



Summer 2022



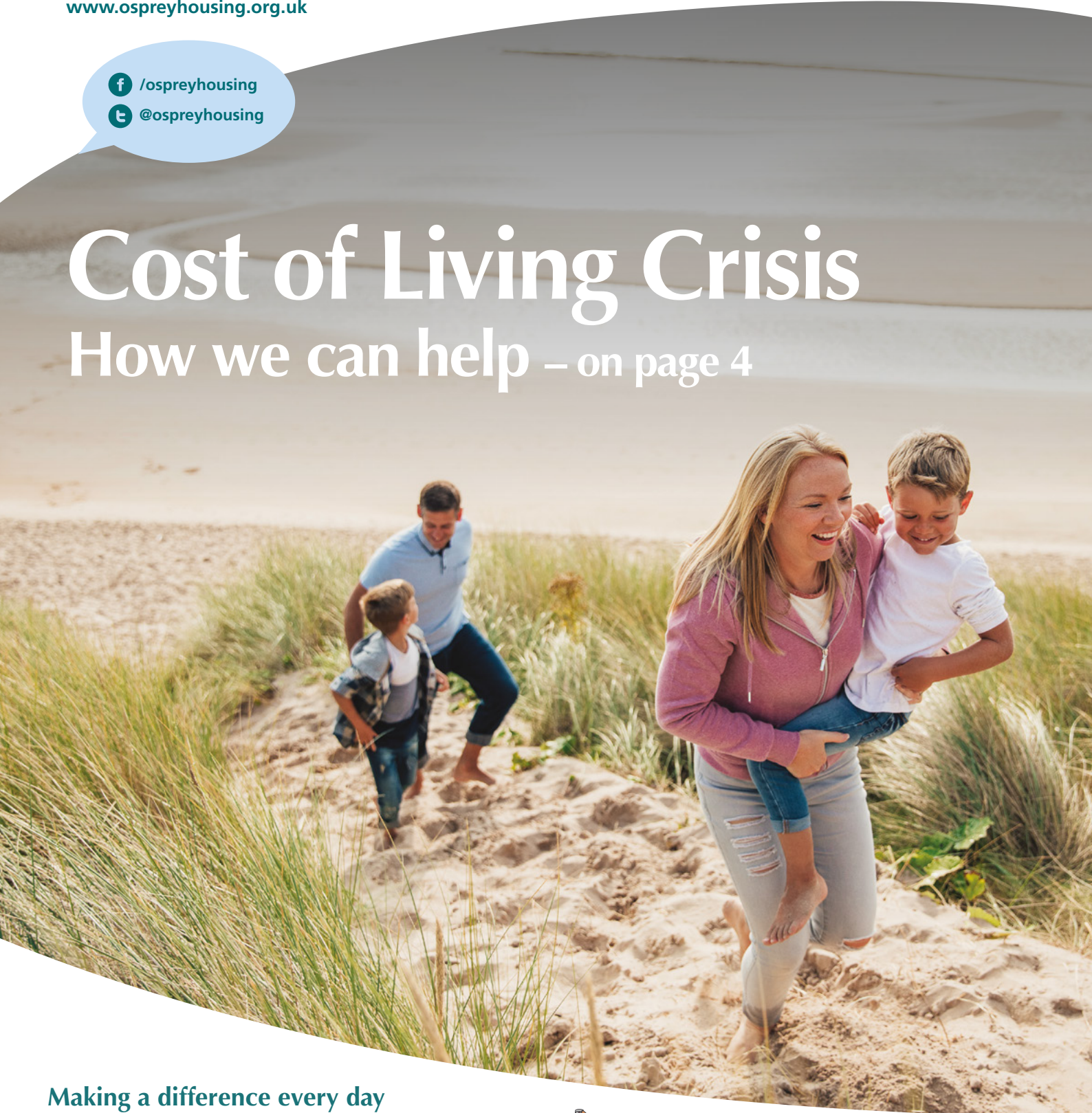
Newsletter

"for tenants by tenants" 

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Cost of Living Crisis How we can help – on page 4



Making a difference every day



Welcome to the Osprey summer newsletter



I would like to take the opportunity to share with you the positive outcomes we have achieved following the transfer of engagements (ToE) and becoming a single landlord, Osprey Housing.

