

VOICE

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Melville Housing
SUSTAINABLE THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Issue 57 - Winter 2023/2024



**Gorebridge gardener's
hard work
rewarded**



**Warm hubs
return across
Midlothian**



**Enter our
Christmas quiz - £25
first prize**



Inside your Winter Voice

Melville to extend 4-day week

Newsletter for tenants of Melville Housing Association

The Corn Exchange • 200 High Street • Dalkeith • Midlothian • EH22 1AZ

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PLEASE
RECYCLE ME

Melville to extend 4-day week



Following overwhelmingly positive feedback from tenants and staff, and with no impact on performance, Melville's management board have agreed to extend our 4-day week experiment that's been running throughout this year (2023). Before a decision is made on the arrangements becoming permanent, we're putting together more evidence about how much the office is used by tenants, and the demand for in-person services on Mondays and Fridays. If you have a view on this please let us know in the usual ways.

The final results of the survey carried out during the summer saw 358 replies, which works out at about one in five households responding.

4 out of 5 who replied were satisfied with the overall service since the start of the 4-day week. Just 16 (4%) of those who replied were unhappy.

4 out of 5 also supported making it permanent. Just 10 (3%) were against it.

Current working arrangements

Monday	Monday – office closed but all staff working from home. Phones and repairs service operating normally. Any tenant who needs an in-person appointment can arrange for staff to visit them at home.
Tuesday Wednesday Thursday	Office open 9am to 5pm, staff available in person, digitally or on the phone.
Friday	Office closed and no Melville staff working. Phones on out of hours service however repairs service and all other contractors operating as normal meaning you will still be able to arrange appointments and book in routine repairs.

Why have working hours changed?

Both the switch to a 4-day working week and the hybrid working arrangements that see staff in the office two days a week, have been designed around a healthier staff work/life balance. This will allow Melville to keep staff, who will be happier and more motivated to carry out their work. Having the office open three days a week (rather than five) also saves Melville money as it cuts down on costs such as heating and energy use while the introduction of the 4-day working week helped us combat the cost-of-living crisis by offering staff (in year one) time rather than money.

Getting your views on rents

Every year we ask you your views on rents for the coming year (starting 1 April 2024). It's really important that you let us know what you think, particularly given the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. We consider everyone's opinion before our board makes the final decision, and your feedback allowed us to deliver the lowest rent increase in Scotland for the current year. However over the past couple of years our costs have been going up just like everyone else's so it's more important than ever that you let us know your priorities.

We'll be consulting shortly and we'll be finding out what you think mainly digitally (by email, website and text message). However if you'd like to phone us we can chat it over with you or send you a paper form.

Years of hard work rewarded for Gorebridge gardener



Winner (£100)

Mrs Wilma Pake, McLean Place, Gorebridge

Runner-up (£35)

Mrs Diane Wright, Woodburn Place, Woodburn

Runner-up (£35)

Mr and Mrs Szymanski, Oak Crescent, Mayfield

Melville celebrated Scottish Housing Day and its 28th annual general meeting by rewarding a tenant for her tireless work creating a stunning garden in the Midlothian town of Gorebridge.

Mrs Wilma Pake and her husband John picked up this year's 'Baxter Keiller Award' for outstanding Melville garden, and the first prize of £100, for their fantastic garden that was praised for its variety, life and colour, while making the maximum use of space and embracing both beauty and functionality.

"What we loved about the garden created by Mrs Pake was the way it married the natural with the cultivated, while at the same time demonstrating the many hours of hard work that have clearly gone into it," said Melville's John McMorrow. "As well as the vibrant flowers and shrubs at the front,

the Pakes have also created a fantastically abundant garden at the back, growing a wonderful variety of fruit and vegetables, truly making the most of the space they have."

Beating off stiff competition from a dozen entries covering the length and breadth of Midlothian, the Pake's special garden is the culmination of years of hard work in their McLean Place home, where they've lived for over 20 years.

"I love spending time in the garden but I never thought it would win me a prize," said champion gardener Wilma. "We didn't even know we'd been entered into the contest until a chap came round taking photos but we're over the moon to have been chosen as this year's winner. I'll look forward to spending my prize in the spring and see if I can't make the garden even better next year."

