its name from 'PACT Enterprises Ltd' to 'Fife Housing Group Yourplace Ltd'.

The private let function of the organisation is responsible for creating income by acquiring homes and letting them through the private rental market. Currently, they have 53 privately let properties spread across Fife.

In 2021, the Board decided that the time was right to change the branding from PACT to something more meaningful and recognisable to our audience.

Colleagues worked with a consultant to develop the 'Yourplace' brand and name, believing it to communicate a welcoming and friendly approach and more accurately represent the service provided.

'We feel that 'Yourplace' has more meaning and will generate better recognition for people in Fife looking to rent a property. Having the word 'you' in the name will also, hopefully, create a sense of pride and ownership for the tenants who rent their home from us. I think this new branding really sums up what our organisation is all about.'

Chief Executive, Nicki Donaldson

fife
housing
group
PACT

Yourplace
fife housing group

Have you signed up for your Home Hub yet?

If not, then why not join over 250 of your fellow tenants by registering now?

Your Home Hub makes it easy to do the things you want to do from the comfort of your front room, without having to wait until the office is open.

If you want to make a rent payment, report a repair or raise an issue then you can now do all of this at the touch of a button.

* We need your email address and DOB on our system. If you think you haven't already provided us with this information please give us a call on 0800 027 4007.

** You will find this on any letters or statements we have sent you or in our e-newsletter (so check your inbox!)

So, why not sign up for Home Hub today? All you will need is the following information:

- Name
- Email address*
- Date of birth*
- Postcode
- Tenancy reference**

Scan the QR code below to register now...



WELCOME TO YOUR HOME HUB.
SET UP YOUR ACCOUNT HERE:

Name

Email address

Date of birth

Postcode

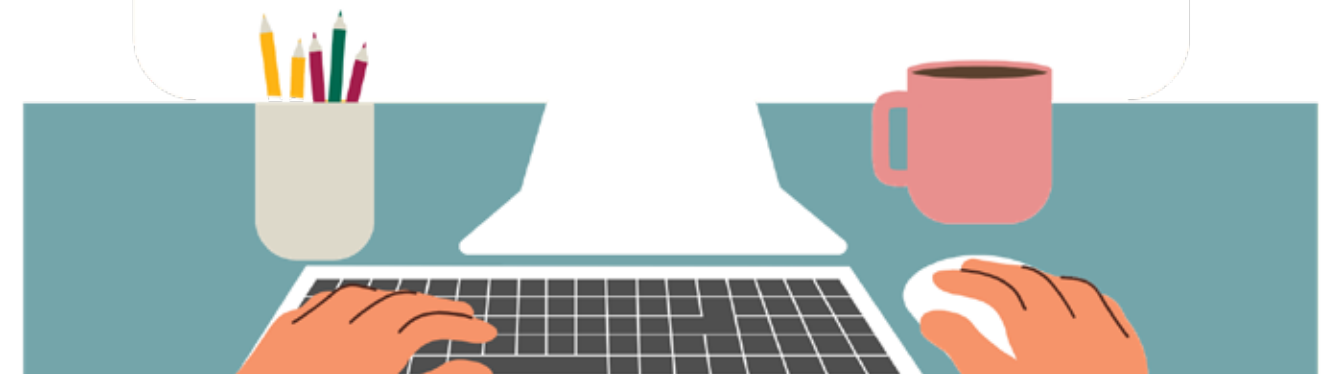
Tenancy reference

You will find this on any letters or statements we have sent you

fife housing group

at home with...
fife housing group

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Home Hub



Considering Complaints

During recent months, we have noticed an increase in complaints regarding both divisional and boundary fences.

When complaint trends are identified, our Operational Leadership Team discuss the root causes of these, to identify if any service failure has occurred and to establish if any improvements are required to prevent the repetition of these types of complaints in the future.

Following analysis of these complaints, it has become apparent that it may be useful for tenants to have clarity on the different categories of fencing and our responsibilities when it comes to maintaining these.