We made several promises to tenants during the ToE, and these are now all gaining real momentum a year down the line. The most significant impact was the ability to freeze rents for a second consecutive year in April 2022, passing the financial benefits of a single organisation directly to tenants. This decision by the Board was positively received by tenants at a time when the cost of living continued to rise, putting household finances under real pressure. In addition,

we have added a new role within the housing team, dedicated solely to supporting and signposting tenants to information and organisations that can help. If you are currently experiencing difficulties, I would encourage you to get in touch. Our core aim is to support tenants to have a successful tenancy, and the best way to achieve this is to engage with us pro-actively. You will find more information on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter or follow us on Facebook to receive regular updates.

We have also made significant steps actioning our digital strategy, with a new housing database currently being configured to go live in October 2022. The new system has a wider range of tenant interactive options as well as more intuitive communication methods – allowing tenants to go paperless managing their tenancy. The system is cloud based which provides more data security as well as accessibility to our staff out in the field, giving tenants a better service at the point of contact. More news of this will follow nearer the time, however this is a significant step towards realising our digital ambitions.

As part of my transition into the role of Chief Executive, I have undertaken a review of the Strategic Plan encompassing the impacts and changes to how we operate following the pandemic and the outcomes from the tenant consultation exercise in January 2022 where tenants ranked priorities aligned with these changes. It is reassuring that the tenant feedback aligns with our strategic direction, ensuring it meets tenants needs and priorities. Our key ambitions;

- commitment to investment in our current stock – with a particular focus on energy efficiency
- commitment to growth - delivering new homes to communities with housing need
- commitment to environmental sustainability and becoming a carbon literate organisation
- commitment to being a great place to work – developing and supporting our staff to be the best they can be, to provide the best service to our tenants.

On this final point, I celebrated my 16th anniversary with Osprey in April 2022 and have never been more passionate about what we do as an organisation, making a difference through the homes and services we provide to you, our tenants. Marking the milestone by adding an Osprey rucksack to my mountain climbing gear.



I hope you find the information in this edition of the newsletter helpful and look forward to sharing more updates in the coming months. As always, we are keen to engage with tenants, hear your comments and feedback and factor these into performance improvement.

Stacy Angus, Chief Executive

These Homes and Digital Update



We are excited to announce that we are working in partnership with another fifteen landlords from across Scotland to deliver a new Digital Lettings Service.

These Homes is a choice based lettings system that allows applicants to register their interest in specific properties advertised by us and the other landlords.

These Homes has replaced our existing allocations system, although we will also continue to take nominations for vacancies from Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray councils respectively

As part of this process, our allocations policy has been reviewed and there may be some slight changes to the number of bedrooms you are entitled to and you may be asked to provide additional proof for things such as medical conditions, support etc.

For any tenant wishing to obtain an internal transfer, the existing Internal Transfer List is now closed and the only way that we can consider you for a move is if you are registered through www.thesehomes.com.

If you are already registered with These Homes then you will need to update your application under section 2, selecting Osprey as a landlord with which you would like to be considered. Once done, our team will assess your application, highlight you as an existing tenant and award your any relevant priority passes.

These Homes enables us to put preference on some properties for existing Osprey Housing Tenants, allowing us to carry out Internal Transfers with the tenants with the highest available passes being given priority. Note that you must have a clear rent account (or maintained agreement) and your property condition must be at an acceptable standard to be made a formal offer.

At the time of writing, we have around 2000 applicants registered with us.

Please remember that you can also register with www.houseexchange.org.uk if you wish to look for potential mutual exchanges as another option for rehousing.

For any queries or assistance with These Homes, please email thesehomes@ospreyhousing.org.uk

Fire Alarms

The Fire Alarms in your home meet the standard required by the recently introduced law in Scotland. Your home will have interlinked alarms in your Livingroom, each Hallway, and in your Kitchen. This is to protect you and means if one alarm is triggered all of them will sound. We check your alarm system annually, often along with your gas safety check. But it's important that you test your alarms regularly too, to ensure they are working. A weekly test is recommended. You can do the test by pressing the 'Test' button, which is often in the middle of the alarm. All of the alarms should sound briefly. It is also recommended that you use a different alarm each time you do the test. Be safe.



