



Were open  
Tuesday  
5 Jan 2016  
at 9.00am

*Listen  
to our festive  
jingle on our new  
improved website  
[www.irvineha.co.uk](http://www.irvineha.co.uk)*



*Season's  
Greetings and  
Best Wishes for  
2016!*

*As always our  
Customer Service  
Centre  
is open 24/7  
over the holidays!*

**0345 112 6600**



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Welcome to the Winter edition of House & Home

Since our summer newsletter there's been lots happening at IHA. Our customer service centre celebrated its first birthday in October. It's great to hear the advisors handling your calls and dealing with various enquiries on one call. It definitely lives up to our vision of having a one-stop-shop where customers have one point of contact and aren't being passed from pillar to post.

We launched a new website in November which will also offer greater flexibility for customers as we introduce a range of personalised services. Firstly, being able to view your rent statement online. Work is currently underway to get this service online asap.

Our support services have been helping customers with energy debts, benefits claims and employment. There are some great success stories featured inside.

We welcomed three new Board Members in September - read about them on page 10.

We've been carrying out various festive activities from donating to Santa Aid and the foodbank to recording our Christmas greeting - view it online at [www.irvineha.co.uk](http://www.irvineha.co.uk)

Have a lovely Christmas and best wishes for 2016!



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## Stay SAFE for SANTA!

Ensure your contents are insured.

Clear your paths with salt...or cheap cat litter works as an alternative.

Follow recommended age ranges on toy packages. Toys that are too advanced could pose a safety hazard for younger children.

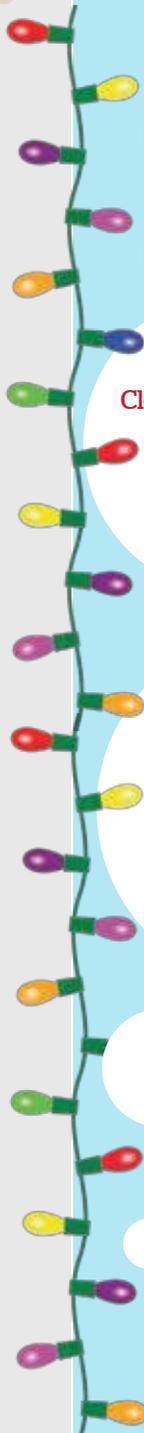
Remember to buy batteries for toys that need them - that way you won't be tempted to remove batteries from smoke alarms.

Unplug fairy lights and put out candles before bed.

Do not overload sockets.

Keep an eye on kids when cooking...turn in pot handles.

Always keep raw foods and cooked foods separate, and use separate utensils when preparing them.



# How our services could help you...

We helped a customer clear over  
**£5k**  
of gas and electric debt in October

If you are struggling to pay your energy bills or would like to pay less, our Affordable Warmth Officer, Kathryn Morrison could help.

Kathryn has been supporting an elderly tenant and her family since February when the family started the struggle to have their mother assessed for dementia.

After discovering several years of unpaid energy bills leading to court action our Money Advice Team were able to put a referral through to Kathryn who successfully negotiated with EONs legal team to halt further action.

After months of ongoing work which saw the case escalate to EONs executive team Kathryn was able to get all £5178.22 of debt cleared and a future payment plan set in place.

This not only allows one of our vulnerable tenants to keep her heat on this winter, but means that her daughter is able to focus her time and attention on giving her mother the support she needs.

**For more information please contact: Kathryn Morrison, Affordable Warmth Officer on 01294 316756.**

Our Employability Officer, Gillian Scott has been working with many of our customers to support them in the right direction towards employment.

Gillian recently helped a tenant who was looking to return to work following a relationship breakdown. Having been involved with the family business for over 20 years, she was unable to obtain references.

She picked up a leaflet on our employability service while in at reception and contacted Gillian for advice.

After getting advice from Gillian and looking into employability options, we explored a few different areas of work. It was apparent that she was a caring person and so working in the care industry seemed like the right path.

Gillian updated her CV, helped to complete application forms and worked on her confidence. She didn't have anything suitable to wear to an interview and Gillian was able to give her vouchers to get her kitted out.

