



Spring 2022

# Newsletter



**St. Matthew's**  
**Housing Association Ltd.**  
A Non Profit-making Housing Association

## STAFF CHANGES

Peter Fahy a member of our maintenance team has left the Association to take up another job with another housing association. We are in the process of recruiting his replacement. Please bear with us at this time and should you have a maintenance issue, do not hesitate to contact Kieran Donnelly.

### Current staff contact details:-

**Kieran Donnelly**  
(Maintenance Officer) – 028 9045 1070  
(option 2) or 07864728592

**Sandra Wright**  
(Housing Officer) – 028 9045 1070  
(option 3) or 077 8485 3689

**Sarah Jane Murray**  
(Finance Officer) – 028 9045 1070  
(option 4) or 077 5630 8481

**Out of Hours Emergencies**  
**Number – 0800 731 3081**



## RENTS 2022/23

We currently deliver services to over 200 tenancy households. We continue to invest in our homes and maintain an excellent responsive housing and maintenance service locally. To pay for all this and ensure we meet all our statutory and legal responsibilities as a responsible social landlord, we charge a fair rent and aim to keep this affordable to our tenants. We also seek value for money in obtaining all that we need to maintain excellent service standards.

In 2022, we have raised rent by **3.1%**. This follows our previous decision in 2021 to freeze our rents. We realise people have been impacted by the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and more recently by the rises in cost of living generally. We also realise wages and benefits are not rising as much to keep up with the increasing costs. Our decision this year was to limit our rent rise but to acknowledge our costs in providing our service are rising too.

We are continuing to invest in our properties and service. We have carried out a comprehensive stock condition survey which outlines our investment plans for each individual property for many years to come – starting with our planned maintenance programme for this year for replacement of ageing or damaged elements. We will continue to invest in our properties and have a 30-year plan to invest in our stock to maintain Decent Home Standards and to add more properties to meet the need in our area.

Please be assured tenant satisfaction when we have surveyed our tenants has been very positive and we will soon be surveying all our tenants again. We will continue to invest, improve our service and seek to limit the costs to enable us to keep our rents as low as possible in the coming years. Thank you all for your understanding.



## OFFICE RE-OPENING TO VISITORS – MONDAY 25<sup>th</sup> APRIL

As you all know access to our office has been limited for some time due to the restrictions associated with Covid-19. Our staff have been working mostly remotely but we are now beginning to open our office to the public.

From the above date you will be allowed to visit our office and speak to an officer, but initially this will be by prior arrangement or appointment. Our downstairs operational office will be staffed initially by a member of staff between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. each day from **Monday 25th April**.

We hope to gradually increase staff availability in the office and open generally without the need to make an appointment soon. However, our return to an office presence will be gradual and phased – the safety of our tenants and staff being a priority in these Covid-19 times.

Your patience in relation to all of this is greatly appreciated.



## PLANNED AND CYCLICAL MAINTENANCE 2022

Following on from our recent Stock Condition Survey exercise and in line with previous years – we are beginning the process of arranging the planned maintenance we are due to carry out at the relevant homes. Those effected will soon receive notification of the works we intend to carry out this year.

As usual we are also seeking to access all of our property to carry out our annual check of heating systems and testing of smoke, heat and CO alarm sounders. Your assistance is greatly appreciated in facilitating 100% access for this exercise this year.

As you may well know, we are no longer using the services of our previous contractor JMC as they are now in administration – but we have new contractual arrangements in place and are confident of being able to deliver on all works in 2022.

**Please contact Kieran Donnelly our Maintenance Officer, for further information.**



**Make sure that you have a working smoke detector**



## RESIDENTS SATISFACTION SURVEY 2022

We have issued a satisfaction survey form to all our tenants to gauge satisfaction with our housing service. We usually conduct this exercise every 2 years but this was delayed from last Autumn due to the office access being limited because of Covid-19.

We'd be obliged if as many tenants as possible could complete the form and return it to our Housing Officer Sandra Wright. If you need assistance in completing it or have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Sandra directly.

## STATUTORY HOUSE SALES SCHEME

The House Sales Scheme for Tenants of Registered Housing Associations is due to end from **midnight on 27 August 2022**.

From 28 August 2022, the scheme will be closed to applications and Housing Association tenants will no longer be able to buy their home.

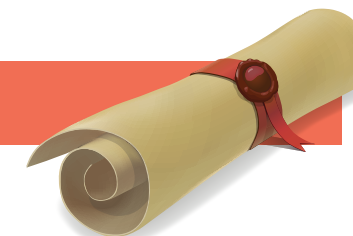
Any eligible Registered Housing Association tenant who wishes to buy their home must make an application through the existing House Sales Scheme before the deadline of midnight of the 27 August 2022.