Tell me more

Now in its ninth year, the 'Baxter Keiller Award' is named in honour of a keen Mayfield gardener and Melville tenant who sadly passed away in 2014. Melville set up a gardening competition to recognise the work done in 2007 by Baxter, along with his neighbour Christine McGrouther, transforming a patch of Mayfield wasteland into a fantastic community garden.

Our contest will be back in the spring next year but it's never too early to enter. If you have a garden that you're proud of, or if you know another Melville tenant too shy to get in touch themselves, just drop us an email. We'll do the rest.

Warm hubs return as temperature dips



Midlothian Council has relaunched four warm and well hubs across the county to provide support with the continuing cost-of-living crisis.

Part of the #MidlothianCares initiative started by the council last winter, the hubs are in Danderhall, Newbattle, Loanhead and Lasswade libraries. They offer warm spaces and free hot drinks and soup and bread during normal library opening hours.

Local residents just need to turn up to stay warm and enjoy what's on offer. They can also access free wi-fi, as well as books and games, and library staff are on hand to give advice and support.

The council is working with third sector partners and the hubs will also host drop-in information sessions on energy advice, income maximisation and financial and wellbeing supports.

A full list of warm spaces, community cafes and other support provided by the council, voluntary groups and churches across Midlothian can be found on the council's cost of living website pages.

£645k for 90 struggling households thanks to life-saving service



90 struggling Melville households are £645k better off thanks to the hard work of a life-saving welfare benefits advice service.

Over the past year Melville's two dedicated Welfare Benefits Advisers helped tenants claim benefits worth £645,564. This works out at nearly £7,200 (on average) for each of the 90 households, and represents a more than 50% increase on the previous year (when tenants claimed £408,464).

In one exceptional case the team worked for months helping an elderly couple fund the care and treatment they needed, resulting in payments totalling almost £15,000 per year, plus a backdated one-off payment of £3,674, lifting their financial worries and significantly easing their anxiety at a very difficult time.

"The service I get from Melville is always good and the help and support I get for my benefits is always brilliant," said one grateful service user. "They do everything possible to get the best outcome in whatever they may be involved in on your behalf and always do it to the best of their ability."

Feedback for the highly-experienced team, made up of John Scott and newest member Barry Smith, is overwhelmingly positive with customer satisfaction levels of 100%. Service users also said it helped with their mental health, leaving them less anxious and stressed.

"These results are fantastic, and a real testament to the hard work and dedication of our welfare advice team," said Jane Burnett, Melville's Head of Housing. "While it's no secret that times are really tough for a lot of people just now and the demands on the service are considerable, it's also no exaggeration to say that this help can be life-saving, and it's the positive impact it can have on people's mental health that can be just as important as the money. Sadly we only expect to see demand for the service increase over the coming year."

Staff Spotlight - Chief Executive John McMorrow

What attracted you to your current job at Melville?

My Name's John McMorrow and I'm the Chief Executive of Melville. I can't believe I've now been at Melville for nearly 3 years, having joined from an association through in the west, where I'd been for 28 excellent years.

It was always my intention to finish my career there but having moved down to the Borders, the opportunity with Melville was too good to turn down. With Melville's reputation, excellent performance and great staff team, it just felt like the right time to move.



What does your average office day look like?

My day starts with a fantastic commute to the office as I travel through some of the most beautiful scenery in the country. It's definitely an improvement on the Kingston Bridge...

Once I arrive I'm not sure there's any such thing as an average day but generally it involves meetings, looking at performance, and a lot of planning for the work needed in the short, medium and longer terms to make sure we continue to deliver the homes and services that our customers deserve. I'm also involved in a lot of the less glamorous stuff like writing reports for the Board and making sure we meet our legal and regulatory requirements.

What do you feel is your biggest contribution to Melville and its tenants?

It's no secret that times are tough but I'm proud that this year we were able to deliver the lowest rent increase in Scotland, thanks to some creative thinking and the introduction of the 4-day working week for staff. We did this while maintaining good levels of service and (mostly) keeping customers happy.

On top of that I feel that my most important role here is to make sure that we always provide value-for-money while putting people first, especially when making decisions on our homes, services and activities.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I spend much of my spare time volunteering with various charities and I also sit on the Board of a Glasgow-based housing association who have a lot in common with Melville.

Where's your dream holiday destination?