- Divisional fencing** - a fence which marks the division between two adjoining neighbours - is the responsibility of both residents and not Fife Housing Group.
- Boundary fencing** - a fence that separates the lands of different owners, as detailed within the Land Registry - is the responsibility of Fife Housing Group.

However, there are some exceptions to the above, which we would like to detail:

- If the divisional fence is constructed from chain-link and a repair is necessary, Fife Housing Group will take responsibility for this and make the necessary arrangements for a blacksmith to attend to carry out any agreed repairs.
- Fences at the front of your property, which act as a boundary fence adjacent to communal paths, are Fife Housing Group's responsibility.
- Gates that access a driveway are the tenant's responsibility.

As part of our aim to continuously improve our services, a review of our relet standard was also undertaken to ensure that clear reference is made to divisional fences, specifically when these are shared with an owner. Further information regarding responsibilities can also be found in your tenants' handbook and, most recently, you may have seen us share this information on our Facebook page.

Complaint statistics for July-September

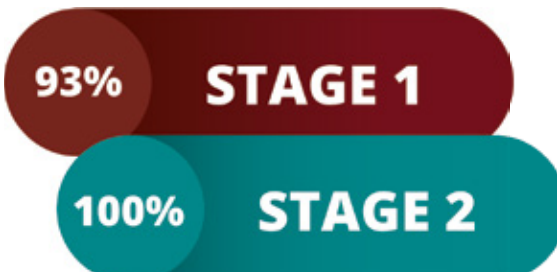
Total number of complaints closed



Total number of complaints upheld



Complaints resolved within timescale



Christmas crisis contacts

Lots of people find the holiday period difficult so we have pulled together a list of contact numbers that you may find useful, to ensure you have the support you need over the festive break:

HELP AND SUPPORT

- Emergency** - 999
- Police** - 101
- Crimestoppers** - 0800 555 111
- Fife Council Public Protection Team** - 03451 55 55 50

HOUSING ISSUES

- Homeless emergencies** - 0800 028 6231
- Housing information/advice** - 03451 55 00 33
- Frontline Fife (homelessness service)** - 01592 800430
- Fife Council** - 03451 55 00 00
- Scottish Gas Networks (gas leak)** - 0800 111 999
- Power cuts and safety helpline** - 105

DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL ABUSE

In an emergency call 999

- Fife Women's Aid** - 0808 802 5555
- Shakti Fife (ethnic minority women)** - 01383 732289
- Scottish Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline** - 0800 027 1234
- Abused Men in Scotland** - 0808 800 0024
- FearFree (Men, LGBT+ and BME communities)** - 0131 624 7270
- Revenge Porn Helpline** - 0845 6000 459
- National Stalking Helpline** - 0808 802 0300
- Rape Crisis Scotland** - 08088 01 03 02 or text 07537 410 027
- Fife Rape and Sexual Assault Centre** - 01592 642336

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- NHS 24** - 111
- NHS Inform** - 0800 22 44 88
- Samaritans** - 116 123
- Support in Mind** - 01592 268 388
- Sexual Health Fife** - 01592 64 79 79
- Touched by Suicide** - 01294 274 273
- Survivors of bereavement by suicide** - 0300 111 5065
- Adult Protection** - 01383 602200
- Social Work** - 03451 55 15 03 (Out of hours emergencies - 03451 55 00 99)
- Fife Gingerbread (supports lone parents)** - 01592 725 210

MONEY

- Scottish Welfare Fund (Crisis and community care grants)** - 0300 555 0265
- Citizens Advice and Rights Fife** - 0345 1400 095
- Tax Credit Helpline** - 0345 300 3900
- Money Advice Scotland** - 0141 572 0237
- Universal Credit Line** - 0345 600 4272



How to save some cash on Christmas dinner

With the drastic increase in the cost of living this year, we are all even more anxious about the Christmas season. Besides buying gifts for all of your loved ones, the cost of food and refreshments tends to make a big dent in all of our bank accounts.

With the help of Beehive Money and BBC Good Food, we have put together our top ten tips that will hopefully help you cut the cost of your Christmas grub.

