

New Committee Members



This year we were delighted to welcome 3 new members onto our Committee: David Bertram, Mary Laird and Ian McKay. They bring with them a diverse range of experience and knowledge, and will be great assets for the Association.

Staff News

In May, we welcomed Neil Foulis to the Association who came on board as our new Estates & Trades Team Assistant. And more recently we were pleased to welcome Tanne Shorter as Head of Finance.



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Upstream Tenancy Sustainment Fund

The Association was one of seven projects from across Scotland awarded funding under the Scottish Government's Upstream Tenancy Sustainment Fund, receiving £198,800.

Over the course of 2025/26 this funding enabled us to partner with The Blide Trust to establish a Housing First for Youth Project, and with Orkney Womens Aid to create a Housing First project for victims/survivors of domestic abuse with complex needs. Significant services were made available to clients by these two projects.

"The Big Ask" - Acting Together to Prevent Homelessness

In February 2026, this funding also allowed us to host a conference to explore the Ask and Act requirements of the new Housing (Scotland) Act. Working with our partners at Voluntary Action Orkney, we delivered a well-attended event with national speakers, Grant Campbell (Homeless Network Scotland), Professor Vikki McCall (University of Stirling) and Ali MacDermid (Rock Trust) speaking alongside local projects on how we can all gain confidence to ask and effectively act to contribute to the prevention of homelessness in Orkney.

We established a bespoke Decluttering Team to assist our tenants with direct, practical support, and have continued this work. We were able to source financial support of £55,931 for our tenants with significant outcomes achieved.



As a result of the work here in Orkney and the other six pilot projects, the Scottish Government will be funding tenancy sustainment work across Scotland via £55 million funding stream. Orkney Housing Association is delighted to have been one of the projects to prove the effectiveness of tenancy sustainment work.

If you have any tenancy sustainment concerns, we are here to help – please do not hesitate to contact your Housing Services Officer.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT CHANGES TO SCOTTISH HOUSING LAW 2026

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 brings in some changes to Scottish Secure Tenancies (SST) and Short Scottish Secure Tenancies (SSST) from 1st August 2026. The Scottish Government has published new model tenancy agreements that we will use for all new tenants from 1st August that reflect the domestic abuse tenancy provisions and new repair-related duties that come into force later in 2026.

All tenancies granted before 1st August will not be replaced by the new model agreement, but the new legislation will still apply to existing tenants, so it's important you are aware of the changes and how they may affect you. We will also be writing out to all tenants with this information.

Domestic Abuse & Tenancy Rights

From 1st August 2026, Part 2 of the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021 will give social landlords new powers to help victim-survivors of domestic abuse to remain safely in their home, where it is appropriate and safe. In certain circumstances, a social landlord may be able to apply to the court to end the tenancy rights of a tenant (including a joint tenant) who has behaved abusively and allow the tenancy to be transferred to the victim-survivor. This is intended to reduce the risk that someone experiencing domestic abuse has to leave their home, community, school, or support network as a result of the abuse.

There are legal tests to be met, and it is up to a court to decide. We will consider each case carefully, sensitively, and confidentially, and will work with specialist support services where appropriate.

Support for Tenants Affected by Domestic Abuse

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 also strengthens the focus on the support that social landlords should provide to tenants who have experienced, are experiencing, or may be at risk of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, physical harm, psychological harm, threatening behaviour, controlling behaviour, coercive behaviour, or behaviour carried out through another person.

If you are affected by domestic abuse, or are worried about someone else, you can contact us in confidence on 875253 or by emailing safeguarding@ohal.org.uk. If there is an immediate risk of harm, you should contact the Police or emergency services. Local and national support services are also available.

Further Changes Coming into Force on 1st August 2026

- **Succession rights:** The rules on who may succeed to an SST after a tenant dies are changing. In some cases, the person who wishes to succeed to the tenancy will need to have lived in the property as their only or principal home for a period of time before the tenant's death, and we must have been notified at the time they move in. That period of time is reducing from 12 months to 6 months. This does not mean that every person living in a property will automatically be entitled to take over the tenancy. The succession rules will still apply, including rules about the person's relationship to the tenant, whether the property was their only or principal home, and whether there has been any previous succession.