One of my favourite places in the world is the Gold Coast in Australia and I've been fortunate enough to visit as we have lots of family there. I'd love to go back again and visit some of Australia's more remote locations.

Who are your 3 famous (living or dead) desert island companions?

If I can't choose my wife and my two (grown up) daughters then...

Bruce Springsteen for his harmonica and guitar

Bear Grylls to keep us safe as I'd be hopeless

JR Tolkien to keep us entertained with amazing stories



Help and advice

Make sure you don't miss out on the latest benefits news. To get up-to-date information, including breaking news on benefit changes, visit our website or 'like' our Facebook page.

Make sure you're not missing out on £19 billion of support

People across the UK are missing out on a staggering £18.7 billion a year in unclaimed benefits and social tariffs, according to a new study (by Policy in Practice).

That comes to nearly £300 for every person in the country, and is made up of:

- £7.5 billion of Universal Credit (UC) that goes unclaimed by 1.2 million eligible households.
- 2.7 million people missing out on £2.8 billion of Council Tax Support.
- Millions missing out on help from social tariffs. Broadband social tariffs have the lowest take up, with a massive 97% of eligible households missing out. If you're on any means tested benefits (like UC, Housing benefit, Income support etc) then check with your utility providers and make sure you're not missing out on big savings.

If you're struggling or if you think that you might not be getting all the help that's available, get in touch and we'll do what we can to help.

Carer Support Payment

Carer support payment (known in the past as Scottish carer's assistance) will soon replace Carer's allowance across Scotland, with the roll-out already having taken place in several local authority areas.

Improvements to the new Carer support payment include:

- making it easier for unpaid carers to access education, by extending entitlement to around 1,500 carers at college and university.
- providing a better service for carers, including linking carers to carer centres and advice and information on income maximisation.
- improved processes for carers who want to challenge a benefit decision, and clear timescales for when they can expect this to be done.

These changes are designed to improve carers access to opportunities beyond caring, provide more financial stability, and better recognise the varying situations carers find themselves in.

Social Security Scotland is also proposing to make an extra payment of £10 a week for anyone caring for more than one person. This is designed to help with the impact the additional caring responsibility has on health and wellbeing. We don't yet have a date for when this is likely to be introduced but will keep you posted.



UC to replace Tax credits for most people



Tax credits are coming to an end, and most people will now need to apply for Universal Credit instead.

Look out for a letter called a UC Migration Notice from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) explaining what you'll need to do, and by when. To continue to receive financial support, you will need to claim UC by the deadline stated in your Migration Notice letter, even if you have just renewed your tax credits claim.

If you are claiming tax credits and are aged 65 or over, DWP will write to you to ask you to apply for UC or Pension credit, depending on your circumstances.

You won't be moved automatically, so it's important to act quickly and follow the instructions in the letter, otherwise your benefits will stop.

Need help?

You should report any change in your circumstances that could affect your tax credits claim as soon as possible by calling the tax credit helpline on 0345 300 3900.

Support and financial advice are also available if you are worried about managing a gap between your tax credits ending and receiving your first UC payment. You can get advice by calling 0800 138 7777 (calls are free).

Get in touch



If you need any advice on benefits, or if you have energy debts or are struggling with money, please get in touch. John Scott and Barry Smith, Melville's two dedicated Welfare Benefits Advisers, are available to help all Melville tenants and members of their households. Help is also available from independent organisations such as Citizens Advice.

John Scott (jscott@melville.org.uk) 0131 561 6481

Barry Smith (bsmith@melville.org.uk) 0131 561 6482

Help and support for victims of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse in all forms is totally unacceptable. Melville has a new policy (which you can find in the Document Library section of our website) setting out how we handle cases and the support and action we can take.

If you or someone you know is suffering from domestic abuse then please speak to our housing team and we'll help however we can. You can also speak to one of the many really good specialist organisations out there set up to help anyone experiencing domestic abuse.

