

The Anchor

Barrhead Housing newsletter

 Barrhead
Housing



Tenant and Team Member

Meet Caroline Tait, a tenant who recently became a valued member of our team. Read her story on experiencing 'behind the scenes' at Barrhead Housing on page 2.



Meet The Hub

Get to know the Hub - Barrhead's main point of contact. Find out what they like most about their job.

In this edition:

- **Blackburn Square** – new housing project
- **Energy bills help** – support available to our customers
- **STV Feature** – read about Barrhead Housing being showcased on STV

Spring 2024

Tenant and Team Member

The transformative experience of becoming part of the Barrhead Housing team.

Meet Caroline Tait, a Barrhead Housing tenant, who recently became a valued member of our team.

Caroline's story is about the positive connection that formed when she became both a tenant and employee. We delve into her motivations and journey to joining our team.

Caroline's mum has been a Barrhead Housing tenant for 25 years. When Caroline returned to Scotland from South Africa five years ago, her mum suggested applying for a home with Barrhead Housing. Caroline did so and soon after moved into a flat close to her mum.

As a tenant, Caroline only saw Barrhead Housing as a landlord. She was surprised one day to receive an email about a community initiative looking for a tenant interested in getting back to work.

Initially, Caroline hesitated to apply. She was hesitant because of challenges with her mental health and confidence stemming from the pandemic. After a conversation with her mum and son, she decided to apply for the post and was successful.

Despite living in social housing, Caroline knew very little about the housing sector. She had heard some negative comments about the housing sector and was uncertain about what to expect in her new role.

When she started her new job, Caroline was overwhelmed by the kindness and compassion shown to her by her colleagues. Her fears about returning to work disappeared and she instantly felt like part of the team.

Caroline saw her colleagues also had compassion for tenants. They made a real effort to continuously improve the homes and lives of tenants.

Her team also asked for Caroline's opinion. It was great for them to get a tenant's perspective. They really valued and respected her opinions. It made such an impact on her confidence.

Caroline has found her 'behind-the-scenes' view of Barrhead Housing amazing. She wishes tenants could see the full extent of what social landlords do. She believes the staff at Barrhead Housing see their work as more than just a job—it's a calling.



Investors in People Gold Award

Barrhead Housing has achieved Investors in People GOLD accreditation. This is a significant moment for Barrhead Housing and it reflects the commitment and achievements of our staff. Congratulations!



Barrhead Housing STV Feature




Our latest new housing development at Dundarnock will be showcased on STV news. It's being highlighted as a prime example of high-quality homes built by a social landlord. We're proud to be featured given we're committed to providing homes that meet customers' needs and contribute positively to the community.

In the feature, Scott Stewart, our Director of Assets and Communities, talks about budget cuts that were announced recently by the Scottish Government. These will impact the ability to build more homes across the housing sector. We hope the report highlights the demand for more social homes. Scott also talked about the importance of investing in energy-efficient social housing.

Letter from a tenant

We're thrilled to share a letter from a delighted tenant. Our Welfare Rights Officer provides practical support to tenants every day. Often, she helps people get financial assistance that significantly improves their daily lives.

If you would like support from our Welfare Rights Officer, or any staff member, please reach out to us. We're here to help.



I SPOKE TO VIVIENNE WHO SUPPORTS TENANTS ABOUT FINANCIAL HELP WITH RENT, COUNCIL TAX AND OTHER BUSINESS SHE SUPPORTED ME WHEN I WAS FILLING IN CLAIM FORMS FOR ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE AS I WAS UNSURE WHAT TO DO AS I WAS NOT NOT FAMILIAR WITH D.W.P. QUESTIONS. WITHOUT VIVIENNES HELP I WOULD BE FIGHTING A LOSING BATTLE BUT WITH HER PROFESSIONALISM I WAS AWARDED THE BENEFIT WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO A MORE COMFORTABLE AND LESS STRESSFUL WAY OF LIFE SO I CAN ONLY THANK VIVIENNE FOR HER ENORMOUS SUPPORT IN EVERYTHING SHE HAS USED HER TIME AND EFFORT TO HELP EVERYONE. ALSO THANK YOU TO ALL BARRHEAD HOUSING STAFF IN ALL THEY DO.

