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Hillcrest News

Tenant Newsletter Summer 2022



This document is available in
larger print or audio format, and
in other languages if required.

Foreword

Welcome to our summer 2022 edition of Hillcrest News.

As we enjoy summer and the warmer weather it brings, it feels like we're getting back to normal following the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, just as we recover from a global crisis, we find ourselves now facing a national cost of living crisis. Energy bills have risen sharply and inflation has seen a significant rise in the cost of household bills.

For those struggling with these increased costs, help is available. Throughout this newsletter, you'll learn how our teams can reduce energy bills, find out what benefits you may be entitled to and we also provide information on available grants and how to get your groceries for less.

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter.

Angela Linton

Chief Executive, Hillcrest



5 TOP ENERGY-SAVING TIPS to take the chill out of bills!

Although the weather may be warmer, it's still worth keeping some simple money-saving actions in mind around the home to trim that little bit extra off your bills. These tips will stand you in good stead in making your winter bills more manageable when the colder weather eventually begins to creep in again and can reduce your energy bill by up to £275 per year.

- 1** Turning down your thermostat by a single degree won't make a noticeable difference to the temperature of your home, but it can save you around £146 per year. The more you turn it down, the more you'll save but don't go below 18 degrees or you could then begin to develop damp and condensation.
- 2** Many devices such as games consoles and TVs will still use power even when on standby, so turn them off completely to save around £45 per year.
- 3** Changing to LED lightbulbs throughout your home will save you a further £38 on average - an added bonus is that they need replaced far less than regular bulbs.
- 4** Doing just one less wash per week with your washing machine or dishwasher will save you £13.
- 5** Finally, ensuring your home is draught-proofed will stop cooler air coming in and will top up your energy bill saving to the tune of a further £33!

If you would like to lower your energy bills, find out what grants and support is available or assistance in dealing with energy debt, contact HEAT on 0300 123 2640 or via the MyHillcrest app.

Hillcrest Homes Neighbourhood Hero Awards 2022

Our Neighbourhood Hero Awards seek to celebrate tenants who have brought a little extra to their neighbours and community. We also want to recognise the efforts of tenants who give up their time to help charities – no matter how big or small.

What are the awards and prizes?

Young Neighbourhood Hero 2022
(up to the age of 16)

- **Overall winner - £175 voucher**
- **Runner Up - £75 voucher**

Neighbourhood Hero 2022

- **Overall winner - £175 voucher**
- **Runner Up - £75 voucher**

Who should you nominate?

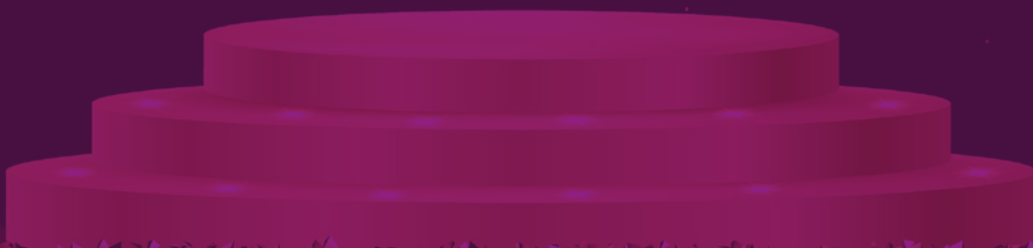
Do you have a neighbour who has offered help, made an impact in your community or has generally gone above and beyond to make a difference to others' lives? If so, nominating someone is easy.

Simply email your nomination to **customerservice@hillcrest.org.uk** with some details about why you've nominated that person (maximum 500 words). Remember to include the following with your nomination:

- The name of the tenant you are nominating and their address and postcode if possible
- Whether you are nominating them for the Neighbourhood Hero Award or Young Neighbourhood Hero Award
- Your name, email, daytime telephone number, and if you are a tenant or work for Hillcrest

Closing date for nominations

Please get your nominations to us by **Friday 30 September**. The winners will be informed in November and revealed in our winter newsletter!



