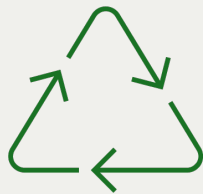


Summer 2025



## Notice something new about recent newsletters?

Tenants have been asking us to move away from glossy paper. You may have noticed that since last issue we have been able to achieve this. We have sourced a matt paper that as well as being more sustainably sourced, improves accessibility - making it easier to read for tenants with visual disabilities.



## Changes to your tenancy

It is important that you let us know if you have had any changes in circumstances which might affect your tenancy. We need to know who is living in the property, so you should update us if anyone moves in or out.

You should let us know if you want to

- transfer your tenancy
- add or remove someone from your tenancy
- apply for a mutual exchange
- take over a tenancy
- add a new person to your household (for example, if you have had a child or if someone moves in with you)
- report a medical condition or if someone living with you has a medical condition.

You should also contact us if there has been a change to your financial circumstances; for example if you have gained or left employment or if you have changed your contact details.

[www.albynhousing.org.uk/update-your-details/](http://www.albynhousing.org.uk/update-your-details/)

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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- ▶ Getting involved
- ▶ Use your voice at our focus groups
- ▶ Sheildaig fire update
- ▶ Albyn have been shortlisted
- ▶ Complaints

0300 323 0990  
[albynhousing.org.uk](http://albynhousing.org.uk)  
[office@ albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:office@albynhousing.org.uk)

## Summer welcome

Welcome to our summer 2025 newsletter. I hope you are all enjoying the fabulous weather and are able to make the most of the sunshine!

As always, the newsletter is filled with really important and exciting information, including the two new appointments we have made to the extended leadership team at Albyn, and a new independent Board member of our subsidiary Highland Residential (HRIL). Robert Buchanan has been appointed as Director of IT and Business Services and has responsibility for driving forward a review of our IT

infrastructure to improve service delivery to customers, and ensure we equip our staff with the appropriate equipment and systems to deliver on our value of being professional.

Marcie Balance joins us in a new post of Head of Development and Sustainability. You may be aware that the Scottish Government has declared a national housing emergency, and the Highland Council has declared a Housing Challenge, in the main due to the fantastic once in a generation economic opportunities that the region will benefit from due to the Green Freeport. Albyn has set out in its Business Plan for 25/26 that we will respond to the affordable housing need in the Highlands and respond to the challenge by increasing our new build development programme to 600 new homes over the next 5 years. Marcie will have responsibility for the programme and seizing new opportunities that Albyn can pursue to deliver on our ambitions.

This newsletter covers the delivery of our latest new homes in Dingwall, just handed over in May. They are a wonderful addition to the area, and are lovely new homes for the customers who have just moved in.

Maggie Morrison joins our subsidiary Board, HRIL, as an independent Board member. HRIL is where we deliver our mid-market rental property management, our factoring services and our shared equity sales. The ambition of that Board is to grow our mid-market rent homes, and Maggie will bring huge experience in making sure we deliver on our aims.

I hope you find this newsletter interesting and informative and as always, we are keen to hear your views and feedback. None more so than through our customer engagement groups, where we are always seeking new volunteers. More information on this inside.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kirsty'.

## Business Plan Update: Year 4

As we move into Year 4 of our Business Plan, we're staying focused on what matters most — supporting tenants, delivering more affordable, high-quality homes, and building a stronger Albyn for the future.

You can review our latest Business Plan online at [albynhousing.org.uk/business-plan-year-4](https://albynhousing.org.uk/business-plan-year-4) or request a paper copy be sent to you.

Everything we do is about delivering value, listening to you, and making a positive impact. Thank you to all our tenants, staff, and partners — we look forward to building more, doing better, and delivering for you in the year ahead.

# Getting involved

Our aim is to make sure that anyone from our communities who would like to have a say about what we do and how we do it has the opportunity to influence changes and improvements to the services we provide.

The insights you've shared through surveys, consultations and direct involvement help shape the services we deliver and ensure they meet the needs of the people who live in our homes. From repairs, to how we manage estates and setting rent, your feedback directly influences the decisions we make. By taking part in consultations and sharing your experiences, tenants play a key role in strengthening our communities. Whether you've taken part before or it's your first time, your views are always welcome — and always valued.

We have developed a number of ways for you to be involved. These include the following.