This journey had a bumpy ride to start with as her confidence was low and she doubted her own abilities, however once she started attending interviews there was no stopping her,

In the end she was offered four jobs at the one time. She opted for a local authority care position where she has now completed her training and is working in the community.

She thoroughly enjoys her role and said she couldn't have done it without Gillian's help and support.

**For more information please contact: Gillian Scott, Employability Officer on 01294 316752.**



# Money Talks...



Clair Christie and Jocelyn McConnell have helped hundreds of customers to maximise their income. From checking what benefits customers are entitled to and assisting with applications to providing debt advice and applying for grants, their service has become a lifeline for many customers.

They recently helped a customer who has been a tenant since 2006. Suffering from mental health problems he has struggled to engage with Housing Officers throughout the years. This led him to accrue arrears, as well as having issues with his benefits.

He was first referred to our money advice service when his housing officer noticed that he was living very minimally. Jocelyn met with the customer and applied for a Community Care Grant. He was

awarded a carpet, clothing allowance, electric cooker, fridge freezer, home starter pack and a washing machine.

A benefit check was carried out, and it became apparent that the customer had not received any benefits since May 2014 due to him not attending a medical for Employment Support Allowance (ESA). Jocelyn helped him make a new claim for ESA, however this was initially refused. He was then assisted to claim Jobseekers Allowance while Jocelyn made an appeal for ESA. While applying for his benefits the customer received 2 Crisis Payments from the Scottish Welfare Fund as well as foodbank vouchers and gas and electricity from the Association's nominated charity, The AQ Trust. The Affordable Warmth Officer also applied for his Warm Homes Discount of £140.

Jocelyn applied to Housing Benefit for a back date as it had been suspended from May 2014. This was awarded and £3,083 was paid which completely cleared his arrears. His account is now in credit, for the first time in years.

His appeal for ESA was finally awarded and he received a back date of benefits totalling £3,859. He was put on the highest rate of ESA and is now liaising with his Housing Officer and has fortnightly appointments with his doctor who is closely monitoring his health issues.

There are many different charities and funds available e.g. two of our customers have worked in the farming industry and were eligible for grants of £1,100 annually. Help is not only available for customers receiving benefits - maybe you're on a low income? Have had a change of circumstances?

If you've worked in a particular industry, it only takes a phone call to one of our money advisors to find out if you can access any funding.

Could our  
money advisors  
**help**  
you?

Call Clair or Jocelyn on 01294 316784 or 01294 316775

# CSC CELEBRATIONS

Our virtual Customer Service Centre (CSC) celebrated its first birthday in October. There were double celebrations as the Riverside CSC based in Liverpool celebrated 18 years of helping with customer enquiries.



Alan Gray, Team Leader heads up the team of eight advisors based in our Irvine office, "Over the last year the CSC in Irvine has become an established part of the bigger team based in Speke, taking calls from IHA customers but also acting as an overflow team for Riverside customers.

In April 2015 we had a 2nd Virtual Call Centre set up in Cumbria for Riverside's Carlisle customers which was great as it meant that as part of our tenants feedback local people were talking to local tenants wherever possible!

Due to the continued growth of the Virtual Call Centre in Irvine we saw further recruitment in June with each of our advisors bringing a diverse set of skills gained from their previous employment and we now have a fantastic team who have settled in to their roles and created a great "team" environment in Irvine.

I'm really looking forward to the next 12 months where hopefully we will see continued growth in both Virtual Teams!"



The virtual CSC not only ensures consistency for customers, it also helped to provide jobs for local people in Irvine and in Cumbria. In November we were awarded a Riverside STAR Award - which recognises and rewards the excellent work of employees - for the set up of the virtual CSC in Irvine.



# Happy Customer



*I wish to give my sincere gratitude to everyone involved with renovating my bathroom. The shower is so much safer and a pleasure to use. Can I thank especially the team of joiners and plumbers involved. They were so professional and friendly. Even the apprentice was so courteous. You should be proud of them all, especially Katie as they are all a credit to their employers.*

*Yours sincerely  
Maureen Findlay*

## Aids & adaptations

An adaptation is a piece of equipment, extra fitting or minor alteration to your home. If you or a family member would benefit from some changes to your home to make life easier and safer, an adaptation could help.