Are pests being a nuisance?

Last year, our repairs team issued over 600 work orders to deal with pests. Here are the most common pests and what we can and can't help you with.

Lots of things can be done to keep creepy crawlies out of your home. First, we usually ask you to try and treat them yourself with products that you can buy in most shops, but if the problem persists or is serious, you can get in touch with our repairs team for advice on

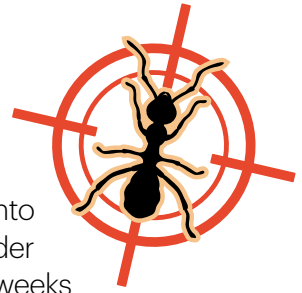
08000 324 888

or at **repair@hillcrest.org.uk**.

Ants

If the ants are in your garden, then we can't deal with them for you. If they've found their way into your home, use ant powder regularly for a couple of weeks around the perimeter of your home, especially around external doors. Powder can also be used inside around skirtings and kitchen kickboards. You can also try a mix of white vinegar with water in a 1:1 ratio. Spray your floor, worktops and skirting boards, especially where ants are seen. Again, this should be used for a couple of weeks, but contact us if the ants don't go away.

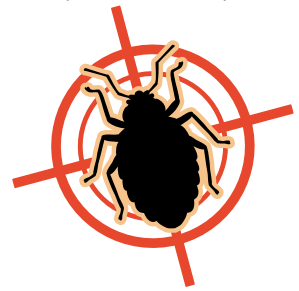
Prevention: clear spillages of food and drinks and use ant powder or spray to keep them at bay.



Bedbugs

Contact us if you think you have bedbugs within the property.

Prevention: vacuum around the bed and surrounding areas regularly, wash bedding regularly, and check and disinfect any second hand furniture before bringing it into your property.



Bees

If there is a swarm of honey bees, don't panic or try to kill them. Either wait for the bees to move on or contact a local beekeeper who can advise you further: **eastofscotlandbeekeepers.org.uk/swarms.html#**.

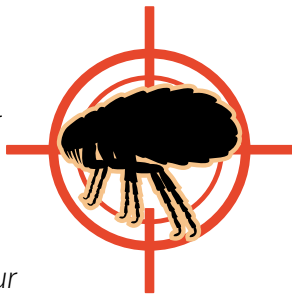
Our pest control contractors will not remove bees.



Fleas

Contact us if you think there are fleas within your property.

Prevention: treat pets for fleas, wash pet bedding regularly, and vacuum your home frequently.



Flies

Fly-killer aerosols will kill flies quickly and sticky fly papers are also available. If the issue persists, please contact us.

Prevention: remove rubbish from your home as soon as possible, and don't leave out any food, fruit or vegetables that are past their best. Clear away food and spills. Bins should be located away from doors and windows and have tight-fitting lids. In warmer weather, spray or dust inside the bin and beneath the lid with a household insecticide.



Mice

Contact us if mice are seen inside your home.

Prevention: food should be kept in sealed containers and cleared away if spilled.



Rats

Contact us if rats are seen either inside or outside your property.

Prevention: if you have spotted rats, don't put any bird food out, and try to keep bin areas tidy and rubbish kept away from your home.



Slugs/ snails

Unfortunately, there is not much we can do for slugs or snails. We'd advise moving plant pots and any vegetation away from your doors and windows, and if you have a pet, don't leave food outside overnight.

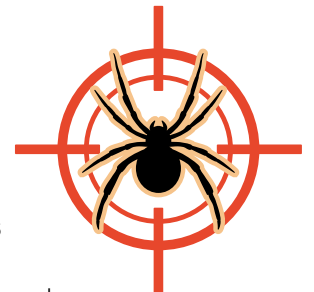
Prevention: Spray household salt mixed in a water solution around the area where you are experiencing the problem.



