



Merry Christmas Everyone!

The Atrium Elves are dusting down their outfits ready to spread Christmas cheer to our tenants at this time year!

Here are some of the Atrium Elves events to look out for:

Over 75's

The Elves will be out and about, and if you're 75 or over, a special surprise will be coming your way - keep your eyes peeled!

Elves Annual Christmas Advent Calendar

Once again, the Elves will randomly select an Atrium tenant every day in December from 1st to 25th, and each one will receive £50 of supermarket vouchers. Wait! ... there's an extra bonus this year due to Atrium celebrating 25 years...the Elves will select TWO tenants each day, giving more tenants a chance win.

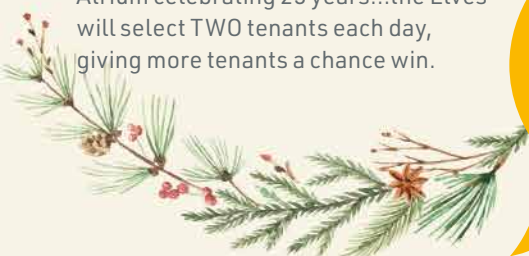
Elves January Blues

The Elves realise that January can be a difficult month for our tenants, so they're doing the 25 days of January event! Again, an Atrium tenant will be selected each day for 25 days and will receive £50 of supermarket vouchers too!

Elf Assistance

The elves are here to help everyone. So if you need our help this Christmas with any welfare matters (benefits, food, paying the bills, etc) please get in touch. Call us on **01563 528 816** Monday to Friday, email info@atrium-homes.co.uk, or pop into the office Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Friday. The Elves may be able to help anyone who is struggling this Christmas with something from our 'Elf Fund'

For both the Christmas Advent and January Blues event, the Elves will make sure that all tenants are on our Calendar list and will be selected at random, so there's no need for you to do anything - you're already in the draw!





Dear Tenant

This Winter edition of our newsletter focusses again on supporting you with the high cost of living we continue to experience. We've provided lots of information on energy saving, ways to keep costs down, and agencies to turn to if you're struggling on pages 14 - 15.

We're acutely aware of the impact of the cost of living crisis on our tenants, and so we were pleased to be able to secure funding which has provided warm packs to new tenants, as well as being able to give out small amounts of financial assistance towards the cost of heating their homes to some of our most vulnerable tenants.

We're still managing a challenging cost environment. Last year we saw the cost of our day to day maintenance on your homes increase by about 25% and some of the costs for our Homes Fit For 21st Century Living Standard (HFF21CLS) major investment programme have increased by as much as 30%. This year, our costs have increased again as inflation has remained high.

We're always reviewing the services we provide to ensure we will meet tenants' needs now and in the future. The Management team, with support from the Board, is always looking for ways to increase efficiency and agility in the way we work, as well as regularly procuring our essential services to make sure we're getting the best price possible in the marketplace.

Over the years, we've developed ways to support tenants in need. We're working to protect - as far as possible - the Money Advice and other services that work with, and support, people who are struggling to pay their rent or who are suffering wider poverty. We're also looking at ways we can give advice to our tenants who are struggling to heat their homes.

We're committed to continuing to improve your homes by replacing kitchens and bathrooms, and improving the energy efficiency of your homes where we can, to help limit your energy costs.

Our HFF21CLS programme continued through the pandemic, but at a slower pace than we had originally planned. Our contractor, CCG, plans to complete Phase 3 of the programme early in 2024.

We've carried out surveys and asked tenants whose homes are in the last two phases of this huge investment programme, what their priorities are for us to spend money on.

The Board met on 10 November 2023 to consider the results of Management's review of work already done and work still needed to be done for the HFF21CLS project and also replacements of components needed on properties that we built several years ago. This has to be balanced against funds we have available in the business and the projected income we can generate from rentals on our tenants' homes.

The Board agreed that our priorities for the next few years will be to complete Phases 4 and 5 of the HFF21CLS programme, looking at funding options for external wall insulation on some of our older homes, as well as starting the new 30-year cycle of replacements on our newer build properties.

Finally, we're coming up to that time of year where we're thinking about our budgets for the next financial year which starts in April 2024. As a key part of that, we'll soon be starting our statutory consultation with you on what level of rent is set from next April.

As an organisation which is focussed on our tenants, our 2024 rent increase will need to consider the level of inflation in the economy, as well as affordability for tenants, which means we'll need to absorb a significant amount of the increased costs we're currently experiencing, so we can protect services and support our tenants.

The cost of living situation affecting our tenants, and the many inflationary pressures which the Atrium has been facing, make it especially critical that our consultation with you tries to find the right balance between rent affordability and the need to maintain our services and continue investing in your homes.

Every household is different and faces different circumstances. Therefore:

- ★ Our rent setting for 2024 will be based on full and transparent consultation with you, our tenants.
- ★ We will absorb at least some of the cost of inflation to protect our tenants.
- ★ Wherever possible, we'll continue to look to find ways for those who need it most, to access the support they need.

