

VOICE

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Melville Housing
SUSTAINABLE THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Issue 60 - Winter 2024/2025



Voice
is now
digital



Energy prices
to rise
in January



Barbara
stands
down



Inside your Winter Voice

Give your views on rents

Newsletter for tenants of Melville Housing Association
The Corn Exchange • 200 High Street • Dalkeith • Midlothian • EH22 1AZ
T: 0131 654 2733 • info@melville.org.uk • www.melville.org.uk • Scottish Charity SCO32755



Voice is now digital



Welcome to the first Voice of our new digital era (unless you're one of the handful of tenants who have asked to continue receiving it through the post). Switching to digital Voice will save Melville around £18,000 a year (mostly on postage), money that we can put towards improving other services.

As well as costing far less and being better for the environment, the digital version is also more up to date (without printing times it's far quicker to produce) and includes useful links so you can find out more about the news we feature.

We plan on continuing to post out the annual diary and handbook in December because of the valuable information it contains, and in future years we are considering combining this with an annual round up of Melville news. If you want to let us know what you think of this we'd be delighted to hear from you.

Give your views on rents

Every year we ask you, our customers, for your views on rents for the coming year (starting 1 April 2025).

In the past, our management board have used a variety of methods when deciding on the annual rent increase. During and after covid, this was kept as low as possible to help customers out when times were really tough. Previously increases were set around the level of inflation at the time. Many management boards, Melville's included, now base their rent increases on what is required to ensure the long term health of the association.

The recent UK Budget increased National Insurance for all employers (including Melville). This will have a significant impact on Melville's finances and also on our key contractors whose cost increases will be higher than normal next year. These are just a couple of things that the board are considering.

While our management board is responsible for setting rents, they will take your feedback into consideration so it's really important that you let us know what you genuinely and honestly think.

Let us know your thoughts, and how any increase might affect you, by completing our short online survey which you can find on our website. Everyone who replies by 5pm on Thursday 9 January 2025 will be entered into a prize draw for the chance to win a £50 voucher.

And if you, or any Melville tenant you know, would like a paper copy of the survey form, just let us know and we'll post one out.

30th Anniversary celebrations



This year marks 30 years since Melville began, taking over from Scottish Homes in Midlothian on 31 October 1995. There have been quite a few highlights over that time and we've got a few ideas up our sleeve for ways in which we can mark the anniversary. We'll bring you more details in the new year but if you have any thoughts on how we can celebrate then we'd be delighted to hear from you.

I still want to receive paper copies of things like Voice and the rent survey, what do I do?

No problem. We're happy to continue posting out information to anyone who can't access it digitally, or who just prefers to receive a paper copy. Just let us know by email to dhughes@melville.org.uk or call 0131 561 6466 and leave your name and address.

Magical Woodburn garden wins 10th annual contest



Winner (£100)

Runner-up (£35)

Small Space (£50)

Mrs Diane Wright, Woodburn Place, Woodburn

Mr David Bowman, Oak Crescent, Mayfield

Ms Diane Gamrot, Westhouses Road, Mayfield

A green-fingered tenant from Woodburn, near Dalkeith in Midlothian, has been rewarded for her fantastic achievement in creating a magical outdoor space with this year's 'Baxter Keiller Award' for outstanding Melville Housing Association garden.

Chosen by the judging panel from entries covering much of Midlothian, Mrs Diane Wright of Woodburn Place was commended for her garden's 'variety, colour and vibrancy, as well the great deal of planning and work that clearly went into this magical space'.

Her victory, which comes in the competition's tenth year, marks the second time Diane has walked off with the top prize (she previously triumphed in 2022).

"Congratulations to Diane for her well-deserved award," said Melville boss John McMorrow. "Hers is a delightful garden that would bring joy to anyone fortunate enough to live nearby and we hope that her hard work helps inspire a future generation of Monty Dons, Carole Baxters or even Baxter Keillers!"

"As always we were enormously impressed by the quality of entries, particularly given the challenging weather conditions we all endured last spring and summer. The judging panel had a very difficult task narrowing it down to just three finalists and I'd like to congratulate not just Diane but everyone who entered for all their hard work."

Tell me more

Now in its tenth 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.

Melville makes cracking festive donations



Melville has made a series of donations worth more than £7,000 to various organizations, including food banks, pantries, and youth development programmes.

