

thenue newsletter

SUMMER 2017

thenue
HOUSING

The newsletter of Thenue Housing Association

www.thenuehousing.co.uk

www.thenuecommunity.org.uk

HELP US TO HELP YOU!

Time To Tell us What You Think

All housing providers undertake such surveys and the more complete they are the better we can understand what things you rate as important.

It will take place later in June and we are asking you to help us in this task. We have commissioned a business called IBP Strategy & Research to undertake a large number of face-to-face interviews.

The company has experience of carrying out similar surveys for other housing associations. Around 40 per cent of our customers will be contacted so that we can obtain a snapshot of your views on a range of matters.

We carry out these surveys every two or three years and they are VITAL in helping us plan for the future and ensuring our resources are targeted in the right places. Your views are being sought on a range of issues which include:

- Customer service
- How you rate our repairs service
- How you think we are performing as a housing association
- What you think of our staff
- What you think of your neighbourhood



There will be other questions, too, and your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence. All housing providers undertake such surveys and the more complete they are the better we can understand what things you rate as important.

The interviews which IBP Strategy & Research will undertake will last approximately 20 minutes and if you are contacted we would encourage you to help us. Remember all IBP Strategy & Research staff will have identification and you will be shown this. NEVER allow anyone into your home who cannot confirm their identity.

If you are not contacted by IBP,

or are not in when they call, and would still like to have your say then please contact Jason Brown at IBP on 01698 532 021 (j.brown@ibp.eu.com). Jason can arrange a time for the interviewer to visit you or, if you would prefer to complete the survey by post, he will arrange for a questionnaire to be sent to you. A large type copy is available on request. Jason can also arrange for you to provide your feedback by means of a telephone interview if preferred and can arrange interpretation support if English is not your first language.

If you wish to opt out of the forthcoming survey please contact the Association on 0141 550 3581.



Universal credit – an update

2



Your rent, affordability and value for money

6-9



Gas servicing and painterwork latest

10



News for older persons

12

100% SATISFACTION WITH OUR SELF SERVICE TENANT APP – HAVE YOU REGISTERED YET?

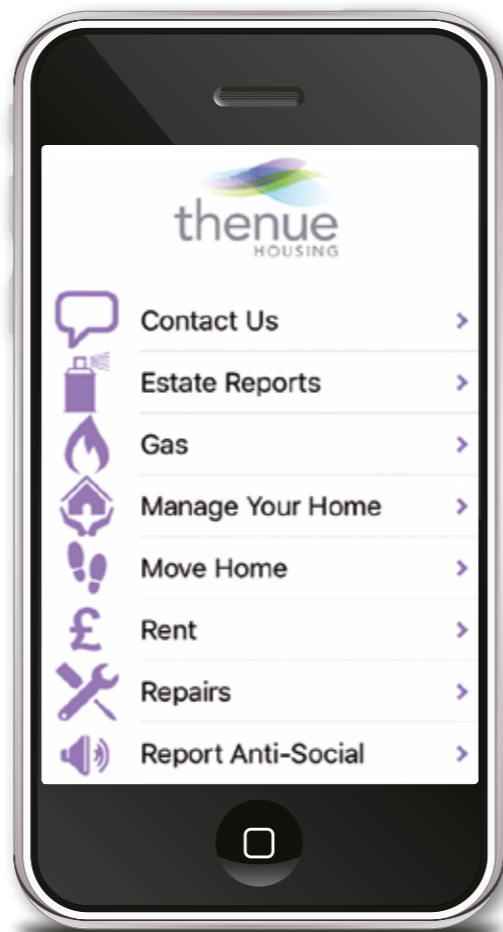
Since we went live with our new FREE Tenant app for smartphones and tablets around 240 tenants have downloaded the App and are using it to access Thenue's services around the clock.

Users of the app have been completing a short survey to let us know what they think of the App and feedback is 100% positive (in fact 75% were very positive!). 97%

also said they would use the App on a regular basis.

That's great news as we're grateful for the enthusiasm people have shown towards the self service app.

We have produced a special leaflet to explain things in more detail and you can obtain a copy from our London Road office.



You can now access many of our services from the comfort of your home or on the go with Thenue's NEW Tenant App.

- No need to phone or visit our office
- See your recent transactions
- Access up to date data on your rent account, repairs history etc 24/7 365 days a year!
- Report repairs or a neighbour complaint, day or night.
- Update your details

UC Universal Credit Latest Update

Universal Credit was introduced in Glasgow in June 2015 and to date 52 of our tenants are now in receipt of the new single payment which is paid monthly. Universal Credit replaces the following benefits:

- income-based jobseeker's allowance
- income-related employment and support allowance
- income support
- child tax credits
- working tax credits
- housing benefit

It is anticipated that from September 2018 Glasgow will be classed as providing a fully live Universal Credit service which means if you are in receipt of any of the above benefits you will be transferred over to Universal Credit.