Best wishes

Shannon Watson
Chief Executive

Garden Competition

2023

As the summer drew to a close, so did our Annual Garden Competition. We were overwhelmed by the entries we received this year, as well as the amazing transformations tenants had made.

Submissions were received from tenants and staff, who throughout the summer, carried out inspections within all our estates.

At our final in August, 11 winners in total were chosen by a panel of Atrium staff, with entries selected from the following categories:

- ✿ Best Overall Garden
- ✿ Best Vegetable Garden
- ✿ Best Feature Wall
- ✿ Best Communal Entrance
- ✿ Most Improved Garden.

The overall winner received a £50 garden voucher and the 10 runners up all received a £25 garden voucher.

Congratulations to all!



Christmas and New Year Holidays

Atrium will be closed completely over the holiday period.

We'll close on Friday 22nd December 2023 at 4pm and re-open on Thursday 4th January 2024 at 9am.

If you have any emergency repairs during this period, our normal Out of Hours service will be operating. Call **01563 528 816** and you'll be redirected to our emergency service.



EMERGENCY REPAIRS SERVICE

We provide an emergency repairs service all year round, including the festive period. If the problem can wait until office hours with only minor inconvenience, it would not be classed as an emergency. If tradesmen are called out to incidents that are not emergencies, or are found to have been caused by you, we will recharge the cost of the call out.

Here are the key contact numbers for repair requirements.

EMERGENCY REPAIRS

01563 528 816

GAS EMERGENCIES

GasSure
01294 468 113

GAS LEAKS

Scotland Gas Networks
0800 111 999

GENERAL REPAIRS

Atrium Homes
01563 528 816

Please only use the out of hours emergency service when it is a REAL emergency such as:

- burst or leaking pipes
- loss of power to the house
- no heating or hot water
- storm damage which requires action to ensure the property is wind and watertight.



Hello

This is my first newsletter as Chair of Atrium Homes' Board. In August 2023, Joe Keen, who had been Chair for five years, through some of the most turbulent times Atrium and its tenants have ever experienced, stepped down and I have taken over the reins.

This time last year, we wrote about how these were unprecedented times that we live in, with the cost of living and the cost of keeping your homes warm, increasing far beyond what any of us have experienced before. That pressure has not eased up for you or us.

We're keenly aware of the difficulties our tenants are facing at this time and we're continuing to support Atrium's Management team as they work to ensure we provide the best possible service to our tenants, while keeping costs as low as possible.

We were pleased to secure funding, in partnership with other social landlords in Ayrshire, which has enabled us to pay for the time of energy advisors from **Lemon Aid** who will be supporting our tenants to review their energy tariffs and get help with any debt they have built up. If you need help, please contact the Atrium team on **01563 528 816** or email **info@atrium-homes.co.uk** and they will try to get you the support you need.

On 12 October 2023, Atrium Homes turned 25 years old. Staff marked the occasion with a lunch and quiz, and celebrated the six staff members who have each given more than 20 years' service to Atrium. We're marking the occasion of our milestone anniversary with some extra support for our tenants in the coming months. Details are included in this newsletter, plus there's more to come.

During the year, Atrium's Board – made up of volunteers who give their time to Atrium Homes – has continued its work to shape the strategy of the organisation. As a group, we're responsible for ensuring the organisation is well governed and meets all the requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Charities Regulator and various other external bodies.

The Board works to support Atrium to continue funding improvements to your homes, while balancing the cost of this and other core services against our desire to keep our rents as low as possible. We look forward to working with the Management team, helping Atrium to continue delivering the best possible service to our tenants for many months and years to come.

Atrium held its Annual General Meeting on 29 August this year. Joe stepped down as Chair of the Board after his maximum five-year tenure, and we're pleased that he agreed to stay on the Board and give us the benefit of his years of experience, both in the Housing sector and as a Board member of Atrium. I stepped up from my position as Vice Chair and we welcomed Carolyn Hope as our new Vice Chair. Ron, our tenant co-optee member, was also confirmed as a full Board member.

We're always keen to hear from tenants who would like to work with us to help shape our services and how we deliver them. Being on the Board is not the only way that you can do this, and you can be involved in a number of less formal ways. These include groups like our Armchair Panel and our Tenant Scrutiny Group. You can find out more on our website at www.atrium-homes.co.uk/get-involved/.

Best wishes

Alistair Reid
Chair

Paying Your Rent at Christmas

It's important to pay your rent on time. Every Atrium tenant is due to pay their rent on the 1st of the month, as detailed in your tenancy agreement. We use the money we collect to deliver the services we provide - like our repairs service and the planned improvements to your home.

Although the Atrium office and shops will be shut over Christmas, that doesn't mean you can't pay your rent. There are plenty of other ways to make a payment:

ONLINE OR PAYPOINT OUTLET

Pay via the website www.allpayments.net/allpayments/ Or pay at any Post Office or other outlets which display the PayPoint sign using your rent payment card.