Barrhead News and Updates

Allocations policy



The ongoing demand for housing in East Renfrewshire shows no signs of slowing down. Our waiting list for housing has doubled in the past 18 months. We currently have more applicants for our properties than we have homes to offer.

We want to make sure everyone has a safe, secure home in our community. Addressing homelessness is crucial. We have reviewed our allocation policy so we can help families leave unsuitable housing and temporary accommodation.

The policy sets out the eligibility criteria to prioritise housing needs. It considers your current housing situation, household size, and health conditions affected by your current home.

We have listened to the views of our customers and partners about how we prioritise our vacant properties. We have revised our rules to encourage those in larger homes who no longer need them

to move to a smaller home which better meets their needs. We are also making it easier for individuals leaving hospital, the armed forces, social care or domestic abuse situations to access housing.

We will offer more homes to homeless households. By helping them leave unsuitable temporary housing, we will help them move forward.

We will shortly publish our new allocations policy, along with a report about how we consulted with customers on this journey. Keep an eye on our website and social media for more details.



Rent increase consultation

We talked with you last year to find out what you valued most about being a tenant of Barrhead Housing. You told us you wanted a better repairs service, more investment in your homes and for us to continue delivering services to our communities. You also urged us to continue offering direct assistance to people struggling with the cost of living.

We considered these priorities when setting our rents for 2024/25. We want to make sure we deliver on what you expect of us.

We consulted on a rent increase of 6.6%. This aligned with the inflation rate in autumn 2023, with a slight adjustment to compensate for last year's lower increase. This will help us meet significantly higher costs of repairs, planned maintenance and investment.

We understand that any increase in rents is rarely popular and have tried to keep the proposed rent increase as low as possible. We want to meet your expectations but also remain financially sound to deliver our services for many years to come.

We will be in touch shortly to inform you of your monthly rent for 2024/25.

During the consultation, some tenants told us that they are struggling with the cost of living. We will be in touch with you directly to offer tailored advice and support based on your circumstances. Please contact us if you are struggling and we will arrange for a member of the team to discuss what we can do to help.



Supporting You



Working in your community - where and when you can see us

Our team are spending more time out and about in the community. You'll notice us visiting homes and inspecting outdoor areas. We are also working within community hubs providing advice and support.

Our customer service officers are responsible for managing tenancies. They also help resolve any problems that may arise.

We know it may not be easy to visit our office, but you might prefer meeting in person to discuss concerns. Our team will be available every Monday morning at the Auchenback Resource Centre from 10am to 1pm. Come along to see how we can help and maybe enjoy some free soup and pancakes while you're at it!

You can also find us at The Bank in Neilston on the first Tuesday of every month.

We will be at The Lodge at Cowan Park on the first Wednesday of each month, providing a private space to listen to you.

You can always reach us Monday to Friday during office hours, or on the phone or email if you're unable to visit us in person.



Energy bills help

Winter is drawing to a close, but energy bills remain as high as ever. We know our customers will be struggling, like everyone else across our communities, to keep bills as low as possible.

To help customers, we are working with East Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau. Together, we provide advice and practical support for households struggling with energy bills.

Every Tuesday, staff from Citizens Advice Bureau will be at our office providing information and help to those struggling.

Get in touch to see how we can help.

Damp, Mould & Condensation

One of our biggest priorities is addressing damp and mould. If you find damp or mould in your home, please reach out to us directly to schedule an inspection. This will let us identify the cause and put a solution in place.

Damp and mould can be caused by rising damp, penetrating damp or condensation. Rising damp and penetrating damp involve water or moisture entering the building fabric. This can sometimes cause mould to grow. It is crucial you report any signs of damp or mould immediately so we can address these matters before they escalate.

Condensation, however, arises from moisture produced by daily activities. Showering, cooking, and drying

clothes can cause condensation if there is insufficient ventilation. If moisture cannot escape, it settles on cold surfaces. Leaving this moisture can lead to the growth of mould spores and mildew in these areas.

We encourage tenants to keep their homes warm to minimise cold surfaces. Still, we understand this may be difficult given the cost-of-living crisis. Our most effective actions are improving ventilation using extractor fans and opening windows. Early intervention is crucial.

Reach out to us so we can help tackle damp and mould issues before they escalate.