- Joining tenants' or residents' groups.
- Joining registered tenant organisations (RTOs).
- Attending meetings and local pop-up sessions.
- Registering an interest in a particular issue.
- Taking part in our resident satisfaction surveys.
- Joining an involved tenant group such as our Customer Involvement Strategy Monitoring Group (CISMG), Performance Monitoring Group, or Tenant Editorial Group.
- Become a member of the society.
- Join our board.

For more details, phone our Community Involvement Team on 01349 855972 or 01349 855976

## Have an interest in how Albyn manage the following areas of your tenancy?

**Repairs, maintenance and housing quality**

---

**Value for money**

---

**Estate management**

We are holding focus groups to help us understand how tenants feel about these areas of performance and gain insights that will support the development of these functions.

This is your opportunity to provide feedback on issues that you are passionate about.

To register your interest in participating, text **07422 076610** or email **[iana.macgregor@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:iana.macgregor@albynhousing.org.uk)**



# Tenant Support

Unsure if you are receiving all the financial support available to you?

Our Tenancy Sustainment Team helps tenants with accessing grants, benefits, money advice, energy advice and much more. Our Team will help with:

- Entitlement checks and help with completing related applications
- Accessing local grants and support
- Guidance on money and energy advice making referrals to local partners for specialist support
- Advice on reducing household bills assisting to access social tariffs

**These are examples of how we have supported our tenants over the past year:**

### Background:

Referral received from our Income Team to help a tenant with a Benefit Entitlement Check. Rent arrears had started to accrue when they reached state pension age as housing benefit had not been in place from the date of the change to state pension.

### Support:

Our Tenancy Sustainment Officer called the tenant, completed a Benefit Entitlement Check – single person who had reached state pension age, no other income and was receiving part State Retirement Pension.

With the support of our Tenancy Sustainment Officer the tenant called the Department of Works and Pensions to confirm income details and make a claim for Pension Credit. Pension Credit was awarded at £170.03 per week with no backdate. This was challenged by the Tenancy Sustainment Officer due to the tenant's circumstances. On review the award was backdated with an amount of over £11,000 being awarded to the tenant.

### The outcome

|   |   |   |  |                      |
|---|---|---|--|----------------------|
| Tenancy sustained   | Backdate of Pension Credit<br><b>£11,612.65</b> | Ongoing Pension Credit Payment of <b>£170.03</b> per week | Access to other entitlements due to Pension Credit award.* | Rent arrears cleared |
| Total Income Maximisation for the tenant, including the backdate <b>£20,453</b> |   |   |  |                      |

\*Warmer Home Discount, Winter Fuel Payment

**If you are finding it hard to meet your rent or other living costs, please get in touch with our Tenancy Sustainment team. You can call us on 0300 323 0990, selecting option 4 or e-mail [tenancysustainment@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:tenancysustainment@albynhousing.org.uk) to discuss what support is available to you.**

## Tenant Energy Service

We're excited to let you know about a brand-new service, the Tenant Energy Support service. We've partnered with Changeworks – Scotland's leading environmental charity and experts in providing energy advice and support – to deliver this service.

The service is free to access and gives our tenants expert energy advice through the online library. There is also support available from energy advisors who can provide expert help, communicate with energy suppliers on tenants' behalf, and direct to financial support if needed.

The Tenant Energy Support online advice library can be accessed via this link: [www.changeworks.org.uk/tes/tes-tenant/tes-albyn-energy-advice/](http://www.changeworks.org.uk/tes/tes-tenant/tes-albyn-energy-advice/) or you can call Changeworks for one-to-one support from an energy advisor.

You can contact Changeworks on freephone 0800 870 8800 between 9am-5pm, Monday - Friday if you feel you need some additional support or a more detailed chat.

## Dealing with fuel debt

It's very common for people to get into fuel debt. If you find yourself in this situation, try not to panic. By law, your energy supplier must work with you to sort out an affordable repayment plan. That way, you can start getting your finances back on track. Our managing fuel debt guide has helpful advice for both understanding and finding your way out of fuel debt. You can access this and lots of other information in our online advice library via this link: [www.changeworks.org.uk/tes/tes-tenant/tes-albyn-energy-advice/](http://www.changeworks.org.uk/tes/tes-tenant/tes-albyn-energy-advice/)

If you feel like you need extra support, contact our Affordable Warmth team for free on 0800 870 8800

## Moving home

If you're moving home, remember to put "sorting out your energy supply" on your to-do list. Our Moving home guide covers what you need to do at your current address, and how to get set up in your new home. You can find it and lots of other energy advice on our online advice library via this link: [www.changeworks.org.uk/tes/tes-tenant/tes-albyn-energy-advice/](http://www.changeworks.org.uk/tes/tes-tenant/tes-albyn-energy-advice/)

## Adaptations Update

Every year, we undertake a number of medical adaptations to our properties to assist tenants to live safely and independently. These range from small works such as fitting handrails, to larger scale works such as fitting wet rooms and adapted kitchens. This work is paid for through funding received from the Scottish Government.