Women's Aid East & Midlothian	0131 561 5800 Mon-Fri 9am - 4pm www.womensaideml.org	Specialist domestic abuse help, support, advocacy and refuge accommodation for women, children and young people.
Edinburgh Domestic Abuse Court Service	0131 315 8122	EDDACS supports female victims of domestic abuse going through the court process.
Shakti Women's Aid	0131 475 2399 www.shaktiedinburgh.co.uk	Specialist domestic abuse, forced marriage and honour-based abuse help and support for women from an ethnic minority background.
Midlothian Sexual Abuse Service	07860 774 5063 Msas@ercc.scot	Support for anyone affected by rape, sexual assault and abuse.
FearFree	0131 624 7270 www.fearfree.scot	Support service for any man or LGBT+ person experiencing domestic abuse.
Scottish Women's Rights Centre	08088 010 789 www.scottishwomensrightscentre.org.uk	Free confidential legal information and surgeries for women.
AMIS	03300 949 395 Mon-Fri 9am - 4pm www.abusedmeninscotland.org	Scotland's leading helpline for male domestic abuse.
Men's Advice Line	0808 801 0327 www.mensadviceline.org.uk	A free confidential support service set up to increase the safety of men (and any children) experiencing domestic abuse.
Scottish Domestic Abuse & Forced Marriage Helpline	0800 027 1234 www.sdafmh.org.uk	24/7 service for anyone with experience of domestic abuse or forced marriage, as well as their family members, friends, colleagues, and professionals who support them.
Victim Support Scottish Helpline	0345 603 9213 www.victimsupport.scot	Providing information, emotional support and guidance to help people move forward with their lives following a crime.
Samaritans	116 123 free from any phone or 0131 211 9999 www.samaritans.org	Free 24/7 helpline providing a lifeline for people in crisis.
Out of Hours Social Work Service	0800 731 6969	Council emergency service outside normal office hours.
Police Scotland	101 or 999 in emergencies	Always call 999 in an emergency.

Latest from our tenant reps



Hi there and a warm welcome to our regular column. My name's Gill and I'm one of Melville's reps for Bonnyrigg and Poltonhall. This issue it's my turn to bring you the latest news on what we've been up to over the past few months.

At our last meeting, back in October, we had a good chat about loads of things but the main topic for discussion was Melville's performance over the past year. We looked at things like repairs, allocating homes, helping tenants and collecting rents and it was good to see that, even with the 4-day week, things are mostly going pretty well. I've always found Melville a good landlord and it was nice to see that most people agree. I was particularly impressed by the help and support provided over the year, particularly by the benefits team.

One area where there's definitely been a wee dip is allocating empty homes. This has been taking longer and there have been more people refusing homes. Issues with repairs contractors have been responsible for the delays but the refusals seem strange to me. I know everyone's needs are different and not every home is suitable but I'd like to find out more about why people are turning down offers.

We also got a sneak peak at the new tenant report that is now up on Melville's website. I found it easy to understand and well laid out. If you haven't yet I would really recommend giving it a look.

Finally, now that winter has arrived, and with energy bills and all our other costs continuing to stay high, it's important we all look after ourselves and those around us. If you're struggling, or if you know someone who is, then make sure you get help, either from Melville or from elsewhere. Whatever you do, make sure no one you know is alone, cold or miserable this festive season.

Merry Christmas and thanks for reading

Gill



Area

Tenant rep

Gorebridge, Newtongrange

Ellie Cairns

Penicuik, Bilston, Loanhead

Steven Jamieson

Bonnyrigg, Poltonhall, Rosewell

Andrew Hiddleston, Gill Pennie, Liz Coyle and Janet Harvey

Mayfield and Easthouses

Belinda Maciver and Barbara Shearer

Pathhead

Position vacant

Dalkeith, Woodburn, Danderhall

Eileen McLaren

Lanarkshire, Edinburgh, East Lothian

Position vacant

Fancy becoming a rep and getting £20 for every meeting you come to? Email mytenantrep@melville.org.uk or call 0131 561 6466.

Top of the Props



Winter's well and truly arrived and during the cold, dark and damp winter months there are a number of issues that you could experience in your home. One is frozen and burst pipes. This can be a major inconvenience that could end up costing you hundreds of pounds so make sure you read our top tips on how to keep your pipes frost free, even if you go away over the festive period.

We've also got a reminder of some steps you can take to reduce the chances of condensation leading to damp and mould in your home as well as a look at Legionella and some advice on how to avoid it in your water supply.

As always, if you need more help and advice or have an issue with your home then please don't hesitate to get in touch. Our contact details are at the foot of this page.

