

VOICE

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Melville Housing
SUSTAINABLE THRIVING COMMUNITIES



Issue 61
Spring 2025



**Melville rents
increase
by 4.5%**

**£1.6m
to improve
homes**

**R3 plans
for the
future**



Inside Your Spring Voice

30th Anniversary Year Begins with a Bang!



Newsletter for tenants of Melville Housing Association

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Increase of roughly £4.20 a week

From 1 April, Melville rents increased by 4.5% (about £4.20 a week on average). This decision was made following another very positive rent consultation, and after careful discussion by our Board to make sure we can keep homes in good condition and continue providing the services you expect.



Like other social landlords in Scotland, Melville has to raise rents each year to cover rising costs and stay financially stable. The Board - not management - sets rent and staff pay, and staff pay increases have usually been below inflation.

This year's rent rise was based on several factors:

Higher National Insurance costs for employers and contractors

Ongoing home maintenance and improvement needs

Preparing for future government sustainability targets

We know rent increases are hard, so we're working to cut costs - like reducing postage by using more digital communication. If you receive a letter containing information that you believe could have been delivered by email or text, please let us know.

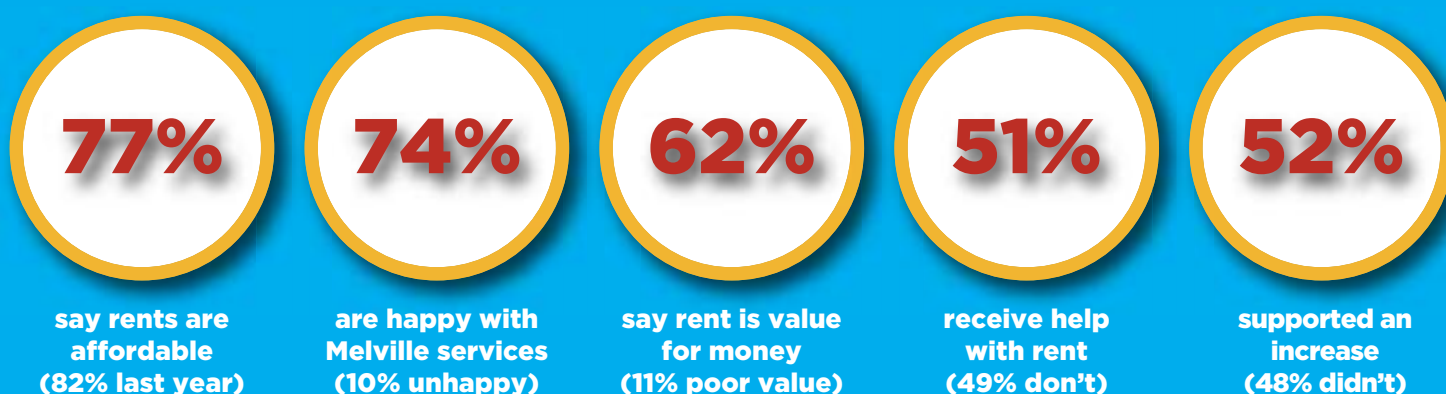
Melville runs extremely efficiently, with fewer staff per home than most landlords. In 2023/24, our staff cost per home was £855, well below the Scottish average. The next lowest amongst neighbouring landlords was £1,019 reaching a high of £2,587.

If you're struggling with rent, please talk to your housing officer. We can offer support like benefits and energy advice, and can sometimes help with things like flooring or household appliances.

What you told us

This year's survey saw another excellent response with 333 replies returned, representing a sample of around 16% of our eligible tenancies.

Of the 333 replies that came back:



We also received more than 100 individual comments on a range of topics, not just rents. We replied to individual comments to investigate problems raised and to offer help and support. Some of those raised were:

- Estate management and neighbour problems
- Complaints about the overall quality of homes and questioning how/where rent money is spent
- Issues with repairs and planned maintenance however these are down significantly since the switch to R3
- Ongoing issues with energy efficiency in homes and several requests for:
 - ⊙ New windows
 - ⊙ Solar panels
 - ⊙ Boiler replacements
 - ⊙ Better insulation
- Issues with damp and mould

Here are some of your comments (in red) and our responses (in blue)

This is a waste of time. Don't think Melville take tenants point of view where rent increase is concerned. You just put them up anyway. I'm sorry if this sounds cheeky it's not meant to just my point of view.