Spiders

It may not be reassuring for those of you who fear the eight-legged beasts, but spiders are actually classed as casual intruders rather than pests. They are not harmful and do not spread disease.

Prevention: It can be difficult to prevent spiders completely, but keeping your rooms clean uncluttered, and wiping away any webs with help reduce them.



Wasps

If you have a wasp nest in your garden or common area, get in touch with us and keep away from it. While wasps will not usually sting unless threatened, they can be more aggressive than bees and could become agitated if you get too close to their hive.





8 Top Tips to make your food budget go further!

With rising fuel and food costs, everyone is feeling the squeeze. **Here are our tips to help stretch your food budget...**

1

Go shopping at the end of the day

If you go to the supermarket with your shopping list later in the day, such as late evening or an hour or two before the shop closes, you could bag some great bargains – in particular, keep a look out for reduced items.

2

Cook in bulk

Batch cooking is not just a money saver, it's a time saver too.

3

Be adaptable

Rather than following recipes exactly or making foods the way you've always done, try looking for new ways to prepare the same tasty meal. You might find you can drop or reduce certain ingredients to make it cheaper, or even replace them with others that are reduced or on special offer.

4

Shop in less common places

When shopping for groceries, your local big supermarket chain probably springs to mind. Instead try checking out places like a local Asian supermarket or no-waste store. Staples like spices and bulk packs of rice and noodles can be much cheaper there than in the big chain supermarkets.

5

Super-size it

This one needs a bit of forward planning - and some storage space - but buying the basics in large quantities is the best way to make sure you're getting good value. Again, for things like rice, spices and other big-bulk staples, see our top tip above!





6

Rethink your leftovers

Before you scrape the leftovers of tonight's dinner into the bin, stop to think whether it could have a second lease of life. Using up leftovers will help your weekly shop stretch further, and if you freeze them, it doesn't have to mean eating the same meal two days running.

1

Stop buying treats

Don't panic - we're not suggesting you give up sweets and biscuits! But it's cheaper to make your own goodies using basics you already have in the cupboard rather than buying from the confectionery aisle.

If you have the right ingredients in the cupboard such as flour, eggs and sugar, you can easily make treats like cakes, biscuits and cookies.



8

Stop throwing food out

Past-its-best food may not always look very appetising, but it often still has life left in it if you know what to do with it. For example, using the chicken leftovers and offcuts from your roast dinner along with some bendy carrots that have seen better days, you can make a tasty soup!

Try to get out of the habit of binning food that looks a bit suspect and into the habit of thinking creatively about what could be done with it. Important note: don't eat anything that's turned blue and furry!

For more ideas and links to recipes:

cookingonabudget.co.uk

**[www.bbc.co.uk/food/collections/
budget_dinner_recipe_and_ideas](http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/collections/budget_dinner_recipe_and_ideas)**

tealnotes.com/cheap-dinner-ideas

**[realfood.tesco.com/recipes/
collections/on-a-budget.html](http://realfood.tesco.com/recipes/collections/on-a-budget.html)**