Blackburn Square

We are working with East Renfrewshire Council on a new social housing project. We plan to build four to six new sustainable homes. The homes will be affordable to live in and made with sustainable materials. We will design them to meet the changing needs of people with health conditions.

The location is Blackburn Square, at the site of the old Auchenback Community Centre. East Renfrewshire Council approved transferring the land to Barrhead Housing in January. The next step for this project is to start site investigation works. Soon after we will appoint a design team to compile essential building specifications.

We asked local people and partners for their views last year. The project got full support. Later this year we will host design consultation events at Auchenback Resource Centre. We encourage everyone interested in the project to be there. We will use what we learn from this project to shape future housing projects.

Assets
Update



Kitchen Contract

We know how important it is that we continually work to improve your homes. We have appointed MCN Limited to install Howdens kitchens in 70 properties this year.

Since August 2023, we have installed 62 new kitchens in your homes. We are on track to complete the programme by the end of March 2024.

This year, we focused primarily on enhancing kitchens in the Auchenback area of Barrhead. Next year's programme will focus on the central area of Barrhead. The surveying phase of this project has already started.

We're committed to maintaining an efficient annual programme of home improvements. By doing this, we want to continually improve people's living standards and community wellbeing.



Windows Contract

In the last year, we have replaced windows in the flats at Centenary Court, and in Saunders Court and its surrounding area. We have successfully completed the installation of new windows in 112 properties and six common close areas.

It's an extensive programme and our next focus will be on South Park Avenue, North Park Avenue, and Centre Way. We'll install windows and doors in 104 properties in these areas.

This represents a substantial investment to enhance the quality and energy efficiency of your homes. It reflects our commitment to improving living standards and making homes sustainable and comfortable for the long term.



Estates Update



Grass Cutting

Spring is almost here and our grass cutting season starts on 1 April. We work in partnership with John O'Connor to deliver this service.

Our customer services officers will monitor the quality of this service when they are out visiting your estates. Our Customer Services Manager, Kim Quinn, also meets regularly with our contractor to monitor the service, pass on your feedback and discuss any issues that arise.

If you have any feedback about this service, let us know by phone, email, or by visiting us in person.



Your home, your tenancy



In the past year our customer services officers have been out visiting as many of our tenants as possible. Visiting you in your home lets us check in on your wellbeing. We can also see if there's anything we can do to assist you and your household.

We've found this process incredibly valuable. It means we understand better the challenges our customers face. And this better understanding lets us pinpoint areas where we can improve our services. Based on your feedback, we're delighted that you've appreciated our presence in your home, listening to your concerns, and actively addressing issues.

We will continue this effort into the next financial year, striving to visit as many tenants as possible to offer assistance.

Your local customer services officer will reach out to you to schedule visits throughout the year. Please feel free to contact us if you'd like a visit sooner.

Our customer services officers can offer expert advice and support on a range of areas. They have knowledge about tenancy management, referrals to specialist assistance, neighbour relations and much more.

Get in touch to see how we can help you. We are here to support you every step of the way.

Here comes the sun

Spring is nearly upon us. We can't wait to start seeing the flowers blooming and grass growing again.

Our customer services officers continue to be out and about. They visit our estates to identify areas needing attention from our landscaping contractor. They also make sure shared spaces remain clear and tidy, free from litter and bulky waste. We want our communities to be a source of pride for all those who live there.

We work closely with the Mixed Tenure Squad at East Renfrewshire Council. Together, we help to keep your neighbourhoods clean and tidy. We take a zero-tolerance approach to fly-tipping in our communities. Action will be taken against those who continue to disregard their neighbours by leaving their refuse in open areas.

Get in touch if you have any neighbourhood issues you would like to discuss with us. We can arrange for your local customer services officer to visit the area to see how we can help.

Garden Competition



Our customer services officers will watch for winning entries. They will do this while they are out and about.

- Most Improved Garden
- Best Back Court
- Best Balcony

The garden competition comprises of four categories:

- Best Garden

Please submit a nomination via the link on the news page on our website.

The closing date for nomination is Friday 9 August 2024.

Community Investment

Social Work Student Placement

We have collaborated with Learning Network West. In partnership with local universities, we can provide 80-day work placements for social work students.

Those students can gain a deeper understanding of the services and how community-based housing associations work. They can also understand how housing associations support social services.