To ensure that your needs are fully met, all adaptations require an Occupational Therapist Report assessment, and currently, funding for all adaptations is subject to grants being provided by The Scottish Government.

Please contact your local social services Occupational Therapist for an assessment of your needs.

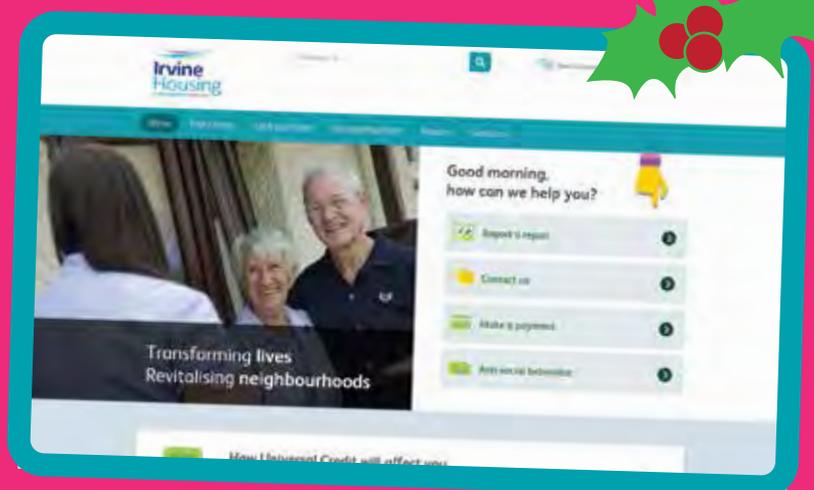
## NEW WEBSITE!

We launched a new improved website in November. We have completely redesigned the layout to make it simpler and easier to navigate.

The new design adapts according to the screen size so can be viewed on anything from a smart-phone or tablet to a desktop computer.

Over the coming months we will be introducing more personalised services including enabling customers to check their rent statement online.

Enjoy the freedom to use services your way



or simply explore the whole range of useful tips, advice and information.

Take a look and tell us what you think at [www.irvineha.co.uk](http://www.irvineha.co.uk)

# FESTIVE DONATIONS



There are few things sadder than the thought of children waking up on Christmas Day without any gifts to open - but that's the reality for many kids in North Ayrshire every year.

Over the last five years the Salvation Army Santa Aid toy appeal (in partnership with the Irvine Herald) has helped thousands of primary school aged children. Working in conjunction with schools and nurseries across North Ayrshire, children will be identified and their siblings. Last year more than 2,000 parcels were gathered and distributed. IHA staff have been supporting this appeal since 2010 and this will be our 6th year making sure every child in North Ayrshire wakes up with a present!

Staff have also donated festive treats to the North Ayrshire Foodbank.



Lyndsay McLaughlan, Marketing Officer said, "We wanted to donate some Christmas treats that can be added into the standard food parcels. As a distributor for the foodbank we meet many of the people using the service ranging from working parents trying to make ends meet to the pensioner having their benefits stopped due to the cuts, single mothers working but not earning enough to cover all their bills and skipping their own meals to feed their children. We want to ensure everyone gets a meal at Christmas."

their own meals to feed their children. We want to ensure everyone gets a meal at Christmas."

# MY FUTURE.. MY ENERGY



We visited pupils at Abbey Primary, Corsehill Primary and St Winnings Primary to deliver interactive sessions on careers advice and energy efficiency to the Kilwinning youngsters.

To celebrate Energy Saving Week Kathryn Morrison, Affordable Warmth Officer delivered interactive presentations to P5 pupils on what we do to protect the environment, as well as tips on recycling, being energy efficient and small changes we can make around the home and school to reduce waste.

Kathryn also covered how we make our homes energy efficient and how she helps customers to lower their fuel bills.

The presentations finished with a poster competition where the pupils were asked to design a poster for Energy Saving Week. All pupils received an IHA goody bag and energy saving workbook full of information, tips and quizzes on being 'green'.