fyf20quid.co.uk/

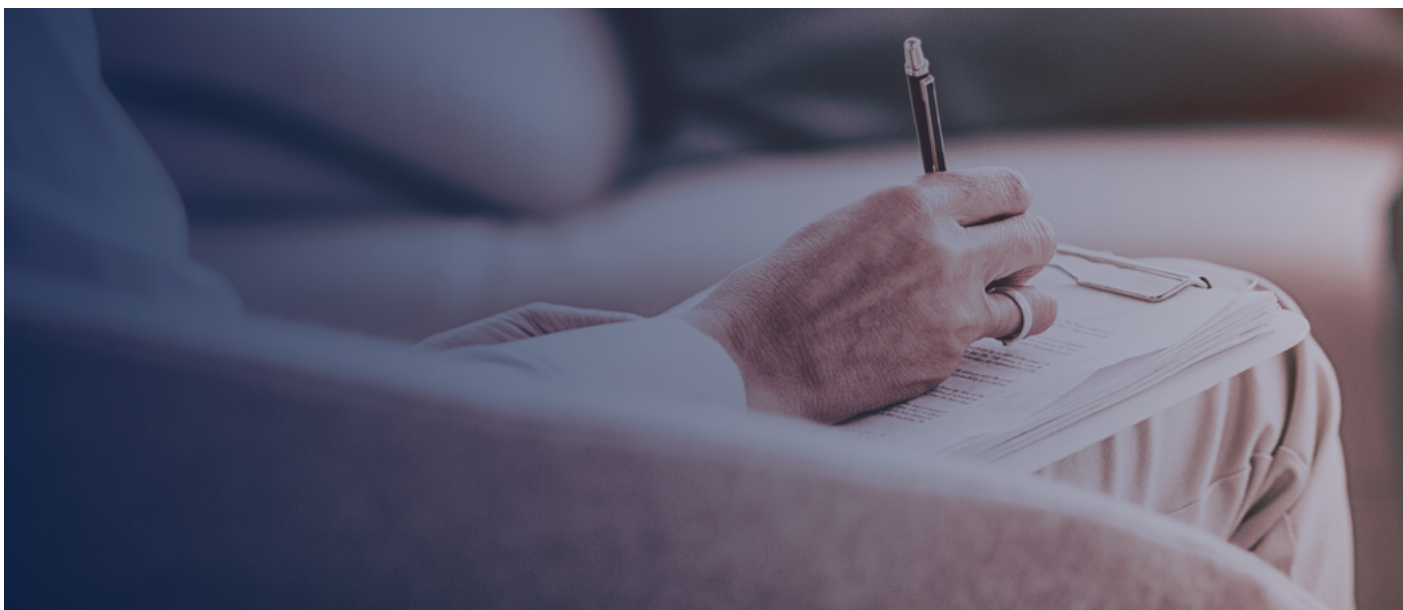


Working together

- working for you!

CASE STUDY

With rent arrears of over £3000 and a court date set for the eviction, a referral was made from our Income Management (IM) team to our Tenancy Sustainment Service (TSS). The tenant had never engaged with staff and no payments had been made to their rent account for a number of months despite the best efforts of IM, TSS and their designated Housing Officer.



The tenant had two major bereavements just as Covid-19 lockdown restrictions were put in place. This had a detrimental impact on their mental health and they isolated themselves at home, using the pandemic as a way to avoid contact with the outside world.

The tenant had neglected themselves and their property, and told the TSS team that they hadn't engaged due to feeling overwhelmed and ashamed. The tenant had tried self-employed work, but struggled to earn much as their poor health meant that they often couldn't leave the house.

A friend of the tenant said they were shocked to see how bad things had become and they made contact with Hillcrest on behalf of the tenant due to these concerns.

Hillcrest worked with the tenant to submit a claim for Universal Credit to obtain some household income and help with housing costs.

The TSS successfully applied for a Community Care Grant from the local authority to replace floor coverings and essential furniture.

A further successful application was made to the local authority for assistance from the Tenant Grant Fund – designed to help with rent arrears incurred due to the pandemic - and £1500 was awarded to the tenant, helping to prevent eviction.

