

# Social Housing Fuel Support Fund Round Two

Funded by the Scottish Government and administered by SFHA



**Innovation &  
Future Thinking**



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Scottish Federation of  
Housing Associations

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## Introduction

The Social Housing Fuel Support Fund is funded by the Scottish Government and managed and administered by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA). It aims to provide practical support to social landlords' tenants to mitigate fuel poverty, and to help them to manage, or reduce, their fuel costs.

Launched in November 2021, this £2 million fund was well received by the sector, with the pot being fully subscribed and dispersed to housing associations by the Christmas break. SFHA received more applications in early January and, following an approach to the Scottish Government, was able to secure a welcome additional £375,000 for projects.

SFHA awarded funding to 35 projects, comprising single organisation, partnership and consortium bids. In total, 41 organisations were direct recipients, with a further 24 accessing vouchers for their tenants through one of the main grantees. Successful applications were received from housing associations from across Scotland, supporting rural, island and urban communities.

Housing associations received grants in the following amounts:

Housing association	Amount awarded
Abronhill Housing Association	£11,000
Atrium Homes	£65,950
Barrhead Housing Association in partnership with HACT	£490,693
Bield Housing & Care	£33,000
Cairn Housing Association	£264,920
Clyde Valley Housing Association	£137,000
Clydesdale Housing Association	£132,600
Cunninghame Housing Association	£72,396
East Kilbride Housing Association	£12,119
Eildon Housing Association	£300,000
Faifley Housing Association	£15,000
Fife Housing Group	£33,200
Glasgow West Housing Association	£20,350
Glen Housing Association	£49,460
Govan Housing Association	£40,000
Hanover Scotland	£15,000

Housing association	Amount awarded
Hillhead Housing Association	£2,500
Link Group	£61,680
Linstone Housing Association	£15,520
Lister Housing Co-operative	£9,250
Lochaber Housing Association	£40,700
Loreburn Housing Association	£12,000
Maryhill Housing Association	£5,300
Ng Homes	£16,000
Paisley Housing Association	£10,500
Port of Leith Housing Association	£33,492
Prospect Community Housing	£11,837
Queens Cross Housing Association	£32,000
River Clyde Homes	£27,000
Ruchazie Housing Association	£9,000
Southside Housing Association	£17,632
Thenue Housing Association	£8,500
Wellhouse Housing Association	£6,000
West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative	£13,398
Wheatley Group	£350,000

*"We are amazed at the support we have been given, it has certainly made a huge difference to my family, heating the home is becoming more expensive and with proposed increase in energy prices, we don't know how we are going to manage."*



## Delivery and impact

The Scottish Government was keen that the funding reached tenants directly, and therefore the fund had an element of flexibility in what could be delivered, with the only explicit exclusions being direct staffing costs and white goods.

The impact of this funding cannot be understated, with both quantitative and qualitative outputs. From the funding received it was reported that organisations were able to support tenants by:

- distributing 15,986 fuel vouchers to tenants with a total value of £783,314
- providing direct financial support to over 4,000 tenants
- providing energy advice to over 4,000 tenants
- reducing depression and anxiety for 1,274 tenants
- providing relief from debt burden for 1,475 tenants and allowing 900 to become debt free.

The short-term nature of this funding meant that organisations needed to be able to deliver at speed but also provide opportunities for interventions that would not only support with the immediate crisis that tenants were facing but enable resilience against future financial shocks. This led to housing associations using a variety of tried and tested models, such as fuel vouchers, but also innovative new approaches such as provision of thermally lined curtains and slow cookers. Whilst direct staffing costs were excluded, housing associations have enlisted the help of external services, such as those provided by Changeworks and the Wise Group, to deliver energy advice and advocacy to tenants in need.



## Govan Housing Association



Govan Housing Association was founded in 1971 and was the first community-based housing provider. The association has taken on ownership and management of over 1,600 properties in the local area and delivered a number of award-winning new build developments.

The award from the Social Housing Fuel Support Fund has allowed Govan Housing Associations to continue providing its service in the community. It has allowed the association to grant fuel vouchers and direct financial assistance for fuel debt to assist tenants to top up their meters. Many of Govan's tenants are in fuel poverty and present to the local housing associations in a state of crisis where they have no heat or lighting in their property. The funding has allowed the service to cover the cost of fuel vouchers to help its tenants in need. It has allowed its energy advisers to give help to tenants who are on bill payment meters and struggling to make payments due or have fallen behind.

The Govan Energy Advice Service is a fairly new service which has been set up to encourage partnership working between three housing associations within the Govan area of Glasgow. Govan, Elderpark and Linthouse housing associations all work together to provide a free energy advice service for Housing Association tenants across the deprived area of Govan. These tenants are recognised as being most likely to be living in fuel poverty, and through working with this service it helps to develop their knowledge, skills and confidence to take more control of their energy use, assists them to switch to cheaper suppliers, deal with energy fuel debts and identify grants they may be eligible for. Govan Housing Association has found that by providing direct support to tenants through advocacy, education, and advice, it enables them to become more empowered to deal with their debts, reduce their energy bills, minimise energy use and improve energy efficiency.