We appreciate everyone's point of view and did consider every single comment we received. We also understand that some tenants will be frustrated by the decision reached. Our Board decided that a slightly higher increase was needed this year in order to meet the financial challenges we are likely to face in coming years.

Except from the odd repair I have had nothing done to my property to warrant an increase in rent. Melville has done nothing in 13 years to improve my property so why should I pay any increase in rent?

Unfortunately we don't have the money to improve all homes at once. Our budgets mean that home improvement programmes work in cycles, so you may go quite a few years without getting any major work done. All homes will, however, receive the same improvements over time and this year's rent increase will help pay for upgrades in future years. There are also rare occasions when we might have incomplete records about a property so if you think you are due work and have missed out, please get in touch.

It appears any investment programmes are geared towards certain areas only. It would be interesting to understand and have sight of what improvement or investments are actually planned, otherwise it would appear the increase I pay is being directed to areas which have no benefit to me.

Details of this year's investment programme can be found over the page and while it might sometimes appear as though we're favouring certain areas (such as Mayfield) you have to remember that Mayfield makes up around 40% of our homes. However this doesn't mean that Mayfield will have 40% of the budget every year. Some years it's more, some less. We also keep costs down by focusing on one area for say bathroom replacements, however this means that in the following year we can focus our attention elsewhere.

Just wondered why you MUST increase rent every year is it just so staff can have a wage rise?

Our costs go up every year just like everybody else's and over the past couple of years have risen sharply, however only a small amount of any rent increase goes towards staff salaries. We're always looking at ways to make savings and the money we save goes towards improving services.

I think it's a difficult time to be increasing rents with the cost of living still very high and the pending increase of the energy price cap. The current rent is reasonable for the house I reside in but the cost of heating this house with windows that are well out of date, terrible insulation and the issues of metal framed houses means that I have to have the heating on all day as it will be cold again not long after turning it off. Melville do give a good service when things need repaired but more needs to be done to bring houses up to current building standards.

A lot of our homes are 60 or even 70 years old and improving the energy efficiency of some of these older properties is a real problem but we are always looking for solutions. Unfortunately, solutions aren't cheap which is why we have to increase rents every year. If you're really struggling with energy bills we might be able to help. Get in touch and we'll see what we can do.

Think the rent is pretty high compared to other council/associations. Houses are very cheap in the way they are built.

Like everyone else we have budget restrictions and must cut our cloth accordingly. Unlike councils, who have money coming in from several sources, rent is our only real source of income (save for the occasional government grant) and it needs to go up every year to pay for improvements to homes.

Celebrating 30 years of Melville...



This year, we're proud to celebrate 30 years serving our customers and communities. Things may have changed a bit since 1995 (like the hairstyles and fashion choices displayed in this photo taken shortly after Melville began) but what hasn't is our commitment to providing safe, affordable homes for people across Midlothian and beyond and with more than 2,100 homes, more than at any point in our history, we're just getting started!

Over the past three decades, and with your help, so much has been achieved. We've built hundreds of new homes, spent many millions upgrading existing ones, and helped create stronger, supportive communities. Our focus has always been on our

tenants, and we've worked hard to improve our services and support - whether it's through better repairs, energy-saving advice, or helping households reduce their bills.

Of course, we know the work isn't done. The demand for quality, affordable housing continues to rise, and we face new challenges all the time. As we look ahead, we remain just as passionate about our mission as we were 30 years ago. We're committed to doing our bit to tackle the climate crisis by making our homes more energy-efficient, ensuring they're fit for the future.

But we're also thinking about the present and we'll be celebrating throughout the year, sharing more with you as we go. Here's to 30 years — and many more to come!

...with 30 community donations

"We're proud of everything we've achieved over the last 30 years, but it's the people in our communities who really make the difference. These donations, which will be chosen by you, are our way of giving something back."

To celebrate our 30 years making a difference, we're excited to announce that we'll be making 30 charitable donations to support local causes that also make a real difference in our communities.

As part of the celebrations, we want you to help us choose the organisations that will benefit. We believe that you know best where support is needed, so we're inviting you to nominate the causes and charities that are close to your heart. Whether it's a local food bank, a youth programme, or an organisation supporting those in need, your voice matters.

To make a nomination, simply send an email to info@melville.org.uk, and tell us why you think the cause deserves a donation. We'll review every suggestion that comes in and select 30 worthy causes over the coming months.