10 organisations, spread across Midlothian and beyond, have each received cheques to help with their work tackling poverty over the busy festive period; they are Aberlour Child Care Trust, Clydesdale Foodbank, Dalkeith Storehouse, Edinburgh and Lothians Trust Fund, Mayfield Pantry, Gorebridge-based Midlothian Foodbank, Midlothian Women's Aid, Penicuik Foodbank, Woodburn Pantry, and Mayfield-based youth charity Y2K.

These donations are part of Melville Housing's ongoing commitment to giving back to the community. "We are grateful for the support we've received from the community and believe in paying it forward," said Melville's Kirsten Dean. "These contributions help us make a meaningful impact on the lives of local families and individuals during this important but also often difficult time of year."

The organisations benefiting focus on providing essentials and services to underserved populations. Local charities have expressed their gratitude, noting that these contributions will help them better meet the growing demand for support and assistance.

"For many people Christmas is an extremely difficult time of year," continued Kirsten. "And while it can be hard, 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 one of the many wonderful organisations that can."

Local youth team scores with £500 Melville donation



A youth football club based in Rosewell, Midlothian, has invested in vital equipment for the future, including new indoor goals, thanks to a £500 Melville donation.

Rosewell Football Academy, which will shortly celebrate its third anniversary, trains on weekday evenings in the local church hall with matches on Sundays and currently has four age groups made up of both girls and boys from under 7s through to under 11s.

"We're delighted to see our donation put to such good use," said Melville's Dan Hughes. "Danny and his team have done a fantastic job over the past couple of years, starting from nothing to now having

dozens of kids getting out and playing football every week. We're pleased to have been able to help out in some small way and we wish the whole club all the best for the new season."

Established in 2021, the Rosewell Football Academy now has more than 80 kids getting outside, exercising and playing regularly with new age groups expected to start playing games next spring.

"The club has come a long way in a short time but without the support of the local community we would really struggle," said Danny McQuade, club organiser. "Help like this is incredibly valuable so on behalf of everyone at the club I'd like to thank Melville Housing for their generous donation."

Staff Spotlight

This issue's staff spotlight shines on our longest serving housing officer, Linda Hay. Linda has been with Melville for 15 years and is leaving us at the end of the year for a well-deserved retirement.



What attracted you to your current job at Melville?

I was working as a housing officer for a much larger organisation and was drawn to Melville as it was community based and offered a much more personal service.

What do you feel has been your biggest contribution to Melville and its tenants over the past 15 years?

This is a hard one. Being a housing officer isn't an easy job. You're often telling people things they don't want to hear but I would say that I've always tried my best for my tenants and I can think of a few occasions over the years when I've done my part in helping to change people's lives. Those are the times that make it all worthwhile.

And what's been your proudest achievement?

Aside from helping people, I'd say I'm most proud of the work we've done with the fabulous Mayfield youth charity Y2K. I got involved when they were struggling for funding and Melville has had strong links with them ever since.

What will you miss most about your job?

It's the people I'll miss the most. I've loved working with people on the front line and with my colleagues. I can genuinely say I'll miss more or less everything (except the bypass and the commute into the office from Fife).

What plans do you have for your retirement?

No real plans at the moment just looking forward to relaxing and spending more time with my grandchildren.

Any hobbies?

I'm quite an active person and I enjoy tai chi, swimming and walking. I also love spending time working in my garden, listening to music (I have very eclectic taste), reading and the theatre.

And what about pets?

I have a grey cat called Thunder. Despite his name, he's very shy but also very chatty.

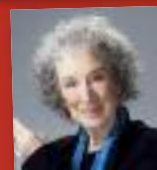
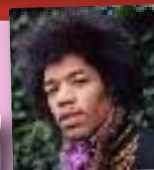
Where's your dream holiday destination?

Iceland



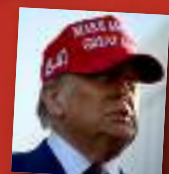
Who are your 3 famous (living or dead) desert island companions?

Jimmy Hendrix, Alan Rickman and Margaret Atwood.



And which famous person (alive or dead) would you least like to be trapped in a lift with?

Margaret Thatcher with Donald Trump a close second.



When a child is born – Let us know!



When a child is born, grows up and moves out or moves back in, you need to let us know. The same applies to adults, it just doesn't fit as well with our seasonal theme... to be clear, this applies not just at Christmas time but all year round!

