

Summer 2023

Housing Matters

Better Homes, Better Neighbourhoods, Better Lives



Housing Service
redesign 2023

Nadder Close digital
success

*Meadow Mornings at
Castle Meadow*

Healthy living programme

*Small Improvement Bid
offers for 2023*

Progress continues on the
Council House Build
Programme



Welcome

Welcome to the summer printed version of Housing Matters. This edition brings you all our latest news including how we are constantly seeking to improve and evolve the services we bring to you, our residents.

We have recently carried out a review of the way the Housing Service delivers its services. As a result of this review, we have redesigned the way in which we work to provide a better, more accountable service and you can find out more about this in the featured article.

You will find the latest information on how we are dealing with mould and damp in our properties, how you can get more involved in your neighbourhood, how the Home Energy Efficiency Programme and new house build plans are developing, and updated fire safety information including a handy summary sheet on the rear cover to cut out and keep.

If you are still struggling financially, we have expanded our tenancy sustainment team who help people maximise their income. If you are living in a home that is too big for your needs as family have left and you are struggling to cover the costs of running it, you could make the decision to downsize. If you do, we are ready to help and support you, so please get in contact with your neighbourhood officer.

We hope you find this edition informative and helpful, and as always please don't hesitate to get in contact if you have ideas, comments or concerns.



Nick Darbyshire
Head of HRA
Housing Services



Cllr Phil Alford,
Cabinet Member
for Housing

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Useful contact information

The iHousing Portal:

<https://ihousing.wiltshire.gov.uk>

The Wiltshire Council Website:

www.wiltshire.gov.uk

General Housing enquiries:

hsgmail@wiltshire.gov.uk

Housing repairs emergencies and out of hours:

0300 456 0117 - option 2

Non urgent housing repairs should be reported via the iHousing Portal at:

<https://ihousing.wiltshire.gov.uk>

You can write to us:
Housing Management
Bourne Hill
Salisbury
SP1 3UZ

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HEEP - pilot homes

We are road testing the latest technology to make sure we can provide you the cheapest homes to run.

We are refurbishing two of our older properties on Winding Way in Salisbury. They are currently undergoing a transformation to become our new pilot homes which will be testing out the latest technology for our Housing Energy Efficiency Programme (HEEP).

The two properties are currently undergoing complete external refurbishment. Once completed they will have full redecoration, new kitchens and bathrooms and the latest renewable energy technologies. One will have an air source heat pump system installed and an infrared panel heating system in the other so they can be compared. Both will have photovoltaic solar panels, smart hot water cylinders & electric vehicle charging points for tenant's vehicles. They will be monitored to provide up-to-date information on the performance of the new technologies so we can see how they help us to provide you the most efficient home to run.





Housing Service redesign 2023

We constantly seek to improve and evolve the services we bring to you, our tenants. We have recently undertaken a critical review of our service, we did this by reviewing a sample of tenancies and examining our interactions with tenants. We were particularly interested with identifying ways to improve and streamline our service so that any and all matters are dealt with promptly and professionally.

As a result of this work, we have redesigned the way in which we deliver our service. We have subdivided our housing stock geographically into four distinct “areas”. Each area has a dedicated team of officers, covering all aspects of Housing Management and Repairs and Maintenance. They will be responsible and accountable for delivering a first-class service to you.

A key objective of the project was to reduce the number of tenancies any given officer manages thus providing greater opportunity to engage effectively with you and address matters swiftly. This has led to a number of vacancies in the service which we are currently working to

recruit to. When we have fully recruited, we will update you with specific contacts and illustrate the geographic patches with future publications providing relevant information to each patch.

The ways to contact us will all still be through the iHousing Portal with the same contact details shown on the second page of this issue, as well as on our website.

Finally, we would welcome any observations of our service, if you have anything that you would like us to consider in our development, please contact the Resident Engagement team.

Our new Property Services team

Our Property Services team has been undertaking a recruitment exercise over the last few months and continues to expand in numbers. These are exciting times for the team as this will enable them to complete more responsive and void repairs in-house and reduce the dependence on external contractors. The formation of a small drainage team is also underway as part of the expansion.



As part of the expansion, we would also like to welcome our brand-new Grounds and Estates Maintenance team into the service. Having previously contracted out the ground's maintenance for our sheltered schemes, we now have a small team who undertake these works. They have made great steps to tidy up the shrubs, trees and hedges in advance of the

grass cutting season all with the use of fully electric equipment. The trial of the new electric equipment has proven to be very successful which is beneficial to the environment and creates much less noise. The team has proved very popular with our residents who are pleased with the increased level of care taken on completing their tasks.





Protect your property from damp, mould and condensation

At any time of year, although more common in winter months, your home is vulnerable to damp and condensation leading to mould and other problems which can affect your home and your health. This can be avoided by taking simple precautions to avoid condensation build up and damp in the home.

What causes damp?

The most common cause of damp is due to condensation building up in the home.

Damp can be also caused by:

- leaking pipes, wastes or overflows
- rain seeping through the roof where a tile or slate is missing
- spilling from a blocked gutter
- water penetration around window frames
- leaking through a cracked down pipe

Rising damp can be due to a defective or missing damp-course or because there is no damp course. If earth or flowerbeds have been allowed to build up against the wall these can bridge the damp course and allow damp to enter the property. These causes of damp often leave a 'tidemark.'

How do I stop damp?

Regularly look up and visually check the guttering, roof, and walls of your property from ground level. If you can see water leaking from the gutters or an overflow pipe down the wall, if the wall looks wet or has patches that won't dry out or if you are able to identify a fault such as water entering around the windows or broken tiles then contact the Responsive Repairs team.

Inside, check your cupboards under the sink. Any unexplained puddles of water could be coming from the plumbing. Report any wet patches that appear internally on ceilings or chimney breasts. Even if it hasn't rained, there could be a plumbing problem.

By reporting them immediately to the Repairs team on the iHousing Portal, we can respond to prevent any damage and damp from spreading.

What is condensation?