You will be expected to apply online to the Department of Work and Pensions and manage your claim through an online account.

The new single payment will be paid monthly, in arrears, to one

person in the household although alternative arrangements are possible in certain circumstances.

In the majority of cases, your rent will no longer be paid directly to Thenue. Instead, it will be paid directly to you and you will have to budget and pay the rent to us yourself.

It is important that you let us know as quickly as possible if you are being transferred onto Universal Credit.

SMART COMMUNITIES GOES BANANAS!

Our digital inclusion project, Smart Communities, has received a real vote of confidence from funders with grants secured recently from Scottish Government and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations. The money keeps the team in place for another year so that they can continue to support people across Thenue communities to get access to computers and the internet and to learn new skills.

Our fabulous photograph shows a young boy from the "Tots n Teens" group in Blackhill learning some of the basics of computer coding where everyday objects can be converted into computer touch pads.



DIGI KNOW?

A THANK YOU TO LLOYDS BANK IN THE COMMUNITY

The Smart Communities team held an information event – Digi Know – at Calton Heritage and Learning Centre on 18 May to promote digital learning and to help people see the many benefits that can be gained from being online.

With help from 12 volunteers from Lloyds Bank in the Community the event delivered one to one sessions showing how easy it is to get online and how many advantages there are in doing so; keeping in touch with friends, access to cheaper goods and products, better access to information and better job prospects. There is a huge digital divide in Scotland that reinforces inequality and internet access is not just useful, it's an essential part of 21st century life. Thenue would like to thank Lloyds Bank in the Community for coming along. We are very grateful for their time and enthusiasm in making this day a huge success.

TURNING THE SPOTLIGHT ON DANCE

Thenue is helping a team of talented young dancers to make a journey to Blackpool for the final of a "dance challenge" in November.

Spotlight Theatre and Dance group train locally and are hugely talented.

They are making the trip to the dance competition and while they are busy fundraising themselves approached us to ask if we could provide a grant to pay for tracksuits and T shirts.

We were happy to do so and have provided £500. We wish the girls well in their dance challenge.



19TH SUCCESSFUL COURSE FOR LEARNING WORKS

Our latest group of successful students have completed their studies with Thenue's Learning Works course. Delivered in partnership with Glasgow Kelvin College we are making a real difference to people's lives by equipping them with skills needed to find work.

The most recent "Celebration of Learning" event took place at Bridgeton Community Learning Campus. Here they are pictured with College and Thenue staff.



EVICTION NOTICE



RENT ARREARS

Paying your rent on time is extremely important. It allows us to deliver the services you rely on, keep rents affordable and improve and build new homes.

Below are some comments we often hear from tenants who have rent arrears or who have been in arrears for a considerable time:

You can't evict me I have kids!

You can't evict me as my arrears are less than £2,000

You can't evict me as my friend has more arrears than me and she hasn't been evicted....

We are obliged to run a financially-sound housing association and that means collecting income that is due to us through rents.

We understand every case is different and we will take everything into consideration when helping you with arrears should this arise. But it is important that you speak to us and we can try to help you resolve these issues and let you keep your home.

Paying your rent on time means we can keep on providing good quality affordable housing for our tenants. There may be a temptation to spend the money on other things. We understand there is often huge financial pressure to do that when money is tight. But a priority is and must always be your rent.

Eviction is a last resort and here at Thenue our Income Maximisation and Financial Inclusion Teams will do everything we can to help you – all you need to do is talk to us and maintain an agreed payment plan.

Last year we –

- Served 162 (Notice of Proceedings) which is the first stage of legal action.
- Booked 42 cases into court for rent arrears
- Were granted 23 Eviction Decrees by a Sheriff
- Evicted 15 families from their homes

You may ask how many of these could have been prevented? ALL of them is the answer.

Did you know if court Decree is awarded against you it affects your credit rating? This has a knock on effect and means that if, for example, you apply for a new mobile phone you may be declined if your credit rating is impaired.

Remember too that money is added to your debt for court fees. It is usually about £400. After eviction we send your file to debt collectors to recover the money owed

Ask yourself if it is really worth losing your home, additional Court fees and you WILL STILL have to pay it all back anyway.

If you think this applies to you come and talk to us AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. This will be dealt with in the STRICTEST confidence.