ALLPAY APP

Go to the app store and download the allpay app. To use this, you'll need your rent card and your debit/credit card. Simply follow directions to set up. Once set up, this is a quick and simple way to make rent payments. It stores the last six months' transactions, so you can always check if you've made your rent payment.

CALL US

You can phone the office on **01563 528 816** up to 22nd December 2023 and pay by debit or credit card.

DIRECT DEBIT

You can pay monthly by setting up a Direct Debit. To do this, call us on **01563 528 816** - please have your bank details ready before you call. We'll set up your Direct Debit and you'll receive a letter from our Direct Debit provider - allpay.net - within 7 days.

BACS/FAST PAYMENT

Transfer your rent straight to our bank account: Sort code **82-65-30**, Account Number **30300484**. Please make sure you quote your Customer Account Number so your payment is assigned to the correct account. If you need your Account Number, please contact us at the office.

PORTAL

If you register with Atrium's tenant portal prior to 22nd December you'll be able to make a payment in this way also.

Struggling to pay your rent this Christmas?

At this time of year everyone feels the excitement of the festive season creeping up on us, together with the priorities that lie ahead. There's no denying Christmas is a costly time for all of us. However, we must remind you that you should continue to pay your rent as you would normally do.

If you're having any difficulty doing this, please contact us on **01563 528 816** as soon as possible so we can offer help and advice before any major problems develop for you. Your Estates Officer will be glad to help you manage your budget.

Please don't ignore any letters we send you regarding your rent - this could put your tenancy at risk.

Remember, as long as you work with us to deal with your debt, we'll do what we can to help you keep your home. So make sure you tell us as soon as it starts getting tough.



FESTIVE FIRE Safety

Please be aware of the extra risks of fire in your home at Christmas time - fairy lights, candles, etc are all potential fire hazards. It's vital to be extra vigilant.



We provide both smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, and carry out an annual inspection of both. However, we encourage you to undertake periodic checks yourself, by pressing the test buttons. If the alarm fails to sound, report this to us as soon as possible.



Winter Blues Event



SAVE
THE
DATE

WHEN
Tuesday 9th January 2024
.....
WHERE
Atrium Homes Offices, 14 Central Avenue, Shortlees, Kilmarnock
.....
TIME:
10am - 3pm

Helping our tenants with Fuel Support

Social Housing Fuel Support Fund

We were once again successful in our recent bids for funding for tenants, and have been awarded an additional £16,500 for 'warm and well starter packs' for new tenants.



We were also successful in a further bid and were awarded £28,900 to assist tenants who meet certain criteria with a payment towards their energy bills! Our staff will contact tenants who qualify.

And we were successful in a joint bid with other housing associations in Ayrshire to employ an Eydent Energy Advisor for 6 months to advise our tenants with any energy issues. If you're struggling with debt at your meter, struggling to pay your energy costs, have meter or supplier issues, have issues with fuel vouchers, heating your home or anything else regarding your energy supply or bills, please contact the office and we can arrange for an appointment.

You're warmly invited to attend our Winter Blues Event on Tuesday 9th January 2024. Please come along and join us!

There will be loads going on during the day, so keep an eye out for more details on our website, Facebook page, etc.

Here's just a taster of what will be happening:

- **Warm café** – come and enjoy a warm space, and free tea/coffee and biscuits. Our staff will be on hand for a chat and to provide any information you need.
- **Free skip in Atrium car park** – bring any excess rubbish (maximum 3 black bags) and get rid of your extra Christmas rubbish.
- **Free energy advice** – pop in and chat to our Energy Advisor to see how we may be able to help you. We also have funding available for tenants who may require extra help.
- **Benefits Advice** – pop in and speak to our experts to see if there's anything we can help you with.

PLUS?

The first 30 tenants who attend the event will each receive a £10 voucher AND all tenants who attend on the day will be entered into our draw for £100!

Community Funding

In Round 1 of our "Cash In The Community" initiative, we provided The Killie Community with a donation of £1,000 to open a brand new kids session at Whatriggs Primary.

As part of our donation, costs will be maintained at £4 per session, with a 25% discount available to parents/carers who are Atrium Homes tenants. If you'd like to register your interest, please visit the link below:

<https://kilmarnockfc.co.uk/community/programmes/kickers-kids-sign-up/>



We're also proud to have played our part in the Bellfield Community Council's Hallowe'en pumpkin trail down at the Bellfield Estate.

This was in Round 2 of our "Cash In The Community", with £250 being donated towards the set up of the event, which attracted hundreds of kids.

Some Atrium staff were also present on the night, volunteering and handing out sweets! As part of the celebrations, we ran a competition for "Best Decorated House", with the winner receiving a family ticket to the Faux Festival Spooktacular event at the Dean Castle Country Park.

Congratulations again to Mrs K's family from New Farm, the winning entry was posted on our Facebook page – check it out!



Sponsorship and Donations

We've received a number of sponsorship and donation applications so far this year, with donations being made to the New Farm Community Council, Crosshouse Community Football Club, Bellfield AFC 2013 and Shortlees Amateurs.

We organised a foodbank collection at our office in Central Avenue, which staff and the local community generously contributed to.