Last year the Scottish Government funding available for medical adaptations was significantly reduced, from £11 million to £8.245m. The reduction in funding and increased demand for adaptations meant there was a significant shortfall in the funding needed to carry out all

requested adaptations. This means we now have waiting list of for works to be carried out and we are unable to carry out any further work until more funding becomes available.

We have written to all tenants on the waiting list to explain the delay. We have submitted our request for funding for 2025/26, and we hope to have a decision on the funding allocation by the end of June. We may be able to carry out small-scale adaptations, such as handrails. If you require any adjustments to your home to enable you to carry out day to day activities, please contact us to discuss this further.



# Shieltaig Update

Albyn Housing Society are pleased to advise that the reinstatement project to re-build 8 & 9 Baile Shuas, Shieltaig, after the devastating fire which raised both properties to the ground, has now completed.

As the build of these properties was funded by our insurance, they have been built to their original design, with the exception of improved fire separation and the use of Mitsubishi Ecodan Air Source Heat Pump systems.

This project couldn't have happened without the support of

- Development team - Albyn Housing Society
- Main Contractor - Compass Building and Construction Services
- Architect - Framed Estates
- Employer's Agent, Quantity Surveyor, CDM Advisor - CSQ Consulting Ltd
- Structural & Civil Engineer - DCF Design Consultants
- Clerk of Works – Albyn Housing Society

Tenants have returned to their homes.



# Home contents insurance

When life gets busy and things are going well, it can be easy to forget about home contents insurance.

Like most forms of insurance, it is something we hope we will never need, but the value becomes clear if we ever have to use it. You should be aware that whilst we insure the building, it is your responsibility to obtain cover for your own household belongings as we are not able to replace these for you if they are lost in a major incident.

Contents insurance can cover replacing personal belongings in your home (and typically outbuildings) if they are damaged, destroyed, or even stolen.

Check out [moneysavingexpert.com](https://moneysavingexpert.com) for advice on getting the best value and read some handy FAQs.

There is also content insurance providers that specialise in insurance for social housing tenants such as thistle Insurance Scheme, visit [www.thistlemyhome.co.uk](http://www.thistlemyhome.co.uk) for more information. We hope you sign up soon!

**Your landlord does not cover your home contents and personal belongings.**

**So it's a good idea to consider what a home contents insurance policy would cover you for.**

**When you move into your property, you should think about protecting your personal possessions and home contents.**

**The Thistle Tenant Risks home contents insurance scheme can cover most of your household contents such as furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, bedding, electrical items, jewellery, pictures and ornaments.**

## Your Rights and Responsibilities

### Your Rights

You have the right to have small, urgent repairs completed within specific timescales under the Right to Repair scheme. When you report a repair, we'll let you know:

- If it's covered under the scheme
- Your rights
- When the repair will be completed

If we don't meet the timescales, you may be entitled to compensation under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

### Your Responsibilities

Please report repairs as soon as possible and allow access for them to be carried out. You're responsible for keeping your home in good order and for damage caused by negligence or misuse—we may recharge you the cost for these types of repairs.

You can find full details in the Tenant Handbook, including which repairs we'll carry out and which are your responsibility.

### Making changes to your home

You'll need written permission from us before starting any alterations, including fitting a satellite dish. Some works may also require Highland Council planning permission.

### Home Inspections

To ensure your home meets the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS), we carry out regular inspections. These may also happen after a reported issue or to check contractor work. We'll always arrange access in advance—except in emergencies.

