

A week in the life of Job Share Housing Officers Monday–Tuesday: Sharon Singer

Monday 18th May – Sharon

Week 9 in the Singer lockdown house and the day begins with a bang. Mr Singer on investigating why the kettle isn't coming on, is given the fright of his life as there is a bang, a flame and the kettle blows up. Thankfully no injuries were sustained, all I needed to do was check the circuit board, flick a couple of switches and the sockets are back in action., kettle on the other hand.... Next task of the day is to wake up two teenage boys, no easy task at the best of times never mind now with the school routine all over the place.

Having done all this it's 9am and time to log on. The first task of the day is to check all the emails I've received. This can take a bit of time as with working part time I will have mail from the end of the week to look over. There are emails from colleagues to answer, some useful information from Maureen our Systems Support Officer on cyber security and emails from tenants. Many tenants do email us and it's a good way to keep in touch with your Housing Officer.

I move on to check some rent accounts to see what payments we have received and follow up on cases from last week. I phone tenants to discuss their arrears and to see if there is anything that we can do to help. This morning a tenant needed a bit of help resolving a problem with Discretionary Housing Payment and Council Tax Reduction so I contact East Dunbartonshire Council to see if we can get the issues resolved. Before I know it it's time for some lunch and to check what schoolwork my boys have managed to do!

Return from lunch and it seems that my laptop doesn't like being left as I have a problem logging back in. Couple of phone calls later and my colleagues have got it sorted and I'm back in action. The afternoon is spent on the phone to the Council, Association colleagues and my final call of the day, to check on tenant who has been struggling emotionally to cope at this tough time.

Tuesday 19th May – Sharon

The day starts with a run at 7.30am, I'm now on week 3 of the Couch to 5k programme. Running is so good for our physical and mental health and sets me up for the day ahead. I check for signs of life from my teenage sons and then it's down to work for the day.

As always, my day starts with checking emails received overnight. I have a few from tenants that have been sent late on Monday night so I reply to them first. More phone calls to tenants about arrears and I liaise with Moira and Morag in Welfare Rights as I have some tenants needing help with Universal Credit and PIP claims. Case notes are all updated in between answering questions from my boys on Geography, English and Physics !

We have continued to receive neighbour complaints and estate management issues to deal with whilst on lockdown. The afternoon is spent calling tenants to discuss their concerns, file notes are updated and letters issued.

It's taken a while to adjust to homeworking, overcoming the issues with IT and my pay as you go phone that sometimes cuts out on me mid conversation, but I've got there. Tenants are pleased to know that we are just at the other end of the phone or only an email away. We might not be at the office but we are still here for you !

Can't believe that already it's Wednesday tomorrow and I'll be joined by Suzanne.





A week in the life of Job Share Housing Officers

Wednesday–Thursday: Suzanne McGraw.

Wednesday 20th May – Suzanne

It's Wednesday and the start of my working week. It's week 9 of Lockdown and since Government advice, like so many others, it's week 9 of working from home for me.

I look out the windows and notice the streets and driveways are still full of parked cars and office car parks lie empty.

I retreat to my makeshift office to log onto my laptop...nothing happens. So I need to wait on the assistance of one of my colleagues. In the meantime I phone Sharon, my job-share partner, for a weekly update on the patch we both cover and anything I may need to pick up on later in the week.

Success - I have managed to get laptop up and running. I spend quite a lot of time reading and responding to emails as they tend to mount up, especially during the current circumstances and of course as I don't work on a Monday and Tuesday.

One major part of my job has changed - the face-to-face conversations with tenants. I am no longer out visiting people on my patch and stopping for a blether on the way to my visits with the usual Hillhead characters...you know who you are! Nowadays I'm having to contact my tenants via phone, email and text.

Each Housing Officer has "vulnerable people" on their patch and although Tracy and Gail from the office are doing a great job of checking in on them with regular phone calls there are a few I like to personally keep in contact with, to raise my spirits as much as theirs.

After these "checking-in" calls I take a break late morning to go downstairs and do my 10 minutes exercise routine...it's not quite Joe Wicks Workout but I'm getting there. Before I start my daily exercises I switch the kettle on for my next caffeine shot. After my jumping jacks and burpees I pour my coffee and head for the biscuit jar...IT'S EMPTY!!!

Wednesday 20th May – Suzanne (continued)

Every other Wednesday the Housing Management Team are trying to partake in a Zoom meeting but it's not diaried in for this week. Hopefully by the end of Lockdown we'll finally have managed to get all of the Housing Management Team together at the same meeting. It's not quite as good as the Live Show but if nothing else we're all finding new and innovative ways to communicate. I use this opportunity to check in on a few colleagues, as one Housing Officer is on leave this week so myself and another Housing Officer are helping to cover their patch.

Following my "check-in calls" and emails I contact other relevant agencies to assist in the support of our tenants. This includes the local Foodbank, a tenant's Community Psychiatric Nurse, Women's Aid and the Police.

Finally before I finish for the day my last call is to a tenant who is seeking some advice on her partner moving in with her. It is important to keep your Housing Officer up-to-date with any changes in household even during these times.

Thursday 21st May – Suzanne

Like a lot of people during these difficult times I have been struggling with my sleep. I decide to log onto my laptop early this morning to avoid the 9am rush. Success... "The early bird catches the worm" comes to mind. So with that in mind and a full cookie jar I'm prepared for the day ahead.

No matter how well I plan my diary, my day rarely goes to plan. Housing Officers are reactive to the needs of their tenants therefore if something comes up we often have to deal with it straight away.

Today the main focus of my day is to concentrate on arrears. Rent Arrears work takes up a significant amount of my time and even more so at the moment but it is extremely important to ensure that the Association has money coming in to spend on repairs and improvements. A lot of my tenants have endured financial difficulties during these times as a result of having their hours reduced at work or being furloughed. We are working extremely hard with our 2 Welfare Rights Officer and Tenancy Support Worker to ensure that all tenants who are experiencing financial difficulties receive advice and assistance in relation to any benefits they may be entitled to. In addition to this we are reaching out to tenants in rent

arrears to assist them in making realistic repayment arrangements. After all, the arrears are not going to go away and will need to be addressed at some point.

During this I get a call from a tenant who wishes to remain anonymous but reports of noisy parties coming from a nearby household on a regular basis. The tenant does not wish to make a formal complaint at this time. I phone the household in question to advise of this noise complaint. Neighbour issues can be very distressing and we always try to intervene as early as possible to resolve things.

Before I log off for the holiday weekend I deal with 2 queries regarding relationship breakdowns. These are always difficult conversations to take place but they are extremely important to ensure that all parties involved know their rights.

It is so important to stay connected during these unprecedented times so in the words of Bob Hoskins from the classic BT advert "It's Good to Talk".

On that final note please contact your Housing Officer if you require assistance or advice during these times.