Looking after your home in cold weather



On top of the many costs we're all facing right now, the last thing you want as the temperature dips is a flood caused by a burst pipe that could cause hundreds if not thousands of pounds worth of damage to the contents of your home. But floods caused by frozen and then burst pipes are one of the biggest dangers to your home in the winter months. But avoiding burst pipes isn't too difficult if you follow a few simple steps:

- If you have pipes and tanks in unheated loft spaces, open the hatch during icy weather to allow the warm air from downstairs to rise and keep the chill off
- If you have pipes or tanks inside cupboards, open the cupboard doors so the air from warmer parts of your home can circulate around them
- When it's frosty outside, to stop your pipes from freezing you need to make sure it doesn't get too cold inside. Experts recommend keeping your thermostat set to at least 7°C - even if you're not at home
- Make sure you know where to find your stop valve so that you can turn the water off at the mains if you go away for more than a day during cold weather. If you need help locating your stop valve speak to our Property team

You should also make sure you have home contents insurance so that your carpets and possessions are protected in the event of flooding (or fire).

You choose which insurance company you want to use. For information the SFHA Diamond scheme, underwritten by Royal & Sun Alliance, has been designed especially for tenants and is delivered at a fair price.

To find out more, or to request an application form, contact your housing officer or visit www.sfha.co.uk/diamond-insurance.

Need help?

If you need help with any of the issues raised here or with anything to do with your home, please get in touch. The contact details for our Property team are:

- 0131 654 2733 (selecting option 2)
- propertyservicesgroup@melville.org.uk

Preventing condensation and mould

Condensation and mould are a particular problem during the cold, damp Scottish winter. Here are a few tips you can try if it's an issue you're experiencing.

1. **Open windows as often as you can but especially first thing in the morning. This lets fresh air in and moist air out**
2. **Wipe away any water on your windows as soon as you notice it**
3. **When using the shower or bath, or when cooking, keep the door closed and open a window or use your extractor fan (these use surprisingly little power)**
4. **Keep lids on pans when cooking**
5. **When drying clothes indoors, use a room with good ventilation like the bathroom or kitchen, with the doors closed and a window open or fan on**
6. **Make sure furniture is away from radiators and external walls as this stops air moving around your home**
7. **Remove mould as soon as it appears, preferably with a mould cleaning product**

Damp and mould are usually due to everyday living but sometimes they can be caused by an issue with your property. If you have tried our tips but it's not helping, please let us know. It could be that there's a problem that we need to look at.

Reducing the risk of Legionella in your home

In every home, private or rented, there is a very small risk of Legionella, a bacteria found in water that can cause Legionnaires' disease, which is a potentially serious and sometimes deadly form of pneumonia.

Legionella is more common in places like hotels, hospitals or offices where the bacteria have got into the water supply. But it is possible, although much less common, to find it in hot or cold water systems at home, especially in a home that has been empty for a period of time.

You can get Legionnaires' disease from things like:

- air conditioning systems
- humidifiers
- spa pools and hot tubs
- taps and showers that are not used often

What can I do to reduce the risk?

- If you suspect any issues with your water supply or heating system, such as irregular hot water temperatures or if your water is an unusual colour, report them to Melville immediately.
- Run all the taps in your home regularly, as stagnant water in pipes can increase the risk of Legionella.
- If you're away for an extended period, consider running the taps and showers for a few minutes when you return.
- Regularly clean and descale showerheads to reduce the risk of bacterial growth.

In social rented homes we need to work together to prevent the possibility of nasty bacteria like Legionella occurring. If you have any concerns or would like further information, please contact our Property team.

Melville makes £4,000 festive donation



Mayfield Pantry, Gorebridge-based Midlothian Foodbank, Penicuik Foodbank, Woodburn Pantry and Mayfield-based youth charity Y2K.

“All of these charities provide invaluable help to the communities we serve and we’re delighted to be able to help out in some small way,” said Melville’s Head of Housing Jane Burnett. “It’s going to be a long hard winter for a lot of people but there is support available. Any Melville tenant who is struggling should contact us and if we can’t help directly we will point them in the direction of an organisation that can.”

With times tough as the country continues to battle the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, Melville has made donations totalling £4,000 to charities that help struggling households.