- **Rent increase notices:** The Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 updates the rules on how rent increase notices may be given under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. It will allow us to issue this notice by e-mail in certain circumstances. If we propose to increase your rent, we will give you the required notice in line with the legal requirements that apply at the time and will explain what the notice means, the proposed new rent, and any steps you can take if you have questions or concerns.
- **Keeping pets:** The Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 introduces a new right for Scottish secure tenants to ask for written permission to keep a pet. Where permission is required, we must not unreasonably refuse this. We must respond to a request to keep a pet or pets in writing within one month of receiving the request. In that response we must confirm whether consent is granted, whether any reasonable conditions apply, or why permission has been refused. Further requirements may be set out in regulations or guidance.

Changes on 6th October 2026 – Damp & Mould Repairs

New repair-related duties, commonly referred to as “Awaab’s Law”, are expected to come into force through the Investigation and Commencement of Repair (Scotland) Regulations 2026. These will introduce clear timescales for landlords to investigate reports of damp and mould, tell tenants the outcome of the investigation in writing, and begin any necessary repair works. These duties are intended to strengthen existing protections and help ensure that damp and mould are dealt with promptly.

What tenants should do: Please continue to report any repair concerns, damp or mould, as soon as possible using our normal contact details. We will update our policies and procedures to reflect the new legal requirements and will provide further information where a change directly affects you.

Further changes expected in due course

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 contains other changes which are not all fully in force yet and may require further regulations or guidance. These include changes relating to homelessness prevention, repossession proceedings and further protections for tenants. We will provide further information to tenants when the Scottish Government confirms the relevant start dates, regulations and guidance. Until then, your current tenancy rights and responsibilities continue to apply, subject to any changes already brought into force by law.

What this means for you

For most tenants, there is nothing you need to do at this stage. These changes are mainly intended to strengthen tenant protections, improve support for people affected by domestic abuse, and update how some tenancy rights operate. We will continue to keep tenants informed as further changes come into force.

If you have any questions about this, your tenancy, or support available to you, please contact us at safeguarding@ohal.org.uk, or 875253. You may also wish to seek independent advice from a solicitor, Citizens Advice, Shelter Scotland, or another independent advice agency.



Rented Allocations Policy Consultation Results

In November and December 2025 we consulted on our Rented Allocations Policy where we sought the views and opinions of tenants, applicants, customers and stakeholders on potential changes to the policy.

We received a fantastic overall response of almost 200 responses and we would like to extend our thanks to all those who participated.

The % of responses received for each of the proposals were:

Question	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Homeless households should be able to bid for properties that interest them in the same way as other applicants on the waiting list.	65	16	19
Couples should be eligible for a 2 bedroom property.	62	21	17
Changes to the criteria for awarding additional bedrooms to applicants with overnight access to children from a previous relationship.	58	10	32
Changes to the ages children are expected to share a bedroom.	56	16	28
Changes to points awarded to the Insecurity of Tenure group to focus priority on those applicants with least security of tenure.	40	10	50
All overcrowded applicants receive the same points regardless of who they live with.	49	26	25
Social housing tenants in Orkney under-occupying their homes receive a higher priority than those out with Orkney.	71	13	16
Applicants who are either over-crowded or under-occupying should attract the same level of priority.	58	21	21
Amendments to the Need to Live in the Area group and inclusion of a priority for key workers.	55	20	25
Changes to how we assess applicants suffering from physical or mental health disability/condition that is being adversely affected by their present housing.	71	11	18

In general, we received a favourable response to each of the proposals put forward, or where it was less favourable there was an increased percentage of neutral responses.

After analysing the responses, a paper was presented to the Association's Management Committee on 25 March 2026 recommending that all of the proposals were incorporated into the revised Rented Allocations Policy, which they approved.



We are working behind the scenes to prepare for the reassessment of the 1,000 applications on the waiting list, and anticipate that this process will be completed by 01 September 2026, with the new Policy fully implemented from that date

Stock Condition Survey Update



Our stock condition programme is now underway, with our Building Services Officer, Chris Park, completing 127 surveys across properties in Kirkwall, Finstown and Shapinsay.

We would like to thank all the tenants who have arranged appointments with us for the surveys to be carried out; and by tenants actively engaging with us we have successfully completed 260 repair / upgrade works.

