



Our offices close on **Christmas Eve at 1pm** and will **re-open at 9am on Monday 4th January 2021.**

**\*\*\*\*EMERGENCY REPAIRS\*\*\*\***

If you need to report an emergency repair during this time call **01782 968566, press 1 on your telephone keypad** and you'll be connected to our emergency service. For any other repairs please wait until our office opens on the **4th January 2021.**

**\*\*PAYING YOUR RENT\*\***

Your rent is still payable over the Christmas period, here's how you can pay it:

- ◆ Contact us now to set up a Direct Debit
- ◆ Call our automated phone line on 0844 557 8321
- ◆ At [www.allpayments.net](http://www.allpayments.net)
- ◆ Using your Allpay payment card at a Paypoint outlet.

For more information on our services go to [www.stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk](http://www.stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk)

**Throwing things out!**

We realise that lots of people are taking the opportunity to have a clear out . Christmas also results in lot of extra boxes and paper to dispose of.

Please don't place bulk waste in the communal bins, it takes up space for general household space and there may be a reduction in council waste collections. If you can't dispose of it properly keep it in your home until you can.

For those living in our high rise blocks, our refuse chutes are under a lot of pressure, particularly over the festive period . Please help to keep them working properly:

- Place rubbish in small parcels, no larger than a carrier bag size, before putting it down the chute
- Don't put large shaped items (such as pizza boxes) down the chute - tear them up first
- Take larger household items to the skip room – don't leave them in corridors where they will be a fire hazard



Remember, a blocked chute affects all of the residents in the building – so please take care.



*Season's Greetings*

**Hello and welcome to your December 2020 Newsletter**

In this December 2020 newsletter you'll find the latest news and information on our services and how we can support you and your families during this difficult time.

If you need extra help, someone to talk to, or are worried about any of your neighbours please do get in touch with us.

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**Christmas Competition!**

**We're giving away £50 worth of TESCO FOOD VOUCHERS to 3 x lucky winners — be sure to read this newsletter and fill in the gaps on the back page**

**Worried about paying your rent?**

Please get in touch with us as soon as you think you may have difficulties as we may be able to help or signpost you to any financial support you are entitled to. If you cannot pay your rent but don't talk to us we may not be able to help and your tenancy could be at risk in the future.

If you are worried about paying your rent please call us on **01782 968566.**

# Your Voice - Your Views

**Food packages**

If you are struggling or are in crisis and need emergency food supplies there are a number of organisations that can help you :



The Society team can make you a Foodbank referral if you are struggling. Contact us on **01782 968566** or go to [www.stokeontrent.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.stokeontrent.foodbank.org.uk)

If you're experiencing hardship as a result of the COVID pandemic you can call the **#STOKEONTRENTTOGETHER COVID-19** support network helpline on **0800 561 5610** or email [communities@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:communities@stoke.gov.uk)

**#STOKEONTRENTTOGETHER**  
**COVID-19 SUPPORT NETWORK HELPLINE**  
**0800 561 5610**  
**7 DAYS A WEEK 9:00AM TO 5:00PM**



The Hubb Foundation wants to help ensure that no child, family or individual goes without essentials throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Contact them on 01782 664000 or email [info@thehubbfoundation.com](mailto:info@thehubbfoundation.com)

---TEAR HERE---

**WIN FOOD VOUCHERS WORTH £50 READY FOR CHRISTMAS!**

Complete the missing words in the sentences below:

1. The Society can make you a \_\_\_\_\_ referral if you are struggling.
2. Please be kind, respect their space and keep your \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Lynn's role is to help residents tap into local opportunities and \_\_\_\_\_ services.
4. If you are in immediate danger call 999 and ask for the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. If you like to play music loudly, wear \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Take care not to \_\_\_\_\_ plug sockets.
7. Your \_\_\_\_\_ is still payable over the Christmas period.



Now complete your name and contact details below, tear at the dotted line and send your entry slip to: Stoke on Trent Housing Society, The Trevor Jones Office, Hammond House, Ridgway Road, Hanley, ST1 3AX **before 9am on 4th January 2020.**

The winners will be the first 3 x correct entries drawn and must be a tenant or leaseholder of the Society .

Name:..... Address: .....  
..... Mobile: .....

**Support those delivering services to you**

As well as carrying out repairs and important building safety work and checks, you will see our staff and contractors out and about busy maintaining our schemes and carrying out essential visits.

Please be kind, respect their space and keep your distance, they are doing their best to carry out essential services in difficult circumstances

Our staff have been given clear guidance on how to work safely and maintain a safe distance from other people and some may be in protective clothing so that they can work safely.

If you are due a visit from us you must let us know beforehand if anyone in your household has symptoms of COVID or is self isolating.

All of the above is in line with government advice, so if you have any concerns please do contact us.



## 2020 in a nutshell !

Despite the COVID pandemic and the many restrictions that we have all faced it has been a busy year for the Society Team and residents. Here's what has been going on:

### Give Something Back

In April this year we launched our "Give Something Back" initiative, with the recruitment of our very own Wellbeing Co-ordinator Lynn. Lynn's role is to help residents tap into local opportunities and support services that are out there, and she couldn't have started at a better time with many residents needing help due to COVID-19.