It's your responsibility, as set out in your tenancy agreement, to let us know about changes as soon as possible. It's a simple step that helps ensure everything is accurate and keeps things square with us. More than that if you don't let us know it can have an impact if you're looking to do things like pass on your tenancy (using your succession or assignation rights) at some point in the future.

Letting us know about changes to your household that are happening now or you expect to happen shortly (or that happened in the past) is pretty straightforward. The easiest way to let us know is by visiting our website and completing the short form on the Changes to a Tenancy page in the 'Your Home' section. You can also drop us an email or give us a call.

Understanding hoarding: Why some people can't let go



Hoarding is a growing problem for housing providers like Melville. We're seeing more and more cases of people collecting and keeping loads of stuff, often to the point where it causes problems in their daily life. Sometimes it can get so bad that it affects physical health and presents a real danger to their home.

Hoarding isn't just about liking things or being messy. It's a recognised mental health issue. People who hoard may feel very anxious or upset at the thought of throwing things away, even if those things seem useless to others. These items might be things like

clothes, old gadgets, newspapers or even food. The collection can get so big that it fills up a home, making it hard to move around, use spaces, or even live in the house comfortably.

People who hoard may feel a deep sense of attachment to their possessions, believing they might need them in the future or that they hold special value.

The causes of hoarding are not always clear, but it's often linked to past trauma, depression, or anxiety. Some people may have grown up in environments where they learned to keep everything, while others might develop hoarding tendencies later in life due to life events or a mental health condition.

Hoarding can affect relationships and cause stress for family members or friends. It may also lead to safety risks, like fire hazards or difficulty accessing exits in an emergency.

If you or someone you know is struggling with hoarding, it's important to know that help is out there. With the right support, it's possible to manage hoarding behaviour, improve your mental health and your quality of life.

Get help

If you, or someone you know, needs help with hoarding then you can contact Melville and we'll see what we can do or direct you to other charities that can help.

If you don't want to speak to us then Hoarding UK, the UK's only dedicated hoarding charity, is a good place to start:

www.hoarding.support
info@hoardinguk.org
0203 239 1600 (Mon-Fri, 10am - 5pm)

Festive Fun

Can you find the 5 differences between the two pictures?



Festive wordsearch - just for fun

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

RUDOLPH

FROSTY

CAROLS

MISTLETOE

HOLLY

IVY

BETHLEHEM

NATIVITY

KINGS

GABRIEL

DONKEY

STOCKINGS

NOEL

No prizes this issue but just for a bit of fun see if you can find the 13 words hidden in the grid above.

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.

Urgent News about Pension Credit and the Winter Fuel Payment



The Government's recent decision to means test the Winter Fuel Payment means it's more important than ever to claim pension credit if you are eligible, and to do so quickly to preserve your entitlement to the Winter Fuel Payment.

Hundreds of thousands of pensioners are being urged to apply for a benefit that could be worth on average £3,900 per year. 21 December is the last possible date to make a successful backdated claim in order to receive the Winter Fuel Payment.

Even if you're not eligible but you know someone that is, maybe a family member, friend or neighbour, then please encourage them to check their eligibility and apply.



While around 1.4 million pensioners are already receiving Pension Credit, up to an estimated 880,000 households are eligible for the support but are not claiming it.

Pensioners whose weekly income is below £218.15 for a single person or £332.95 for a couple should check to see if they are eligible for the payment.

People with a severe disability, carers and those who are responsible for a child or young person who lives with them could get more. Pension Credit can also include extra amounts for certain housing costs, such as ground rent or service charges.

Applications for pension credit can be made:

- Online at the pension credit page on www.gov.uk
- Over the phone by calling 0800 99 1234 (Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm)
- By printing out and filling in a paper application form

And if you're not sure if you should be applying, then speak to Melville. We'll check to see if you're eligible.

Working together is key

Janet's heating problems began in October 2020 when her gas supply was capped due to safety concerns, and her old boiler was condemned. Already struggling as the primary carer for her husband, who suffered from dementia, and dealing with her own declining health, Janet faced significant challenges.

Efforts to install a new heating system dragged on and were delayed as Janet found it difficult to prepare her

property. The loss of her husband and lack of support made it even more difficult for her to clear the clutter and allow the work to go ahead.