Gillian Scott, Employability Officer at Irvine Housing Association delivered an interactive session entitled 'My Future' to P7s. This is aimed at pupils who are moving onto secondary school after the summer and highlights how important it is to leave school with qualifications as well as aiding discussion around what they want to be when they grow up.

Pupils received a 'My Future' workbook, produced by IHA, and with direction from Gillian, they were able to explore the skills they already have and the types of skills their dream job may require. This interactive session helped the pupils look into a variety of careers and how their skills can be transferred to jobs they may not have even considered. Gillian rounded off the day with 3 words - chase your dream!



We will be carrying out further sessions with schools in our areas of operation.

# SCRUTINY

We scooped 2 accolades at the annual Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland awards in November!

Joan McTurk, our Community Involvement Officer was awarded Tenant Participation Champion of the Year for her outstanding contribution to tenant participation!

And we were also runners up in the Best Practice In Involving Customers in Services category. Paul McGregor, Chair of our Scrutiny Group collected the award.

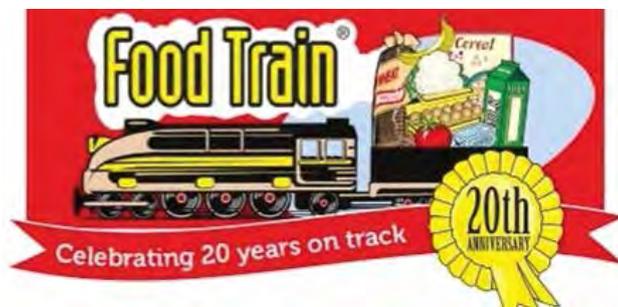


Tenant Participation Champion of the Year



Best Practice in Involving Customers in Services

Paul is also on Riverside's National Scrutiny Committee (known as the NSC) along with scrutiny group members Michael Fullerton and Allan Paton. The NSC is a group of trained tenants and customers who check our performance to ensure you are getting the service you are entitled to. They are independent and hold us to account in terms of the services provided to you and your neighbours.



The Food Train operates in Dumfries & Galloway and North Ayrshire. Local volunteers provide weekly deliveries of fresh groceries to older people experiencing difficulties doing their weekly grocery shopping, ensuring they can eat well, live well and age well.

### How does it work?

Customers complete a blank shopping list which is collected by a volunteer; a blank shopping list is left with customer for next time. Shopping is completed and delivered by a volunteer at local shops on a nominated day. Shopping is delivered in a box which is unpacked by volunteers. Volunteers will also put things away if needed.

### Who can use the Food Train?

Customers must be 65 and over due to the type of funding the Food Train receives. Customers must be unable or have difficulty getting their grocery shopping.

### How much does it cost?

£1 for one year's membership - this is paid when beginning the service and provides access to additional services as well.  
£3 per delivery - this is paid alongside the cost of the shopping at the point of delivery.

### Contact Details

Dumfries & Galloway - 01387 270800  
[everything@thefoodtrain.co.uk](mailto:everything@thefoodtrain.co.uk)

North Ayrshire - 01294 271025  
[northayrshire@thefoodtrain.co.uk](mailto:northayrshire@thefoodtrain.co.uk)

More information on the Food Train and the range of services provided is available at [www.thefoodtrain.co.uk](http://www.thefoodtrain.co.uk)

# NEW BOARD MEMBERS

We welcomed three new Board Members in September.



Nathaniel Alexander

Nathaniel is a Solicitor in private practice with DW Shaw; and a Solicitor member of the Law Society of Scotland as well as a member of the Scottish Young Lawyers Association.

Nathaniel specialises in chambers practice including property and housing matters. He previously worked with the DWP for almost 10 years.



Janice Murray

Janice has over 20 years' experience in community involvement, ranging from supporting and setting up a variety of projects to volunteering within her local community.

Janice was also a member of Irvine Housing Association's tenant scrutiny panel for 2 years, during this time she gained her CIH Level 3 in Resident Scrutiny Involvement.



