

HYGIENE KILLS THE VIRUS

CAMPAIGN DOSSIER

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Some landlords falsely claim the govt has ordered cleaning to stop, this needs to change.
- 1.2 In schemes many people are unaware of the physical distancing policies, but despite the ability to do so there is no communication from landlords eg one household in the lift. The situation across the country is wildly different. For example, Wheatley Group has great policies in the GHA and Cube, having committed to two-hourly cleaning of buttons and surfaces (handrails, bin chutes, door handles etc.). Their factoring company YourPlace, however, has completely suspended cleaning in properties and tenements.
- 1.3 This wildly varied and often dangerous situation (notes Maryhill Housing and Elderpark Housing reversing policies to stop cleaning due to tenant action) requires regulatory action.
- 1.4 We have formulated our demands based on an extension of the best policies of Wheatley Group (when they are practised) but also some obvious ones like tenants do not pay, PPE for staff etc and we urge this to urgently be considered.
- 1.5 All quotes and photographs are from tenants who have submitted comments to Living Rent and are copyright of their respective submitters.

2.0 RSL ACTIONS & TENANT TESTIMONIES

2.1 Aberdeen City Council

2.1.1 “Nope. Aberdeen city council most certainly is not. But then, with all the high rises in Aberdeen, it would be difficult to maintain. Giving the building a decent clean would be a start 😬”

2.2 Cube HA

2.2.1 “85 wyndford road .maryhill communal stairs and landings cube housing”



2.2.2 “Just about 2 hours ago I reported to cube about syringes and tinfoil on my landing ,still there.”

“Three ambulances outside 151 Wyndford road in a matter of 4 days today 5 police cars and a paramedic and an ambulance surely there is a link here ,why the cube be taking care of us.”

“Same here the football pitch has been cut twice in 2 days. Ludicrous. We need to log these as Cube is withholding a bunch of services, but the grass round my way is like a putting green.”

2.2.3 “They are not doing that good tbh my renement 28 Wyndford Road not been cleaned in over a month.. Millions and that's not exaggeration of pigeon crap in close.. Stairs all piss aswell. Been like this for weeks – Cube.”

2.2.4 “This is one of the lifts I'm 171 today and an hour later was still the same.



2.2.5 “This is my landing at the bin chute end which has been like this for at least 2 days”





2.3 Dunedin Canmore HA [Wheatley Group]

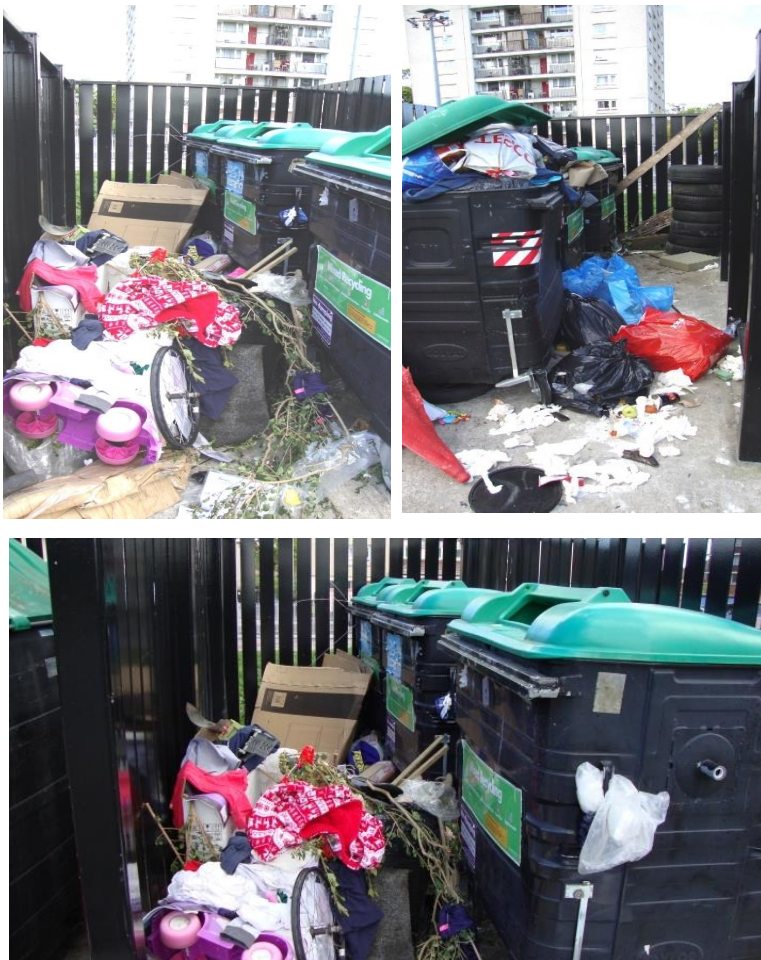
2.3.1 “Hi I'm a tenant at Westfield Avenue Edinburgh run by Dunedin Canmore/Wheatley Group. Rented for 4 years and rent increased again, as does annually, 1st May. Cleaning stopped at start of lockdown which is disappointing as part of our tenancy agreement includes communal stair and lift cleaning. I have cleaned the lift myself twice a week. Regards.”