These placements will equip the students with the skills and knowledge they need to support social services in our community. Students will gain practical insights and contribute to our community's welfare.

In January, we were excited to welcome Chloe as our first placement student. Here's her feedback about her first weeks with us.

“Over the last few weeks, I've explored working with a wide network of people at Barrhead Housing. I get to meet people from various backgrounds, ages, and abilities. This is a crucial learning opportunity in my course. The communication skills I've learned from this will be valuable in my career.

I have learned a lot about community work. Good connections with the community are valuable. They help a housing association run well. Barrhead Housing have been accommodating and welcoming. I'm very excited to see how much more I can learn across the next few weeks.”



Our
**Brighter
Futures**
Barrhead
**Community
Investment
Activities
Timetable**

The Scottish Government's Investing in Communities grant funds the activities. Most are free and a few have a small charge. If there is something you fancy, why not come along to give it a try?

What	Where	When	Who to contact
Community Café: Free Soup and Pancakes	Auchenback Resource Centre	Every Monday 10am – 1pm Free	No need to book, drop in
Incahootz Drama Group	St John's Church Hall and Dunterlie Resource Centre	Young Person Activities: Acting Aces (P1-P4): 4pm – 4.45pm Mondays Drama Llamas P5-7: 4.45pm – 5.45pm Mondays Youth theatre P7 to 6th Year: 6pm-7.15pm on Mondays Dunterlie adult drama: Wednesdays 1.20pm-3.30pm All Free	Annmarie Annmarie@incahootz.co.uk
Dunterlie Arts and Crafts	Dunterlie Resource Centre	Every Thursday 12.30pm -2.30pm Free	Lynn linnie200@icloud.com
Dunterlie Food Share	Dunterlie Resource Centre	Every Friday at 11.30am - 12.30pm Free	No need to book, if you live in a G78 postcode you can pop along and receive a free bag of food
Exercise Classes	Dunterlie Resource Centre and Auchenback Resource Centre	Every Monday 9.30am-10.30am - Auchenback Every Monday 6.30pm-7.30pm - Dunterlie All Free	Steph wakeupwithsteph@gmail.com
Dunterlie Baby and Tots Group	Dunterlie Resource Centre	Every Wednesday 10.30am-12.30pm £1.50 per Child and 50p for additional children	Cara dunterliebabyandtots@gmail.com
Bump, Babies & Blether – Chat all things babies	Dunterlie Resource Centre	Tuesdays 9.45-11.15am Free	Jolene jolene280109@hotmail.com
Family Cooking Workshops	Auchenback Resource Centre and Dunterlie Resource Centre	Various 6 week blocks Free	Louisa info@totnosh.net
Digital Drop In – Help with anything Digital	Auchenback Resource Centre	Wednesdays 1.45pm-4.45pm Free	No need to book, drop in, or contact Lynsey: lynsey.ng@ercultureandleisure.org

Meet the Hub

L to R – Jade, Kimberley, Nicola, Mark



Our Hub team provides a range of support and services to our customers.

There are four members in the team led by Jade Byers, the Customer Services Hub Team Leader. Working with her are three Customer Services Advisors - Mark McLean, Kimberley Whitten, and Nicola Roy.

You've probably spoken to someone in the Hub. They are your main point of contact when you phone or email us. One of their main jobs day-to-day is dealing with repairs. But they have extensive knowledge and handle a diverse range of queries about housing. The Hub is the central point of contact for customers looking for help or information.

Here's what the Hub staff said they like most about their job

Jade said "no two days are the same – which keeps me on my toes"

Kimberley said "Knowing customers can call us for anything and we will do our best to provide the best possible outcome"

Mark said "we are given the autonomy to make real change at Barrhead Housing"

Nicola said "helping our customers with their housing journey. We are always kept busy."

Barrhead Housing Information

Study Participants Needed

Take part in a research study exploring how to tackle stigma.

The Intersectional Stigma of Place-based Ageing project is searching for individuals to take part in a diary study. Participants need to be 45 years or older and have a disability.

Participants will need to keep a diary for one week on three occasions each year, over a two-year period.

You have the flexibility to decide how you want to document your diary entries. It can be through photos, voice recordings, or written notes. After submitting three completed diary entries, participants will receive a £25 voucher as a token of appreciation for your participation.