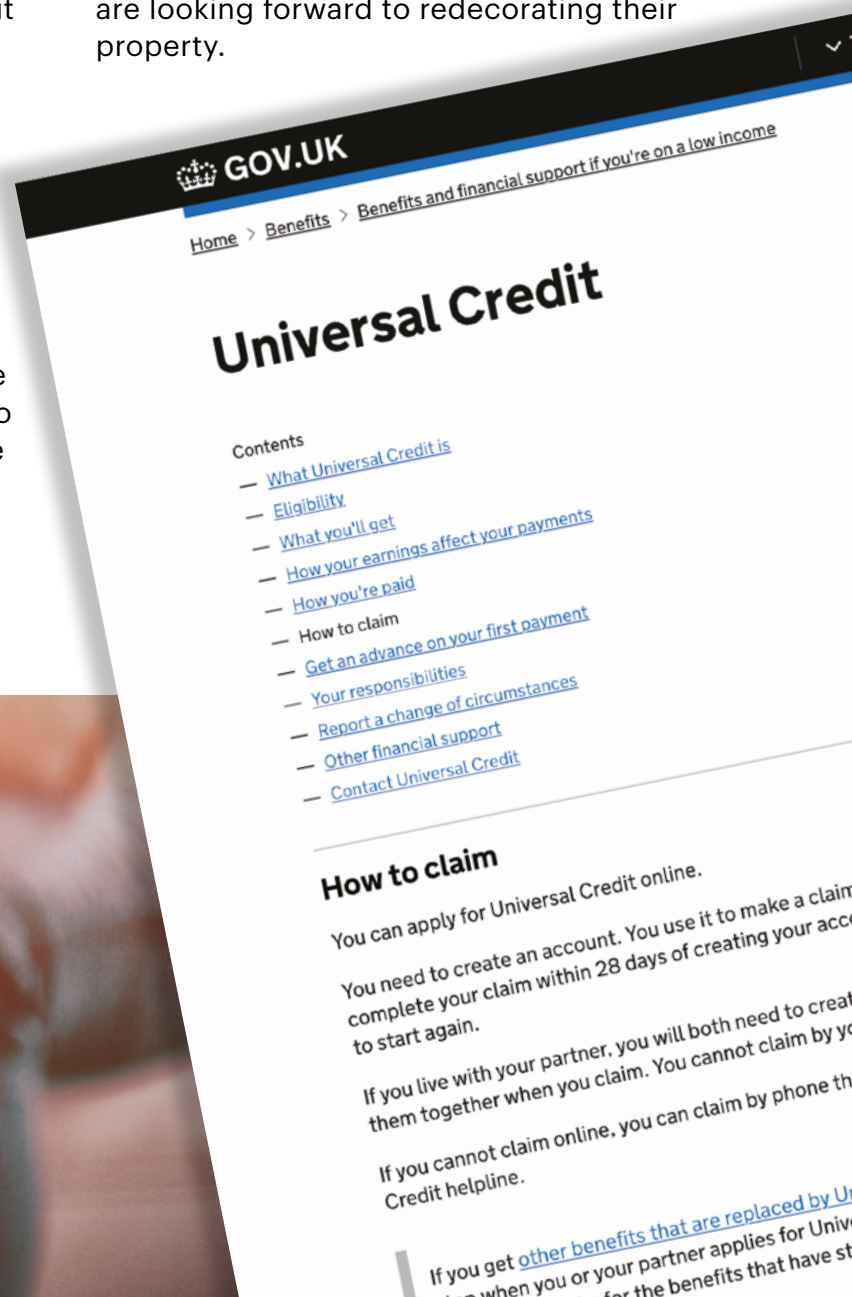
A referral was made to the Tenancy Support team who helped the tenant

to access new white goods for their property. A dedicated Support Worker was allocated to help them to engage with support services to manage their tenancy going forward.

The tenant was also referred to the Hillcrest Energy Advice Team (HEAT) who provided an energy top-up and helped access their local foodbank for a food parcel.

These interventions assisted the tenant while they were waiting for payment of their Universal Credit. In the month since first contact with the tenant, Hillcrest has helped them access approximately £5000 of grants and other interventions, and they are now £440 better off per month.

The tenant says they now **feel much more motivated and positive about the future**. They have been getting their flat ready for new carpets and furniture, and are looking forward to redecorating their property.



What are we doing to make your homes more efficient?