2.4 Edinburgh City Council

2.4.1 “I live in Edinburgh, a mixed stair of 3x Council tenants and 3x private landlords. I'm a tenant of the latter. We're meant to get our stair cleaned professionally every Thursday. Not seen/heard the cleaners in at least 3 weeks. I've cleaned the stair rails personally once a week, no one else in the stair has cleaned anything. The council tenants appear to still be interacting like normal with their friends on the street so guessing they've not received extra instruction from the council. The private landlords are on the quiet side too. I never hear from my letting agency though can contact my landlord direct. Owner downstairs is my landlords mum so I am contacting her direct. Landlord across the way is oblivious and even had their ten”

2.4.2 “Edinburgh city council has stopped cleaning the stair in Stenhouse.”

2.4.3 Bins in Muirhouse:





2.5 Elderpark HA

2.5.1 “Elderpark Housing have not had cleaning team out since 10 March, I am now out of pocket to purchase broom mop bucket and disinfectant to do my close.... made worse by 2 neighbour's still having family visit their homes.”

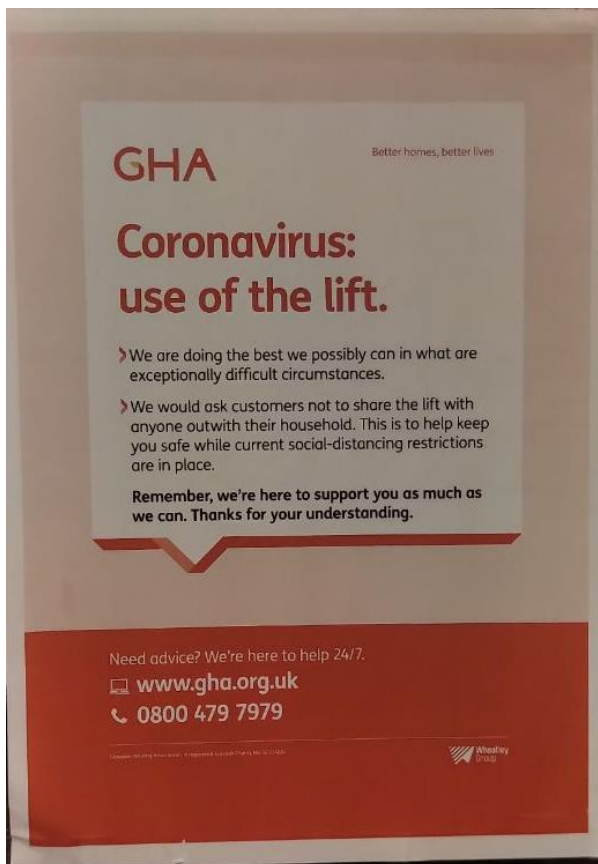
2.5.2 Same tenant, seven days later:

“Got text questionnaire this morning and it asked if I am happy now cleaning commenced not seen any sign this has taken place as only cleaning done here is by tenants.”

2.6 GHA / YourPlace [Wheatley Group]

2.6.1 Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) and its factor-only service YourPlace Property Management are part of Wheatley Group. GHA have publicly stated that “...ground floor areas such as lifts and entry systems are being cleaned every two hours, subject to staff resources.”¹

2.6.2 Some GHA properties now have notice advising only members of the same household should use the lifts together:



2.6.2 "I don't live in flat but up a close owned by GHA. No cleaners at all since it all started which I don't really understand surely cleaners are 'essential workers' not that I want anyone at extra risk but a weekly deep clean would certainly help!"

2.6.3 “GHA have not been near in weeks but have still been charged according to their latest bill.”

¹ <https://twitter.com/GlasgowHousing/status/1245363566565359620>



2.7 Govan HA

2.7.1 “No I am doing that in my close as no one else is doing it”

2.8 Linthouse HA

- 2.8.1 “Not sure if it's my imagination but Linthouse HA have stopped cleaning out communal areas altogether. Anyone velse with the same experience? Going to contact them to confirm.”