The food was donated to Killie Foodbanks, who offer foodbank collection services at all Kilmarnock FC home games. For more information, please visit @KillieFoodbanks on Twitter.

Garden Improvement Award

We've allocated funding from our Community Funding budget to help tenants improve their garden.

The Garden Improvement Grant - if awarded - will be a B&Q voucher for £100 to help with the cost of buying a lawnmower and strimmer to help maintain your garden area.

To apply for this grant, contact our office on **01563 528 816**.

If you wish to apply for Community Funding, please email info@atrium-homes.co.uk for an application form or call us to receive more information!

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



We recently updated our policy on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, which sets out how we put you, the tenant, at the heart of all that we do every day.

We're also considering putting in place software which might enable us to communicate with you digitally by default. We want your opinion on this to ensure we continue to not exclude anyone in the way that we communicate with you.

Please take the time to complete our short survey. The closing date is 15 January 2024.



Scan for survey

HOMES FIT FOR 21ST CENTURY

Where we're currently at

Phase 3 of our Homes Fit for 21st Century Living Standard (HFF21CLS) contract works is progressing towards completion, with work being carried out across various areas including New Farm Loch, Onthank, Galston, Crosshouse and Kilmarnock Central.

The work has mainly involved upgrades to kitchens and bathrooms. Other works within some homes has included re-wiring, boiler upgrades, heating system upgrades, plastering and external door replacements.

Customer satisfaction survey visits are carried out after the work has finished. Satisfaction surveys are ongoing for Phase 3 and, in the main, tenants have told us that they're happy with the upgrades within their homes. Some tenants have, however, expressed dissatisfaction around certain parts of the process, especially the time taken for the work to be completed or the level of disruption they experienced. We appreciate the inconvenience and disruption caused by having this amount of work completed at the same time and we continue to monitor this with our contractor.

We use the information collected from surveys to plan future works. Staff continue to undertake these surveys and may be contacting you soon. However, please let us know if the work has completed within your home and you've not yet had an opportunity to provide feedback.

Next Steps: Phases 4 and 5 Consultation and Planning

We remain committed to making the improvements we consulted on when creating the programme. However, the programme is roughly two years behind the original plan, primarily due to the delays caused by Covid restrictions.

The Technical Officers have been out surveying the homes that feature in Phases 4 and 5, and we're planning how we make the necessary improvements in tenants' homes. Collecting this information ensures we balance priorities against the expected costs of improvements required, so we spend money where it's needed most.

In the phases completed so far, we've carried out all the improvement works needed in one go. While this means that all the big works to your house are done at once, it can be very disruptive and can take a number of weeks to complete. Tenants have told us that plastering works were very disruptive, messy and impacted on existing decoration. Tenants also told us that the length of time the works took to do in one go was too long, at approximately 5 to 6 weeks.

We're therefore considering how the improvements that have the biggest positive impact for you can be done first, while ensuring that we continue to provide you with a home that is safe. We asked customers in Phases 4 and 5 to tell us what work you consider to be most important. The consultation exercise was carried out between September and October 2023 through a combination of postal and online questionnaires, and two drop-in sessions held in our office. We were delighted with the response, which saw 41% of the tenants whose home is included within Phase 4 and 5 tell us what their priorities are.

We use the information collected from surveys to plan future works.

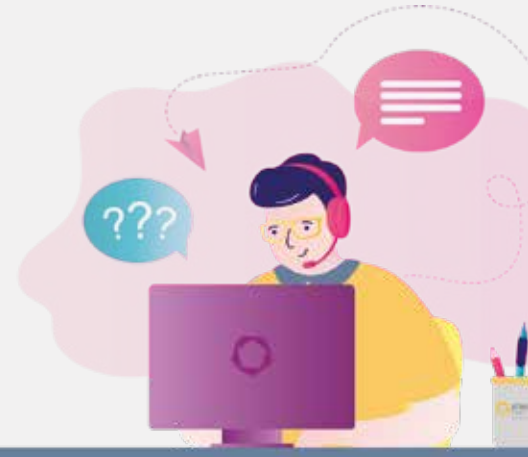
Staff continue to undertake these surveys and may be contacting you soon.



WHAT YOU TOLD US

Below is a summary of the consultation feedback we received:

	Higher Importance	Medium Importance	Lower Importance	No Rating Provided
Kitchen upgrade	69%	17%	8%	6%
Bathroom upgrade	54%	22%	17%	7%
Making your home cheaper to heat	45%	32%	13%	10%
Improving externals (primarily windows and doors)	29%	36%	27%	8%
Plastering internal walls	14%	31%	43%	12%
Getting all work done in one go	31%	20%	44%	5%



You told us that your priorities are the upgrades to kitchens, bathrooms and works which make your home cheaper to heat. Your feedback showed lower priorities for plastering and getting all the work done in one go.

We're currently reviewing the work packages with the aim of delivering improvements where they're most needed within the current project.