We're proud of the work we've done and the communities we serve and this is our way of saying thank you to everyone who has worked with us over the years. Here's to 30 years of making a difference, with your help!



Melville has changed massively over the past 30 years. We have lots of tenants who have been with us throughout the journey and we hope to bring you some of their stories in the coming months. However we only have one member of staff who remains with us from that momentous day in October 1995. She's Head of Housing Jane Burnett (see if you can spot her in the 1995 photo on page 4) who joined Scottish Homes in August 1993 at the tender age of just 20! We spoke to her to get her thoughts on Melville and how things have changed over the decades.

So Jane, what job were you doing at the time Melville took over?

I was a Clerical Officer in the Repairs team. The job was non-stop but I loved it!

What was the feeling like among staff at the prospect of change?

Most of us were a wee bit apprehensive. Some folk (including my whole team) chose to stay with Scottish Homes rather than move to Melville which left me as manager at the age of just 22!

How was the workplace culture different back then?

It was night and day! I remember it feeling like a much lower pressure environment and expectations didn't seem so high. Smoking was allowed in the office and Fridays were an early finish with staff often ending up in the pub and regularly bumping into customers! Our contractors and tenants came through the door all the time and the language could be a bit choice on occasion...

When I first started, there was also a typist in the corner. We had to write down what we wanted to say, place it in the typist's tray, and she would then type it up. How crazy does that sound in 2025!

Do you feel customers and/or communities have changed?

Yes I do. Most of our tenants are great but we never used to need an acceptable behaviour policy or to visit some tenants in pairs in the interests of staff safety! Mental health issues have always been around but they're much more apparent these days.

On the plus side we've also seen really positive community developments in recent years. I love the community pantry model and this would have been unheard of in 1995.

And what do you see as the most significant changes over the past 30 years?

So much has changed and not just the smoking ban... computers, emails, policy changes and the pub culture to name but a few.

I think the direction changed over the years to ensure that tenants had a voice and to make sure that voice was heard. I believe these changes were mostly for the best, however I also feel that things have become less personal and that's not so good.

And then there was covid which was a real game changer. I didn't ever think that it would be possible to work from home, never mind a 4-day-week!

How was the workplace culture different back then?

I've worked in just about every role there is at Melville and worked under many different management teams. What this has shown me is that things never stay the same and that Melville, like every successful organisation, has always changed with the times. We can't get stuck in a rut. I maybe miss the 1995 prices though!

What do you feel are the biggest challenges/changes we can expect in the next 30 years?

There is some great work happening out in our communities to support those in greatest need. Finding the funding to continue helping these groups will be key in the years to come. Climate change is another massive challenge and we continue to wait to see how that will evolve and impact tenants and budgets. Last but certainly not least, tenant engagement will always be at the top of the agenda.

Focus on repairs and maintenance



It's been a busy winter for repairs, and I want to thank everyone for your patience during the colder months. Our team has been working hard to make sure urgent issues are dealt with quickly, and we know how important it is to keep your homes warm and safe.

We've just completed the first full year of working with our new repairs company, R3, and although there have been some minor issues, overall I'm pleased to say it's been very positive. They've helped us respond faster and improve the quality of work, and we're looking forward to building on that progress.

Looking ahead, there are exciting changes coming. We're bringing in new IT systems that will make it easier for you to report repairs and help us keep you better informed about what's happening with your home.

We're also planning significant investment in your homes over the next 12 months, continuing our programme of replacing kitchens and bathrooms as well as making big energy-saving improvements – for more details about that read on.

Thanks again for your support and helping us to deliver the best homes we can, and if you need more help and advice, want to let us know your thoughts on R3, or have an issue with your home then please don't hesitate to *get in touch*.

Rich Murdoch, Head of Asset Management

Big improvements coming to Melville homes

Over the next year, we'll be spending £1.6 million to make homes better and more comfortable for tenants. This is part of our ongoing work to modernise and improve the quality of our properties.

We know that older kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems, windows and doors can make homes more expensive to run and older heating systems are more likely to break down. That's why we're replacing them – to make homes warmer, more efficient and easier to live in.

Over the next year, we'll spend £1.6 million to make homes better

£388k on roofs (mostly in Gorebridge and Rosewell)



£319k on 70 heating systems (mostly in Mayfield)

£340k on 37 bathrooms (mostly in Mayfield)



£294k on 70 kitchens (Mostly in Dalkeith, Penicuik, Mayfield and Bonnyrigg)

£223k on 120 doors and 25 windows



We'll also use £30,000 of the budget to carry out other essential repairs to the structure of some homes.