2.9 Lowther Homes

- 2.9.1 “Im with lowther homes and whilst the close is in an ok state its not about presentation its about hygiene of an unseen virus. There has been no one out to clean the floors or bannister aince mid march and seeing as they have just increased the rwnt im teally not happy with the current situation.”

2.10 Maryhill HA

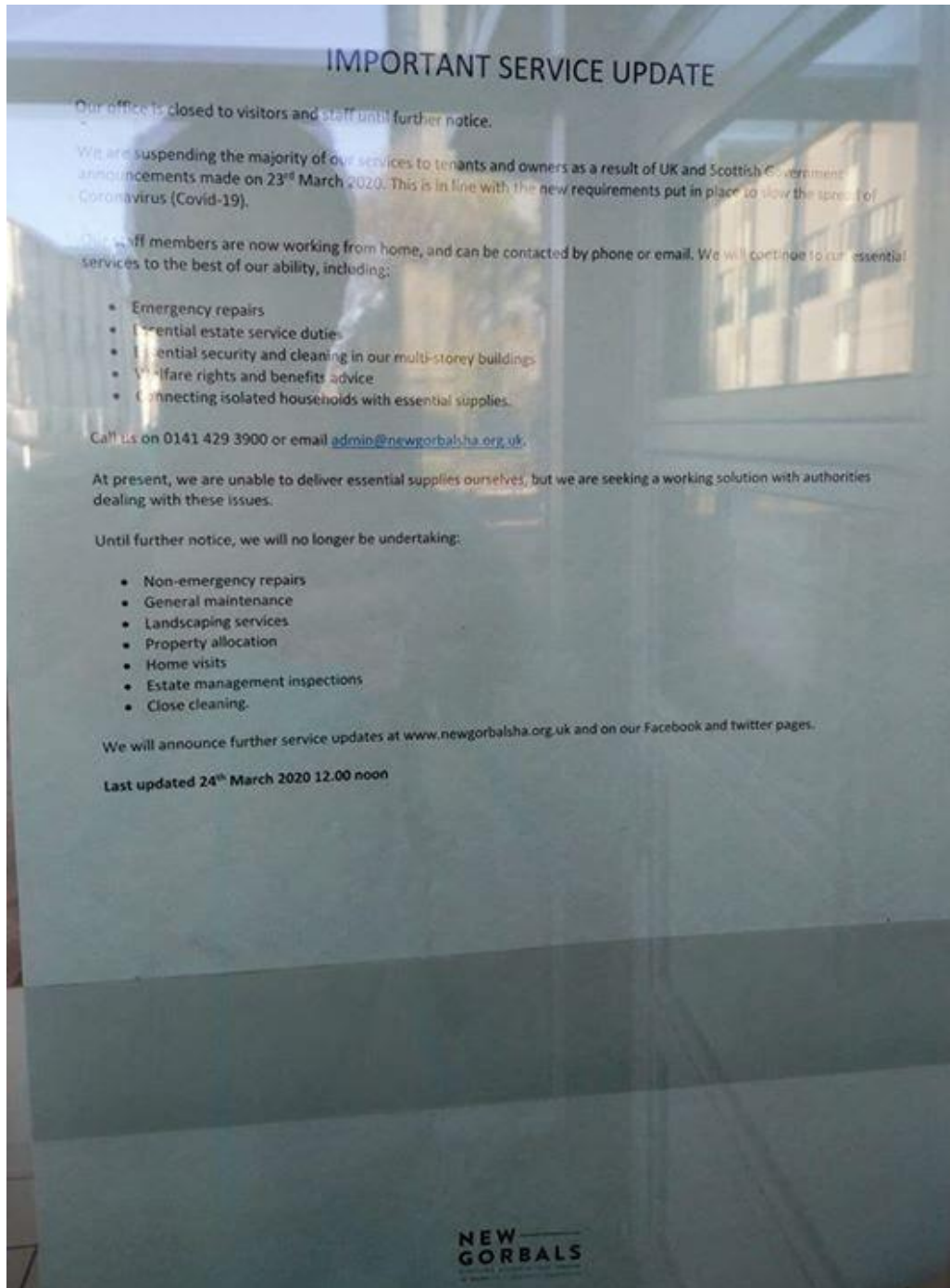
2.10.1 “This is supposed to have been cleaned by Caledonia Cleaning. It’s never been cleaned in years.”