WE'LL BE IN TOUCH

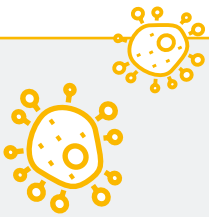
We plan to begin the first surveys in some areas included in Phase 4 over the coming months and we'll make contact with you to arrange an appointment before we visit. We'll write to all tenants whose home is included in Phase 4 and 5 when we have more information on when the work will start in your home.

Further information on the HFF21CLS project can be obtained via our website or by contacting the Investment team on the main office line, **01563 528 816** option 3.



CONDENSATION, DAMP AND MOULD

Damp and condensation can cause mould to grow. If left unattended, the issue will potentially spread and become more problematic, so it's very important to report any issues to us, especially where they consistently reoccur.



THERE ARE THREE GENERAL REASONS WHY MOULD GROWS:



1

Penetrating damp occurs when water is finding a way inside your home via a leak and this penetration can cause mould growth and dampness.



2

Rising damp is caused where groundwater is being soaked up into the bricks or concrete at floor level.



3

Problems with penetrating and rising damp are more easily solved after the source of water ingress is identified and repaired.

Determining the cause of the mould growth is key to identifying the solution.

Condensation is a common problem which can also lead to mould growth that can become quite severe if left untreated.

Condensation will form when the inside air holds too much water and there's a drop in temperature. This can lead to water forming on colder surfaces such as walls, ceilings and windows. One example is when you run the shower and the bathroom mirror mists up. This happens as warm air with lots of moisture comes into contact with the colder mirror.

There's always moisture in the air of any home caused by everyday living, from cooking, bathing, showering, boiling a kettle, etc.

Did you know?

AN AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD WILL PRODUCE 24 PINTS (14 LITRES) OF WATER PER DAY OR 168 PINTS (80 LITRES) PER WEEK.



Condensation is more likely to occur during colder weather as we often reduce ventilation by closing windows in our homes to retain heat.

Currently, the increase in energy costs also impacts the level of heating which is on in our homes.

Reducing the likelihood of condensation is a balancing act of heating and ventilating, along with reducing the amount of moisture produced within your home. We're here to offer advice in relation to mould growth, so please contact us for advice.



If you need help with energy costs please contact us as we may be able to offer some financial assistance via grant funding.

Do's



- ✓ Report the issue to us
- ✓ Clean the mould with hot soapy water
- ✓ Open window trickle vents
- ✓ Use fans and extractors
- ✓ Open the windows when cooking/washing
- ✓ Keep your home free of clutter
- ✓ Contact us for financial assistance/support if you have an issue with Damp, Condensation or Mould.

Do Not's



- ✗ Try to manage alone
- ✗ Use bleach on mould
- ✗ Keep all your windows and vents closed
- ✗ Cover or stop using fans and extractors
- ✗ Dry clothes on radiators
- ✗ Hoard lots of items in your home

As your landlord, we take all reported cases of damp and mould seriously. We know that living in a home with mould is unpleasant, and can lead to other issues. We'll work with you to resolve issues of this nature, so please report damp and mould issues to us.

You can contact us to arrange a visit if condensation, damp or mould is causing an issue in your home on **01563 528816** or via **info@atrium-homes.co.uk**

Cyclical Works Programme

We're continuing to progress with various cyclical projects and works. This includes:



Gas Safety

Every 12 months, we must carry out a service of the gas boiler in your property if you have gas central heating. This is a requirement by law under The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998.

The annual service is completed to ensure the safety of our tenants in their home. It's therefore important to read the letters you're sent about this and to take action before it's too late. We cannot extend the date of your service and we may gain access to your property if no access is provided.

We appreciate that people work and have other commitments, but you must allow us access to undertake the service when it's due. You can phone GasSure (our gas engineers) direct to arrange an appointment time on **01294 468 113**.

External Painterwork & Gutter Cleaning

Our contractor, the Bell Group, recently completed a programme of external painterwork and gutter cleaning. The works were carried out at properties in Onthank, Kilmarnock Central, Crosshouse, Galston and Lainshaw.

We'll contact tenants over the coming months where gutter cleaning work is being planned for next year.

Periodic Electrical Testing

Our contractor, Magnus Electrical, continues to complete the required electrical testing. This is an important aspect of making sure your home remains electrically safe. We must carry out an electrical safety test of your home every five years. Contact will be made directly with tenants who are included in the programme.

Stock Condition Surveys

We're currently carrying out stock condition surveys on properties in various areas. The information we collect from these surveys lets us assess the condition of your homes and helps us prioritise future work.

Atrium staff are carrying out the surveys, with a sample being carried out by an external surveying company. We'll contact you directly if we would like access to your home to have this type of survey completed.



Alterations and Improvements

If you want to alter and improve your home either internally or externally, you need to request permission from us first.

We'll assess your request to ensure it complies with current legislation and poses no risk to the household. Please avoid doing any works to your home without asking us first.

Most alteration and improvement requests received from tenants are approved.

For further information about alterations and improvements, please contact the Investment team by calling **01563 528 816** or emailing info@atrium-homes.co.uk

Flytipping - it has to stop!