Condensation is caused by moisture in the air turning in to water droplets when it comes into contact with a cold surface. There is always some moisture in the air, even if you can't see it. If the air gets colder, it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny drops of water appear. You may notice it when you see your breath on a cold day or when the mirror mists over when you have a bath.

Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather. The most obvious sign of condensation is mist on the windows, but it can also form:

- in corners
- in or behind wardrobes and cupboards
- it often forms on north-facing walls
- where furniture is pushed against a wall, such as beds or sofas



Some simple changes you can make to avoid condensation forming at the property

- Set your heating properly. By keeping your home at a steady temperature rather than having it heat up and cool down by a larger margin, you can help prevent condensation forming. If you need help with setting your heating or if the heating is faulty, you can contact the Responsive Repairs team who will be happy to help.
- You should keep your home well ventilated. Ventilation is needed to get rid of moisture being produced all the time. Keep the window trickle vent open all the time if possible, especially when someone is in the room.
- Make sure your extractor fans are working and the fan is clean and clear of dust or blockages. The extractor fans fitted should never be turned off and are very energy efficient with minimal running costs. Contact Responsive Repairs if the fan is not working.
- When cooking, to reduce the amount of moisture, cover pans and do not leave kettles boiling.
- Close kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use even if your kitchen or bathroom has an extractor fan.
- Paraffin and portable flueless bottled-gas heaters put a lot of moisture into the air. One gallon of gas or paraffin produces about a gallon of water. As per your tenancy agreement you should not be using these types of heaters in your property for safety reasons.
- When washing clothes, hang outdoors to dry if you can. Or put them in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on. It is best to fit a fan that can be switched to run continuously for clothes drying. If you have a tumble dryer, make sure you vent it to the outside, unless it is the self-condensing type.

- Wipe moisture off surfaces such as windows daily.
- Allow space for the air to circulate in and around your furniture. Open doors to ventilate cupboards and wardrobes. Leave space between the backs of wardrobes and the wall. Where possible, position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls, such as walls which have a room on both sides, rather than against outside walls.

If condensation and damp are left untreated, they can create conditions that are suitable for the growth of mould.

Mould can affect your health and should be dealt with as soon as possible for your safety and wellbeing.

How to tackle mould in five simple steps

1. First treat the mould already in your home. If you deal with the basic problem, mould should not reappear.
2. To kill and remove mould, wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash which carries a Health and Safety Executive 'approval number.' Follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely.
3. Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets. Disturbing mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning can increase the risk of respiratory problems.
4. After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould. Note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper. When wallpapering, use a paste containing a fungicide to prevent further mould growth.
5. The only lasting way of avoiding severe mould is to eliminate dampness.

You can find out more about treating mould and damp in your home on our website www.wiltshire.gov.uk/housing-maintenance



The iHousing Portal – what can it do for you?

Are you registered on the iHousing Portal yet?

The iHousing Portal continues to provide the best way to quickly access your tenancy account and information at any time of day or night. Check your rent balance, arrange payments, and access our services at the touch of a button and receive current news and information updates from the Housing team. The portal also contains links to our latest resident information and engagement opportunities.

The portal has been going from strength to strength since its launch and now over 40% of our tenants are registered users.

Why should you register?

- To ensure we always have your up-to-date contact details
- To carry out your business 24/7 when it suits you – no waiting in a call queue
- To report non-urgent repairs. Reporting via the portal ensures your repair gets dealt with quickly by going to the right team
- To keep track of your rent account and registered repairs
- To request rent statements, report ASB and much more

Do you need help with the iHousing portal? Having trouble registering your account? Not sure how to report a repair or check your balance? Our Resident Engagement team is here to help.

You can contact us by email or phone with any queries and a member of staff will help to resolve the problem. You can also book in an MS TEAMS video call and our staff will provide a step-by-step tutorial so you can see what you need to do. Just contact the Resident Engagement team for more information.

The importance of email

When we sign up a new tenancy, we always ask for the prospective tenant to provide their email address. We do this for reasons including -

- no delays in sending you important information about your tenancy and your messages to and from us are received immediately
- a reduced impact on the environment with no need for paper letters to be sent out
- cost efficiency savings for the council such as postage and handling costs. Savings made by us mean that you benefit as we can redirect any savings towards our properties and assets
- a valid email address is required to sign up to our secure iHousing portal which gives you access to all your tenancy services online

If you would like to know more or for help setting up an email address, please contact the Resident Engagement team.

Your monthly Digital Newsletter

Our Better Homes, Better Lives newsletter is sent out monthly by email to all our tenants who have an email address registered with us. This monthly update replaced the quarterly digital Housing Matters magazine and allows us to get information out more quickly to keep tenants informed. As well as Housing updates, there are energy and money saving tips,

competitions like our monthly draw to win a food hamper and much more.

If you are not receiving the newsletter but would like to, please contact us and update us with your current email address.



Nadder Close digital success will now roll out across our sheltered schemes

After the successful installation of our Nadder Close digital noticeboards and booth, we will be rolling out across the rest of our sheltered housing schemes with Needham House already completed at the time of writing.

A communal room computer will let tenants go online to access our digital services including the iHousing Portal and the Wiltshire Council website, while digital information boards will display the latest information from Housing, letting us keep residents updated without delay or the risk of paper notices being covered or going astray. The boards also allow information to be posted almost instantly including any alerts or urgent updates.

The final piece of the rollout is guest communal WiFi in the communal

lounges so residents can access the internet using their own devices.

When this is rolled out in a scheme full training and information will be made available to all residents and the Resident Engagement team will be on hand to provide further support.





We can support you to set up community groups. Some examples of the groups we have helped set up in the last year include:

Knit and Natter at Westwood House

Westwood House was supported by the Resident Engagement team to start up a Knit and Natter group. The group has been running now for over six months and grown in numbers. The ladies that attend enjoy a cuppa and chat whilst knitting. Carole said, "Coming to the group helps with loneliness, isolation and wellbeing".