This work helps make homes safer, easier to heat, and better to live in – while also cutting down on the number of repairs needed in the long run.

If you're due an upgrade look out for an email or text message from us (to save paper and money we're only sending letters as a last resort). And if you think you should be getting work done but haven't heard anything, get in touch.

A successful first year for Melville's partnership with R3

"We're proud of what we've achieved in our first year. There have been some challenges, but with our continuing focus on doing the right thing for tenants, we're confident things will keep getting better."

It's been a year since R3 took over as our new repairs company - and despite a few bumps along the way, it's mostly been a positive story.

We had a quick chat with our contract manager at R3, Stuart Macfarlane and here's what he told us:

Over the past 12 months, R3 have completed thousands of repairs for Melville tenants across Midlothian and beyond. There have been a few challenges, including staffing issues and delays in getting some materials. The winter was especially tough, but thanks to the hard work of our team, we got through it and came out the other side stronger.



We've made some important changes to improve the service since I joined in November. We're now reducing travel time by having tradespeople work closer to their local areas. We've also started tracking our vans, which means we can spot who's nearby and quickly divert them to urgent jobs. On top of that, we're working more closely with Travis Perkins to help avoid stock shortages and get materials on site faster.

We know there's still room to improve. That's why we're continuing to invest in better technology to help us spot problems sooner and fix them faster. Our goal is simple: to deliver the best possible service for customers and get things right first time.

Thanks for your patience and support - here's to an even better year ahead!

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

You can also report repairs by visiting www.melville.org.uk.

Find out more about R3 at www.r3repairs.co.uk.

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.

Rising costs

Spring may have arrived and the weather may be improving but sadly there's little reason for optimism when it comes to household finances. You don't need us to tell you that costs are continuing to increase (our rents included) adding to the financial strain many families are under.

We know that many of you are feeling the pressure, from energy bills to food prices. Here's a summary of recent increases and some of the help available.

Rent	Melville rents have gone up by 4.5% (roughly £4.20 a week) from the start of April.	If you're struggling to pay rent, speak to us as soon as possible. You may be eligible for Housing Benefit, Universal Credit, or Discretionary Housing Payments.
Energy Bills	For a typical dual-fuel household, energy bills have risen by roughly £111 a year.	There's help through various energy grants. You can also get advice on reducing your costs from Home Energy Scotland.
Council Tax	Council tax rates have also increased, by 10% in Midlothian and by 6% in South Lanarkshire.	If you're struggling to pay, speak to your local council.
Water Charges	Scottish Water bills (included alongside your council tax) have seen a nearly 10% increase to fund infrastructure improvements aimed at tackling climate change. Homes in the lowest council tax band (Band A) have seen annual water and wastewater charges rise by about £36, bringing the total to over £400.	
Food	Food costs are not increasing nearly as fast as they have been however many items remain far more expensive than they used to be.	Help is available from Community Pantries who provide low cost food locally. There's also the Midlothian Foodbank providing free food for anyone in crisis.
Other Costs	Many other costs such as the TV License and phone and broadband charges are continuing to rise.	Social tariffs are available from many phone and broadband providers. Speak to your provider to find out more.

Support available if you're having money troubles

If you are facing financial difficulties, we strongly encourage you to seek professional advice as early as possible and you should always seek professional advice before arranging any debt solution. This can help you avoid costly and stressful mistakes.

As your landlord, we offer an in-house welfare benefits service to help with income maximisation and budgeting. If you think this might be helpful, please reach out to us. We have a range of support available including energy funds and other help that you may not be aware of.

If you don't want to speak to us then there are many organisations available who will give independent impartial advice and assistance. These include:

Citizens Advice Scotland	0800 028 1456	www.cas.org.uk
Advice Direct Scotland	0808 196 2316	www.advisedirect.scot
National Debt Line	0800 028 1456	www.nationaldebtline.org

If you are unsure about anything to do with your money, please don't hesitate to contact us - we're here to help. To find out more or request help, call 0131 654 2733 (selecting option 4).

YOU must tell Universal Credit about your rent increase

All Melville rents went up by 4.5% at the start of April (see article on page 2 for more details). If you're on Universal Credit (UC) and you haven't already done so, you **MUST** tell them about this change. This applies even if your rent is paid directly to Melville.