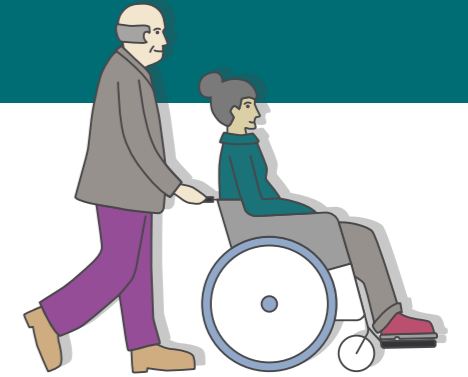
How we manage our open spaces

Did you know that Osprey Housing maintain over thirty different landscaped areas? Some of these are small consisting of just a couple of strips of grass, but others are quite large, up to ½ hectare. Until recently these areas have been predominantly kept as short grass with some shrubs and some trees. However, we are now starting to set some parts of these spaces aside a meadow areas, to encourage and support native plants and wildlife. We will develop these areas over the next few years and hope you and our native species enjoy them.



Tenancy Support Info

Cost of living – challenges ahead and how we can help you

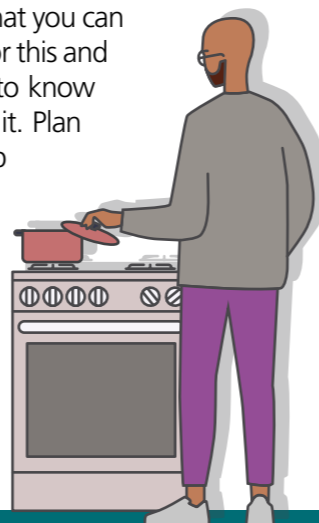


There is no doubt that the cost of living crisis is going to affect us all, but more low incomes households and those living on benefits. Inflation continues to rise and is expected to reach a 40 year high increasing the cost of food, fuel and many other commodities. The government has announced a support package that will help ease some of the strain. It really is a worrying time for all and certainly not a time to bury our head in the sand.

It's important that we prepare as best and as early as we can for things to come. We have put together some information and links for you to get yourself ready:

- **Could you be entitled to benefits or help with your rent?** – Use an online benefit calculator [Benefits calculators - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators) They are free to use and don't take long to complete.
- **Energy** - Most energy suppliers have a hardship fund – if you are in debt contact your energy supplier to ask for advice.
- **Warm Home discount** – If you are on a low income or are vulnerable you can apply for a warm home discount. Contact Your energy supplier to ask about this. [Warm Home Discount Scheme: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/warm-home-discount-scheme)
- **Energy advice** – get money saving tips from SCARF [Scarf](https://www.scarf.org.uk) and from [homeheatingadvice.scot](https://www.homeheatingadvice.scot)
- **Smart Meters** – monitor your energy usage and keep on top of your payments – most suppliers can fit these for free. Contact your supplier and ask.

- **Tenants with oil** – plan ahead – consider asking a fuel supplier to pay a monthly direct debit to save for your next fill or join a fuel club to get better prices. Search online price comparison sites or telephone around suppliers to get the best price on that day.
- **Debt** – contact Citizens Advice Scotland [Citizens Advice Scotland \(cas.org.uk\)](https://www.cas.org.uk), Step change [StepChange Debt Charity - Free Expert Debt Advice](https://www.stepchange.org). or Advice.scot [advice.scot](https://www.advice.scot) for free debt advice
- **Budgeting** – make a list of your income and expenditure monthly so you can budget for priority bills, see where you can make cut backs and if you have any disposable income left. The Money and Pensions service had a Money Helper online guide with free budgeting advice [Budgeting | MoneyHelper](https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk) Citizens Advice Scotland can also help you plan your household budget
- **Food** – We can make referrals to foodbanks and Osprey also has a list of mobile pantries or food larders in the local areas that you can go to without referral. Ask us for this and we will share it with you. Get to know your food budget and stick to it. Plan your meals and weekly shop and try to avoid buying more than you need. Look for budget meal ideas online such as this [Budget dinners - BBC Food](https://www.bbc.com/food/articles/budget-dinners)