### Planned Maintenance

We carry out:

- Estate Investment Works – one-off improvement projects like new kitchens or insulation
- Cyclical Works – regular maintenance like gas servicing, gutter cleaning and external painting





# DIGITAL SAFETY WORKSHOPS

Red Chair Highland is proud to deliver a series of **Digital Safety Workshops** in partnership with **Cairn Housing Association** and **Albyn Housing Society**, designed to support individuals in building confidence and staying safe online. Each week focuses on a different topic, helping participants navigate the online world more safely and with greater independence.



**Merkinch Community Centre**



**10am 11.30am**



**SAFETY  
FIRST**

**WEEK**

**1**

## KEEPING YOURSELF SAFE ONLINE

Learn essential online safety skills including creating strong passwords, securing your devices and using safe browsing practices.

**31st July**



**WEEK**

**2**

## SCAM AWARENESS

Understand how to identify and avoid online scams. Learn about phishing, fake websites and fraud tactics - and what to do if something goes wrong.

**7th Aug**



**WEEK**

**3**

## KEEPING YOUR MONEY SAFE ONLINE

Get tips on safely managing finances online, from shopping securely and banking with confidence to safely selling items on the web.

**14th Aug**



**WEEK**

**4**

## HEALTH APPS & NHS NEAR ME

Explore digital tools that support health and wellbeing, including how to use NHS Near Me and discover helpful apps for managing appointments, prescriptions and mental health.

**21st Aug**



**MORE  
INFORMATION**

**01463 417240**  
**info@redchairhighland.scot**

**cairn**

**albyn  
group**



# New leadership appointments

Albyn Housing Society has strengthened its leadership team with two senior appointments to help improve services and ensure the resilience of the organisation.

Bolstering its extended leadership team with a Director of IT and business Services, as well as appointing a Head of Development and Sustainability will support Albyn to meet its mission of maintaining and building quality homes, providing excellent customer service and giving opportunities for people and communities to thrive.

Robert Buchanan has been appointed Director of IT & Business Services. With nearly 18 years of experience in the social housing sector, working in IT and group services at Dunedin Canmore, now part of the Wheatley Group and most recently as Director of Operations at IT Foundations, an IT and cyber security firm. His role at Albyn will focus on improving how we use technology to serve tenants better, making sure we continue to offer efficient services and meet your needs more effectively.

Robert Buchanan, Director of IT and Business Services at one of our homes on Skye.



Robert said: "I've seen firsthand how dedicated the teams are at Albyn to providing homes in some of the most rural parts of the UK. I'm excited to join the team and help improve services for our customers in the Highlands."

Marcie Balance has been appointed Head of Development and Sustainability. With more than 20 years of experience in affordable housing. Marcie originally qualified and worked as an architect before moving into a variety of development and asset management roles. Most recently, she was Director of Property where she led the delivery of over 430 new homes and oversaw repairs, maintenance and tenant safety.



Marcie Balance, Head of Development & Sustainability at our offices in Invergordon.

Marcie said: "I am thrilled to join Albyn, an organisation known for delivering high quality homes. This role will allow me to focus on two areas I am passionate about - development and sustainability – and make a positive difference to the customers and communities we serve."

**Albyn Group CEO, Kirsty Morrison,** said: "We are really proud to welcome Robert and Marcie to our team. Their combined expertise will help us to deliver high quality homes and services to our customers.

Robert's focus on IT and Business Services will ensure that we can deliver more efficient and effective services, while Marcie's work in development and sustainability will help us meet the housing needs of the Highlands."

## Development Update

Albyn Housing Society are delighted to advise we have taken handover of 12 units at 1-12 Willie Wilson Way, Dingwall, with tenants able to move in on 13th May 2025.

This is the first half of our second phase at our Castle Park site and consists of:

| 4x                              | 4x                           | 2x  | 2x   |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 bed<br>(2 person)<br>Bungalow | 3 bed<br>(5 person)<br>Villa | 2 bed<br>(4 person)<br>Ground Floor<br>Flat | 2 bed<br>(4 person)<br>First Floor<br>Flat |

The properties are of timber kit construction comprising of a 145mm wide insulated timber frame with 100mm thick concrete block externally and finished with render and cladding. The roof comprises of factory assembled pitched timber frames finished externally with concrete tiles.

Internally walls are constructed of timber with a plasterboard surface finish. Along with providing separation between rooms and neighbouring properties they can also provide structural integrity, fire integrity and sound transfer, reducing properties.

Ground floors are of concrete construction laid on insulation and 1st floors are chipboard particle board load on timber framing.