You can tell them about the change using your online UC account. They'll need to know that your rent increased from 1 April 2025 and how much you're now paying. You should then receive the new amount in

your next payment.

If you do not tell them about the increase in your rent, you will not be paid the full amount leaving you with rent arrears.

If you need to find out what your new rent amount is, get in touch in the usual ways.

Remember – You MUST tell UC about your new rent NOW!

Final countdown to UC completion

There's now less than a year until the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) expects to complete the move of all legacy benefits to UC. It hopes to achieve this by March 2026. This mainly applies to benefits such as tax credits, housing benefit, and employment support allowance.

If you still receive one of these old-style benefits then you should receive a notice through the post in the near future. The notice will let you know when

your benefit will stop, and that you must make a claim for UC if you wish to continue receiving support. This process is called 'managed migration'.

Once you receive the notice you will have three months to make your UC claim.

Employment support allowance can be a bit more complicated. If you need help with your application then get in touch and we'll be happy to help.

Earnings threshold for UC

If you or your partner are working, the amount of UC you get depends on how much you earn during your assessment period.

Sometimes your UC might be reduced if you get paid more than usual in that period. For example, if your payday changes and you get paid twice in one assessment period, or if you're paid every 4 weeks and this happens to fall twice in the same period.

In this case your UC will usually be adjusted automatically so that you get your normal amount although sometimes you may have to tell them using your online account.

If you earn more than £2,500 over the limit, which

could happen if you're self-employed or get a bonus, this extra money is called 'surplus earnings'. You will not get any payments until your earnings, including the amount that's carried over, go under the limit and you become entitled to UC again.

If your wages reduce enough for you to be eligible for UC within five months, your payments will automatically restart. If it's after five months you will need to apply again.

If you're part of a couple who separate, any surplus earnings will be divided equally between the two of you. Your half will be taken into account if you make a new single or joint UC claim.

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

Anniversary year begins with a bang



At the start of this year we carried out a major customer satisfaction survey. We do this every three years to find out from you how we're performing. A research company went door-to-door across most of our communities and spoke to over 700 Melville customers, mostly on the doorstep but some on the phone. Thanks to everyone who agreed to take part.

Overall satisfaction sits at 90%, up from 88% in 2022 while 91% of tenants are happy with the quality of their homes (also up from 88% in the previous survey). 86% feel that Melville rents provide good value for money, up from 83% in 2022 while 95% are happy that Melville does a good job managing their neighbourhood.

The survey, conducted by independent survey company Research Resource, took place in late January with researchers speaking to more than a third (718) of tenants across all areas in which Melville operates.

79% said it was important to them that Melville is a green

organisation that does more to help the environment. When asked about priorities for the coming year, the majority of customers highlighted making existing homes more energy efficient followed by building more homes and modernising existing ones (upgrading things like kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems).

"It's a very exciting year for Melville and these excellent satisfaction results are the perfect way to begin," said Melville's John McMorow. "Putting the customer first has been at the core of who we are throughout our 30 years and despite the many challenges we've faced in recent times, I'm delighted that our tenants continue to recognise this.

"Whilst these independent findings are extremely positive, there's always room for improvement. We know that energy efficiency is an issue in some of our older properties and there are also some aspects of the repairs service that need work, however we are actively working to address these challenges. With that said, these results show that our fantastic team is providing the homes and services that the vast majority of our customers want."

Staff and the level of care they provide came in for particular praise in the survey with all areas of customer service scoring satisfaction levels above 90%. Researchers also quizzed tenants on Melville's advice services with both Welfare Benefits and Energy Advice receiving 100% satisfaction.

On maintaining existing homes, contractors carry out around 7,000 repairs to Melville customers every year and more than eight out of 10 spoken to said they are happy with the service they receive.

90%

Overall
satisfaction

91%

Happy with
quality
of home

99%

Happy with
communication

86%

Say rent is
good value for
money

95%

Say we manage
estates
well

81%

Happy with
repairs
service

Getting Involved

Latest from our tenant rep meetings

By your Tenant Rep Group

Hello everyone! We wanted to share a quick update on what's been happening in our recent tenant meetings with Melville.

We've had two really important meetings lately. At our most recent meeting one of the main topics was the performance of the repairs company R3, who have now been working with Melville for a year. We looked at how things have gone over the past 12 months and had a good discussion about what's working well and where there's still room to improve. It's so important for us as tenants to make sure the repairs service is doing a good job, and we'll keep a close eye on it.