1. Don't look up

In the supermarket we mean! Supermarkets at Christmas time use a variety of cheeky tactics to get us to buy more, and it's often things we don't need that end up getting wasted or sitting in cupboards for months. A simple trick is to look down to the bottom shelf. More expensive items are usually placed at eye level and often a better-value pack of either the same or a similar brand sits lower down.

2. Homemade is where the heart is

Making things from scratch is more time-consuming but it can save you money. Consider making your own versions of Christmas classics by using own brand and freezer ingredients, such as Yorkshire pudding or roast potatoes.

3. Ignore the fancy packaging

We tend to go all out at Christmas and buy the 'best' of everything to treat our loved ones. However just because the packaging looks fancy doesn't mean the food inside is the best. Marketing experts want us to believe it is, however, if you check the list of ingredients for yourself you will see they usually aren't that different. Make some swaps and see if your family can tell the difference.

4. Look out for yellow stickers and special offers

Head to the shops near closing time and grab those yellow sticker items. Keep an eye out on special offers too, lots are going on across the season. You may need to visit more than one supermarket but you can save some serious pennies.

5. The freezer is your friend

In the weeks before Christmas start to buy yellow sticker items and freeze them. This is a good way to spread the cost and you will be smug that you are prepared well in advance! Cheese freezes well, as do pastries (and these can be found for a fraction of the price near closing time). A lot of food in the freezer section tends to be cheaper too. Frozen party food, like mini quiches and spring rolls, are perfect for Boxing Day buffets and don't forget the frozen prawns and veg!

6. Plan ahead

Remember, Christmas is only one day. Buy only what you can afford and what you can reasonably eat, to avoid waste, and plan what you will do with those leftovers (turkey curry anyone?) Make a meal plan for Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day to avoid overspending.

7. Make a list and check it twice

It sounds obvious and links to the previous point, but, we recommend setting a budget, then making a list of items and going through it again to make sure you are not buying anything you don't really need. Then be strong and stick to your list.

8. Shop online

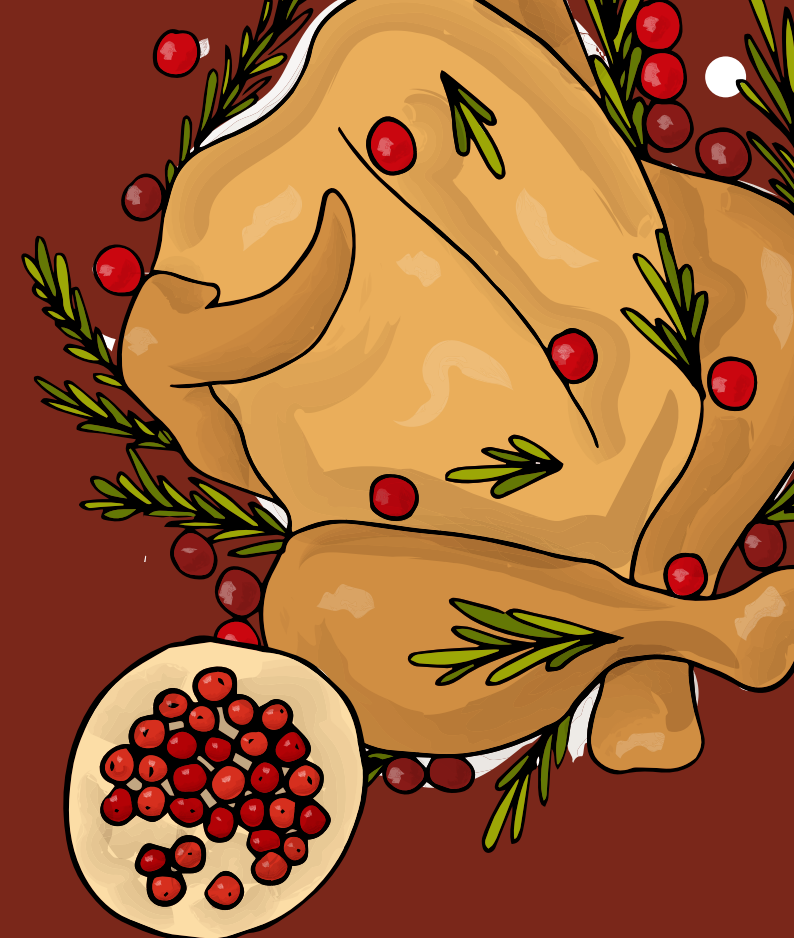
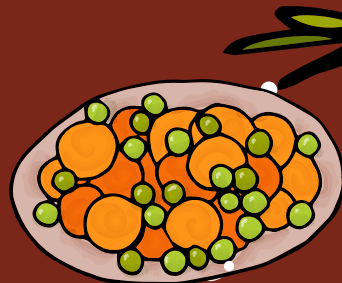
The best way to stick to your list is to not step inside a supermarket! Instead, do all of your Christmas food shopping online. It's a lot easier to ignore all of those pricey extras.