ARE YOU IN A HOUSE THAT IS TOO BIG FOR YOU? LOOKING FOR A SMALLER HOME?

We hope to shortly agree Lettings Plans for each of our new developments in Castlemilk and Bridgeton and it's likely that we will agree that tenants who are underoccupying their current home, will be given a degree of

priority for moving into a smaller property in the developments.

You may have family that have moved on or, due to other circumstances, your home has become too large for your needs.

If you are looking to downsize and you're not already on our waiting list, do contact us.

You can apply online via our website www.thenuehousing.co.uk, under the section called

Homeseekers or, if you don't have access to a computer, we can send out an application form. If you have any queries about the process of applying for a transfer, contact your Area Services Officer.

RENTS, AFFORDABILITY AND VALUE FOR MONEY

One of the ways YOU will judge if you are getting value for money from a housing association like Thenue and whether your rent is affordable is where we can demonstrate your rent has NOT risen by more than inflation.

This is sometimes referred to as the “cost of living”.

In the four pages that follow we explain more about this and why we are always doing our best to achieve that.

Each year Thenue needs to anticipate what level of income we need in order to not just cover our costs (including rising costs due to inflation) but also ensure that we have money in place to cover the cost of long-term maintenance.



These are things like window frame replacements, new kitchen units, central heating boiler replacement etc. All of these are vital to keep your homes looking good and to ensure improvements are ongoing.

Predicting how inflation will change means that it is tricky balancing our financial viability as a housing association, while at the same time ensuring that the rent you pay is always affordable. Thenue compares very favourably in terms of rent levels with other housing associations in Scotland.



Most housing providers continue to set rent levels with reference to some measure of inflation.



The average rent increase across all housing associations over the last year was 3%. Thenue's increase of 2%, (at 1 April 2016), compares very favourably with this.

While it is clear that average rent in the sector is continuing to rise faster than inflation, here at Thenue we are able to demonstrate that this has not been the case.

The graphic opposite shows how Thenue's total rent increases over the past eight years compares to total yearly levels of inflation.

Total of Thenue Rent Increases over the past 8 years **24.5%**

Total Yearly Level of Inflation over the last 8 years **24.7%**

We are very pleased that we have been able to limit our rent increase to inflation only over the last 8 years, and we will always do whatever we can to ensure future rent increase are kept to the absolute minimum. You can be sure that we set rents in a way that means we can continue to be a financially viable organisation but takes account of your ability to keep paying your rent.

All housing associations have what is known as a “business plan”.

The Scottish Housing Regulator (which monitors the performance and conduct of housing providers), has noted:

“Our analysis of housing association’s business plans..... shows that most Registered Social Landlords are planning to increase their rents by more than inflation over each of the next five years.

Here again, Thenue are pleased to be able to tell you that we are not planning to increase rents by more than inflation over each of the next five years.

IS YOUR RENT AFFORDABLE?

The best person to judge that is yourself and when we asked this question in our last tenant survey in 2015 only 2.5% thought their rent was unaffordable.

Their analysis focuses on ‘bed spaces’ rather than bedrooms, so in order for you to see how your own rent compares with Government data you may find the following table helpful:-

We also take account of the view of the Scottish Government as to what it thinks is an affordable rent and Thenue compares very favourably to their affordable rent figures.

e.g. A two bedroom property with two double bedrooms will have 4 bedspaces.

Bed spaces	Scottish Government affordable rent	Thenue Average current Monthly rent	Monthly Difference (is Thenue rent more or less)
2	£313	£304	£9 less
3	£351	£329	£22 less
4	£382	£352	£30 less
5	£405	£405	No Difference
6	£421	£401	£20 less
7	£456	£433	£23 less
Average totals	£388	£371	£17 less

When we compare Thenue’s rents, (not all are included in the table above as we have some 1 and 8 bed spaces in some of our properties), then on average Thenue’s rents are £17.96 per month less than the Scottish Government’s affordable rent.

There are of course a few homes that are exceptions to this because they have special adaptations, significant additional amenities or were specially built developments.

But taking everything into account, we do feel confident that over 99% of our rents are affordable according to the Scottish Government’s criteria of an affordable rent.

Remember:

We are always on your side when it comes to setting rent levels. We will always do our best to keep them affordable while ensuring we can carry out the improvements and repairs we are committed to as a housing association.



VALUE FOR MONEY

Here at Thenue we have a strong commitment to **value for money**.

WHAT IS VALUE FOR MONEY?