We also talked about the rent increase for the coming year. We know this is a big concern for many tenants, especially just now. Melville explained the reasons behind the increase, and we made sure your views were heard during the conversation.

One thing we're all really excited about is the plan to improve Melville's IT systems. A brand new tenant portal is on the way in the next month or so, which will give us better access to our own information – things like rent statements, repairs history, and more. This should make it much easier to manage things online and stay informed.

And finally, a wee bit more good news! The recent tenant satisfaction survey showed really positive results. It's great to see so many people are happy with the service they're getting – but of course, there's always more Melville can do. We'll continue to work with them on improving services further in the coming months and years.

Thanks for reading, and remember – your voice matters. If you've got thoughts or ideas, get in touch with Melville or speak to one of your tenant reps. We're here to represent you.

Getting our priorities right

These home upgrades are paid for by your rent money so it's important that we prioritise the right areas. In a recent survey you ranked investment areas to give us an idea of where we should be focussing our attention:

You said

Make existing homes more energy efficient

Build more homes

Improve existing housing services

Upgrade existing homes

We are doing

Continuing to invest in new heating systems and also replacing roofs, doors and windows.

As long as we have funding, we'll keep building new homes to support those on our waiting list and our current tenants. These homes are mostly paid for with grants and loans, not rent money.

We are always looking for ways to improve services while keeping costs down. R3 are now delivering an improved repairs service and we are also investing in new IT systems. We're also looking at new ways for staff to work that have already improved performance in areas like estate management.

This year we will be replacing over 180 kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems.

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	Belinda Maciver and Barbara Shearer
Westhouses (Mayfield), Pathhead	Position vacant
Easthouses	Position vacant
Dalkeith	Iain Lawson
Woodburn	Eileen McLaren
Danderhall	Christina Bain
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

Focus on gardens



Get your garden ready for the summer!

Spring is most definitely in the air (or it was at the time of writing...) which means that summer is just around the corner, and if you're lucky enough to have one, it's time to get your garden in shape.

Our housing assistants will be out checking gardens each week, but if you notice one in your area that isn't being maintained, please let us know at info@melville.org.uk.

We don't expect every garden to be prize-winning but it's important they're kept to a basic standard. This means no rubbish, no junk and making sure hedges, grass and trees aren't overgrown.

If you're struggling to maintain your garden for any reason, please speak to us - we may be able to offer support before it gets out of hand. We also have a strimmer and a lawnmower that we can lend for free (but on payment of a small deposit) to help keep your garden looking tidy.

Let's work together to keep our communities looking their best this summer!

How to attract native bees to your garden – The easy way

Bees are dying off around the world, mostly because they're losing their homes, the climate is changing, and harmful chemicals are being used. This is a big problem because it puts our food supply and the environment at risk.

So what can you do to help? Well you can start by attracting more bees to your garden. Native bees are gentle, helpful pollinators that can boost your plants without bothering you - most of them don't even sting!



Here's how to bring them in:

1. Plant the right flowers

Native bees love native plants. Choose a variety that bloom from early spring to late autumn so there's always food available. Need help picking the right ones? Use tools like the Adelaide Gardens Planting Guide or the Botanic Gardens Plant Selector - just pop in your postcode.

2. Avoid insecticides

Skip the sprays. Especially avoid systemic insecticides - they spread through the whole plant and stay toxic for weeks or even months. These chemicals can harm bees that visit your flowers.

3. Provide a home

Bees need places to live too! Leave some bare soil for bees that nest in the ground. For bees that nest above ground you can also make a bee hotel using wood with holes in or bundles of paper straws.

By planting bee-friendly flowers, going chemical-free, and offering places to nest, you'll create a buzzing, healthy garden full of life - and your plants will thrive!

Show off your garden for chance to win £100 first prize

We love seeing the amazing gardens created by our talented tenants, and this year our Great Gardens contest is back to celebrate your hard work!

There are three chances to win: two prizes for outstanding gardens and a special award for the most creative use of a small space — whether it's a balcony, patio, or even just a few hanging baskets by your door.

To enter, just email dhughes@melville.org.uk or call 0131 561 6466 by 5pm on Thursday 14 August. Judging will take place throughout August, and we'll reveal the winners at our Annual General Meeting in September.