Karen Osborne

Karen is a Solicitor at Govan Law Centre, specialising in Housing Law. Karen has a background in welfare rights and debt advice and was previously employed by North Ayrshire Council and a Housing Association as a money advisor.

Once again we sponsored the North Ayrshire Sports Hall Athletics, in partnership with Ayrshire Harriers Club Association and Scottish Athletics.

More than 800 Primary pupils from 37 North Ayrshire schools are off and running in their bid to become the 2015/16 Sports Hall Athletics champions.

The competition involves Primary six and seven pupils competing in a series of running, jumping and throwing events, specially developed for indoor competition.

The grand final will be held at the Magnum Leisure Centre, Irvine in December.



We also sponsored KA Leisure's Halloween Bash, encouraging kids to try sports for free.



The one day event featured games, activities, swimming, competitions and a roller disco.

# GOLDEN GARDENS

In July we judged our annual In Bloom Garden Competition where customers were awarded for bringing some colour to IHA's streets.

Once again the Association was impressed with the standard of entries. Technical Officer, John Howie said, "It's great to see our customers taking pride in their home and their area. Front gardens make such a difference to the overall look of an area and brighten the place up - especially with the weather we've had! Congratulations to this year's winners!"

This year's Harbourside in Bloom First Prize went to Michael Fullerton & Anne-Marie Carson. Their colourful display was a real show-stopper, attracting many passers-by.

Michael said, "We would like to thank Irvine Housing Association for our first prize award for the Harbourside In Bloom competition. The weather was not kind to the garden this year; however we managed to create a nice show. We

would like to encourage all Harbourside tenants to get involved, you don't need to be an expert in horticulture, a few nice tubs and planters or some nice baskets are all that's required to help brighten up our streets."

David and Cathy Martin received Second Prize and Pamela Miller was awarded Third Prize.

The wider In Bloom competition attracted some new entries. Winning First Prize were James McCulloch and Yvonne McKenzie from Drongan. The couple's lawn and flower beds really brighten up the area.

They said, "We are delighted to accept the prize for best garden. We enjoy spending time in our garden with the kids. Thank you to Joanne MacLellan, housing officer for suggesting we enter and also thank you to IHA for the prize."

Second prize was awarded to Jean Robertson at West Doura Court, Kilwinning, and third prize went Mr & Mrs Frew, also from West Doura Court.





S4 Kilwinning Academy pupils Reagan Christie, Rachel Reid and Rachel Gorman presented their way to raising £300 for our nominated charity, The AQ Trust.

The girls were granted the money through the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) where pupils research social issues affecting their community and analyse local charities working to address these issues.

Reagan explains why they were interested in The AQ Trust, “We chose The AQ Trust as the charity helps vulnerable people in our communities. I visited the

charity to meet the trustees and gain a more detailed understanding of the work they do. We presented our findings to the school, guests and a panel of judges. We were delighted when we found out we’d been granted £300 for The AQ Trust and couldn’t wait to tell them.”

“It has been a rewarding real-life experience and has given me a greater appreciation of the issues affecting people in Ayrshire.”

“I can’t thank the AQT enough as they helped when I had nowhere else to turn.”

Service User

The girls are pictured presenting the cheque to AQ Trust trustee, Phyllis Rodgers on Tuesday 8 September.

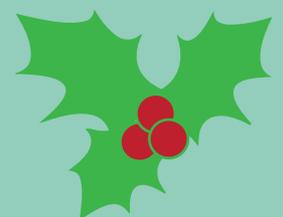
Phyllis said, “We were delighted when the girls contacted The AQ Trust to learn more about us and the work we do. The YPI is a fantastic initiative that inspires and empowers youth to make a difference in our community, and a hands-on opportunity to learn social responsibility.”

“We’d like to congratulate the girls on their successful presentation and thank them for this kind donation. This money will be used to offer crisis support and practical help to people throughout Ayrshire.”

Since its launch in March 2012 The AQ Trust has assisted 664 people in crisis throughout Ayrshire. The charity mainly assists its customers with:

- White Goods
- Beds/Bedding
- Fuel Top-ups
- Start-up packs
- Transport costs

For further information about the AQ Trust please contact 0345 112 6600.