Eight organisations, spread across Midlothian and beyond, have each received cheques for £500 to help with their work tackling poverty over the busy festive period; they are Aberlour Child Care Trust, Clydesdale Foodbank, Dalkeith Storehouse,

Winter vegetable and lentil soup

When it’s cold outside, treat yourself to a healthy homemade vegetable soup, packed with immunity-supporting vitamin C and four of your 5-a-day

What you’ll need

- 85g dried red lentils
- 2 carrots, quartered lengthways then diced
- 3 sticks celery, sliced
- 2 small leeks, sliced
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- 1 tbsp fresh thyme leaves
- 3 large garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 vegetable stock cube
- 1 heaped tsp ground coriander



Method

STEP 1

Tip all the ingredients into a large pan. Pour over 1½ litres boiling water, then stir well.

STEP 2

Cover and leave to simmer for 30 mins until the vegetables and lentils are tender.

STEP 3

Ladle into bowls and eat straightaway, or if you like a really thick texture, blitz a third of the soup with a hand blender or in a food processor.

Festive Fun

Why can't Christmas trees knit?
Because they're always losing their needles

What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire?
Frostbite

What did Santa do when he went speed dating?
He pulled a cracker

Who is Santa's favourite singer?
Elf-is Presley

What happens to elves when they are naughty?
Santa gives them the sack!

What do snowmen wear on their heads?
Ice caps

What do frogs wear on their feet?
Open toad sandals

Who hides in the bakery at Christmas?
A mince spy

What do Santa's little helpers learn at school?
The elf-abet

Prize Quiz - £25 voucher up for grabs

In the best festive tradition we have 12 fiendishly tricky quiz questions for you, one for each of the traditional days of Christmas. To enter, and to be in with a chance of winning a £25 shopping voucher, just email your answers no later than 5pm Friday 19 January to dhughes@melville.org.uk or send to Dan Hughes at the Dalkeith Corn Exchange, EH22 1AZ.

- 1 If you are born on Christmas Day, what is your star sign?
- 2 What colour was Santa Claus' suit before Coca-Cola decided to dress him in a festive red for an advertising campaign?
- 3 Which Christmas hit originally released in 1984 has been UK Christmas number one three times?
- 4 A Christmas classic by Cliff Richard was the best selling song of 1988 in the UK - what was it?
- 5 How many times does the number 1 appear on an advent calendar with 24 doors?
- 6 According to the song 12 Days of Christmas, what bird do you find in a pear tree?
- 7 What is the name of Anna and Elsa's kingdom in Frozen?
- 8 In what film would you hear the greeting "Merry Christmas, ya filthy animal"?
- 9 Traditionally, what does Santa put in the stockings of children on the naughty list?
- 10 Which Hollywood actor played 6 different roles in the polar Express?
- 11 How do you say Merry Christmas in Spanish?
- 12 Which former US president appeared in Home Alone 2?

Can you find the 5 differences between the two pictures?





Over to you...

We've continued to see better performance, with fewer complaints over the past four months compared to this time last year. So far this year we've recorded 85 complaints compared to 113 at the end of October 2022. However we can still do better so if you experience good or poor service, please let us know. We don't have room to give a response to your comments and complaints here but as long as you provide contact details we always reply directly when issues are raised.

July to October complaints



Frontline (stage 1)
complaints

39

Upheld

19

Average Response Time

2.5 days



Investigation (stage 2)
complaints

9

Upheld

6

Average Response Time

14.3 days



Compliments

7

**Repairs
(13 complaints)**

Staff behaviour (8)

Other contractor (5)

**Poor service/comms
(excl repairs/gas) (6)**

Policy/procedure (4)

**Property
condition (4)**

ASB handling (1)

Heating/hot water (4)

What you told us

“I find it difficult to contact Melville sometimes due to them now working a shorter week.”

“Take more care in checking up on your elderly doing more for them to make life that bit more bearable.”

“Could improve repair service been waiting nearly a month (for repair).”

“Genuinely helpful and friendly.”

“Novus need to answer the phone I sat on the phone for over an hour and a half still didn't answer nightmare to get through to them especially if it was an emergency.”

“When I phoned for a repair the lady made sure it would be within school times which was very convenient. The plumber who came for the repair was very friendly and gave us advice before leaving.”