The Baxter Keiller Prize, named in honour of a



keen Melville gardener who passed away in 2014, is awarded each year to Melville's finest garden and last year was won by Ms Diane Wright of Woodburn Place, Dalkeith.

**£100
first prize**

**£35
runner up prize**

**£50 prize for best
use of small space**

New development opened by Minister



Housing minister Paul McLennan has officially opened Melville's latest development of 39 high-quality, affordable homes.

Built by Lovell Partnerships at its Oakwood Edge development in Mayfield, the £7.1 million development, backed by £3.94m in Scottish Government grant funding, has provided a range of energy-efficient homes for social rent as part

of a wider 156-home development.

All homes at Oakwood Edge have been designed to meet high energy efficiency standards, with solar PV panels and communal electric vehicle charging points. Four homes have also been enhanced to achieve net zero status, featuring air source heat pumps, battery storage and triple glazing.

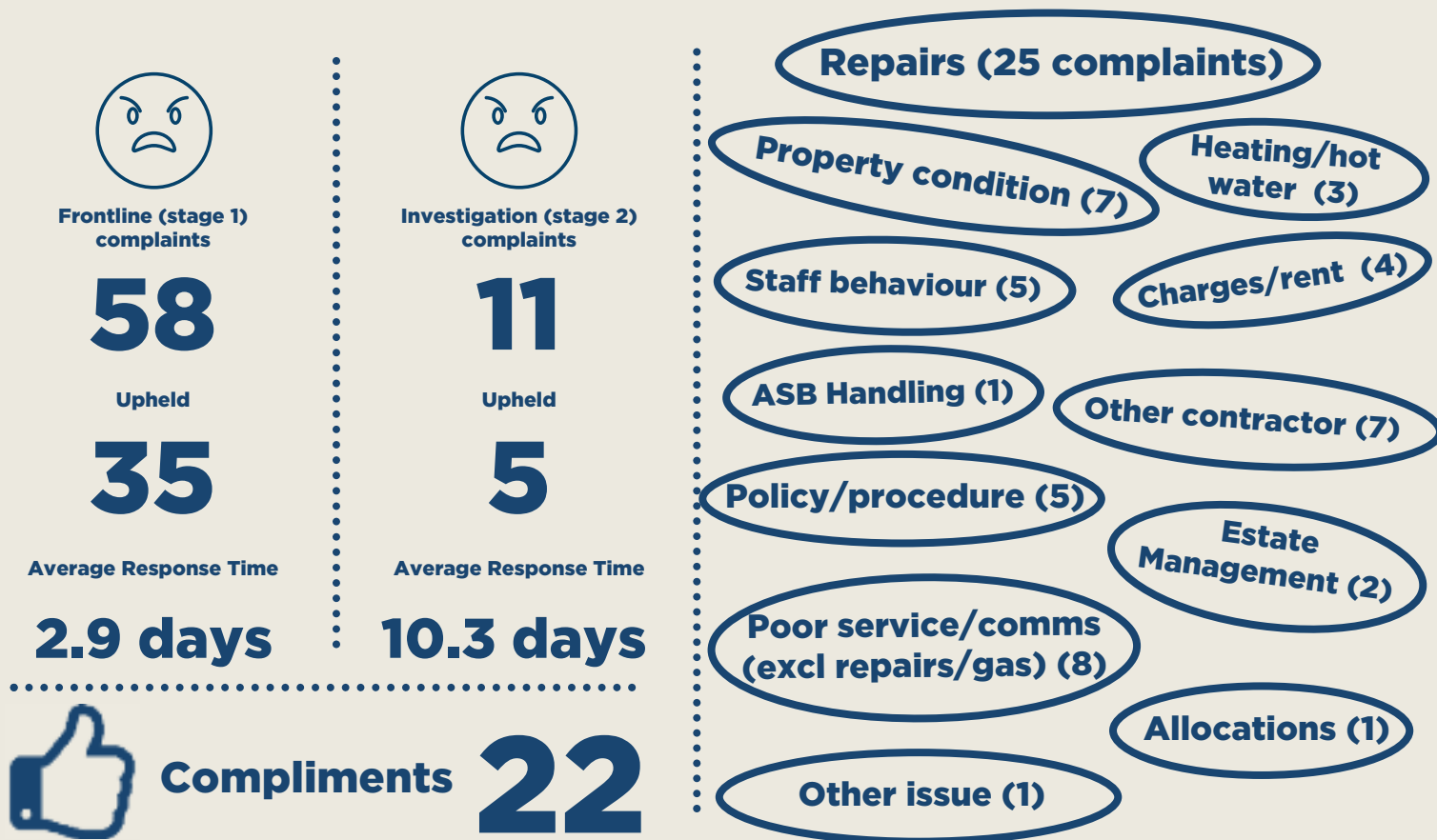
Housing minister Paul McLennan said: "It was good to have a tour of Melville Housing Association's new social rented development and meet one of the tenants whose new home is part of Oakwood Edge. What is particularly impressive about this development is the range, quality and energy efficiency of these houses, alongside the existing community facilities in the area."