## Parking in Hammerheads

It has been noted that residents are parking in hammerheads on our estates.

Hammerheads are designed to allow vehicles to turn and provide access for emergency vehicles to deal promptly with emergencies.

Communal car parking has been provided on our estates. In certain areas there are individual garages in gardens or attached to properties, separate lock-ups and also a small number of parking spaces provided for individual use.

We appreciate that in some instances there are less spaces than are cars as some households may have more than one car - a sign of the times. However, it is important that there is access for ambulances and other emergency vehicles.

**Recently due to cars being parked in a hammerhead, Fire Services were obstructed in carrying out their duties whilst attending a house fire.**

We hope that you and your visitors will assist and refrain from using the hammerheads as an additional car park. This may mean you have to park your car further away from your home than you would like, but this action could help save lives.

Gillian Scott, Employability Officer and Joan McTurk, Community Involvement Officer have completed the 12 week NHS Weigh to Go programme at West Doura Court sheltered complex in Kilwinning. Ten residents actively participated with a fantastic combined weight loss of three stone - well done West Doura!

Joan said, "As well as delivering weekly healthy eating and weight loss workshops, we have used this as an opportunity to engage with the residents to promote the other support services we have on offer. This has resulted in ten referrals to money advice and ten referrals to affordable warmth.

We will visit the unit again in three months to review residents' progress. In the meantime, we have recruited one of the participants as a volunteer "champion" who will continue with weekly weigh-ins for anyone who wants it."

A second 12 week programme started at Hawthorn Place, Kilwinning in October.

# Stay **FROST FREE** this Winter!

**In the event of a burst pipe, turning off the cold water stopcock will immediately minimise damage. Your stopcock is usually under the kitchen sink, or in a pipe chase in the ground floor toilet. If you are unsure please call our Customer Services Team on 0345 112 6600. When turned off there should be no water supply at your kitchen sink cold tap.**

## Useful Numbers

**I have no gas** - call your gas supplier.

**I can smell gas** - call TRANSCO on 0800 111 999.

**I would like my heating system drained down** - call Customer Services on 0345 112 6600

**I have no heating/hot water** - call Customer Services on 0345 112 6600.

**I have no water at all** - call Scottish Water Emergency Helpline - 0845 600 8855.

**I have frozen pipes** - If you get frozen pipes, turn off the water at the stopcock, turn on all taps to sinks and bath and contact Customer Services on 0345 112 6600.

**I have a burst pipe** - Act fast and follow the steps below to ensure that damage is kept to a minimum!

Turn off water at the stopcock.

Turn on all taps and flush the toilet to drain the system of any water.

If the burst pipe is within the central heating pipework, radiators etc, turn off your central heating system.

Bind the leak tightly with a towel placing a basin or bucket below to catch any drips.

If near electricity cables or cables are wet, turn off electricity at the mains.

Call our Customer Services Team immediately on 0345 112 6600.

If going on holiday leave the heating system on at a continuous setting of 10°C. As long as your gas and electricity supplies are left on, the heating system will operate as normal to protect against frost damage. Alternatively we can have your system drained down and filled/repressurised on your return for around £40.

Keep your home reasonably warm, both day and night - set your thermostat to a minimum of 10°C.

## FESTIVE OPENING HOURS

Our offices will close at 12.30pm on Thursday 24 December 2015 and will re-open on Tuesday 5 January 2016 at 9.00am.

You can still access our services over the festive period by calling our Customer Service Centre on 0345 112 6600.

### Availability in other formats

If your circumstances require a copy of this publication in another language or another form (such as Braille or audio tape) please tell us and we will seek to provide you with a copy as soon as we are able.

### Equal opportunities

The Association will endeavour to ensure that no person or organisation receives any less favourable treatment than another unless it can be reasonably shown to be. The Association is opposed to any improper discrimination and will take appropriate steps within its powers as an employer, service provider and receiver of services to counteract any such improper discrimination.

**Registration No. 2459 R(S) and Registered with  
The Scottish Housing Regulator No. HAL 280.  
Registered Scottish Charity No. SC042251**