Flytipping is a blight on our communities and continues to soak up staff time to deal with it.

There are ongoing problems in all of our communities when it comes to flytipping. We recognise that people may be reluctant or unable to pay the additional costs for special uplifts, however, we must all work together to reduce the level of flytipping within our communities.

In the year 2022-23, we arranged a total of 39 bulk uplifts to deal with flytipping across the various communities in East Ayrshire at an average cost of £85 per uplift.

A wide range of items can be collected using the East Ayrshire Council's bulky uplift service, including white goods. The following charges apply:

- 1-3 items: **£15.93**
- 4-5 items: **£29.21**
- **£3.49 per additional item** – with a maximum of 10 items allowed per uplift.

We work proactively to try and resolve issues around refuse collection and flytipping, working alongside partners such as Cleaner Communities, East Ayrshire Council. One example of successful joint working has been the improvement of refuse disposal and the subsequent environmental improvements at flatted blocks in Nether Robertland. Euro Bins were installed to provide greater capacity for waste for the block and we've seen a massive improvement in the general standard of the area.

Eurobins before and after



Want to go Walkabout?

Keeping our estates well maintained is a priority for us. We carry out regular, routine estate checks and inspections every month, making more visits to larger estates. Once a month, we also carry out joint estate inspections with our landscape contractor.

Three times a year, these joint estate inspections are open to both property owners and tenants, and are attended by Atrium Homes staff and our landscaping contractor, along with representatives from East Ayrshire Council and local community council members. These visits are known as 'walkabouts'.

Walkabouts help us to monitor your estate for any issues relating to landscape maintenance and work carried out by our landscape contractor. We inspect all the open landscape areas to ensure the area is looking clean and tidy, and that everywhere is being maintained to a high standard.



We're keen to see more involvement from our tenants. We're looking for 'Estate Buddies' who would be willing to come along to three walkabouts in their estate each year.

If you're interested, call us on **01563 528 816** or email info@atrium-homes.co.uk

Keeping gardens under control

You may have noticed more Atrium Staff out and about in your estate. Along with our regular estate walkabouts, our staff have been out inspecting individual gardens, making sure they're kept tidy. They've also been working alongside tenants to get their gardens up to an acceptable standard.

Coping with

BIGGER BILLS



Household bills are increasing every day for Atrium households. The cost of living and the energy crisis are the major factors in your bills costing more each month. If you're struggling to pay your bills, help is available.

To access this, it's vital to contact the right source of support for what you need. Read on for more information, including links to some organisations and funding that can help you manage your money, provide financial support and check if you're eligible for benefits. But most importantly, contact us on **01563 528 816** and we'll give you as much information and support as we can.

General Information

East Ayrshire Council Cost of Living Crisis website

www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Community/cost-of-living/cost-of-living.aspx



Fuel Support

Below are benefits that some tenants may be entitled to which can assist with the cost of their gas and electricity. This is dependent on whether a member of your household fits the criteria for entitlement to the benefit.

We've provided contact details below, but if you're struggling to apply, please contact us and we could make a referral to our Eydent Energy Advisor for assistance.

If you're struggling to pay for utility costs, please contact us and we may be able to assist further by making a referral to the Energy Advisor.

Child Winter Heating Assistance

This is a payment of £235.70, paid once a year to parents and carers of disabled children and young people under 19 who receive a qualifying benefit. If you're not receiving this payment but think you may be eligible, contact www.mygov.scot/contact-social-security-scotland or call **0800 182 2222** Monday – Friday 8am to 6pm.

Warm Home Discount

This is a £150 payment towards your energy costs, managed by participating energy suppliers. To apply for the discount, speak to your energy supplier directly.

Winter Heating Payment

If you're currently eligible for Cold Weather Payment from DWP and your circumstances haven't changed, you'll be eligible for a Winter Heating Payment.

Winter Fuel Payment

If you were born on or before 25 September 1957, you could get between

£250 and £600 to help pay your heating bills. You'll receive your Winter Fuel Payment automatically.

Prepayment Meter Support

Help is available if you use a prepayment meter. Support depends on your personal circumstances. Contact your energy supplier to get precise information. Remember - if your energy supplier has issued you with a voucher, it has to be used within 90 days.

Fuel vouchers

If you're struggling to top up your pre-payment meter, you can contact your local council, Atrium Homes or foodbank for a fuel voucher.

We may be able to assist tenants who are struggling with cost of living by providing Foodbank vouchers or help in applying for Scottish Welfare Crisis payments. Or we can refer you to an Energy Advisor for a fuel voucher. Entitlement to these funds will be assessed by the issuing organisation.