9. Don't shop on an empty stomach

A classic tip that applies all year round. Do not shop when you are hungry, it can affect what you buy and will make sticking to your list more challenging. Go after dinner to avoid tempting treats and to catch those yellow sticker bargains.

10. Buy what you love best

Can't stand cranberry sauce, Brussel sprouts or Christmas cake? Then don't buy them! A lot of people buy all of the festive foods... even if they don't particularly like them. Most of us are guilty of buying food items just because it's Christmas or to please our guests and we end up with a lot of food waste. Spend your money on what you do like, you won't be sorry.



Christmas tree competition time!

One of our favourite events each year is our annual Christmas tree competition, and we cannot wait to see what you come up with this December!

This is your opportunity to showcase your decorated Christmas tree and perhaps bag yourself a bonus gift before Santa has even started packing up his sleigh!

Last year's entries inspired us all. The amount of creative flair and effort that went into creating these beautifully decorated trees was incredible.

So now it's over to you again and our judges are keen to see what you come up with this year.

To enter, please send your photos to us along with your name, address and contact details. You could just scoop yourself a prize before the big day.

Entrants should send photos of their decorated Christmas trees to helen.miller@fifehg.org.uk or by post to our office by no later than **19 December 2022**. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch or speak to your Housing Officer.

We look forward to seeing your trees – they certainly get us all into the holiday spirit!

Get rid of your rubbish for free

August saw the first of three FREE skip days being offered, in a bid to help clean up local areas and give our tenants the chance to have a proper clear-out and get rid of any items they may have previously struggled to dispose of.

The first skip days took place in Methil and allowed tenants to make use of two skips for 2 hours, completely free of charge. It wasn't long before both skips were full of unwanted items, many of which had been stored within the gardens and were visible to passers-by. The clean-up improved the overall look of the area, almost instantly.

The same was true of the second skip day, which took place in High Valleyfield in September and we are currently working on plans for the third, which is due to take place in October.

We will continue to offer skip days next year so look out for our promotional materials in your area which will provide more details or speak to your Housing Officer if you feel your area would benefit from this service.



Updates from your Housing Officers

General Updates

Home Hub

Please take the time to register for our new Home Hub, which gives you 24/7 access to your information, allowing you to do things like make rent payments, report a repair or view your statements. It also has a live chat facility, allowing you to speak to a member of our team during office hours.

To sign up visit - portal.fifehg.org.uk

You will need your tenancy reference number, which you can get by calling the office or it can also be found on any letters we have sent you.

Alternatively, if you would prefer a payment card, please contact the office or your Housing Officer and this will be ordered and delivered to your door

Stairwells and shared spaces

Recent months have highlighted an increase in residents using the stairwell to store bikes, prams, shoes and other items. The stairwell is not an extension of your home, the area must be kept clear at all times. Failure to do so is a serious breach of Fire Safety Regulations and a breach of your tenancy agreement.

It also prevents the stair cleaning contractors from properly cleaning the stairs, which is a service that you pay for.

If you require an additional landfill bin, due to the size of your household, you can request one by telephoning Fife Council on 03451 550022. You can also use this number to arrange a special uplift for £15. Additional recycling bins are available at any Fife Council recycling points.