The properties have Quantum Heating and Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Panels.

They are equipped with LD1 smoke detection and full fire suppression systems have been installed.

We look forward to the delivery of the second half of the project at the end of the summer.

**A big thank you to everyone who has worked on the project so far:**

**Development Team** - Albyn Housing Society Ltd

**Architect** - Bracewell Stirling Consulting

**Quantity Surveyor & CDMA** - Torrance Partnership

**Civil Engineer** - HGA Consulting Engineers

**Clerk of Works** - Albyn Housing Society Ltd

**Main Contractor** - Capstone Construction Scotland Ltd

**Allocations** – Albyn Housing Society Ltd







# Our Engagement Plan with the Scottish Housing Regulator

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has now published its updated Engagement Plan for Albyn for 2025/26.

We're pleased to share that Albyn continues to meet all of the Regulator's requirements. This means we're compliant with the standards that help make sure we are well-run, financially sound, and delivering good services for tenants.

We're classed as a "systemically important" landlord because of our size, the number of homes we manage, and our plans for growth. This just means the Regulator keeps in regular contact to understand how we're performing and managing risks.

Every year, we submit an Annual Assurance Statement by 31 October. This gives the Regulator a clear view of how we're performing against their 7 key standards for good governance and financial management. These standards are in place to make sure landlords like us are doing the right things – for tenants, communities, and the future. The Regulator also meets with our Leadership Team, observes a Board meeting, and reviews how we're managing risks, finances, and performance.

All of this gives you extra confidence that Albyn is well run and working hard to deliver safe, high-quality homes and services.





# Scottish Home awards

National Award Recognition for New Homes in Lairg

We're proud to share that our new £2.3 million housing development in Lairg has been shortlisted for two national awards at the Scottish Home Awards 2025!

The development is in the running for Social Housing Development of the Year (under 100 units) and the Community Contribution award – recognising not just the quality of the homes, but the partnership work that made them possible.

This is the first new social housing to be built in the village since the 1990s. The homes sit on land donated by Lairg Community Development Initiatives (LCDI) – a brilliant example of how working together locally can achieve great things.

We used local contractor Compass Building & Construction Services, who delivered the homes ahead of schedule – meaning some tenants moved in two months early!

The development includes:

- Four two-bedroom wheelchair accessible bungalows
- Four one-bedroom Fit homes with beautiful views over Loch Shin

The Fit homes are a new kind of smart housing, using sensor technology to support independent living. They quietly monitor changes in daily routines (no cameras!), and can alert loved ones or support workers if something seems unusual. This can make a real difference for people who want to stay independent but may need extra peace of mind.

**Andrew Martin, Albyn's Executive Director of Group Services, said:**

"It's exciting to see this work being recognised nationally. But most of all, we're proud that these homes are now part of a strong and growing community in Lairg. We'll keep working to bring high quality, affordable homes to rural areas that really need them."

The winners of the Scottish Home Awards will be announced in Glasgow on 19th June 2025. Wish us luck



## Complaints in 2025/2026

While we hope that you will never need to raise a complaint with us, there may be times where you feel that the level of service you have received is not of the usual standard. If you feel you have experienced poor customer service, we want to hear about it to try and make things right and continue to support you.

In order for our complaints process to be as accessible and positive as possible, we have implemented some new ways of working. Firstly, we felt it was important for you to understand how we are performing against our peers and ourselves in previous years. Therefore, we will now be providing quarterly updates on our website which showcases some of the key performance information surrounding complaints. These can include the number of complaints we received as well as what topics are being complained about the most. This will help us to identify where we need to focus on so that our services can improve.

We also want to ensure the complaints process is efficient and any issues are resolved in a timely manner. We have been working on reducing the time it takes to receive a response and have seen a healthy reduction in wait times compared to last year.

| Days to respond | 2023/24    | 2024/25    | SPSO Target |
|-----------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Stage 1         | 4.35 Days  | 3.52 Days  | 5 Days      |
| Stage 2         | 19.53 Days | 15.35 Days | 20 Days     |

| You said  | We did  |
|---|---|
| You told us you would like regular updates on what we are doing to make our complaints service better | We have committed to providing regular website updates and newsletter articles to share our progress and news   |
| You said that, in some cases, you felt we hadn't fully answered all concerns raised in complaints     | We have introduced a quality assurance process for all complaints which means they are checked by a scrutiny panel before sending to make sure we have completed a thorough and clear investigation |
| You said you find it difficult to know who to speak to on the phone                                   | We have updated our welcome message to clearly explain who are teams are and make sure you get through to the right person  |