Advice Direct Scotland

This organisation provides funding and support. This includes the Home Heating Support Fund which offers households financial relief to help with significant financial hardship, no matter the fuel or payment method. Call them on **0800 800 9060** from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, or apply via the website www.homeheatingadvice.scot/

They also offer help for anyone who needs to resolve an issue with their energy supplier. Find out more by calling **0800 196 8660** from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, or via this website <https://energyadvice.scot/>

Debt Advice

Citizens Advice Scotland

CAS help with queries about employment, housing, debt, benefits, and consumer issues like energy bills and many other topics. Call their helpline on 0800 028 1456 from Monday – Thursday, 9am to 3pm and Friday, 9am to 12 noon. You can also find help on their website www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/

Citizens Advice Money Talk Team

Along with general advice, Citizens Advice Scotland also have a dedicated debt and money advice team. Call **0800 085 7145** or visit their website www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/debt-and-money/other-resources-related-to-debt-and-money/money-talk-team-s/.

Age Scotland

They provide advice for older people on finances, welfare and benefits rights, health and wellbeing, home and care, travel and lifestyle, and work and learning. Call them on **0845 833 0800** Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm or visit <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/>.

National Debtline

They give free and independent debt advice over the phone and online. Call them on **0808 808 4000**, Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 1pm, or visit www.nationaldebtline.org/.



UNIVERSAL CREDIT MANAGED MIGRATION – *get ready!*

Information from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) confirms the latest roll-out will apply only to people in the West of Scotland, including East Ayrshire (expected to begin in November 2023).

This will affect those tenants who are “tax credits-only” claimants i.e., people who are getting Tax Credits, but who don't receive any other legacy benefits. For example, if you receive Tax Credits and Housing Benefit, you will not be migrated at this first stage.

You will be expected to make the Universal Credit application within 3 months of the date on the migration letter. It is important that you do not delay in changing to Universal Credit, as it's paid monthly and, dependent upon when you claim, you may be left without any Universal Credit over the Christmas and New Year period.

If you're entitled to Transitional Protection, that is if your current benefits payments are greater than what you would receive under Universal Credit,

you'll receive a transitional protection payment in your Universal Credit. This payment will ensure you don't lose out financially because of the forced migration to Universal Credit.

If you receive a Managed Migration letter, you can contact us and we'll explain the consequences and carry out a benefit check to let you know how much Universal Credit you'll receive.

Call us on **01563 528 816** to speak to a member of our Money Advice team.



WINTER WARNINGS

It's important that you keep yourself safe in your home throughout the year, but especially during the harsher winter months. We'll carry out necessary statutory checks such as gas servicing, but there are also things that you can do yourself to protect your family and home.

Frost Precautions

During the coldest months, there's risk of damage to your home caused by frost or flooding from frozen pipes.

To avoid burst pipes

- Keep your home reasonably warm day and night
- Open internal doors
- Check pipes regularly

Check your contents insurance to make sure your belongings are insured for damage.

If the water pipes freeze

- Turn the water off at the main stopcock. You should find this under the kitchen sink or where the service pipe enters your home.
- It's best to let the pipes thaw naturally, but you can try to thaw the ice in the pipe with a hot water bottle or hairdryer (taking care to keep it well away from any water). NEVER use a heat gun or blow torch.
- If the hot water system is frozen, turn off any water heaters.
- If you have some water, fill available containers to ensure you have an adequate supply of water should the pipes freeze further.

If a pipe bursts

- Turn the water off at the main stopcock and open all your taps to drain water from the system. Remember to close the taps again when you're finished. (Make sure you know where the stopcock is – it's usually on the ground floor, under the kitchen sink or in a downstairs toilet.) Closing the stopcock will stop the supply of mains water into your house, helping to reduce damage.
- Turn off water heaters.
- Find the leak and bind it tightly with a towel, placing a bowl below to catch any drips.
- If water is lying on top of a ceiling and making it bulge, pierce the ceiling using a screwdriver to let the water escape.
- If electric cables are wet, switch off the supply at the mains. DO NOT touch the cables themselves.

Boiler and Heating Problems

Some boilers have a condensing pipe that drains to the outside, and the liquid in this pipe can freeze in extremely low temperatures causing the boiler to shut down.

The pressure gauge on your boiler should sit between 1.5 and 2.0 when the boiler is running however if the pressure keeps dropping, then there may be a leak in one of the heating pipes.

Report any of these faults to our office.

Storm Damage

It's not only cold weather that your home is exposed to over the winter months. There's a risk of storm damage too.

If tiles are blown off your roof but there's no water coming in

- Contact our office on **01563 528 816**. We'll log the details of your repair, which will be classed as a Routine Repair and a roofer will call within 7 working days when safe to do so.

If water starts to leak through the roof

There's roofing felt under the tiles and this should prevent water coming into your house. However, if your roof does start to leak:

- Use a bucket or container to catch any water coming into rooms and lay a plastic sheet over any possessions that are close to the leak.
- Tell us immediately to update the information, especially if there's any doubt about water in your electrics.

Slips trips and falls

Wintry weather is arriving, which means there's a greater risk of slips, trips, and falls. At this time of year, surfaces can be more dangerous than at other times, with seasonal factors to consider in avoiding accident and injury.

Poor lighting, rainfall, snow, ice, and wet and decaying leaves can all increase the potential for slip, trip and fall accidents. Paths can also become a bit uneven at this time of the year because of the weather. Please tell us if paved surfaces inside your property boundary require attention, so that we can help keep you safe.