To book a slot at a recycling centre, use this link: fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/bins-and-recycling/recycling-points-and-centres

Tenants are advised, especially in flatted stock areas, to put padlocks on their bins.

If you know of anyone who is dumping items within your block, please contact your Housing Officer in confidence to allow them to take appropriate action and avoid any communal recharges in the future.

Additionally, we would like to encourage tenants to report anti-social incidents, as we can only deal with issues if we are made aware of them. In some circumstances, it may also be advisable to contact the police when the incident is taking place.

Use the link below to report issues directly to Fife Council, Safer Communities Team, who will investigate, where possible, and identify the perpetrator(s). Where there is proof, fines will be issued.

Visit: fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/environment2/street-care-and-cleaning/illegal-dumping

Telephone: 03451 55 00 22

Email: SaferCommunities.Team@fife.gov.uk

Or contact Fife Council on Facebook at [@safercommunitiesfife](https://www.facebook.com/safercommunitiesfife)



Oakley

Recently, we carried out an estate inspection in Oakley as part of our annual estate inspection calendar. During this inspection, we noted some potholes and defects on roads and pavements, which we have since reported to Fife Council. If you notice any potholes or defects in pavements or roads please report these to Fife Council by visiting fife.gov.uk/services/form-pages/report-a-road-or-pavement-fault. Please be accountable for the upkeep of the local area and don't assume that a neighbour or someone else will report it instead, as these can become quite dangerous if left unattended.

Valleyfield

At the end of September, as part of our Giving Something Back agenda, we had a very successful skip day in Pentland Terrace, with skips at either end of the street being quickly filled by grateful residents. If any tenants in Valleyfield (or anywhere else in the West Fife Villages for that matter) have any suggestions about where we could host further community skip days, then please contact your Housing Officer, Gavin Waddell.

Leven and Buckhaven

These areas have had a particular issue with items being dumped in gardens. Your garden and shared garden spaces should be kept clear at all times and we will continue to make regular checks to ensure this requirement is being met.

Please keep us up to date with any changes in your household so that we have the most up-to-date information. It is also important to let us know about any changes which need processing with regard to your benefits.



Lumphinnans

The Lumphinnans Tenants' and Residents' Group has recently experienced a change in their membership and would like to thank the previous members of the group for all their hard work in setting up the community garden.

We are looking forward to hearing the plans for the future from the new group, who held their first meeting at Lumphinnans Bowling Club back in September.

If you have access to Facebook, please 'Like' the page [@LTRAGroup](https://www.facebook.com/LTRAGroup) for updates.

If you would like to get involved, please come along to their next meeting for a chat with like-minded people who would love to hear your thoughts and ideas for the coming year.

Residents in Lumphinnans will also have noticed new signage located at the front and rear entrance doors to the flats. This is a reminder that smoking is not permitted in the close. There is also a reminder to keep the main entrance doors closed for added security.



Some of the new members of the Lumphinnans Tenants' and Residents' Association with Housing Officer, Audrey Cameron (second from right), and Engagement Office, Helen Miller (far right).

Kirkcaldy

The flats at Dunearn Drive continue to have issues with tenants storing items and dumping rubbish in communal areas. Please see above for more information on the serious health and safety implications of this and the options available for disposing of unwanted items.

Crombie

We have had more enquiries over the last few months about the planned development in Crombie - please be aware that we have no involvement in this. We understand that the development is being carried out by Fife Council and will bring 19 much-needed new social rented properties to the area. If you are interested in being rehoused in Crombie then you should complete an FHR housing application and select Crombie as one of your areas of choice.

Lochgelly

Residents in block number 41-63 Grainger Street, Lochgelly, will soon experience the benefits of the garden contract taking effect at the rear of the blocks.

Previously, the distance between the flats and the furthest away gardens made it problematic for some residents to cut their grass area and maintain their space. The area is now a usable space for all residents and it is nice to see it being used as it was intended to be.