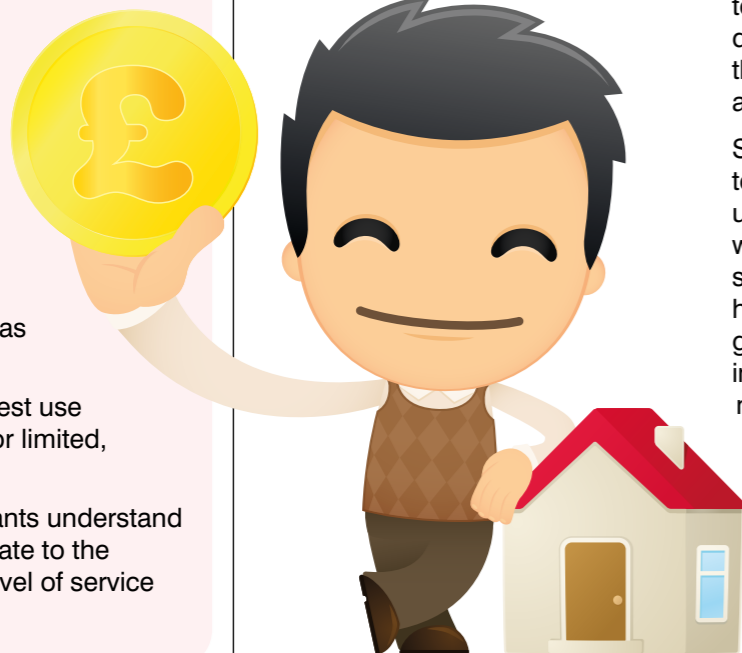
Contrary to how it sounds, value for money isn't just about saving money! It is about ensuring that the business is efficient, effective, and economical.

When we asked our tenants previously what reasons they gave as to why they got Value For Money for their Rent, most mentioned the following:

- The quality of their home
- They received a good repairs service
- Their rent was affordable

Value For Money for housing associations is usually seen as being about:

- maximising value & minimising costs.
- a high quality service that is as efficient and effective as possible.
- making the best use of available, or limited, resources.
- ensuring tenants understand how costs relate to the quality and level of service provided



WHAT WE DO TO SECURE VALUE FOR MONEY

It is our aim to continually assess opportunities to enhance our services to you and actively involve both you and our staff to achieve value for money. We continually look for the best value for money by sourcing the best materials at the best price. And we're always looking for ways to make our services work more efficiently and effectively. We have a culture of "do the right things" and "do things right". This helps to ensure our service delivery is efficient, effective and economical.

A common misconception is that value for money is about cutting costs. It is about getting more quantity and quality alongside spending money wisely.

Financial resources are of course a limited resource. We aim when we increase our rents to keep this to an

absolute minimum, just to ensure that we cover our costs and comply with regulatory and lenders' requirements such as when we build new homes.

Therefore we aim to be "wise spenders not big spenders".

A major element of our commitment to achieving value for money is the drive to deliver our objectives with the best quality at the best cost achievable.

Spending money wisely in order to deliver our objectives will allow us to produce efficiency savings which will result in Thenue being a sustainable community-controlled housing organisation for our future generations and which can be re-invested in new housing, enhanced neighbourhood services or front line delivery.

Our effectiveness will also be measured by examining what's known as "Key Performance Indicators", which we report to all tenants annually each autumn.



Examples of where we have achieved Value for Money, to deliver housing related services which have either not cost our rent payers one penny or have not resulted in any rent increase include:-

Our award winning 'Learning Works'

- A combination of over £408,000 external funding.
- 20 courses so far, to help residents secure work.



Calton Heritage & Learning Centre

- A brand new community hub which has been a great success
- Governing body made up of local residents



Urban Fox

- Over £17,000 a year from the Scottish Government
- Outdoor and adventure activities for teenagers.



External cladding and energy insulation at over 650 'Inter-war' tenement flats in Calton and Bridgeton, costing over £2½ million:-

- Phase 1: 2016/17 £736,752
- Phase 2: 2017/18 £1,838,350



Smart Communities

- Over £81,000 of Scottish Government funding.



New Community Centre in Castlemilk

- Big Lottery funding of £1 million
- Centre under construction: due to open spring 2018.