The surveys are a requirement of the Scottish Housing Regulator to ensure social landlords meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing. By understanding the current condition of your property, we can identify any areas that require attention and this enables us to plan our maintenance programmes. If you fail to provide us with access for the survey, there may be repair and upgrade works you miss out on as we will not be aware of what your property requires.

Stock condition surveys allow us to assess the condition of the main internal and external component parts of your home including bathroom, kitchen, heating & hot water systems, ventilation systems, windows and doors. The survey also ensures your home is compliant with safety regulations such as smoke detectors and electrical installations. The information gathered during the survey is used to inform our long-term capital investment plan that enables us to forward plan more effectively and make adequate financial provision to ensure our properties meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standards.

As the stock condition survey programme progresses, you will be contacted by our Customer Services team to arrange a suitable time for the survey to be carried out. It is important you provide access to us to carry out the survey and under the terms of your tenancy agreement we have a right to access for visits in accordance with the Association's landlord function.

The survey is to your benefit as the tenant and provides you with the opportunity to discuss any concerns you have with our Building Services Officer. If you have any immediate concerns or defects these should be reported to us in the usual way.



Have you replaced your Radio Teleswitch meter, and are you on the right tariff?



The RTS service finally came to an end on 30 June 2026, so if you do still have an RTS meter you should contact your supplier urgently to arrange a replacement.

If you still have a Radio Teleswitch (RTS) meter in your property and have not yet organised to have it replaced, now is very much the time.

Even consumers who have not seen an impact to date from the switch-off could still see disruption to their heating and hot water provision over time.

The UK Government, which has contacted Liam McArthur, Orkney's MSP, with an update on progress with the RTS switch-off, says suppliers are confident in their capability to respond quickly to consumers seeing any impact, and that call centres and engineers remain poised to respond to consumers swiftly.

The Government says it is aware that the remote or rural areas of Scotland, including here in Orkney, have faced challenges in the past with obtaining appointments due to lack of installer resource or logistical challenges.

Mr McArthur has been encouraged by the UK Government to let them know of any consumers who may still be having difficulty in obtaining a meter exchange. If you fall into this category, the Association would be happy to forward your details to Mr McArthur so he can pass them on and hopefully get urgent action on your behalf.

And even if you have had your RTS meter replaced it is worth checking that you are on the best tariff for your needs, and that your Peak (Rate 1) and Off-Peak (Rate 2) balance is similar to what it was prior to the change, as we are still seeing instances where there is far too much usage being charged at Peak rate, leading to higher bills.



Need support or want to find out more?

If you require any support with having your meter replaced, or want to find out more about tariffs, please contact our Energy Officer, Robert Leslie, on **01856 875253 ext 404**, or by email at robert.leslie@ohal.org.uk.



The importance of leaving ventilation systems switched **ON** in your home



Keeping ventilation switched on helps remove moisture from the home and reduces the risk of condensation, damp and mould.

Our modern properties are well insulated and sealed to reduce heat loss, and as our older properties receive additional layers of loft insulation and more energy efficient windows and doors to help them retain heat, they too become more sealed making it more difficult for water vapour and indoor pollutants to naturally escape.

Trapped moisture within the home does not only affect people, it also affects the fabric of the building. Everyday activities such as cooking, showering, washing dishes, drying laundry indoors and even breathing release moisture into the air. If that moisture cannot escape, it will settle on cold surfaces, corners of rooms, behind and on furniture and on curtains as condensation. Over time, condensation can lead to damp patches and eventually mould growth, damage to decoration and musty smells. Please leave all ventilation isolation switches within the home switched ON at all times to help clear excess moisture from your home and help to prevent unwanted moisture-related issues such as condensation, damp and mould.

Having your heating set up to have a maintained heat of between 18°C–21°C within your home will also help to keep interior surfaces warm enough to help prevent water vapor in the air from

condensing. This constant temperature alongside keeping your ventilation systems operating correctly and opening windows to let moist stale air out and a fresh change of air in will also help to prevent moisture-related issues within your home.