We'd like to remind customers to be mindful of how you go during the poorer weather. Information on grit bin and gritting routes can be found on East Ayrshire Council's website www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/ or by visiting the East Ayrshire Roads Alliance website at www.ayrshireroadsalliance.org/



ANNUAL RETURN ON THE CHARTER

2022 - 2023

Atrium submitted its 9th Annual Return on the Charter in May 2023 to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The ARC Report is broken down into 5 sections: Homes & Rents; Tenant Satisfaction; Quality & Maintenance of Homes; Neighbourhoods and Value for Money.



HOMES & RENTS

AT 31 MARCH 2023

No. of homes owned by Atrium:

1,210

Total rent due for year:

£6,005,232

Increase on weekly rent:

4.7%

on average from previous year

At Atrium Homes we allocate all our available properties through the Common Housing Register for East Ayrshire, known as SEARCH. Properties are allocated from 5 lists, with targets for each agreed at the start of the year - Waiting, Transfer, Homeless, Strategic Needs and Outwith the District.

Size of Home	Number of Homes Owned	Atrium rent p.wk.	Scottish Average
1 Apartment	-	-	£78.26
2 Apartment	124	£79.31	£83.46
3 Apartment	564	£91.59	£86.28
4 Apartment	481	£104.68	£93.96
5 Apartment	41	£114.81	£103.72



TENANT SATISFACTION

Of the tenants who responded to this landlord's most recent satisfaction survey:

	Atrium	Scottish Average
Tenants satisfied with landlord's overall service	81.9%	86.7%
Tenants who felt their landlord was good at keeping them informed about its services and outcomes	84.2%	89.7%
Tenants satisfied with opportunities to participate in landlord's decision making	78.1%	85.9%



QUALITY & MAINTENANCE OF HOMES

We aim to provide well maintained homes for all our tenants

	Atrium	Scottish Average
Landlord homes meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard	81.8%	79%
Average time taken to complete emergency repairs	2.4 Hours	4.2 Hours
Average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs	6.7 Days	8.7 Days
Reactive repairs completed 'right first time'	85.2%	87.8%
Tenants satisfied with the service they received for repairs or maintenance carried out on their home	85.5%	88.0%



NEIGHBOURHOODS

For every 100 of your landlord's homes, 13.3 cases of anti-social behaviour were reported in the last year.

	Atrium	Scottish Average
Percentage of anti-social behaviour cases resolved within targets agreed locally	100%	94.2%



VALUE FOR MONEY

We recognise the importance of delivering value for money in all our services.

	Atrium	Scottish Average
Percentage of total rent due in the year collected by landlord	100.2%	99%
Percentage of rent due but not collected due to empty homes	0.4%	1.4%
Average number of days taken to re-let homes	26.8 Days	51.6 Days

Annual Assurance Statement 2023



As an organisation committed to continuous improvement, Atrium Homes has embraced the self-assurance process, and the Board has continually monitored organisational performance and compliance. The Board confirms that we have reviewed and assessed a comprehensive bank of evidence to support this statement.

It is the judgement of the Board of Atrium Homes that we have appropriate assurance we continue to materially comply with:

- All relevant regulatory requirements set out in Section Three of the Regulatory Framework
- The Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management
- The relevant standards and outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Our statutory obligations in respect of tenant and resident safety, housing and homelessness, and equalities and human rights.

This judgement extends to our wholly owned subsidiary Atrium Initiatives Limited.

In reviewing the evidence and assessing compliance, we have taken account of

good practice advice. We are confident that, taking account of the current economic and social environments, we continue to meet our responsibilities to our tenants, service users, regulators and funders.

We are assured that Atrium Homes has the necessary arrangements in place to identify any risks to compliance in the course of the conduct of our business and governance arrangements.

We are satisfied that we meet all of our duties in relation to tenant and resident safety. In particular, we have gained the necessary evidence-based assurance of our compliance in respect of duties relating to gas, electrical, fire and water safety, and our obligations relating to asbestos and damp and mould.

In reviewing our compliance with the Regulatory Framework, we are assured that we have established appropriate systems for the collection of equalities data. We are assured that we are working towards using appropriate data to take account of equality and human rights issues in our decisions, policy-making and day-to-day service delivery.

The judgement expressed in this statement is to the best of the Board's knowledge and belief, based on factors including internal review of background information and reports presented to the Boards of Atrium Homes and Atrium Initiatives on an ongoing basis, supplemented by independent reviews conducted by internal and external auditors.

This statement was considered and agreed by the Board of Directors of Atrium Homes at its meeting on 26 September 2023.

Signed on behalf of the Board

Alistair Reid
Chair of Atrium Homes



**ATRIUM
HOMES**

The Landlord of Choice

If you have any comments or questions or want to know what Atrium is doing at the moment, then please get in touch. Our contact details are:

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14 Central Avenue, Shortlees
Kilmarnock / KA1 4PS

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E. info@atrium-homes.co.uk
W. www.atrium-homes.co.uk