Dunfermline

The BASICSIM (Bute Crescent, Allan Crescent, Sky Road, Islay Road, Shields Road, Iona Road, MacBeath Road) Tenants' and Residents' Association have relaunched and their first meeting due to take place shortly. Get in touch with us for further information on the group and their activities.

Methil

There continues to be an issue with anti-social behaviour across Methil. If you feel you are unable to speak to your neighbours to sort out any problems then please contact your Housing Officer, Greg Turner.

As always, if it is serious you must contact Police Scotland on 999 or 101. There is also a mediation service which we use regularly which has had fantastic results in resolving any issues

We want to help you make your home and your community a better place to live so please do let us know if you have any concerns.

Please remember that if a colleague from Fife Housing Group visits you at home, they will always carry photographic ID to identify themselves.

Hill of Beath and Cowdenbeath

We would like to take this opportunity to remind all tenants that smoking is not permitted on the shared stairwells. This also applies to any visitors to your home.

If there is anything else you would like to see placed on the communication boards in communal areas, please contact the office or discuss this with your Housing Officer.



Recipe: Christmas Rocky Road

This budget recipe is a great way to use up all your leftover Christmas treats including your selection boxes, tins of biscuits and nuts. A fun activity to keep the kids occupied over the Christmas break!

Method

STEP 1

Butter and line a 20cm square tin, or use a 20cm square silicone mould. Break the biscuits into pieces – they need to be no smaller than a pea, but not too chunky or your rocky road won't hold together.

STEP 2

Halve any larger nuts either by snapping them or carefully cutting them with a knife, then combine them with the biscuits. Halve any large pieces of dried fruit and chop or snap sweets into smaller pieces, then add these to the bowl.

STEP 3

Melt 300g of the chocolate, the butter and the golden syrup carefully in a pan set over a low heat, stirring occasionally, then pour this over the biscuit and nut mixture and mix together so the chocolate covers everything.

STEP 4

Tip the mixture into the tin, then level the top – it doesn't need to be completely smooth. Melt the remaining chocolate in the microwave in short blasts, or in a heatproof bowl over a small pan of simmering water, then drizzle this over the top and sprinkle with the decorations. Chill for at least 3 hrs or overnight before cutting into squares. Will keep in the fridge for three to four days.



Ingredients

- 100g butter, cut into cubes, plus extra for the tin
- 250g Christmas biscuits, such as shortbread or chocolate biscuits
- 100g mixed dried fruit (such as raisins, cherries or glacé ginger)
- 75g Christmas sweets (candy canes, marshmallows, jelly sweets or selection box treats)
- 400g milk or plain chocolate (or a mixture of both), chopped
- 140g golden syrup (weigh this straight into the pan you will use for melting)
- (OPTIONAL) 75g shelled nuts (use up a bag of whole nuts, or bits and bobs from the baking cupboard)
- (OPTIONAL) 2 tbsp sprinkles, or more sweets, to decorate

(Recipe from BBC Good Food)

WORDSEARCH

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



Enter our AUTUMN/WINTER competition and you could WIN a **£25 gift voucher**.

To enter: Complete the wordsearch, cut along the dotted line and send your entry to the address below by **5 December 2022**.

CHOCOLATE
CHRISTMAS
COLD
COSY
FALL

GIFTING
HALLOWEEN
HOT
JUMPER
LEAVES

MULLED
PUMPKINS
SNOW
WINE
WINTER

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TEL: _____

Return this form to Fife Housing Group, 7 Pitreavie Court, Pitreavie Business Park, Dunfermline, KY11 8UU.

Wordsearch winner

Thanks to everyone who entered our summer wordsearch competition, and congratulations to our lucky winner, Joyce Anderson of Kirkcaldy, who received a supermarket voucher and will be able to treat herself to something nice online or in-store.

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Contact us

Freephone: 08000 274 007

East Fife - Kingdom Gas: 0800 389 9463

West Fife - City Technical: 0333 202 0708

Text: 07520 632 740 Email: info@fifehg.org.uk

Our opening hours are:

Monday to Thursday 8:30am - 5:00pm

Friday 8:30am - 4:30pm

Fife Housing Group

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