### Do you wish to make a complaint or provide a compliment?

Get in touch in a way that is convenient for you:

**Call us on**

0300 323 0990 Option 5

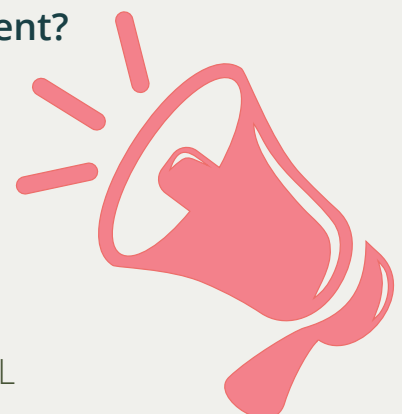
**Email us at**

[office@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:office@albynhousing.org.uk)

**Write to us at**

Albyn Housing Society, 98-104 High Street, Invergordon, IV18 0DL

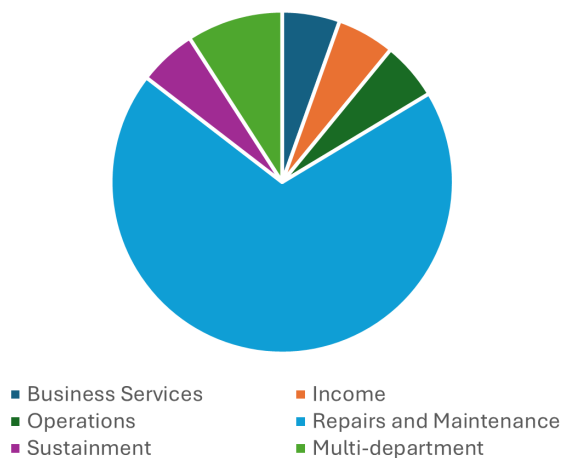
**14** [office@albynhousing.org.uk](mailto:office@albynhousing.org.uk) | 0300 323 0990 | [www.albynhousing.org.uk](http://www.albynhousing.org.uk)



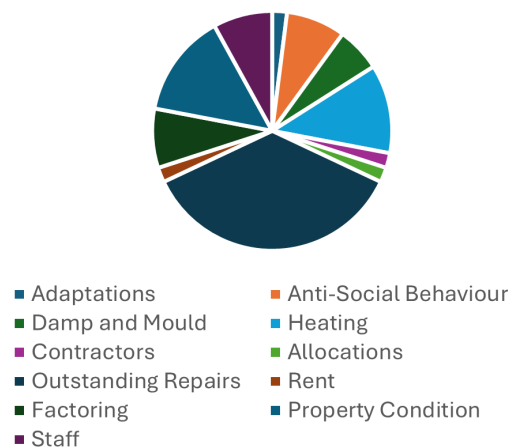
# Compliments Round-Up (Jan-Apr)

We received 40 new stage 1 complaints and 15 new stage 2 complaints. Of the complaints closed, 19 were not upheld, 17 were partially upheld and 16 were fully upheld. The average time we took to respond to stage 1 complaints was 3.41 days and 15.77 for stage 2 complaints. None of our complaints were found to have an equalities aspect.

What department did the complaints relate to?



What were the complaints made about?