To resolve this, we organised a meeting with Janet, Saltire (our heating contractor), her support team and the Council's Unpaid work team (UWT). Her Housing Officer secured funding from Melville's Tenancy Sustainment Fund to hire a skip, enabling the UWT to assist Janet in

Energy prices to rise again in January



“Anyone struggling with bills should speak to their supplier to make sure they’re getting the help they need and look around to make sure they’re on the best, most affordable deal for them.”

Energy prices will rise again in the new year following news that the energy price cap, set by regulator Ofgem, is to increase by 1.2% in January.

The change to the price cap – which sets a maximum rate per unit and standing charge that can be billed to customers for their energy use – will rise by £21 for an average household per year or around £1.75 a month for the period covering January to March 2025.

This means that the average household (paying by Direct Debit for dual fuel) will pay £1,738 per year.

The regulator is urging customers to take advantage of the rising choice in the market and look for the best deal to help keep their household bills down. By switching, savings of up to £140 are currently available, it said.

Tim Jarvis, director general of markets at Ofgem, said: “We understand that the cost of energy remains a challenge for too many households. However, with more tariffs coming into the market, there are ways for customers to bring their bill down so please shop around and look at all the options.”

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

clearing her home.

Over two months, significant progress was made. The combined efforts of Janet, her support network, and local services prepared her home for the new heating system.

This case highlights the value of tailored support and working together, helping vulnerable individuals to overcome barriers and ensuring both their essential and wider needs are met.



Be on winter watch to protect your home

Every year our winters seem to be getting less and less predictable with storms and strong winds now a seemingly bigger issue than snow and ice. So what advice is there to help protect your home from damage during the winter months?

Make sure your things are insured

Floods caused by frozen and then burst pipes are one of the biggest dangers to your home in the winter months. And the last thing you want over the winter is to be thousands of pounds out of pocket following a spell of cold weather!

You should 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.



Clear your gutters

Clear any rubbish/leaves from your gutters to prevent a build-up which could result in gutters collapsing, or the water finding a way inside your home and causing damp. This can be a tricky job, especially working at height, so if you need help just let us know.

Prepare your garden for storms

Making sure your garden is clear and clean is a good idea. Secure anything that could be swept away by the wind such as trampolines, garden furniture and wheelie bins.

Prepare for power cuts

Power cuts can be even more of an inconvenience in winter due to the colder temperatures and earlier sunsets. To help look after yourself and your property, make sure you know where your fuse box is. Stashing away torches, charged power banks or even good old candles will also help. Extended power outages should be reported to Scottish Power on 0800 092 9290.

Protect your pipes

Avoid frozen and burst pipes by following these simple steps:

- If you have pipes and tanks in unheated loft spaces, open the hatch during icy weather to allow the warmer air from downstairs to rise and keep the chill off.
- Similarly, if you have pipes or tanks inside cupboards, open up the cupboard doors during spells of really chilly weather so the air from warmer parts of your home can circulate around them.
- To stop your pipes from freezing during cold weather 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 or two during cold weather. If you need help locating your stop valve speak to our Property team.

Let us know what you think in big survey



Hi there and a warm welcome to our regular column. My name's Dan. I'm Melville's lead officer on all things participation and this issue it's my turn to tell you what we've been up to over the past few months.

At our last meeting, back in October, we welcomed a new member and had a good chat about loads of stuff but the main topic for discussion was Melville's performance over the past year. We looked at issues like repairs, allocating homes, helping tenants and collecting rents. Things are mostly going pretty well and we were all pleased to see how much help is available for struggling tenants however there were a few concerning areas.

The average time to let one of our homes has increased to 19 days. Although much better than national and local averages this means that more rent money is being lost, however our reps agreed that homes should be up to a better standard for new tenants moving in. We're also seeing a worrying trend developing with tenancy offer refusals. Our housing team is monitoring this and looking for reasons and possible solutions.



We had a chat about the performance of R3 now they've been in place for around 6 months. The group felt performance overall has been okay but they did feel that some people may feel pressured to respond positively when presented with a doorstep satisfaction survey. We'll be looking with particular interest at the answers to the repairs questions in the big customer survey in the new year to see how they match up. And on that note, your feedback is so important so we'd really appreciate you taking 10 minutes or so to speak to one of the survey team if you're approached.