Lanfear Close quiz nights

Residents from Lanfear Close asked for support in setting up a quiz evening at the scheme. The Resident Engagement team were able to help them and officer Caz hosted the first event as the quiz master. The residents formed teams and following a successful night, they planned to make it a monthly event.

Meadow Mornings at Castle Meadow

The Meadow Mornings group at Castle Meadow, Downton, is going from strength to strength. Set up initially to help provide a warm space for the village, the weekly get-togethers are looked forward to by our residents and the wider community. With volunteer support, these free sessions provide fresh coffee, tea and tasty treats as well as a chance to get together with your neighbours.

"It is super to spend time chatting over a cuppa" said resident Gloria.

Needham House

What started off as a small resident only quiz afternoon has turned into a local community quiz evening with a meal. Needham House has been hosting regular quiz nights with a meal provided by Marmo's Catering for the past year now and numbers have been increasing with each passing quiz.

Adam, the housing manager told us "Quiz nights at Needham have become very popular and include a delicious meal provided by Marmo's, the social aspect of the event, It brings people down who normally wouldn't partake in activities but has also brought people in from the community who then return to partake in other activities being held at Needham House, helping them make friends and reducing their social isolation."

If you would like more information about the support available to set up groups or activities in your neighbourhood, please contact the Resident Engagement team.



Healthy Living Programme cooks up success

As part of our Healthy Living Programme, we have been looking at opportunities for our residents to learn new skills, gain confidence and to find new ways to get the best value out of the food and ingredients, all while enjoying good company. We have tried three different cooking experiences which have all been very successful and we hope to bring more to our tenants over the next year.

For more information about what we have planned and how you can take part, please contact the Resident Engagement team.

Family cooking lessons at Bemerton Heath

We ran a six week cookery course for families at St Michael's Community Centre in Salisbury. Chef Mel and Pantry Partnership Director Fiona pulled out all the stops providing our families with practical instruction and tasty ingredients.

For the final session, our cooks had to come up with their very own recipe ideas to create a family meal. Jenna and her family made a delicious pie with a potato topping while Siobhan and her family opted for a puff pastry pie top. The results were delicious with plenty of food to take home for tea. We now have some confident young cooks alongside happy Mums!

We would like to thank the families that attended and the Pantry Partnership who enabled us all to learn so much during the course. They were joined by Cllr Robert Yuill, Housing Portfolio Holder, at the finale.

Cook – a – long online reaches residents around the county

To help us reach our residents across the county, the team piloted an on-line cookery course with Chef Catherine which was attended by tenants from Salisbury, Porton, Amesbury, Laverstock and Harnham.

Residents who signed up for the course received their ingredients in the post and support was available from the Resident

Engagement team to help them join the online sessions. Everyone was able to cook along with Chef Catherine and serve up a dinner of fresh fishcakes and apple crumble.

All who took part agreed would like to return and take part in more sessions and we hope to have more available.

Cooking up fun at Westwood House in Salisbury

A cookery workshop held at Westwood House sheltered scheme in Salisbury saw eight tenants from three of our sheltered housing schemes get together for a morning of chat and cooking. Fiona from the Pantry Partnership gave a demonstration of how simple staples could be made more exciting with residents being able to take part in cooking a coconut & potato curry with mushroom rice followed by pancakes with mixed fruit.

Jeff from Shrewton was one of the residents who attended.

“The presentation reminded us all of how simple it is to use cupboard staples to assemble a delicious meal from the simplest of ingredients. Most of the discussed food items could be cooked and frozen for later. That’s a valuable reminder in these days of scarce resources.

It was also lovely to spend a couple of hours with folks from a different group and chat about our own culinary highs and lows. Without doubt, introducing strangers for get togethers

with the wonderful bonus of a tasty meal, was a big hit with all attendees.”



Communication is key

‘Communication is the key to everything and so is accountability and value for money’

That’s what Christine Cave and Darren Soul believe, both are members of the Challenge and Change Group.

They were both introduced to the Challenge and Change Group by Kate, the Senior Resident Engagement Officer. ‘It’s sometimes called the C&CG,’ said Darren, ‘it’s the residents’ scrutiny group.’

Christine and Darren both had a great understanding of housing management and were keen to work together with officers to do their best to drive up standards. Social housing is a regulated sector; we are required to support scrutiny and involve residents in decision making – this is called co-regulation.

‘I moved into what was described as sheltered housing a few years ago. Just after I got into Westwood House, I attended community club meetings and from my involvement there, I was approached to see if I was interested in other involvement opportunities.’ Christine said.

‘Everything I’m trying to do in Westwood House isn’t just about me, it’s about all residents. We’re inclusive,’ Christine explained, ‘look at our Knit and Natter group, and we make the effort to speak to everyone and offer them the chance to get involved, whether it’s just a social thing or something more like scrutiny.’

For Christine, a hardcopy of Housing Matters had a big impact: ‘It was Evergreen Court that sparked my interest, I thought it was stunning. And I wondered if we could achieve something similar at Westwood House. Our lounge is a bit tired and dated; Evergreen Court’s was lovely, light and airy, it felt uplifting – this wasn’t just because it was a new build, it was because

of the life that you could lead within it. The furniture, the grounds, it all impressed me.

It just seemed perfect; I was keen to encourage investment in Westwood House too. Just speaking to your engagement officer, keeping in regular contact with the health and safety officer, all these things can help to push things in the right direction. We’re trying to achieve this at Westwood House – there’s more to do, and I’m going to continue doing my bit to help out. I would encourage others to get involved and see what could be achieved.’

Darren explained the role of scrutiny: ‘It’s where we take a narrow part of the service, we investigate it, compare it against the policy, look at how other providers behave and figure out what best practice is. From that, we can make recommendations to the Housing Board.’

Darren also encourages more involvement from residents, ‘It’s not just us on scrutiny, there are a few more. We’re keen to get more tenants and leaseholders, more from general needs housing and from sheltered. Everybody is welcome. Everyone should be included.’