*By David Conway,
Senior Contracts Manager*



We are nearing the final year of our 7 year Heat Replacement Programme.

We've invested over £10m and secured a further £2m in external funding to remove ineffective storage heaters. We're replacing them with gas central heating and high heat retention storage heating systems that offer tenants significant fuel savings and increased levels of comfort. Nearly 70% of our housing stock now has a heating system that is less than 6 years old.

We're planning the next phase of energy-efficiency works to ensure our improvements and investments support ambitious targets set by the Scottish Government to increase energy performance and reduce carbon emissions.

In the near future, we will be renovating your homes with a focus on reducing energy consumption as much as possible and to address any energy inefficiencies. We'll focus on insulating your homes to reduce the energy needed to heat them and we'll install high performance external insulation, including loft and floor insulation where possible. We'll also install new windows and doors to tackle

heat loss and air leakage. Over time, we'll need to fit air cooling, heating and hot water systems that are low consumption and high efficiency, using low carbon technology. We're also exploring the options of installing solar and thermal panels, and possibly battery technology so that your homes can generate energy. It's very likely that your heating system will be powered by heat pumps or connected to a heating network powered by renewable technology or even hydrogen.

There's no doubt the future is renewable, but what exactly that future looks like is still to be decided. Emerging technologies will inform how we further develop our low carbon strategy.

This is a long-term strategy and we're very much in the planning phase, but hope to share our plans with you in 2023. The remainder of this year will be spent installing energy efficient heating systems and photo-voltaic panels, while securing external funding to further trial wall insulation works – all of which will help lower your energy bills.

Feeling lonely or isolated?

Volunteering could be the answer



Have you been feeling lonely or isolated during the Covid-19 pandemic?

If so, we can help! One way to improve your wellbeing and become active within your community is through volunteering. The Tenant Participation team has been working with Fife Voluntary Action and Dundee Volunteer & Voluntary Action to discuss the hundreds of different volunteering opportunities across **Aberdeen, Angus, Dundee, Edinburgh, Fife and Perth** that you can get involved in, as much or as little as you like with many benefits on offer:

- *meet new people, share new experiences and learn useful skills*
- *increase confidence/self-esteem and get a sense of achievement*
- *develop new interests or put your talents and interests to good use*
- *gain a new job seeker reference, to help you get back into work and update your CV*
- *and most importantly, enjoy yourself!*

Fife: Fife Voluntary Action can help you decide what kind of volunteering role might suit you best and offer advice on a wide range of volunteering opportunities and information on travel expenses and volunteering while on benefits. If you are new to volunteering and/or are unsure of what is expected, FVA offers an introductory training and information session called '**Step Into Volunteering**' which is ideal if you have not volunteered before or if you're about to start volunteering.

To find volunteer opportunities in Fife, please view the current openings at **www.fva.org/volopps.asp** or contact the volunteering team by calling **0800 389 6046** or email **info@fva.org** for more information.

Dundee: Dundee Volunteer & Voluntary Action (DVVA) supports people across the Dundee area to get involved in volunteering through information sessions. If you would like to take part in one of these sessions, contact DVVA by calling **01382 305700** or email **admin@dvva.scot**.

Edinburgh: Volunteer Edinburgh. Their office at 222 Leith Walk is now open to the public Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm. Advisors are available for a chat about volunteering options.

Aberdeen: Volunteer Aberdeen helps connect people with volunteer opportunities they may be interested in and will put you in touch with the right person at the volunteer organisation. For more information on volunteering or if you have any questions, please email **volunteer@acvo.org.uk**.

Angus: If you live in the Angus area, you can find out more about volunteering opportunities near you at **Voluntary Action Angus** or phone **01307 466113**.

Perthshire: If you live in Perth or the surrounding area, you can visit **PKAVS** for opportunities or call **01738 567076** to speak to someone who can help with your enquiry.