Details of the scheme and a fact sheet providing information on the ending of the scheme is available on the Department's website at <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/disposal-housing-association-property>

Please contact staff at our office for more information on this scheme.



## SMHA BURSARY AWARD SCHEME 2022



### Education Bursary 2022

**The aim of the bursary programme is to give financial assistance to tenants and/or other family members (residing within their household) who are students or completing a recognised apprenticeship.**

The award shall be known as the **St. Matthews Housing Association Annual Student/Apprenticeship Bursary Scheme**. The bursary will be an annual award of up to £500 to assist them financially in a formal student course at a recognised further or higher education college or whilst completing a government recognised apprenticeship programme, NVQ qualification, or to assist with the costs of attending an officially recognised course in the Gaeltacht.

- Any person making an application for the bursary award must be a resident in Short Strand area or tenant or household member who resides within one of St. Matthews Housing Association dwellings.
- The bursary recipients will be determined by a Panel made up from SMHA Board.
- Only one application per student is permissible.
- Students must show **evidence** of having been enrolled and accepted on the course or apprenticeship.
- The decision of the Association is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- Application forms will be available to all SMHA households via our website and are also available from SMHA Offices at 58 Harper Street, Belfast, BT5 4EN.
- The recipients will be notified by post and may be required to attend any publicity or promotional events.
- **Applications must be submitted to St. Matthews Housing Association Ltd, 58 Harper Street, Belfast, BT5 4EN or emailed directly to [office@smha.co.uk](mailto:office@smha.co.uk) by 12:00 pm (noon) on 31st October 2022.**

## SMHA AND COMMUNITY

SMHA is at the heart of the Short Strand community and we provide an excellent local service to our tenants, including in Clonard and Poleglass for over 40 years.

### SMHA seeks to:-

- Inform - Informing residents
- Consult - Consulting with residents
- Empower - Empowering residents
- Partnership - Partnership with the wider community
- Measure - Measuring outputs

We continue to supply information to tenants through our Annual Report, Spring Newsletter and our updated website [www.smha.co.uk](http://www.smha.co.uk). Many Housing Associations are getting better at supporting communities where they operate and are looking beyond simply the bricks and mortar of the housing they provide to do more in their communities. Often this is done by awarding small grants to local groups whose work benefits the community. SMHA is actively seeking to support the communities we serve – not just Short Strand but also in Clonard and Poleglass.

There has been low take up or low need for some of our financial inclusion measures, and our Board members introduced a Student Bursary scheme in 2021/22 for those in training or studying – which we intend to repeat in 2022.



**Defibrillator  
donated to Short Strand  
Community Forum  
£1,080.00**

By way of support to local community groups, initiatives etc. we expended the following:-

- Donation to Short Strand Community Centre Summer Scheme 2021 - **£1k**
- Donation to Short strand Partnership Meals on Wheels Scheme 2021 - **£2k**
- Donation to Short Strand Community Forum – Defibrillator - **£1.08K**
- Donation to Under 6 Football Team for kit - **£1k**
- **SMHA Bursary Scheme Awards 2021** – Bursary scheme awards as per the adopted policy of SMHA in 2021 – 9 @ £500 with one pending – Total - **£4.5k**

**Current updated Total expended on Financial Inclusion and Community Support Initiatives - £9,580 – equal to 0.9% of potential income turnover £1.06M for 2021/22.**





# Water hygiene

## Why are we telling you about water hygiene?

- To raise awareness of Legionella and Legionnaires' disease
- Help you understand how to improve your water conditions
- To help you understand what St. Matthew's Housing Association do

## What is Legionella?

- Legionella is a bacteria found in water
- It usually grows in stagnant water between 25 °C - 45 °C
- The bacteria in the water will increase daily if the taps are not used. High levels could be reached by the 7th day of no use.
- Legionnaires' disease affects the lungs. It's very rare and can only be caught by breathing in water vapour

## What can you do to help?

- Run all infrequently used taps (indoor and outdoor) and showers for at least two minutes weekly
- Clean and de-scale your taps and shower heads quarterly
- Leave your water heater and boilers on to avoid the water sitting at temperatures between 25 °C - 45 °C
- Report any repairs to St. Matthew's Housing Association
- Don't forget to run your water through your outlets as soon as you get back from your holiday, or if you have been away or if you move into a new home

## St. Matthew's Housing Association will:

- Give advice about caring for your water system
- Carry out any repairs needed

- Risk assess where necessary
- Service thermostatic mixer valves (TMVs)
- Check water hygiene in premises

## Who to talk to?

If you've any questions or concerns regarding water hygiene, please contact us:

**Phone: 028 9045 1070**

**Email: [office@smha.co.uk](mailto:office@smha.co.uk)**

**Website: [www.smha.co.uk](http://www.smha.co.uk)**



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