You can find out more about the Challenge and Change Group on our website at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/housing-hap or you can call the team on 0300 456 0117 – option 5 for a chat about how you can get more involved.



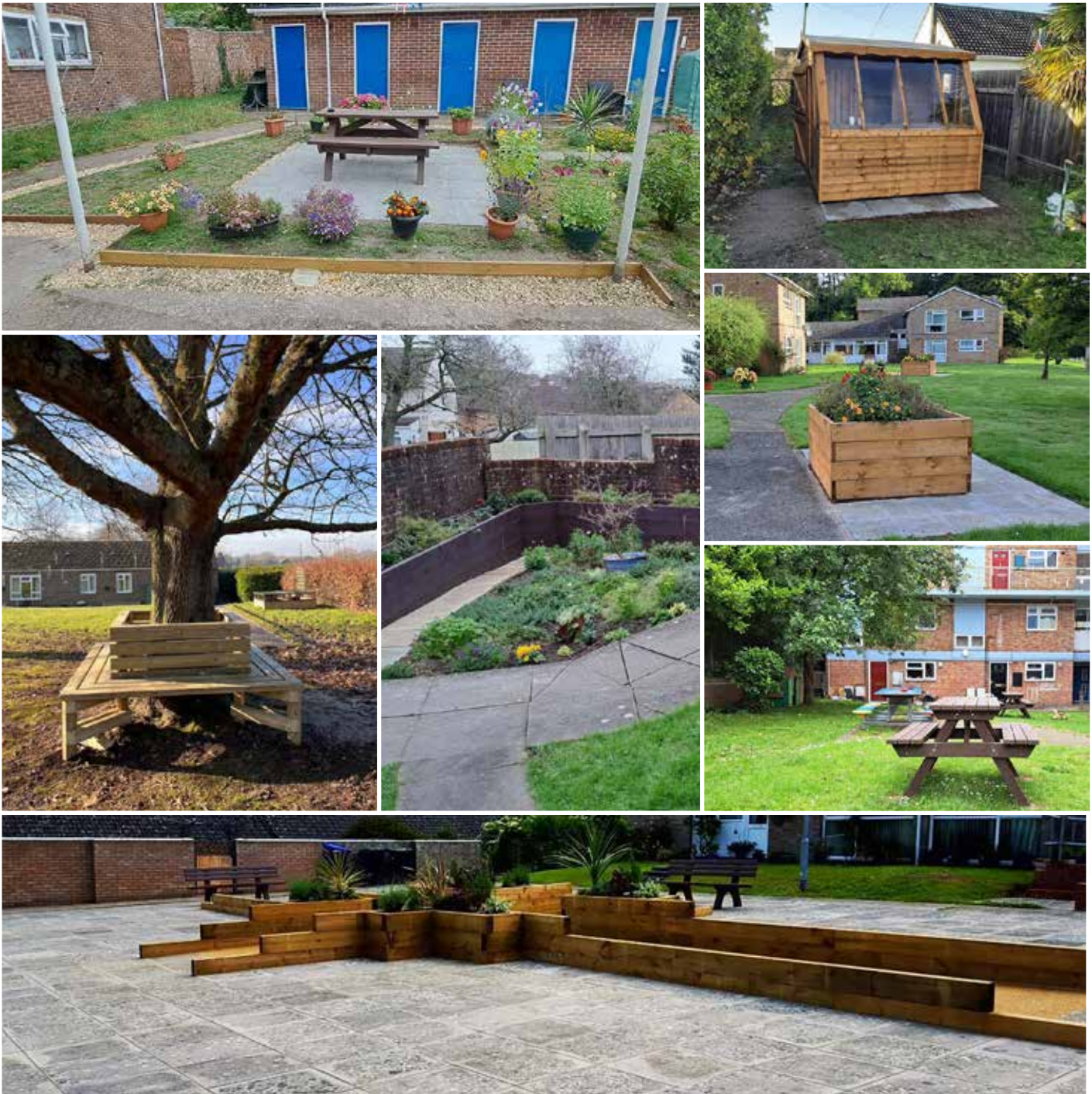
Small Improvement Bid offers for 2023

Wiltshire Council Housing is pleased to announce the return of Small Improvement Bid offers for 2023.

A Small Improvement Bid (SIB) can improve communal areas such as providing a garden upgrade for residents who have a shared communal gardens at their blocks of flats or

sheltered housing scheme. These shared communal spaces can be turned into community fruit and vegetable gardens for everyone to enjoy and benefit from.

Some examples of SIBs delivered to our tenants around the county to date.



You can find all the details including the application form, terms and conditions and example bids on our website at - www.wiltshire.gov.uk/housing-resident-involvement or call 0300 456 0117 – option 5

Estate offices

Our estate offices in Salisbury are getting a much-needed refurbishment to bring them up to date. The offices will be redecorated and redesigned to make them more welcoming places, creating a better hub for the service in each location.

The office will host staff from the Neighbourhood and Resident Engagement teams who will be available for appointments. The tenancy sustainment team will be delivering regular drop-in sessions where you can get advice about finances, benefits and help maintaining your tenancy.

- The Bemerton Heath estate office is on Gainsborough Close, Bemerton Heath in Salisbury
- The Friary estate office is on Whitefriars road, The Friary in Salisbury.

For more information, contact the Neighbourhood team

Sheltered Scheme guestrooms are open again



We would like to remind all of our sheltered housing residents that the guestrooms for the schemes have all now re-opened following the closure during the pandemic. These rooms are available for you to rent for your visitors.

To book a room, please contact the Neighbourhood team.

Friary Improvement Project

Despite some delays, The Friary Improvement Project is still on track and continuing to deliver the improvements to the Friary estate in Salisbury. Plans have been drawn up for the aspirations of the project and are available to view at our Estate Office and in the Friary Community Centre.

The Friary ditch and culvert which runs along the boundary of the estate has been cleared of a considerable amount of silt and rubbish and the overgrown weeds and brambles have been removed to clear it up and improve the openness and look of the estate. The next stage of the works will be to repair the stone sides and look at a new fencing option alongside the dual carriage way.