“More publicity that it's okay to report anti social behaviour. How the process works as many neighbours are scared to report due to fear and an escalation of neighbours behaviour or violence in some cases due to being reported. Also advertise the options that Melville has to remedy antisocial behaviour. And that Melville tenants are protected and actively listened to.”

“Great staff, and very helpful x”

“I had whole new heating system fitted in my home by Melville and I am very happy with the service Melville provided. However the outside heating installers were a bit loud with their conversations and a bit unsatisfactory with their language at times.”

“The service I get from Melville is always good and the help and support I get for my benefits is always brilliant do everything possible to get the best outcome of anything that they are supporting me with and always get the best outcome in whatever they may be involved in on your behalf and always do it to the best of their ability.”

“I'm always happy with how quick repairs or maintenance get carried out. It's much appreciated.”

“Is Melville staff still working from home and is the office closed Monday and Fridays?”

“You have looked after us for many years and it is appreciated.”

“More help offered if mess is made due to issues with house.”

“If they could house people more appropriately they wouldn't have so many issues. Leaving families stuck in 1 bedroom open plan flats with young babies to share a room with parents till they are at least 7 years old. It's a joke.”

“I am very happy. Dan Hughes is very able and would do anything to help. Melville is definitely the friendly housing association. Recently I was pleased to get my wet room upgraded .. repairs are done promptly.”

“Always get quick and professional help when needed.”

“The service I have received has been really good.”

“The only issue I had was recently with the gas service. I had to cancel an appointment and then when I rebooked I got a letter saying they were going to force entry. It was a lot of carry on trying to get this removed from my file so they didn't turn up when just my daughter was in.”

“I feel there should be a better option of being able to keep track of your rent account etc, the website is not good at all and I never get any rent statements, and the statements don't make sense at all anyways.”

“Melville are good landlords.”

“Amazing service.”

News in brief

Tenant Report now available to download

This year's Tenant Report, produced with the help of our Tenant Rep group, is now available to download from our website. The report shows how we've performed over the past year and is based on figures supplied to the Housing Regulator in our Annual Return on the Charter.

If you'd like a paper copy of the report, an audio version, or translated into a language other than English, please get in touch in the usual ways.



Welcome to new staff

We've had a couple of new members of staff join our busy housing team in the autumn. We're delighted to welcome new Welfare Benefits Adviser Barry Smith and new Housing Assistant Shawnee Davie. Barry joins us from West Lothian Council, while Shawnee previously worked at Midlothian Council. Both come with glowing references and we all look forward to getting to know them better over the coming months.



Prize draw winner

Well done to Stacey Gilchrist from Old School, Mayfield, winner of our latest quarterly prize draw. Stacey picked up a £50 voucher just for replying to our satisfaction survey text and completing a short online form. Remember, almost all Melville feedback is now done digitally so to be in with a chance of winning make sure you let us know how we're doing after you've used any of our services.

Join us on Facebook



Join our growing Facebook community. We currently have more than 2000 people following us on Facebook but we're always keen to find more. By joining us on Facebook you get to hear the latest Melville and community news first, tell us what you think of us, and even enter prize competitions. Visit us at www.facebook.com/melvillehousing.

Want to hear from us differently?

If you have problems reading Voice, we can provide it in large print, as an online audio version or in a language other than English. And if you want us to stop posting you a paper copy we can take you off the mailing list and send it to you electronically instead. Just let us know by email to dhughes@melville.org.uk or give us a call on the usual number.

Online services don't stop for Christmas - sign up to the tenant zone today!

Melville will close for a fortnight at 12 noon on Thursday 21 December, reopening at 9am on Monday 8 January 2024. During that time many of our services will be available online and through our automated switchboard.

While we're closed you can still:

Report emergency repairs by calling 0131 654 2733. Follow the instructions and you'll be directed to the right people to speak to
Pay your rent, and any rent arrears, as normal by phoning 0330 041 6497, by visiting our website or at any shop displaying the PayPoint logo.

More detailed information is available in your 2024 diary and handbook, included with this issue of Voice.

While many of our services remain available while we're closed, unless you've signed up to our new tenant zone you won't be able to find out your rent balance or see recent payments you've made.

So, for peace of mind over the festive period, make sure you sign up today. Go to www.melville.org.uk and click on Tenant Zone.

Merry Christmas and all the best for the new year!