If you are a woman looking to return to work, support is available



Recent studies show that over 600 people a day in the UK quit their jobs to provide unpaid caregiving and, of these, women are more than twice as likely as men to put their career on hold to provide childcare or look after a relative.

Returning to work after a period of time off can often feel rather daunting. For women in particular, the prospect of juggling work life with home life can feel overwhelming and cause stress and anxiety. In response to this, the Scottish Government has established a network called Triage to encourage and support women who are looking to return work, and offers specialist employment related advice, coaching and training.

Review, Refresh, Return is a free programme being delivered across Scotland by Triage as part of the **‘Women Returners’** network, which is funded by the Scottish Government. Triage understands that each person has unique home/life circumstances and ensures that the programme is delivered to meet individual needs. This can be through online sessions or in person with a focus on building confidence, developing skills and building on previous experience to get each woman back into the workplace or further education by breaking through barriers.

Open to women aged 25 and over who have been out of work for six months or longer, participants benefit from peer support and access to skill building services including CV writing, health and well-being advice, online learning and interview skills. Triage understand that these are key to unlocking the potential in every woman to create a better future for themselves and their families.

"Sometimes you just need to be reminded that everything is going to be ok and that you are not alone, and that's what the programme did for me.

Anne Marie (at Triage) immediately put me at ease and reassured me that she was going to be with me throughout the whole process. We arranged weekly Zoom calls, we worked on my confidence and interview skills. She then put me in contact with Penny to help me find a job that was perfect for me and my situation.

Anne Marie helped me get over the fear of being rejected and provided fantastic interview techniques. Penny reminded me of my worth, and that job hunting isn't just about finding 'any job', but about finding the right job for me."

Julie Gezer, a Women Returners participant

If you would like more information on how **Triage's** Women Returners programme can help you:

f Search '**Review Refresh Return**' on Facebook

📞 Call Triage on
07547 404395

🔗 Get in touch via
**[www.triagecentral.co.uk/
get-in-touch](http://www.triagecentral.co.uk/get-in-touch)**

 **Triage**
helping people succeed

Face to face appointments at our housing offices

Last year, we sent a survey to all tenants to find out how you would like to contact us when Covid-19 restrictions eased. Nearly 1,000 of you responded and told us that your preferred way to get in touch is by telephone or email. However, we do understand that sometimes you'll want to meet us face to face, so we are now offering appointments for tenants at our Perth office. To make an appointment, contact the housing teams by phoning **0300 123 2640** or email **customerservice@hillcrest.org.uk**.

We also hope to be able to offer in-person appointments at our Edinburgh office by the end of the summer and our Arbroath office by the end of autumn.

Due to the recent closure of our Dundee South Ward Road office, which is being redeveloped into a Wellbeing facility, we are looking at other suitable sites to hold face to face meetings with tenants who live in the Dundee area.



Newsbytes



The HEAT Heroes take to Facebook!

Hillcrest Energy Advice Team (HEAT) is now on Facebook! Follow the page to stay in the loop about available funds and grants, energy-saving tips and more handy info that can save you money. You can even reach the team directly with a quick and simple Facebook message.

You can find the page at www.facebook.com/HillcrestEnergyAdviceTeam

HEAT takes top award for their fight against fuel-poverty

Our **HEAT Heroes** have lived up to their name once again, being named '**Fuel Poverty Heroes**' at the prestigious **Energy Action Scotland Fuel Poverty Heroes Awards 2022** for their tireless work in combating fuel poverty.

The honour was announced during the annual Energy Action Scotland (EAS) Fuel Poverty Conference in March 2022, and was in recognition of the effort, innovation and care that HEAT puts into reducing fuel poverty in households.

Hillcrest Action for Residents and Tenants Update

Hillcrest Action for Residents and Tenants (HART) has been working on a scrutiny project looking at how we can improve our maintenance process. Members of HART have started attending emergency repairs to get first-hand experience of how our maintenance team deals with call outs.