At the time of writing, work is shortly due to start on the removal of a number of low walls around the estate which will open-up lines of sight and spaces, reducing the potential for antisocial behaviour.

Two new bin stores have been installed as a pilot project to improve the look of the estate where currently, the large waste bins are on the streets next to the blocks of flats. These new storage units keep the bins tidy, prevent large items being dumped in them and help to prevent rubbish overflowing or falling out, all of which will help improve the area around the flats. The bin stores also have "sedum" roof tops which will help to capture and remove carbon from the air, making yet another contribution towards our carbon neutral targets. Since the installation we have seen a reduction in the amount of fly tipping in the area of the bin stores and a reduction in contamination in these bins. We look forward to rolling these out around the rest of the estate in the coming year.

Is it time to downsize?



Are you spending money on heating a large house that you don't need...?

Are you struggling to maintain the house and garden...?

Would you like to move to a smaller home...?

Downsizing to a smaller home means less upkeep, lower bills and more time and money to enjoy the things you love.

You could benefit from downsizing if:

- your home is too large
- you have a spare bedroom or bedrooms
- your garden is too large to maintain
- you would like to reduce your household bills e.g. rent, council tax, utilities, and for working age tenants avoid the spare room subsidy

Wiltshire Council are keen to assist tenants living in larger accommodation to move to suitably sized homes, which in turn will help families who need larger accommodation. We are also very aware of the costs involved in running a large home, the obligation to maintain the house and garden and potential social isolation that results from remaining in the “wrong” accommodation. We have amended our allocation policy to prioritise those who wish to downsize. Providing you are a Wiltshire Council tenant and under-occupying a property you will be placed in Band 1 which is the highest priority banding.

If you feel that you would benefit from downsizing please contact us, we would like to help. We will explain your options and assist and guide you throughout the process.

Telephone: 0300 456 0117 Option 4
Email: hsgmail@wiltshire.gov.uk



Fire safety in communal areas

Following the Grenfell tragedy there have been subsequent investigations and enquiries and the Government has made responsive changes to Fire Safety regulations and legislation which affect us all.

It is now a legal requirement for a “responsible person” namely Wiltshire Council, to inform our residents about the Fire Safety instructions should they live in a residential block with two or more domestic premises, and which have common parts or in other words, a communal area. There are new rules about buildings which are over 11 metres, and the tall high rise blocks over 18 metres. Although most of our buildings fall below this 18-metre threshold we still however adhere to these new rules across all of our housing stock.

As a council we have always put the safety of our residents first in the way we operate and in previous years have already put in place safety measures such as regular fire risk assessments, undertaking any actions identified as required. We have spoken to our tenants and leaseholders about the importance of fire doors and have them working properly, with new signage and information.

We have also implemented a new system to keep communal areas clean with any items that shouldn't be there, clearly marked with stickers and removed if they are not cleared within the agreed timescales.

In all of our internal communal areas, like the stairwell or halls, there will be a red fire sign by the main door with the communal safety information on it. You will find a copy of this on the back cover of this magazine.

We also work closely with Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service. The new regulations make it a legal formality to help better inform and advise. There are now greater powers of enforcement when it comes to some residents not adhering to fire safety and leaseholders who refuse to replace flat front doors with the new fire doors.

If you would like to find out more about fire safety in communal areas, please contact the Resident Engagement team.

Fire Doors in communal buildings

Residents who live in flats, including leaseholders, with a common or communal area should have a 30 minute fire resistant door, usually referred to as an FD30 fire door, fitted with a closer attachment. This will be inspected and checked every year. Look out for notification when we are going to attend and check the door.

We will be checking the type of door and if it complies to current regulation, making sure the hinges and handles and letterboxes are correct and working and looking at the gaps and seals. The door closer must be working and effective and the door must close within a given time. Any damage to the door and frame is important and repairs may be needed.

There is also a requirement that signage must be correctly fitted, and, in some cases, the door may have an automatic release or a hold open device which we will also check. One important change is that the door must no longer be fitted with a cat flap. These are no longer permitted on our fire doors and if you install one without permission, you could face a charge for a replacement door.

Please remember that, unless otherwise clearly stated, all fire doors should be shut when not in use. Residents and guests should not remove or tamper with self-closing devices on fire doors.

Any faults or damage to the door or closer mechanism of the door, or if you have any queries about your fire door, please call Housing Repairs immediately on 0300 456 0117, option 2.

Fire safety at home

What Wiltshire Council does to help keep your property safe from fire

When a tenancy starts at a property, we will have already carried out a range of safety checks. These include:

- fitting at least one smoke alarm on every floor of the flat used as living accommodation and test them on the first day of each new tenancy. Residents are advised to test once a week and report any faults as soon as possible
- fitting carbon monoxide alarms in all rooms that contain a solid fuel burning appliance and are used as living accommodation and test them on the first day of each new tenancy. Residents are advised to test once a week and report any faults as soon as possible
- ensuring all gas and electric appliances are safe and maintained in good working order at the start of tenancy
- ensuring all electrical installations are inspected and tested by a qualified and competent person at least every five years and provide Electrical Incident Condition Reports to tenants and housing associations on request
- ensuring all gas installations are inspected and tested by a qualified and competent person yearly and a copy of the gas safety certificate is provided to the tenant on each occasion
- any furniture or furnishings supplied by the council, for example in a sheltered scheme communal area, must comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988"

What to do if there is a fire in your property:

- Try to be calm and don't panic
- Get everyone out as quickly as possible, closing doors as you leave to prevent the spread of fire. Do not stop to collect belongings
- Do not use the lift under any circumstances
- Call the Fire Service (999) from somewhere safe to do so (e.g., a neighbour's house, public phone or shop)
- Do not re-enter the property for any reason until you are told it is safe to do so by the Fire and Rescue Service
- Remember even if your "pay as you go" mobile phone has run out of credit it will still allow you to call 999

If you become trapped in your home by a fire you should:

- close the door to the room you are in
- try to seal any gaps under the door with clothes or a towel, to stop smoke entering
- where possible cover your face to prevent inhaling the smoke
- call the Fire Service (999)
- shout for help out of the window asking passers-by to call the fire service





Tackling anti-social behaviour in our communities

At Wiltshire Council we are committed to working with residents to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB). Some anti-social behaviour can be nipped in the bud. If problems are not dealt with quickly, they can often escalate.