Through this initiative we have so far:

- Made/sent over 700 phone calls, emails and text messages to check on the welfare of our residents
- Delivered over 40 of our very own food parcels to residents
- Donated £5,000 to the Stoke on Trent Foodbank
- Helped a small number of residents to claim over £3000 between them in backdated benefits
- Helped 14 residents claim benefits that they didn't realise they were entitled to
- Provided various household items for 5 residents who were struggling financially

If you are struggling and would like a chat with our Wellbeing Co-ordinator call 01782 968566.

### Fire Safety Works

**The safety of our residents is our number one priority and this year we have made a huge investment in this important area:**

- \* All of our apartment schemes have had their annual Fire Risk Assessment completed by an independent qualified assessor
- \* 396 new fire doors have been fitted to 7 of our apartment schemes
- \* All of the communal doors within these schemes have been fitted with new fire doors –that's over 250 communal fire doors
- \* We have fitted 175 new hard wired smoke alarms and heat detectors to our high rise schemes

### General Improvements

**In addition to the fire safety work that we have completed this year we have :**

- Renewed the flat roofs to Dickson and Hammond House in Hanley
- Completed a new storage heater programme at Marchwood Court. Penkhull
- Refurbished all of our lifts in our multi storey schemes

## 2021 and beyond ...

The Society's Board is committed to developing a programme of works for our homes that will see continued investment in areas such as new kitchens, bathrooms, heating upgrades and improvements to external areas around our schemes.

To help develop and deliver these programmes a new Head of Property, Hadrian Noble, will be joining the Society's Housing Team in January 2021. Hadrian will be the lead officer for all planning and delivery aspects of our property maintenance and compliance functions and has many years experience in this area of work.

**Information on our planned programmes will be available later next year via our website.**

## Warm Home Discount Scheme

You could get £140 off your electricity bill for winter 2020/21 under the Warm Home Discount Scheme.

The money is not paid to you - it's a one-off discount on your electricity bill, between September and March - providing you qualify for the payment. There are 2 ways to qualify for the Warm Home Discount Scheme:

- you get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit
- you're on a low income and meet your energy supplier's criteria for the scheme

You can also still qualify for the discount if you use a pre-pay or pay-as-you-go electricity meter. **For more information go to <https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme> or contact us.**

## Domestic Abuse and COVID-19

It's currently a difficult and worrying time for everyone, and particularly so for adults and children living with abuse.

Staying at home is an important part of preventing coronavirus, but for some home isn't the safest place to be. A pressured situation could get much worse and you may be worried about self-isolating with someone who is harming you.

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger call 999 and ask for the police. If you can't respond to the prompts make yourself heard by coughing or tapping the handset or once prompted by the system press 55 and don't hang up.

If you aren't in immediate danger but would like to talk to us about something you or someone you know is experiencing call us on **01782 968566**. You can also call the Refuge 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline on Freephone **0808 2000 247**.

# Refuge



For women and children.  
Against domestic violence.

## Being a good neighbour

As we spend more time at home than usual, showing consideration for our neighbours is more important than ever. Here are some tips for being a good neighbour:

- ♦ Be mindful of your neighbours and consider how your activities may impact those around you.
- ♦ If noise is an issue in your home, think about whether you could do something more quietly.
- ♦ If you like to play music loudly, wear headphones.
- ♦ Remember your neighbour could be a key worker trying to get some rest or someone working from home.
- ♦ If you're a parent, please try to make sure that play activities do not disturb your neighbours.
- ♦ If you are a neighbour hearing children, please be understanding. This is a difficult time for everyone and children can become restless when forced to stay indoors.
- ♦ Many people are at increased risk of loneliness and social isolation, so if you can, look out for your neighbours.

## Help us to keep you safe

Please work with us too, so that we can keep your home as safe as possible:

- ♦ Keep all fire exits clear
- ♦ Keep fire doors closed at all times
- ♦ Take care not to overload plug sockets
- ♦ Unplug Christmas lights when you go to bed or leave home
- ♦ Don't burn candles in your home.



## My Home Tenants Home Contents Insurance

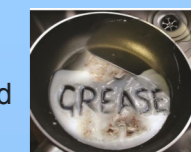
We have teamed up with the National Housing Federation and Thistle Tenant Risks to offer tenants and leaseholders the **My Home Contents Insurance Scheme**.

It's easy, flexible and affordable and you can pay cash fortnightly, monthly or annually. To find out more contact the Society for an application pack or contact **My Home Contents Insurance**:

- Call 0345 450 7288
- Email [myhome@thistleinsurance.co.uk](mailto:myhome@thistleinsurance.co.uk)
- Visit [www.thistlemyhome.co.uk](http://www.thistlemyhome.co.uk)

## Blocked Drains

We've had to deal with a few blocked drains recently that could have been avoided by following these top tips.



- Remember the 3 P's. If it's not Pee, Poo or toilet Paper, don't flush it.
- Don't put cooking fats, oils, grease and food waste down the sink. Allow this waste to go solid and then dispose of it in your bin.
- Recycle unwanted cooking oil at a recycling centre.
- Dispose of medical items like needles and syringes in special sharps bins.

Remember, you could be charged if your actions have caused the blockage!