To join, please download the information leaflet from our website. You'll find full details about the study and contact information to participate.



Initiative of the Year Nomination



We're excited to share that we've been nominated for Initiative of the Year at the All About Barrhead Awards. We were nominated for the community support we offered during the Christmas season.

We teamed up with CX-Feedback, who provides our online customer engagement tool. Together, we prepared 600 Christmas food bags for customers. Our kitchen contractor, MCN Limited, supported us to distribute the bags. It took over three days, dropping off at community centres and visiting door-to-door.

We also had 800 selection boxes donated by James Frew, our heating contractor. We distributed them to a range of diverse organisations within the community. We also gave them out during our annual Christmas party. Even Santa Claus made a special appearance to meet the families and give gifts to our youngest customers.



You Said, We Did

Our customers told us that...

They got a letter from the DWP about switching from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit.

Our customers told us that...

They appreciate the effort and compassion of the team

Our customers told us that...

They're grateful for our involvement in the community, our visits, and our efforts to assist them as much as possible.

We have...

Identified people who will be affected by the migration to Universal Credit. We are working with those individuals to maximise their household income.

We are...

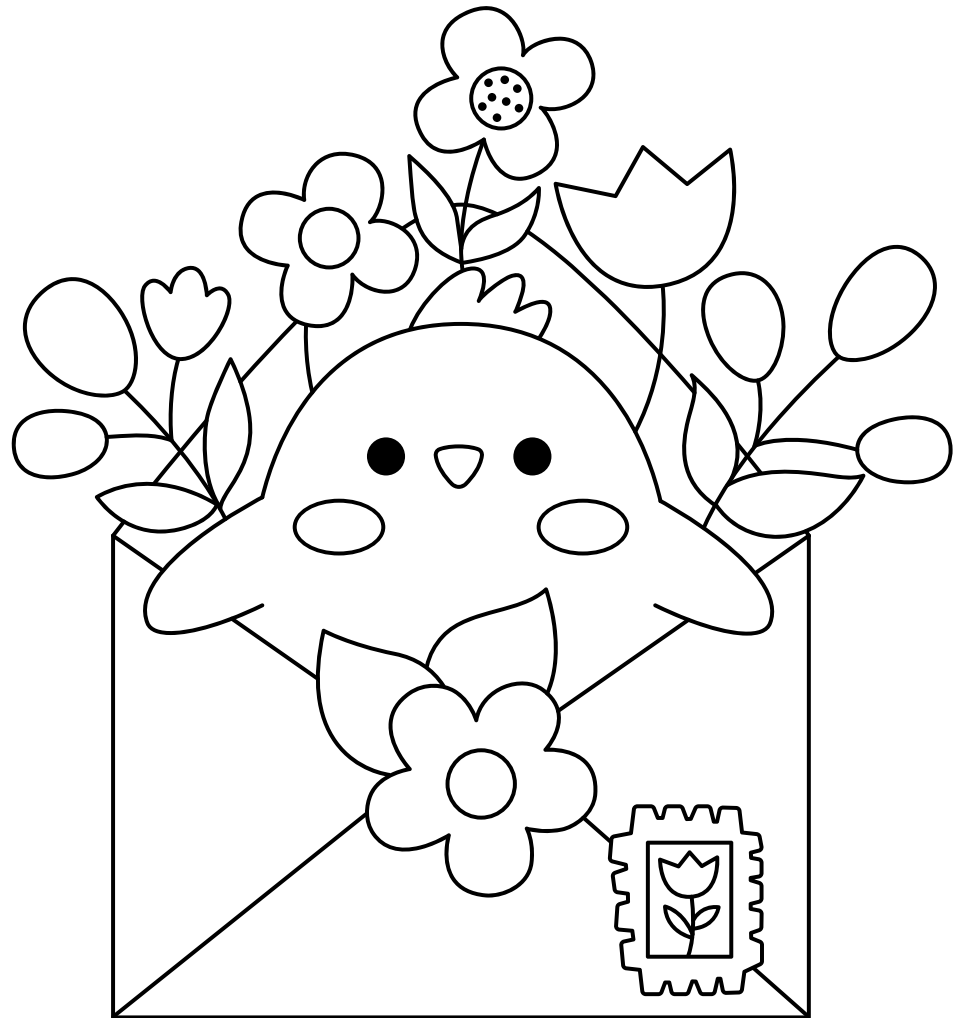
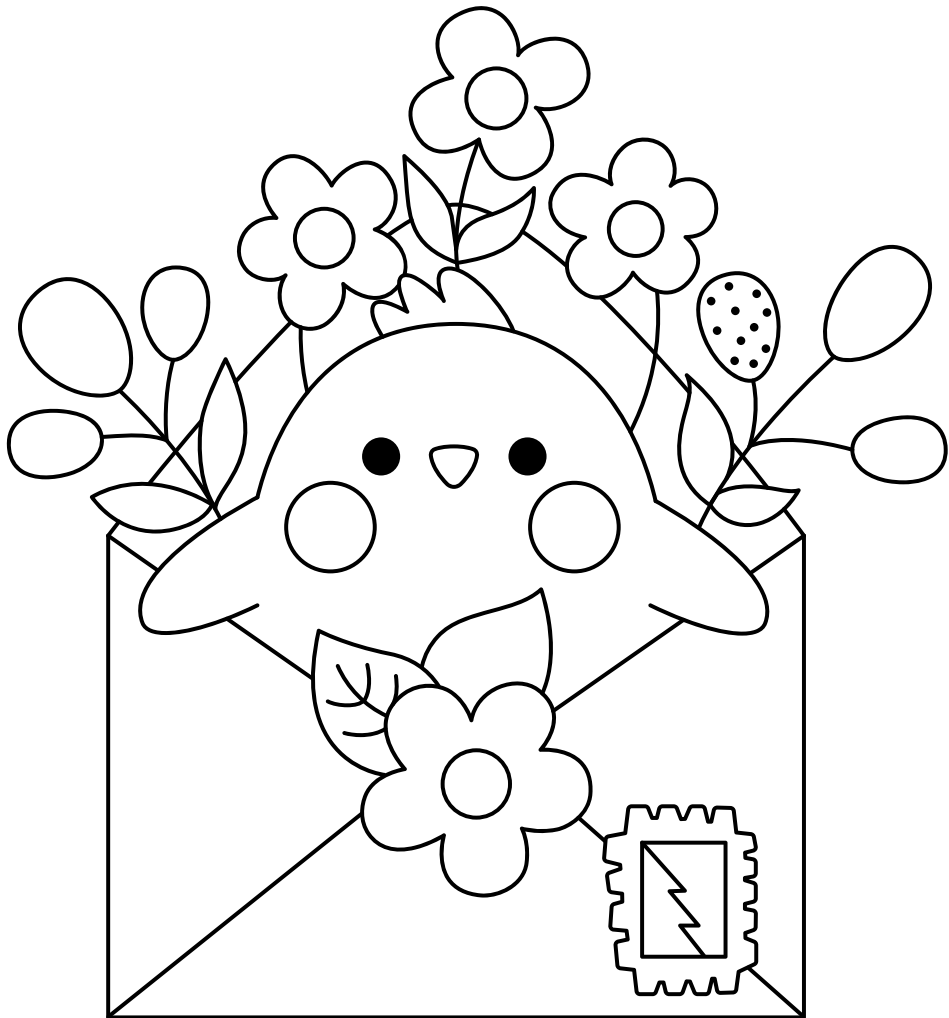
Encouraging team members to record compliments from customers to share with the team

We continue...

To let our customers know who we are, where to find us, and how we can support them through social media, texts, newsletters, and visits.

Can you find 10 differences?

There are 10 differences between the two drawings below - can you spot them all?
When you're done, you can colour them in too!



We believe that everyone deserves to live in a secure, good quality, well-maintained home within communities that are safe, supported and inclusive.

We are always here to help

Call us: 0141 881 0638

Email: enquiries@barrheadha.org

Web: www.barrheadha.org

Out of hours repairs: 0800 652 0633

Download the Barrhead Housing App from the Google or Apple Stores.

Follow us

 Follow us on Facebook

 Tweet @BarrheadHousing

Office Opening Times

Monday 09:00 – 17:00

Tuesday 09:00 – 17:00

Wednesday 09:00 – 17:00

Phone and email service

Thursday 09:00 – 17:00

Friday 09:00 – 16:00