In partnership with Linthouse and Elderpark Housing Associations



**linthouse**  
HOUSING ASSOCIATION



Theme:



Energy

**£40,000**  
funding received

## Fife Housing Group

Fife Housing Group is one of the largest independent housing associations in the East of Scotland, with approximately 2,500 properties. Glen Housing Association owns and manages circa 500 houses in Glenrothes and Levenmouth, and Ore Valley Housing Association is based in Cardenden, with over 670 properties located throughout Fife.



Fife Housing Group proposed to offer financial help to its social renting tenants who are in fuel poverty but also to enable the purchase and provision of additional energy saving equipment that could help the clients in their home. The project targeted the following tenant groups:

- those who have been disproportionately impacted by the effects of Covid-19 and who are most at risk of disconnection, fuel poverty and cold-related health issues
- new tenants who have been allocated a property from the homeless list
- tenants in financial difficulty who, either for health and safety reasons, or due to outstanding debts, have had their gas supply capped.

Fife Housing Group saw a great demand for its energy advice project, with Greener Kirkcaldy providing in-depth energy advice to 81 households. Forty-four of these households received 58 fuel top-up vouchers to ensure they were not disconnected over the winter period. Fife Housing Group provided energy efficiency measures, including thermal curtains, LED bulbs, radiator reflectors, slow cookers and letterbox covers to 41 homes, increasing energy efficiency, helping participants to feel more comfortable within their homes and saving them money.

During the project, Fife Housing Group collated information about its participants' financial gains from the energy adviser. Sixty-five participants received a total of £19,895 in financial gains, averaging £306 per home. It is expected that these gains will continue to increase after the life of the project as more debt is cleared and more measures are installed. Gains included access for households to the Warm Home Discount, totalling £3,640, and removal of debt by utility companies of just under £10,000. Throughout the project, it carried out a survey to obtain feedback from households who received an energy advice or telephone advice session, and 81 tenants took part in the survey. Seventy-four per cent of tenants sought advice as they were struggling to pay for their fuel use or were looking for gas and electricity utility debt advice.

### Themes:



Energy



Household items

**£33,200**  
funding received

## Glasgow West Housing Association

Glasgow West Housing Association (GWhA) is a community-controlled, charitable housing service provider in the West End of Glasgow, housing over 2,000 tenants across its extremely diverse neighbourhood.



GWhA has a large number of households who do not have pre-payment meters, and it proposed to assist these households by matching the fuel bank donation of £49 per activity.

GWhA also aimed to provide additional heavy tog duvets, thermal bedding and hot water bottles to households who it deemed to be in fuel poverty, with priority being given to those with children and/or underlying health conditions.

GWhA allocated £5,000 of its award to the Fuelbank Foundation which allowed it to make the proposed 102 winter payments of £49 credit to pre-payment meter households for a top-up of gas or electricity. Additionally, it made 150 £49 payments to assist households who had dry or smart meters, to support them to continue to use their gas or electricity without fear of cost. The association also assisted 132 households by providing them with winter bedding items, including winter tog duvets and flannelette fitted and flat sheets based on household and bed types.

### Themes:



Energy



Essential items

**£20,350**  
funding received

*"I have no money; I am so grateful for your help. I just want to watch the TV and put the heating on."*



## Hanover Scotland

Hanover Scotland has been housing and supporting people in Scotland for more than 40 years, currently managing over 5,000 homes.



Hanover Scotland proposed to provide fuel vouchers and advice to existing tenants, identified as being at high risk of fuel poverty or fuel debt, over the winter months. It planned to concentrate its efforts on reaching low-income families, people in receipt of assistance with housing costs, older and more vulnerable people living in rural communities and individuals who only have use of expensive to run electric storage heating. It expected that having access to additional funds would alleviate some of the financial stress that tenants were facing during the energy and fuel crisis. Additionally, Hanover Scotland expected that it should also positively impact both tenants' mental and physical health.

Hanover Scotland contacted 758 residents via letter, inviting them to apply for the £49 fuel vouchers and/or seek further advice. The letter also signposted the recipient to other local agencies for benefits and debt advice in their area. Three-hundred and five applications were received and 61 of these cases wanted further advice and were referred to Home Energy Scotland via its referral portal. Despite having 305 responses, Hanover Scotland was only able to provide 286 vouchers due to the Charis platform admin fees.

### Themes:



Energy



Mental health support

**£15,000**  
funding received

*"This really took some pressure off, I was really stressed about the situation."*



## Challenges and opportunities

While housing associations were able to deliver at pace, the short timescales for applications given the 'first come, first served' nature of the fund, in addition to the need for funds to be spent by the end of the financial year, has limited the type of activities which could be delivered. Some of the funding was therefore used to purchase fuel vouchers, with many social landlords making use of third-party fuel voucher administrators. While this allowed the funding to be spent within the required timescale, as described in the Hanover Scotland case study, platform administration fees for fuel voucher schemes have eaten into funding that would otherwise have meant organisations could support more households, and this feedback has been echoed by a number of grantees.