NEWS ROUND UP

GAS SERVICING

Help us to keep you safe. Every year by law Thenue has to check and service your gas appliances to ensure that they are in safe working order. You will receive a letter in advance advising you of the date City Technical Services (CTS) will come to carry out the service. If this is not convenient please call us as soon as possible and we will arrange another appointment to suit you. Contact us on 0141 550 9547 or 08445 796 493

LANDSCAPE & BACKCOURT MAINTENANCE

We are continuing to carry out the works to our common landscape areas and backcourts doing the following:

- Grass in the growing season cut approximately every fortnight
- Shrubs pruned at the start of growing season April/May and at end in October/November
- Litter is collected fortnightly and hard standing areas brushed
- Weed kill applied monthly April- September but weather must be dry for this to be effective
- Backcourts – are visited weekly following the refuse collection by GCC. Any excess rubbish is removed and backcourts cleared of litter and hard areas swept.
- Bulk items are removed to the agreed collection point on the allocated day for bulk uplift. White goods (fridge/freezer/washing machine etc) are a special uplift and GCC must be contacted on: 0141 287 9700 to arrange for these to be removed from the backcourt/garden area.

CLOSE CLEANING

All closes included within the contract are cleaned on a weekly basis by CAS Contract Cleaners. The stairwells are swept out and then washed down.

Where there is a lift on the premises this will also be cleaned weekly.

Walls, ceilings, doors, handrails and windows are cleaned monthly.

PAINTERWORK

The paint contract has recently been re-tendered for 2017/18. The successful contractor is: Novus Property Solutions. Please see the programme below. You will be advised by letter from our contractor prior to the works commencing in your location.

Estate	Year 2 (2017-2018)		
	Closes	Windows/ Fascia	Fencing etc
207 - Acorn Court Brick Built	✓		
216 - 3 Landressy St/24 Bridgeton Cross	✓	✓	✓
218 - 29, 33 & 41 Main Street	✓		
219 - 3 Muslin St / 59- 65 Main St			
220 - 91 Tullis St 117- 127 Greenhead Street	✓	✓	✓
221 - 139-151 Greenhead St	✓	✓	✓
223 - 3&5 Greenlodge Terrace/155 Greenhead St			
233 - Dale Street	✓		
234 - 521,527 London Rd/357-363 Abercromby Street	✓		
300 - Arnprior Crescent	✓	✓	✓
410 - Baillieston		✓	✓

GUTTER CLEANING

The gutter cleaning contract is being re-tendered for a four year contract - 2017/21. Once the contract has been awarded residents will be contacted by the contractor giving notice of when the works will commence.

GETTING THINGS RIGHT

We aim to get things right first time. If you are unhappy with any aspect of our service, please contact us as soon as possible - this will allow us to deal with your concern promptly. Please contact us on: 0141 550 3581.

ONE-TO-ONE
DIGITAL
SUPPORT

Available free to all Thenue tenants

Get digital training and support
from our patient, friendly staff.

Learn what YOU want at YOUR pace.

Interested? Contact us
on 0141 550 9542
or ask at Reception!

Smart
Communities

Thenue plans to have regular news in our newsletters for older people. It is all part of our Strategy on Older Persons and we would appreciate any comments you may have about your new section.

RETIREMENT HOUSING BRIDGETON – AYR BUS RUN

The summer bus run to Ayr is taking place on Thursday 15 June. Although all 34 places are now all taken, you can still contact us and we will add your name to our list in case there are any cancellations.



LUNCH CLUB, 71 MAIN STREET

A two course lunch is provided every Wednesday. Please come along for some hearty food and good company! Contact Dot Murray on 0778 631 2143 for more information.

CALTON – TRIP TO AYR

Calton tenants are also heading to the seaside at Ayr on 17 August. More information is available from Linda or Fiona on 0796 937 4811.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Did you know that our retirement housing events are open to all of our older tenants, not just tenants living in a retirement house?

If you are an older tenant, we would be delighted to see you at our regular events so please do contact Dot, Fiona or Linda and check out our website –for a full list of events.

BYE BYE ISABEL

We bid a fond farewell to Isabel Walker, Retirement Housing Assistant who is moving on to our Area Services team. Isabel has worked with our retirement housing tenants for over 5 years and will be missed by the tenants and her immediate colleagues. So it's a big thank you to Isabel and welcome to Fiona Williamson who has worked for the Association for a number of years and took up the post of Retirement Housing Assistant in May.

AFTERNOON TEA

Staff are continuing to work on the Action Plan and over the next few months will be arranging an afternoon tea event in Bridgeton, Calton, Dalmarnock and Castlemilk.

The first of these events will be held in Cranhill in the Veterans' Centre, Bellrock Close on Wednesday 28 June 2017 from 1.00pm – 3.00pm. If you are one of our older tenants living in Cranhill or Blackhill and you like tea, coffee and cake, do come along!

You will hear about our work with older tenants and the Royal Voluntary Service will be outlining the services they can offer for older people in Cranhill and Blackhill.