We are looking for volunteers to join HART. You'll be able to provide feedback on our services, develop new skills and help make a difference in the community.

To find out how to get involved, contact Emma Burnett on **0300 1232640** or email us at customerservice@hillcrest.org.uk.

Repairs text surveys

We're very excited to launch a new automated satisfaction survey platform which will allow us to send surveys by text, email or post almost immediately after you have received a service from us. If you get a repair completed by Hillcrest Maintenance and we hold your mobile number or email address, you will receive a short survey asking for feedback within an hour or two of the works being complete. If the work is carried out by an external contractor, it may take slightly longer for you to receive the survey.

By filling in the surveys, which can be completed at your own convenience, you will help us improve our service delivery.

Free electric bike hire

Would you and your family like to try electric bikes for free?

If so, and you live in the Dundee area, please give us a call on

0300 123 2640 or email

customerservice@hillcrest.org.uk to find out more about this fantastic offer!



FREE tickets for summer



We can give you free tickets for:

- **Deep Sea World**
- **Blair Drummond Safari Park**
- **Edinburgh Zoo**
- **Discovery Point & Verdant Works**
- **Codonas**

These tickets are on a first come first served basis and the maximum number of tickets issued per person will be based on the number of people registered as living with you. Please note that we can't include travel costs. Call **0300 123 2640** or email **customerservice@hillcrest.org.uk** to get your tickets!

Benefits news and updates

Help with school clothing costs

You may be able to get financial help with your child's school clothing and shoes through a School Clothing Grant. You can apply for this through your local council and it's normally paid directly to your bank account.

Who can apply and the amount of money you'll get depends on your local council, but everybody who gets a school clothing grant will receive at least:

- £120 per child of primary school age
- £150 per child of secondary school age

You may also be able to apply for free school meals at the same time you apply for the School Clothing Grant.

How to apply: Check your local council's website to see when you can apply for the grant. Most councils will accept applications from July until the end of March.

Young Person's (Under 22) Free Bus Travel

Children and young people living in Scotland aged 5-21 years old are eligible for a card giving them free bus travel. Children under 5 years old can already travel on buses for free and don't need a card. Applications for cards are now open.

To get on board for free, children and young people will need a new or replacement National Entitlement Card (NEC) or Young Scot National Entitlement Card (Young Scot NEC). Previously issued cards will not allow access to the scheme.

How to apply: For more information, visit <https://freebus.scot>

If you would like any advice or information regarding benefits, please call our Tenancy Sustainment Service on **0300 123 2640** or contact us via the **Hillcrest app**.

Useful numbers and contacts

Customer service general enquiries (including rent payments): call **0300 123 2640** or email **customerservice@hillcrest.org.uk**

Non-urgent repairs: Use the **MyHillcrest app**, call **0300 123 2640** or email **repair@hillcrest.org.uk**

Emergency repairs: **08000 324 888**

Local Authorities (for waste management, homelessness, anti-social behaviour and more):

- Angus Council: **03452 777 778** (www.angus.gov.uk)
- Dundee City Council: **01382 434 000** (www.dundee.gov.uk)
- Fife Council: **03451 550 000** (www.fifedirect.org.uk)
- Perth and Kinross Council: **01738 475 000** (www.pkc.gov.uk)
- City of Edinburgh Council: **0131 200 2000** (www.edinburgh.gov.uk)
- Aberdeen City Council: **03000 200 292** (www.aberdeencity.gov.uk)

Police (non-emergency): **101**

Support organisations:

- Shelter Scotland: **0808 800 4444**
- Dundee Foodbank: **01382 698 020**
- Angus Foodbank: **01307 466 841**
- Perth Foodbank: **01738 626 799**
- Edinburgh Foodbank: **0131 444 0030** or **0131 664 9353**
- Aberdeen Foodbank: **01224 596156**



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T: 0300 123 2640

www.hillcrest.org.uk/homes

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