“MHA said we in closes are only getting handles and entry buttons cleaned. Not seen any signs so far. Bin men have to bring bins through the closes for emptying and trails of mud etc being left. Despite this lack of cleaning we are still having to pay the charge for landlord services. Grass not being cut either. The pic of our door entry system shows it hasn’t been cleaned ever.”

2.11 New Gorbals HA

2.11.1 “Service Update” notice from New Gorbals HA, stating among other things that they will no longer be undertaking close cleaning.





2.11.2 “It's been that way for a few weeks. I'm having to take antibacterial wipes and disinfectant if I want to use the lift otherwise I use the stairs.”

2.11.3 “My close is just as bad it's not been cleaned in a long time now. Plus I still got dried in blood in the close when the shop got broken into last yes I reported it repeatedly and it still there.”

2.12 North Lanarkshire Council

2.12.1 "I'm in a tower, there's a caretaker on 12 hrs a day 7 days, see them mopping cleaning regularly even before this. Don't know how often, it's council. There's letters at lifts about 1 at a time. It's just one guy who can only do so much to clean handrails, doors, buttons – every 2 hours be near impossible. Landings etc always spotless"



2.13 Partick HA

2.13.1 “Partick H A hasn’t cleaned our building since before lockdown.”



2.14 Port of Leith HA

2.14.1 “Great to see ‘social’ landlord @PortofLeithHA not only withdraw cleaning of buildings during covid lockdown (and still ask to be paid for it) but also sending officers to demand covid rent arrears be paid.”



2.15 QXHA

2.15.1 “I live in Dundasvale court, the main door was automated, but since this outbreak began the door is broken and no one bothered to fix it, which is terrifying because the main door and the left is the common point to spread the virus. QXHA runs the block”

“I asked the concierges few times, they were saying the mechanic engineer is working on that. But I don't think so. As i have not seeing any around and not progress within a month.”

2.16 Williamsburgh HA

2.16.1 “Im a Williamsburgh HA tenant. They say they are focussing on cleaning buzzer panels and bannisters. Not closes . I pay a service charge for close cleaning. I’ve not seen anyone cleaning buzzer panels or close door or close. We have had lots of traffic in.close due to anti social behaviour from one tenant . Although notified of fact there are people in/out not observing any social distancing and touching doors handles and bannisters WHA have not responded with any cleaning. [...] Situation with. my landlord regarding grass cutting was to delete my questions from their facebook page and to totally not bother contacting me to address the questions - same with close cleaning. No one has come back to.me despite fact I continue to advise them of frequent daily footfall to close due to neighbours asb.”

3.0 CASE STUDY – BIRNIES COURT, MUIRHOUSE ESTATE, EDINBURGH

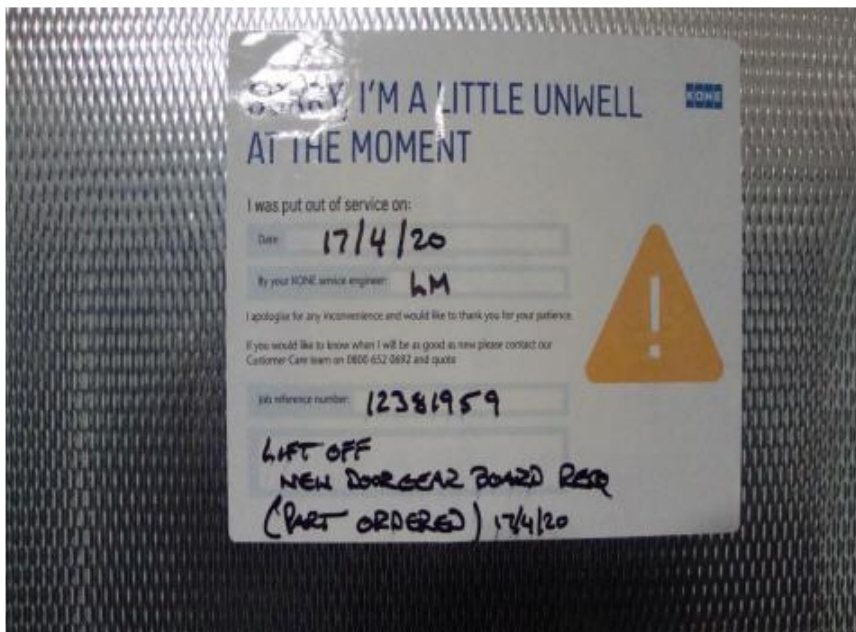
3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Built in the 1960s, Birnies Court is a 14-storey tower block in the Muirhouse housing scheme, one of the six remaining high rises in the scheme. Each floor has four flats. The block is served by two lifts, one of which goes to the odd-number floors the other to the evens. Both lifts go to the top floor. Over 100 people live in the block.