What should I do about ASB?

If you experience any of the below:

- Noisy and/or abusive neighbours
- Acts of Violence
- Vandalism/criminal damage
- Intimidation
- Drunken/abusive behaviour
- Drug use/substance misuse and/or dealing
- Hate crimes
- Domestic abuse
- Harassment (malicious communication and any other anti-social behaviour specifically targeted at an individual)
- Misuse of fireworks
- Car and motorcycle nuisance – prolonged revving of engines, racing or wheel spinning

Examples of behaviour or nuisance which may not be categorised as ASB include:

- One off parties and BBQs
- Infrequent and occasional noise or disturbances
- Children playing
- Barking dogs
- Excessive noise from domestic appliances such as washing machines or vacuum cleaners
- Minor vehicle repairs
- Staring
- Disputes regarding boundaries or car parking spaces

Think about talking with your neighbour

It might be better to speak to your neighbours informally if you are experiencing a problem. Reporting to the council or police before speaking to your neighbour first to resolve the problems, can cause bad feelings between you.

Tips about how to speak to your neighbours:

- Choose a good time to talk and only when you are feeling calm.
- Think about what a good time for your neighbour might be, too.
- Do not say whose fault it is; talk about the effects the behaviour or situation has had on you. This makes it easier for your neighbour to hear what you are saying without becoming defensive.
- Don't make threats or give them an ultimatum. Your neighbour is more likely to respond well if you calmly let them know the problem and allow them the chance to respond.
- Try to keep the conversation friendly. It may be that there is something happening in their household that you do not know about and this could clear the air between you. Alternatively, your neighbour may be completely unaware of the disturbance they are causing you. Assume goodwill on the part of your neighbour – if you give them the benefit of the doubt they may respond more positively.
- You may be feeling nervous before approaching them, so take a few deep breaths first, and don't rush it – take your time, and always allow the other person to respond. Try to put yourself in their shoes and understand how the discussion will make them feel.
- When letting them know what the problem is, keep it clear and stick to the facts. Don't bring in other issues or past history to 'prove' your point – keep to the most recent incident that has caused you to now talk to them.
- Listen carefully to what they have to say, and don't interrupt them. Try to see it from their point of view and be prepared to be reasonable. Reassure them you want to resolve the problem in a friendly way and let bygones be bygones.
- If you can't or don't want to approach your neighbour in person, try writing to them and outlining your concerns instead.

If talking to your neighbour has not reduced the ASB or you feel you cannot talk to your neighbour

You should report it to the Housing team as soon as it occurs. You can do this by phone, email or through the iHousing Portal - 0300 456 0117 Option 4 or email - hsgmail@wiltshire.gov.uk or visit www.wiltshire.gov.uk/community-safety-antisocial-behaviour.

If a crime has been committed, you should always contact Wiltshire Police in the first instance by calling 999 for emergencies or if you fear for your own or anybody else's safety. For non-emergencies call 101 or on line at www.wiltshire.police.uk

The council is committed to continuing to resolve anti-social behaviour as, where and when it occurs.

ASB Toolkit

In the latter part of 2022, the Senior Anti-Social Behaviour Officer within Wiltshire Housing worked with other agencies in the Wiltshire Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership to create an ASB Toolkit. The toolkit looks at what ASB is and how you can get help if you are affected by it. The final version of the toolkit has been approved and is now available to view within the Council Housing Tenant Handbook About Wiltshire Council Housing - Wiltshire Council.

What action did Wiltshire Council Housing take in 2022 in relation to ASB?

There are a number of tools that are regularly utilised to tackle ASB that have escalating severity. When we receive a report of Anti-Social Behaviour, we will respond using a multitude of tools.

ASB Power utilised	Quantity
Community Protection Warnings	11
Community Protection Notices	6
Injunctions	1
Closure Order	10
Court Undertaking	1
Cases pending outcome at Court	3
Possession of Property resulting in eviction due to ASB	4



The sewage plant that's piloting a new treatment for phosphate removal

The sewage treatment plant at Avon Meadows in Middle Woodford, which is run and maintained by Wiltshire Council Housing to serve our housing stock and other properties in the area. It has been replaced with a brand-new system and will provide the latest in sewage treatment technology including remote monitoring.

The treatment plant is manufactured by Klargestar, part of the Kingspan group. It can treat up to 10 cubic meters of sewage a day, which is roughly equivalent to 50 persons daily usage. In addition to the standard treatment plant, a new technology is being piloted here that will reduce the number of phosphates in the final effluent discharged, meaning an even greater environmental saving.

To top it off, following the installation, the whole area has been seeded with a meadow mix to provide a mixture of grass and wildflowers, which will look great and be of real benefit for local insects and wildlife.

We continuously upgrade our sewage plants and have three more planned for upgrades in 2023.

These are just some of the ways that Wiltshire Council Housing is working behind the scenes to improve our environmental footprint and ensure better services for our residents.

Qualitas audits give peace of mind

The Gas Safety (Installations and Use) Regulations 1998 require all our fossil fuel boilers to be serviced annually. If you have a gas, oil or air source boiler in your home we will service it every year. The service makes sure that the boiler is working safely and efficiently.

Following the yearly gas safety services at our properties, random addresses are picked for an audit by Qualitas Compliance each month. The auditor will check the work that has been carried out by the engineers, ensuring it meets the current regulations. By auditing in this way, we can be confident that we are keeping homes compliant and tenants safe.