The group also got a sneak peak at the new tenant report that is now up on Melville's website. It's designed to be easy to understand and straight forward to navigate. 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



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 and Iain Lawson

Lanarkshire, Edinburgh, East Lothian

Position vacant

Want to become a rep and get £20 for your time? Email mytenantrep@melville.org.uk or call 0131 561 6466.

Pillar of the community stands down after 20 years service



A pillar of the community who has played an immense but understated role in the life of local people has called time on one part of her stellar volunteering career after 20 years of service to social housing in Midlothian.

Barbara Shearer, who lives in Mayfield, stood down at this year's AGM, having sat on the Board of Melville since 2004, first as a member and then as secretary while attending over 200 meetings and playing an important role in the organisation's expansion.

"When I joined the Board Melville weren't building new homes and, thanks to right to buy, stock levels had plummeted," said Barbara. "It's one of my proudest achievements that we've added almost 500 homes since we started developing, a huge increase which has helped some of the many, many people in Midlothian desperately in need of a quality affordable home."

Barbara, who turned 75 earlier this year, was born in Edinburgh but has called Midlothian home for almost 50 years. She joined the Melville Board when she became a tenant in 2004, having retired from her job at a local plant nursery after it became too physically demanding.

"I wasn't very confident before joining the Board and it was a bit of a leap of faith," explained Barbara. "But I got plenty of training and that quickly got me up to speed and taught me new skills. I was soon getting involved with major home improvement programmes that have made a real difference to people's lives. Our homes are now almost unrecognisable from the ones inherited by Melville in the 90s and I'm proud of the part that I played in that."

Even though she's retiring from the Board, Barbara isn't stepping back from Melville entirely. She will continue in her role as a tenant rep, attending regular meetings and acting as a spokesperson for residents in Mayfield. She is also considering an offer to join the Board of Ironmills, the subsidiary company that owns Melville's mid-market rent properties.

"I'll miss the Board but it was time for me to go," said Barbara. "I felt I'd done about as much as I could and didn't feel there was much more for me to give. I would say that it's really important that organisations like Melville don't lose touch with their communities and should always have Board members who understand the local issues. 2004 doesn't seem that long ago to me but in many ways it was a very different time. We've achieved a huge amount but the challenges ahead are complex and will need fresh ideas to solve them."

Barbara is also a keen volunteer in the community. Even more impressive than her time with Melville is the 32 years she's spent helping out as a Guide leader, a role she still carries out, although now in a reduced capacity.

"I've been working with the Guides and also the Cubs for almost as long as I can remember," said Barbara. "It's hard work so I'm not quite as involved as I used to be but it's extremely rewarding and I'll continue to help out for as long as I'm able."

Keeping busy is not a problem for Barbara. She also volunteers at the Grassy Riggs project in Woodburn, helping out with a talking group for older people. She's also an active member of their knitting group which in recent years has sent hand knitted clothing to premature babies, local people struggling through difficult times, and even to those in desperate need due to the war in Ukraine.

"To give 20 years of your life, as a volunteer, to one organisation is a fantastic achievement and testament to Barbara's dedication to her community," said Donna Bogdanovic, Melville Chair. "Barbara has been an ever present and an extremely valuable member of our Board. Her knowledge, experience and understanding of our local communities will be very hard to replace. We'll all miss her enormously."

Christine Moore

As well as Barbara Shearer, Christine Moore (pictured 2nd from left) also stood down from the Board at our most recent AGM (in September 2024). Christine had served for 5 years and made a valuable contribution through a difficult period. Everyone at Melville would like to thank Christine for her commitment and service.

Comprehensive tenant satisfaction survey



Our large tenant satisfaction survey, that we carry out every 3 years and that gives us an idea of how we're performing and areas that you'd like us to focus on, will be happening in January and February. It will be carried out by Research Resource and will mostly be done face-to-face but with some telephone surveys. If you're able, please take 10 minutes or so to answer their questions and help us improve our service to you. This time round they plan on speaking to around 710 customers so if you would definitely like to be involved please let us know and we'll arrange for you to be one of them. If you definitely DON'T want to be contacted, please also let us know.