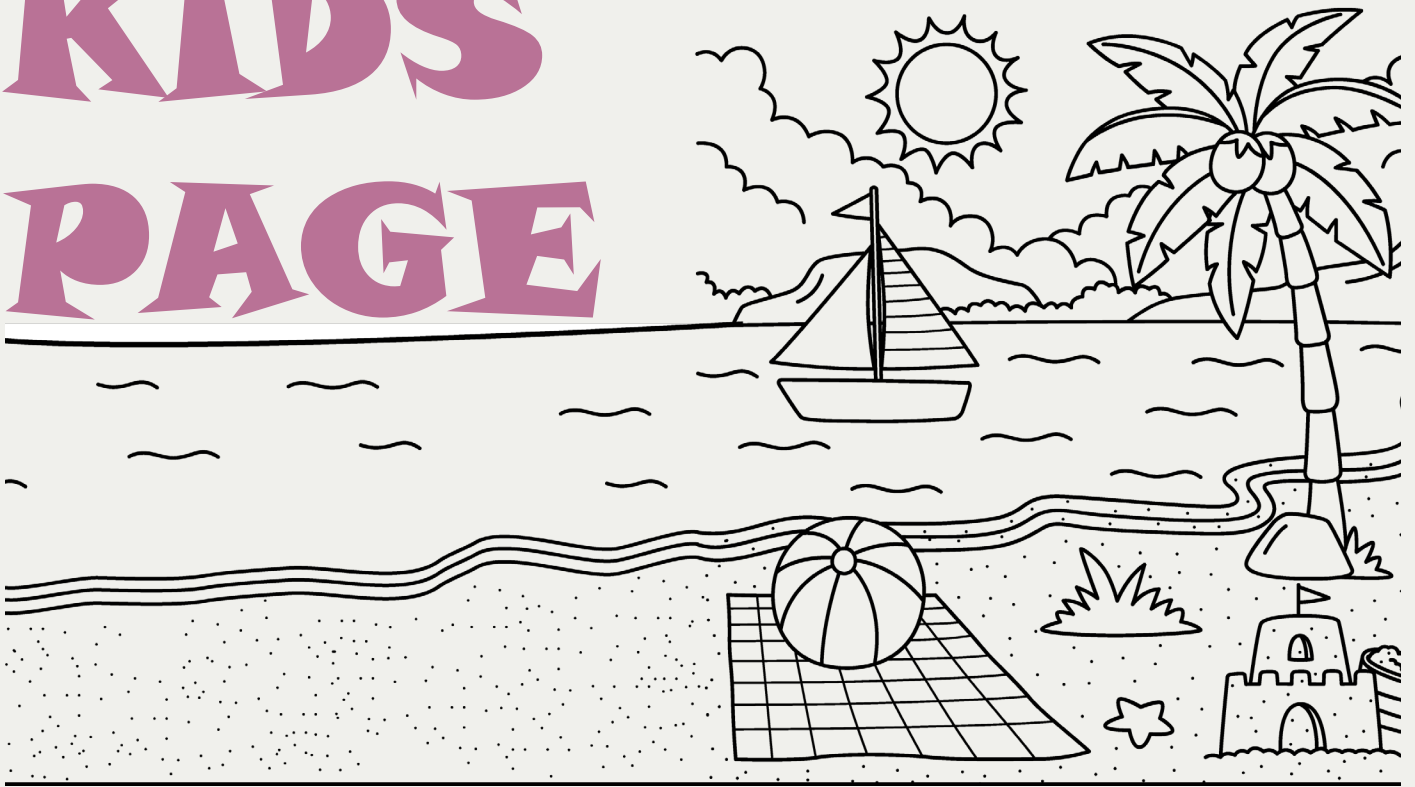


I would like to say thank you for dealing with our complaint. We are happy with the progress to date. Once again thank you for your help in dealing with our problem which should have been done many years ago.

I wanted to drop you a line just to thank you for everything that you did to help us. We have our insulation and the new air source heating and it's been great. Truly thank you for your patience and understanding getting us through this, it's greatly appreciated.



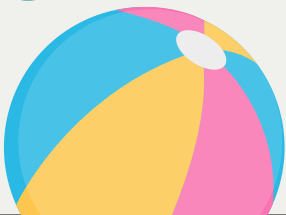
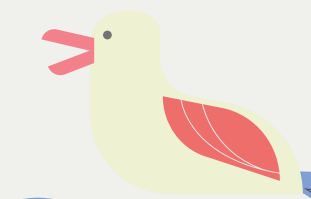
I had the painters out again today, second time they've been in my home. Father and son duo Paul and Ben. I just would like it known that these men are worth their weight in gold. They are so polite, keep me informed of every aspect of the job, as they are working in a few rooms within my home. Tidy up as they go along and leave my home as they found it cleanliness wise. They both do their job exceptionally well.

# KIDS PAGE



## SUMMER SCAVENGER HUNT

This summer, why not try to find as many of these things as you can. If you would like to draw us a picture or write us a story about your summer holidays we would cherish it and put it on our walls ... we might even publish it in the newsletter!!

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| KITE<br>    | FLOWER  | <br>SUNSHINE |
| LADYBUG  | BEACHBALL<br> | SEASHELL  |
| SEAGULL<br> | WIGGLY<br>WORM  | SAND<br>CASTLE  |