Another challenge has been the availability and capacity of energy advice services, particular where tailored, face to face provision is required. While some of SFHA's members already employ in-house advisers, not all social landlords have the resources to offer this type of specialist service. Some of our members will signpost tenants to other local, third sector organisations, however, much of this activity can be subject to short-term funding schemes and many have already been working to capacity. While the Social Housing Fuel Support Fund has allowed organisations that do not have core or grant-funded energy advice services in-house to buy in provision, such as those provided by HEAT (Wise Group) and Changeworks, these services have, in turn, faced challenges meeting the need.

Given the escalation of the energy crisis during the course of the funding period, tenants have seen their energy costs increase significantly, thereby reducing the amount of heat or comfort associated with a standard £49 fuel voucher. The average dual fuel costs rose to their highest ever rate in October 2021, followed by a further 54% rise in April 2022, resulting in average annual bills of around £2,000. With a further increase in the price cap expected in October 2022 and again in January 2023, the real term value of such vouchers will be eroded even further next winter.

Since Round 2 of the Social Housing Fuel Support Fund has concluded, both the UK and Scottish Governments have introduced various other measures to assist households with their fuel costs. The £400 grant available to all domestic electricity customers and the various cost of living payments available through the social security system are particularly welcome. However, as it stands, there are vulnerable households who will miss out on this much-needed support. For example, some social landlords offer 'heat with rent', or similar models where the building owner has a commercial contract with the energy supplier, often as part of a communal heating system. These scenarios are particularly common in supported and sheltered accommodation, which are often home to people with multiple and complex needs. However, these end users are not classed as domestic customers and are therefore not eligible for some of the proposed support mechanisms, nor are they protected by the price cap.

## Recommendations:

- The Scottish Government should increase the budget for the Fuel Insecurity Fund in 2022/23 and extend the duration of the funding window to reflect the nature of the ongoing energy price crisis.
- The Social Housing Fuel Support Fund should continue to prioritise those facing the highest energy costs, and those who are ineligible for current support mechanisms, while reviewing the eligibility criteria to facilitate activities which will have a sustained, longer-term impact.
- The Scottish Government should introduce a dedicated fund to support fully-funded places on the City and Guilds Energy Awareness training programme to help upskill existing housing staff ahead of the coming winter.
- Both the UK and Scottish Government should introduce alternative safeguards and additional support for households who are neither protected by the energy price cap nor eligible for current support mechanisms.
- The Scottish Government should consider actions which support holistic measures to support social housing tenants affected by the cost of living crisis and consider investment to create further capacity in local advice services.
- The Scottish Government should also develop a co-ordinated national winter campaign which promotes home energy efficiency, including heating and ventilation practices, alongside clear routes to ongoing advice and support.
- The Scottish Government should consider how to provide enhanced support for off-gas households/those facing higher energy costs.
- Initiatives which provide financial support to those in need over the winter months (e.g. Winter Fuel Payment) should increase in line with the inflation of the energy price cap.
- The Scottish Government's review of the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing Two should consider how to more closely align the benefits of energy efficiency investment and the tackling of fuel poverty, to ensure a just transition.
- The Scottish Government should work closely with housing associations and local authorities to develop long-term funding solutions and a clear pathway to the delivery of the Zero Emissions Social Housing Taskforce report recommendations.

"You are absolute life savers! I never would have resolved the utility or debt problems myself."



## Case Study

### Linstone

L. H. is a single mum of two:

*"Firstly, I'm grateful to you and your team for thinking of me and my children, also your funders for this fantastic opportunity. Unfortunately, I have cervical myelopathy in my spine (compressed spinal cord) and cervical dystonia (muscle spasms in my neck and back), and I am in a great deal of pain every day. I have hot baths a lot to help me manage my pain also, as a result, I have chronic fatigue, depression and severe anxiety."*

*"Since lockdown, and having limited movement, this has progressed a lot and have been off sick from my job as a senior project worker on and off for three years and do not have any sick pay left, so this has helped us a great deal and takes a bit of pressure off me as a lone parent."*

*"One of my sons is autistic and benefits from being able to watch his TV in his room when he needs alone time, so it also benefits him in a lot of ways."*

*"I am forever grateful to you all for this voucher as it goes along way and not just to heat our home and give us use of electricity but in other ways that help us along the way as individuals and as a family"*

L.H. obtained two prepayment energy vouchers to help top up her energy bills. This is an example of someone who is struggling and probably needs ongoing support as her situation would not experiment any changes in the short term. The association was able to help alleviate the financial pressure by providing the vouchers and referring her to Linstone's Community Energy Adviser. The Community Energy Adviser will be able to provide long-term support to help her manage energy usage in a more efficient way to avoid the family becoming dependent on fuel vouchers.

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