"This development, our second with Lovell, is a fantastic example of how partnerships can deliver real results for communities," said Melville Chair Donna Bogdanovic. "The homes at Oakwood Edge provide much-needed, high-quality social housing in an area of high demand and we're delighted with the positive feedback we've already received."

Over to you...

Here's a round up of the feedback, good and bad, you've given us over the past few months. We don't have room to give a response to your comments and complaints here but as long as contact details have been provided we always reply directly when issues are raised.

November to February complaints



What you told us

“Reporting the issue is not a problem, getting someone out is not a problem it's getting someone out in a timely manner with the repair services and getting the job done properly and not cutting corners as the repair will eventually return surely costing more long term.”

“ (Benefits officer) John was great, helped put me at ease and talked me through the whole process.”

“Just want to say a huge thank you for everything you do for us. We love our home and are so pleased we are here. Our house will and always will be well looked after.”

“The service I received 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 them again.”

“Helping to keep residents informed of local food banks as some residents need to know where they are just in case they ever need them.”

“I would just like to say thank you for the new kitchen and bathroom and internal doors which I have received. Melville have done well.”

“Housing officers are amazing and rent is great value for money. The upkeep of shared flat areas could be better maintained although I was very impressed when u asked for stair door to be painted and it was done very quickly.”

“I appreciate Melville spending money on home improvements but some of the upgrades done should be further down the list of priorities. The windows and doors fitted in these properties have been done to a poor standard so as well as having new roofs and insulation we lose so much heat from drafts in windows and doors.”

“Make sure repairs are done correctly the first time to prevent further calls outs.”

“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.”

“We had a few issues with a recent repair but this was due to the contractor. Service has always been really good.”

“I'm so grateful for the help and service I received from Melville and their joiner. My cousin was bedbound and couldn't get downstairs to get his meds or to let anyone in. I phoned Melville and they arranged for a joiner to meet me at his house to change the lock and let me in. The guy who came to the rescue was really nice and once he had his meds my cousin was fine.”

“Need to find better repair companies to take care of your properties.”

“Thank you so, so much for the fencing at the front and back of the house. The guys (from Ross contractors) have done an amazing job and it looks so much better!!”

“(Housing Officer) Caroline has always been so caring, understanding and available to help whenever I needed help with anything at all regarding the house.”

News in Brief

Melville makes Pavilion donation



Melville has made a donation of a microwave and electric hob to help with the new Garden Café at the Mayfield and Easthouses Development Trust Pavilion.

Fundraising for the £3000 project is well underway and we wish the team all the best for the Kiltwalk later in the year. You can support the team with a donation, big or small, by going to their page on www.justgiving.com.

Longest serving Housing Officer retires



One of Melville's longest serving staff members, who has spent more than 15 years supporting tenants and providing help and advice, has called time on her distinguished housing career.

Linda Hay joined Melville back in 2009 and has stepped back after more than 27 years in the sector. Everyone at Melville wishes Linda all the best in her well earned retirement!

New tenant portal coming soon

As part of a major IT upgrade at Melville we are making significant changes to our online tenant portal. While we do this we have had to disable access to Tenant Zone, our current portal.

We apologise for any inconvenience while we're carrying out preparation work but the upgrade will definitely be worth it! We'll provide updates and further information over the coming weeks.

In the meantime if you need information on your account please contact us in the usual ways.

Competition winners

Well done to Mr Nathaniel Murray of Oak Place, Mayfield, who won our rent consultation prize draw. Mr Murray picked up a £50 Tesco voucher for letting us know his thoughts. Thanks to everyone who took part.

Congratulations also to Mary Wilson of The Circle, Danderhall, winner of our quarterly satisfaction survey draw. Mary 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 2,000 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.

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