- **Free school meals/help with school clothes cost** – If you are in receipt of some benefits you maybe entitled to apply for [School meals - mygov.scot](https://www.mygov.scot/school-meals) or [Help with school clothing costs - mygov.scot](https://www.mygov.scot/help-with-school-clothing-costs)
- **Scottish Child payment and Scottish bridging payment** - If you are in receipt of some benefits you maybe entitled to apply for a payment towards the cost of raising your child - [Scottish Child Payment - mygov.scot](https://www.mygov.scot/scottish-child-payment) for children under 6 or [Scottish Child Payment Bridging Payments - mygov.scot](https://www.mygov.scot/scottish-child-payment-bridging-payments) for children over 6
- **Disability** – Personal Independence payment – can help towards extra living costs for people with long term physical or mental health conditions [Personal Independence Payment \(PIP\): What PIP is for - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/personal-independence-payment) – Citizens Advice can help you apply for this or ask us for support. If you are in receipt of Universal Credit and also have long term physical or mental health conditions you could apply for an additional payment. Please contact UC about Limited Capability for Work Related Activity (LCWRA) payment or ask Citizens advice or contact us for help with this.

Tenancy Support is now an essential part of Osprey Housings customer focussed approach and helps to increase Tenancy Sustainment.

Did you know that it is now one year since Osprey Housing introduced the Tenancy Support Officer role and the demand for this service has been high.

Over the past year the Tenancy Support Officers have assisted over 150 tenants across Moray, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire with a variety of support issues including:

- Assisting with Scottish Welfare Fund applications
- Sign posting for services dealing with everything from isolation to mental health issues
- Issuing vouchers to help tenants facing fuel poverty
- Referrals for food parcels, clothing and children's items
- Arranged Christmas parcels through Mission Christmas
- Helped with benefit advice, advised and assisted tenants looking for alternative accommodation
- Assisting tenants to gain grants to help with rent arrears, sourced furniture, flooring and white goods.
- Sign posted tenants for help with hospital costs

The list goes on!

Support can be offered on either a short or long-term basis dependent upon the individuals requirements.

If you feel that you are in need of support to help you sustain your Osprey Housing tenancy, please contact us by emailing support@ospreyhousing.org.uk or complete a self referral form <https://form.jotform.com/Ospreyh/Supportrefer>

The Tenancy Support Officer for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire is Elaine Bowie. Elaine works Wednesday to Friday each week. The Tenancy Support Officer for Moray is Catriona Leggat and Catriona covers this area on a Monday and Tuesday. The Tenancy Support Officers work alongside your Housing Officer to provide you with as much support to help sustain your tenancy.



New Development Handovers & Equalities Update



Osprey Housing development at Alba Place

Osprey are committed to continuing to deliver new properties in the communities

The Osprey Housing development in the town's Alba Place was recently completed working in partnership with Morlich Homes and Moray Council. The scheme comprises four one-bed cottage apartments and six three-bed villas in a terrace design emulating nearby former mill workers' homes.

The new homes are on the site of the original Elgin workhouse, of which all that remains is a wall that formed the entrance to the workhouse grounds. This wall has been incorporated into the boundary for our properties, creating a clear link to the heritage of the area and featured into the overall design of the scheme.

The flats have communal gardens and drying areas, while the houses each have their own garden at the rear of the properties. The ground-floor flats feature level access shower trays, and all main doorways allow wheelchair access.

Morlich Homes Managing Director John Main said: 'We are delighted to have delivered more high-quality affordable housing stock for the people of Moray through our continuing partnership with Osprey Housing.'

'These homes exceed building regulations and are highly energy efficient, which keeps running costs low for tenants at this most challenging of times while also supporting the environment.'

Osprey Housing secured Scottish Government funding of £803,520 through Housing Association Grant (HAG) in support of delivering the Alba Place properties.



Stacy Angus, Osprey Housing Chief Executive and Head of Housing for Moray Council, Edward Thomas with tenants of Alba Place

Equalities Monitoring Matters

Many people don't understand why an organisation would want their personal, private information and get quite annoyed when asked for it. If this is you, hopefully this article will answer some of your queries. If not, and you are relaxed about sharing your data, it will give you some further information on why we collect it.