If your property is chosen, Qualitas will contact you directly shortly after your annual service and ask if they can attend to carry out an audit at your property. The process is voluntary, but we hope you will be able to allow access for the auditors to carry out the inspections. If you have any queries or you are contacted by Qualitas and need more information please contact Wiltshire Council Housing on 0300 456 0117 - option 3 or email ContractsAdmin@wiltshire.gov.uk

Senior Contract Surveyor Mike Kalvis says: **"Thank you to all our tenants who support us by waiting in for the engineer to call. We have over four thousand service visits to carry out each and every year! I am proud of our British Gas engineers who go the extra mile to get the job done."**

Progress continues on the Council House Build Programme

It has been another busy year for the Residential Development team who continue to deliver the council's ongoing affordable housing programme, this is a commitment to deliver 1,000 additional council homes over a 10 year period.

To date, the programme has delivered 64 additional council houses, with a further 26 homes on site and 12 within the conveyance process. This year, the team has achieved 19 new homes starting on site, whilst reaching the completion of 44 homes.

Below you can see a selection of the beautiful homes completed within the 22/23 financial year.



In the early spring, three Shared Ownership homes were completed at Whistledown Farm, Upavon. Wiltshire Council worked in partnership with Redcliffe Homes to deliver 18 affordable homes in this rural location.



Throughout the summer, affordable rented homes were completed in partnership with Redcliffe homes at Whistledown Farm, Upavon and Rowden Brook, Chippenham. The homes were a mixture of one bed flats, to four bed houses.

Into the autumn and winter period six homes were delivered in partnership with Newland homes, four for affordable rent and two for shared ownership, all equipped with Air Source Heat Pumps. Whilst the remainder of the homes at Upavon were completed in unison.



Rounding the year off saw the Start on Site of seven new homes at Ludgershall, these will be delivered as four shared ownership homes and three social rented homes during the Autumn of this year in partnership with Rivendale Developments, whilst four homes completed at The Acorns, Melksham. Two of which are yet to be sold as shared ownership homes.

Throughout the year ten market conveyances also took place, with the homes being made available for rented accommodation at completion.

This Spring saw the completion and occupation of five new homes at New Zealand Avenue, Salisbury.



This coming year the team will be developing homes in Durrington, Rowde, Corlsey, Chippenham and working on future projects at Mere, Corhsam, Devizes and Ludgershall. If you would like any further information about these homes or the council's build programme, please contact the Residential Development Manager, Andrew Mead - AndrewM.Mead@Wiltshire.gov.uk.



Meet our dedicated Tenancy Sustainment Officer team



Eve Paxton – Tenancy Sustainment Officer “I have a background of pastoral and safeguarding, being a Tenancy Sustainment Officer has allowed me to carry on these skills helping families in need.”



Ross Foster-Manning – Tenancy Sustainment Officer “I have a wide variety of knowledge about housing and benefits and have worked for a considerable time in housing and can’t wait to support you!”



Stephen Storey – Tenancy Sustainment Officer “I have worked in the social housing sector for many years and enjoy helping our tenants by empowering them to sustain their tenancies and live comfortably in their homes.”



Antonio 'Ilidio' Riberio – Tenancy Sustainment Officer “I previously worked as a Development Officer at Southampton City Council, organising educational well-being programmes for service users with special educational needs. I also worked for two years in a housing association, providing support to individuals experiencing homelessness.”



Luanne Bliszko – Tenancy Sustainment Officer “I have worked in supported housing as well as mental health and have nine years experience within the field of domestic abuse, working with both perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse. I enjoy my role as I feel it draws on all of my past experience and enables me to continue to help others.”



Helen Grinter – Mental Health Housing Support Worker “I have a history of working in supported housing, I hope the skills I’ve learnt are able to help those with their tenancy.”



Andrea Sainsbury – Mental Health Housing Support Worker “I have worked within housing support and mental health support for many years, developing experience and knowledge within this role.”



Adam Crew – Intensive Tenancy Sustainment Officer “I have a wide range of support work experience and enjoy helping people to make their lives better. I am friendly and patient and I look forward to supporting you.”



Gemma Syrett – Financial Inclusion Officer “I oversee our Housing Support Services and ensure we are delivering a high level of customer service. I have been in housing for over 20 years and enjoy supporting others to achieve great outcomes for our tenants.”

Tenancy Sustainment Service for Wiltshire Council tenants

Free
advice and guidance

Need help managing your finances and your tenancy?

What can we help with?

- Any debt or money difficulties.
- Maximising your income.
- Offering welfare benefit advice – making sure you are getting all the benefits you are entitled to.
- Help with applying for grants.
- We can offer advice and guidance on moving home through Home Swapper or Homes 4 Wiltshire.
- Help setting up a bank account/direct debit.
- Help you manage your money and make your rent payments by offering budgeting support.
- Offer advice and support to access employment and education.
- Referring and signposting you to more specialist services if appropriate.



Look at the positive impact we had for our tenants in the last financial year

With the cost-of-living crisis affecting so many people, our Tenancy Sustainment team are on hand to help with money advice, claiming benefits and to focus on income maximisation during this challenging time. They provide support and advice to help you maintain your tenancy.

Number of households helped
409

Total amount of backdated benefits
£143,576.24

Total amount of grants awarded
£117,213

Total amount of debt written off
£24,799.38

Additional yearly income
£531,255.66

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

You can phone us on:
0300 456 0117 (Option 1)

Email us at: housingtso@wiltshire.gov.uk

Come to a drop-in session
(no appointment needed)

Bemerton Heath Estate Office
151a Gainsborough Close
Every Thursday 9am-12pm

Friary Estate Office
White Friars Road, Salisbury
Every Wednesday 9am-12pm

Evergreen Court
Amesbury, SP4 7YT
Every Wednesday 9am-12pm

The Atrium
County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge
Every Wednesday 9am-12pm

Needham House
Devizes, SN10 1FA
Every 1st Monday of the month

Are you ready for the 'Managed Migration' to Universal Credit?

'Managed migration' is the final phase of the rollout of Universal Credit, when The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), in a controlled way, gradually contact those who are still claiming Legacy Benefits to notify them that those benefits will be ending, and inviting them to claim Universal Credit instead. Below is the proposed timetable for all Legacy Benefits to Universal Credit.