3.2 The Lifts

3.2.1 In September 2017, Birnies Court residents were informed by letter that the Council would be installing two new lifts. The farce commenced. It took eight months to install the new lifts during which time the residents had, at best, only one lift. On at least two occasions, both lifts were out of order, leaving residents to struggle up and down stairs, or just stay in, trapped in their homes. The installation was completed in April 2018 and the problems began at once. At first it was the odd-numbers lift, which would break down for weeks on end. Often residents would be stuck in the lift. On one occasion, a resident had to be freed by the Fire Brigade. The odd-numbers lift was ultimately repaired – then the even-numbers lift conked out, again for weeks on end. That situation continues. That lift was out of action for weeks, ‘repaired’, then out of action again.

3.2.2 On that recent occasion (17 April) a notice was stuck on the lift door, presumably by the repair company, stating that the lift was ‘a little unwell’:

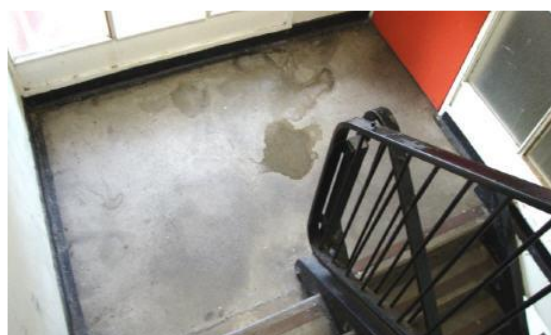
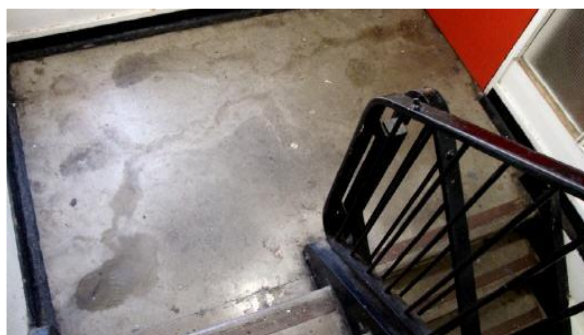


This witticism didn’t go down too well in the middle of a viral pandemic, especially as it meant, as usual, that Birnies residents would be forced to use the one lift.

3.2.3 Even in non-pandemic times the hardship these constantly breaking down lifts create can be demanding, especially for those with mobility difficulties. If the lift that serves your floor is broken down, it means having to negotiate two hefty self-closing fire doors, walking down two flights of stairs, and negotiating another two hefty fire doors before accessing the landing. The difficulties this causes to the elderly, disabled, mothers with buggies and bairns etc. can be easily imagined. The even-numbers lift is, as I write, broken down again - it only lasted for a few days after being 'repaired'. The dangers of over 100 residents being forced to use just one small lift during this epidemic do not need to be described. Lift buttons are notorious for passing on infections. (And to exacerbate the situation, Birnies Court has more than its fair share of anti-social types. The other day the lift buttons were covered in dried-out spit.) Today the only working lift looks like someone has gone over its inside with a dirty cloth. They seem to be rarely deep cleaned, if at all. **This isn't hygiene control. It is neglect by the City of Edinburgh Council.** Of course if one doesn't want to get into a possibly infected lift there is always the stairs - at least in theory.

3.3 The Stairs

3.3.1 In the autumn of last year Residents in Birnies Court received a letter from the Council concierge service informing them that because of health and safety issues the blocks stairs would not be washed throughout the winter as this made them slippy (everyone knew that the real reason was because of cuts to the concierge service, leaving them short-handed). They would however be frequently swept. The stairs have never been washed since that letter was sent out. They have not been swept for many weeks. The stairs are filthy, especially the lower floors which have much more foot traffic than upper floors and are also often soaked in urine, which I am told is human.



3.4 The Handrails

The handrails have not been cleaned for years. If you touch a handrail your hand comes away sticky and dirty. A fellow tenant tells me that she won't use the lift and while going downstairs with her children has to constantly remind them, 'Don't touch the rails!'



3.5 Summary

3.5.1 In short, the communal areas of lifts and stairways in Birnies Court are a complete disgrace, an affront to hygiene, and a danger during this coronavirus epidemic. I include a number of photographs I have taken of this gross lack of hygiene.