Ventilation systems are not simply optional extras, they are effectively the lungs of your home and play an important role in keeping your home healthy, comfortable and protected from moisture-related issues. On many occasions it has been found that isolation switches and fuses to ventilation systems have been switched off or removed. These are required to be in and switched ON at all times and not tampered with once set up. If damp or mould develops because tenants have NOT used the equipment provided correctly, this falls outside of our control, and you may be recharged for treatment or remedial works for this. To avoid unnecessary charges, please leave all switches, fuses and settings as they should be so that the system installed can operate correctly and effectively within your home.

If you need energy advice, assistance with the setup and function of your ventilation system or have any questions please get in touch with us.



Poor Ventilation



Good Ventilation



Good ventilation supports a healthier home by allowing water vapour and indoor pollutants to escape before they settle on cold surfaces.



WHAT IS LEGIONELLA?

Legionella is a type of bacteria found naturally in freshwater environments, like lakes and streams. It can become a health concern when it grows and spreads in systems like showerheads, taps, hot water tanks and heaters. Legionnaires' Disease is a pneumonia-like illness, caused by inhalation of droplets of contaminated water containing the legionella bacteria. You cannot get Legionnaires' disease from drinking water.

Am I at risk of catching Legionnaires' Disease?

The likelihood of Legionella being in your home is very low as most households do not store huge amounts of water and water is used regularly so it's not usually standing still in pipes. Thankfully, catching Legionnaires' disease in your home is therefore rare. It is also not infectious, so it can't be passed from person to person. However, there is a possibility that when certain conditions exist in the home it increases your risk.

What can be done to minimise risk?

Legionnaires' disease is easily preventable by putting in place some simple control measures. Although the Association takes precautions on legionella being present in hot or cold water systems within its properties, tenants should follow these relatively simple guidelines to minimise the risk of Legionnaires' disease in their home:

- Ensure hot water is kept hot – contact the Association if your hot water system is not working;
- Ensure cold water is kept cold – your home is connected to the mains water supply, with pipes and tanks insulated to ensure the temperature remains low;
- The water you use is circulated – everyday use of your water systems will provide enough water movement to minimise stagnation;
- Flush through showers and taps for 10 minutes following a period of non-use (ie, after you have been on holiday or if a room is not in regular use);
- Keep all shower heads and taps clean and free from a build-up of lime scale, mould or algae growth; and
- Report any deposits such as rust or any unusual matter flowing from your water outlets.

Carrying out these simple precautions will help reduce the risk of bacterial build up in your hot and cold-water systems.



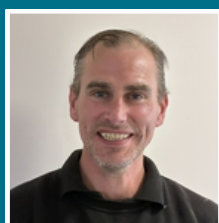
If you would like any further advice on Legionella Risk, please contact the office.

OUR REPAIRS SERVICE

Trades Men



Dennis
Chalmers



Roy
Mills



Erik
Sinclair



Stephen
Hadow



Neil
Foulis

Estates & Trades Team Assistants

OHA's Trades Team comprises 3 Trades Men and 2 Estates & Trades Team Assistants

We carry out repairs and maintenance for tenants in rented properties. Sharing owners are responsible for all their repairs and maintenance, unless it is classed as a communal area.

If there is something in your home that needs repairing, there are a number of ways you can report this to us. You should report repairs as soon as you become aware of them.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE

We will advise you of the timescales for completing your repair. Repairs are classed as emergency, urgent, non-urgent or routine and the table below provides some more information on how we categorise repairs:

REPORT A REPAIR

You can report any repair during office hours by:

- Calling the office on **875253** and choosing Option 2
- Online through our website
- By email to repairs@ohal.org.uk
- In person at the office

EMERGENCY REPAIRS

You can report emergency repairs (rented tenants only) out with office hours, during holidays and weekends by:

- Calling the emergency line on **886308**

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSE TIME
Emergency	Where there is a risk to life, a serious danger to health and safety or the potential for more extensive damage to the property.	0-6 hours
Urgent	Where there is no emergency but the risk is sufficient for the work to be carried out in a shorter time than a routine repair.	1 working day
Non-Urgent	Works not classed as an emergency but would cause a degree of inconvenience if not attended to within 3 days eg partial loss of electricity or water.	3 working days
Routine	All other repairs not included in the above categories.	20 working days

Further information on repairs and maintenance is contained in your Residents Handbook which can also be found on our [website](#)