- During 2023/24 - Tax Credit only cases.
- During 2024/25 - Income-Related Employment & Support Allowance with Tax Credits, Income Support, Income Based Job Seekers Allowance, Housing Benefit only or with Tax Credits.
- During 2028/29 - All other Income-Related Employment & Support Allowance. The government is pushing back the managed migration of claimants from income-related employment and support allowance (ESA) to Universal Credit (UC) to 2028.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will write to you when they want to move you to Universal Credit telling you what you need to do. If your Universal Credit entitlement is less than your entitlement to Legacy Benefits you will receive a 'transitional amount' to top up your Universal Credit.

This is an amount to top up your Universal Credit so that you are not worse off than you were under Legacy Benefits. However, you will only get a transitional amount if you move to Universal Credit by managed migration. If you come off Universal Credit, the transitional amount will stop. You will not get a transitional amount if you move by 'natural migration'.

Should I ask DWP to switch to Universal Credit from Legacy Benefits?

The DWP is starting to contact people about moving to Universal Credit. You can decide to move sooner as some people will be better off moving to Universal Credit. However, this isn't

a decision to make lightly: **once you move to Universal Credit from a Legacy Benefit, you can't change your mind**, even if you receive less money.

The rules around Universal Credit are also different to Legacy Benefits which may mean you have to change the way you do things and manage your money.

So you need to make sure Universal Credit is right for you and your circumstances before you claim.

There are several independent online benefit calculators to see how much you could claim.

- Turn2us benefits calculator: <https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk>
- Entitledto benefits calculator: www.entitledto.co.uk
- Policy in Practice better off calculator: <https://www.betteroffcalculator.co.uk/login>

Rent statements

We would like to let you know that Rent statements for the period 3 April 2023 to 2 July 2023 will be sent to all tenants the week commencing 3 July 2023. These will all be sent by post.

In future, paper rent statements will be posted out annually, therefore, the 2024 rent statements will be sent in July 2024 to cover 4th July 2023 to 30th June 2024.

In the meantime, you can check your rent balance at any time by logging into the iHousing portal if you have already registered. If you would like to register to use the iHousing portal, please register using the 'Register for a new account' button.

Or you can call the Income team on 0300 456 0117 Option 1.

Alternatively, you can email the Income team at housingincome@wiltshire.gov.uk

Saving energy in the home by reducing your electricity usage

Set your heating efficiently

Make sure you have your heating and hot water correctly set up. If you have electric heating, make sure your tariff is set up correctly and be mindful of using booster functions such as the immersion heater in your cylinder during peak electricity usage times. If you need help and advice about how your heating system works, please contact the Neighbourhood team. For more information about your tariff including how economy 7 and 10 plans work, contact your supplier.

Turn off lights

Turn your lights off when you're not using them or when you leave a room. This will save you around £14 a year on your annual energy bills. Replacing all the lights in your home with LED bulbs could help you save even more and is better for the environment as well.

Switch off standby

You can save around £40 a year just by remembering to turn your appliances off standby mode. Almost all electrical appliances can be turned off at the plug without upsetting their programming. You may want to think about getting a standby saver or smart plug which allows you to turn all your appliances off standby in one go.

Check the instructions for any appliances you aren't sure about. Some satellite and digital TV recorders may need to be left plugged in so they can keep track of any programmes you want to record.

Don't leave items on charge longer than you need to. Consider investing in a portable solar charger or similar device to charge things like tablets and phones during the day rather than plugging into a socket.

Avoid overfilling the kettle, only boil the water you need and you could save yourself £8 a year on your electricity bill.

Use the right size pots and pans. It has been estimated that a six-inch pan on an eight-inch burner typically wastes approximately 40 percent of the heat produced by the burner on electric cooktops.

Keeping a lid on your pots and pans uses less energy to heat the contents and helps reduce steam escaping. Only open the oven door when necessary and for the shortest possible time. Your oven's temperature drops about 25 degrees every time you open the door while cooking.

Consider only filling your bath half full or to the level you need. When using the hand basin, use the plug to fill the sink to wash your hands rather than letting the tap keep running unnecessarily. By keeping your shower time to just four minutes could save a typical household £45 a year on their energy bills.

Always make sure your washing machine runs a full load and turn down to 30 degrees which will save more energy.

Avoid using a tumble dryer for your clothes. Dry clothes on lines outside to save £40 a year.

Most of our blocks of flats have communal drying areas in the gardens or even internal drying rooms in some cases. If the washing lines are broken or missing, contact the Responsive Repairs team.

Remember to leave the bathroom and kitchen extractor fans switched ON. You might be tempted to turn off your bathroom and kitchen extractor fan to save electricity. However, these fans are designed to run very efficiently all the time and cost almost nothing each year to run. If you turn them off fully then the bathroom will not be able to ventilate, and you could end up with a damp and mould problem. Please continue to use your extractor fans as normal.

Fire Safety Notice

In the event of a fire dial 999 and ask for the Fire Brigade

- If a fire is in your home, or you are in the communal area, leave the building immediately and alert other people if possible without delaying your escape.
- Do not use any lift.
- Assemble well away from the block.
- If a fire is in another flat, your front door should resist a fire for 30 minutes. It may be safest to stay put. If in doubt leave the building.
- Do not go back to your flat until you have been told it is safe to do so.

Safety Advice

- Do not smoke in the communal area.
- Do not leave person possessions in the communal area.
- All communal areas, landings and lobbies must be kept clear.
- Do not leave any rubbish/cardboard in the communal area and report to the council anything of concern that you see.
- Keep your front door closed to prevent the spread of fire or smoke in the event of a fire.
- Do not prop or wedge open any communal fire door.

Contact information

In an emergency dial 999 and ask for the Fire Brigade

Neighbourhood Management 0300 456 0117 option 4

Repairs: 0300 456 0117 option 2 / Emergency out of hours 0300 4560117