Why we're asking

We collect equality information to help us to plan and deliver effective services and to meet our legal and regulatory obligations. We do this when you sign up and at regular intervals as you continue to be our tenant, by asking some questions about you. This information will be gathered anonymously and treated with the upmost confidentiality. It will only be seen by our support team, and it will never be used against you. On the contrary, it's collected to help Osprey make sure we're as inclusive as possible.

Here's why you should share your data with us:

We want to understand the communities we serve

We ask questions to collect overall statistical information – not to pinpoint individuals. It helps us understand who is and isn't accessing our services, and how satisfied different groups of people are.

Your information is safe

There are strict laws to make sure your information is stored safely and responsibly. Your answers are confidential and we'll always tell you how they're going to be used before we ask.

Help us improve our services

By learning more about the people we serve, we can tailor our services to meet your needs.

What happens next

In the next few weeks, if you have agreed that Osprey can contact you by email, you will receive a link to a jot form to complete your information on the nine protected equality characteristics. If we do not have your email address we will send you a paper copy with a return envelope.

If you don't want to share any of this information with us, you don't have to but please complete the 'Do not wish to say' boxes and return to us, so we can get as high a response as possible.

Be Assured

Your data will never be used in a way that can identify you. It will be kept anonymously and not linked back to you.

If you have any doubts or concerns please talk to your Housing Officer so they can reassure you.



Osprey working in partnership with Kirkwood homes

Osprey are proud to have worked in partnership with local house builder, Kirkwood homes on the second and final phase of our development at Sauchen, Aberdeenshire. This most recent phase sees Osprey take ownership of a further twelve units – three, two bedroom houses and nine, three bedroom houses on Monday 27th June. In total Kirkwood have delivered eighteen new properties for Osprey at this site in Sauchen.

Osprey's Development Officer Allan Liddle said the following about the development "As always, it is a pleasure to work with Kirkwood Homes to deliver more much needed high quality affordable properties. Sauchen is a rural community and Osprey Housing are very keen to help support and enhance the areas in which we work throughout Aberdeenshire and Moray. This latest project in Sauchen represents our second phase in the village and completes a total of eighteen new high quality family homes with an excellent mix of two and three bed properties."

Housing Officers Elaine and Leisha were onsite to handover the keys to our new tenants who were delighted with the quality of their new homes. Leisha added that there had been a few tears, thankfully these were all tears of joy! Elaine Sutherland will continue to cover Sauchen and the surrounding area to assist our tenants.



Tenant Participation - OTRA



We're committed to involving tenants and residents in what we do and how we deliver our services. By 'involved' we

mean being able to influence decisions about the services you receive, and other issues affecting you, your home and the area where you live. Tenant involvement helps us make the right decisions, and enables us to identify and make any necessary changes and improvements to what we do or the way we do it. Osprey is committed to working with tenants to enable them to take part in, and influence, the decision making process on issues which affect them, their homes and the environment in which they live.

There are many different ways you can get involved including:

- Joining The Osprey Tenants and Residents Association (OTRA)
- Joining the OTRA Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/OTRA.Online>)
- Participation in your Local Rate My Estate Projects or becoming an estate champion
- Participate in OTRA Scrutiny Projects

If you wish to get involved in any of the above, please speak with any Osprey Housing Colleague.

Tenant Scrutiny Project

The OTRA Scrutiny Panel recently completed and submitted their Scrutiny Project on the Repairs and Maintenance Services. This highlighted to the organisation the key concerns of tenants and the recommendations have been taken forward for improvements to be made. To see a copy of the full report along with management comments as to how these will be taken on board, please get in touch with the Customer Services Team.



Office Attendance

Now that the pandemic restrictions have been lifted, we will be opening our offices up to visitors once more.

However, having taken on board the changes in our working arrangements which enabled us to maintain our performance levels during the restrictions, our staff will now be working hybrid working patterns. This means that they will not be working from our offices every day and so may not be there if you drop in. If you plan to come to either our Elgin or Westhill offices please phone ahead on 01224 548000 or email our enquiries line enquiries@ospreyhousing.org.uk to make sure the person you are hoping to see will be available.