Reporting significant performance failures

Every now and then things go wrong and mistakes are made. If the mistakes are ours then we would hope you'd give us the opportunity to put them right, however if you feel our failures are more serious then you should report them to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). Some examples of things you might report include:

- Consistently failing to carry out repairs
- Putting the safety of tenants at risk - through not carrying out things like gas safety checks
- Not helping tenants to report anti-social behaviour
- Not allowing tenants to apply for another house

Regulator considering new damp and mould indicators



The SHR is considering updating performance indicators around tenant safety, including how well landlords deal with damp and mould.

The proposed new indicators relating to damp and mould cover the average length of time taken to resolve cases, the percentage of these that are subsequently reopened, and the number of open cases at a year-end.

It's also proposing ditching a number of ARC indicators that are not routinely used, including around numbers of tenancy offers refused, cost of adaptations completed, homelessness referrals and abandoned homes.

It additionally suggests amending some reporting around completed repairs, resolved anti-social behaviour cases and types of lettings.

Contact the Regulator

To find out more about the work of the SHR, and how you can report serious performance failures visit www.housingregulator.gov.scot, email shr@shr.gov.scot or call 0141 242 5642.



Over to you...

We've seen an increase in complaints over the past few months, although numbers are still lower than this time last year. So far this year we've recorded 81 complaints compared to 85 at the end of October 2023. The increase in recent months has been driven by complaints about the repairs service delivered by R3 and also about the condition of properties, both from new and existing tenants. 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

52

Upheld

37

Average Response Time

3.1 days



Compliments

6



Investigation (stage 2) complaints

6

Upheld

3

Average Response Time

15.5 days

Repairs (19 complaints)

Property condition (15)

Other contractor (4)

Poor service/comms (excl repairs/gas) (7)

Policy/procedure (3)

Estate Management (1)

ASB handling (3)

Heating/hot water (4)

Staff behaviour (1)

Allocations (1)

What you told us

“The service I received from your welfare benefits service was second to none in a crisis which was having a detrimental effect on my anxiety and poor mental health.”

“The welfare officer went above and beyond to help me get the answers I needed, I would definitely use again.”

“Very helpful and peace of mind knowing the help we required was very much appreciated.”

“

John (the Welfare Benefits Adviser) was very friendly and understanding. I would have struggled without his help.

”

“

I am very satisfied with Melville and the way they conduct the business and especially the repair side.

”

“

I just wanted to say thank you very much for sorting the money for the washing machine. I appreciate it more than you'll know, I've actually had a wee cry this morning but happy tears so thank you for giving me a break and helping me, I don't ask for or receive help very often.

”

“

I am very dissatisfied with the state of some gardens that have been left to poor standards. This is over 6 months and nothing has been done. Why has Melville let this go this far?

”

“

Brilliant people behind Melville. Have been very helpful and attentive. Taken a lot of stress and worry off my shoulders.

”

“

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to your company and your operative who recently attended our property. His work was flawless and we feel he is a credit to your company. He was polite, extremely helpful, very knowledgeable and professional throughout his 2 visits. He went above and beyond our expectations in fixing our heating issue as we approach the start of a cold winter ahead.

”

“

You have been an outstanding housing officer to us, practically everything that needs repaired to make our house our home again. In as little as a couple of weeks. You truly are amazing Kayleigh. Thankyou so much for everything that you are doing for our family.

”

“

I'm getting really annoyed waiting on repairs that should have happened last year! I've emailed and I get no response back!

”

“

It has taken 4 weeks & 4 plumbers to fix leak under kitchen sink.

”

“

I had no power for over 2 hours and when phoning the emergency repair number no one answered.

”

Melville in the community



The Melville team have been getting out and about in the community over the past year and will continue to do so in the new year. We've been dropping in to community hubs like the pantries in Mayfield, Woodburn and Penicuik as well as venues in Forth, offering help with housing, benefits and related issues. We'll always post on Facebook to let you know when and where we're going to be so keep your eyes peeled and next time come along and say hello. You might be surprised by the help we can provide!

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.



Festive prize draw winner

A nice wee Christmas present is on its way to Claire Thomson winner of our quarterly satisfaction survey draw. Claire, who lives in Bonnyrigg, 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 receive a paper copy of Voice?

Most people now read Voice online, through our website. If you would like to continue to receive a paper copy 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 5pm on Monday 23 December, reopening at 9am on Monday 6 January 2025. 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 2025 diary and handbook, sent out to all tenants in December.

While many of our services remain available while we're closed, unless you've signed up to our 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!
Wishing you and yours a very merry Christmas and a prosperous 2025!