

BUILDING SAFETY SPOTLIGHT

The Building Safety Act, which became law in April 2022, sets out new roles and responsibilities for all organisations that own and manage high-rise blocks to ensure the fire and structural safety of the buildings is being properly managed. Stoke on Trent Housing Society has a duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent a building safety risk happening and to reduce the seriousness of an incident if one happened. Our Building Safety Manager, **Hadrian Noble** and Compliance Officer, **Estelle**, work in partnership with qualified risk assessors and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service to manage fire safety in the buildings that we own. We carry out annual fire risk assessments, alongside weekly visual fire inspections and have plans in place to mitigate risks.

We have registered our high-rise buildings with the Building Safety Regulator and have been busy preparing a "safety case report" for each high-rise building. This entails keeping up to date various pieces of information relating to each high-rise building's design, construction type, services and facilities as well as information relating to fire prevention, protective measures and all maintenance and inspection records. We are also keeping detailed records of any major refurbishments and keeping the emergency services informed of this information and any changes.

A vital part of this duty is keeping up-to-date information relating to the "resident profile" of each high-rise block which includes basic information about the people that live in each building. This information is held securely by us and is only required for the purposes of ensuring safety. We will not share this information with any other organisation except for the emergency services. By collating this information it helps us to identify anyone who may struggle to evacuate a building without help in an emergency situation or anyone who may require information in alternative formats. This includes people who may have mobility problems due to age or a disability, people whose first language may not be English, people who have hearing difficulties, visual impairments or any other reason that may create additional risks in the event of an emergency.

Please let us know if you think that you may struggle to evacuate in the event of an emergency, call 01782 968566.



The Consequence of No-Access

To ensure that our properties remain safe and compliant with regulations, we send out staff and contractors to carry out legally required inspections, such as fire door checks, gas safety checks, electrical assessments, and other critical safety tasks.

These inspections are not only a legal obligation but also crucial to maintaining a safe living environment for all customers. Unfortunately, we have encountered instances where our team has been unable to gain access to certain properties, even after notifying customers well in advance. This creates a significant risk not only to the individuals living in those homes but also to neighbours. Without these essential checks, undetected issues could worsen and result in serious health and safety hazards.

Potential Issues include:

Fire Door Issues: Fire doors are a critical safety feature designed to contain the spread of fire and smoke, giving occupants valuable time to evacuate. An inspection ensures that each door is functioning as it should, and will perform effectively in the event of a fire.

Boiler Failures: Without regular servicing, boilers could malfunction, leaving tenants without heat or hot water, particularly in colder months, which can have severe health implications.

Gas Leaks or Carbon Monoxide Poisoning: If gas appliances are not inspected and maintained, there's a risk of gas leaks, which can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning, a silent killer that is often undetectable without proper checks.

Electrical Fires: Faulty wiring or electrical systems that go uninspected can spark dangerous electrical fires, endangering both the property and its occupants.

Structural Issues: Routine inspections often catch underlying structural problems, such as cracks or dampness, which if left can lead to significant damage and expensive repairs.

Mould Growth: Moisture issues that go unnoticed can lead to mould, which not only damages property but poses potential health risks.

We urge all residents to allow access when notified of upcoming inspections. These checks are for your safety and the safety of those around you. Failure to provide access could result in the Society taking legal action resulting in legal and court costs charged to you.

Together we can ensure that all homes remain safe and secure.

Complete the missing words in the sentences below:

1. My _____ is our new customer portal.
2. Your household _____ should be put away.
3. Do not keep _____ longer than needed.
4. Dumping rubbish is unhealthy, unsightly and attracts _____ and can become a fire risk.
5. If you want to make any internal or external physical alterations to your home, you may need our written _____.
6. If gas appliances are not _____ and maintained, there's a risk of gas leaks.



Complete your name and contact details below and send us an image of your entry slip via **WhatsApp** to **07876897172** or email us at **info@stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk** with your answers. Alternatively, send your completed entry slip to The Trevor Jones Office, Hammond House, Ridgway Road, Hanley, ST1 3AX. The 3 lucky winners will be drawn on **26th March 2025** and must be a tenant or leaseholder of the Society.

Name: Address:

Email: Mobile:

My Account

My Account is our new customer portal, providing you with an easy way to manage your tenancy. You can access it safely and securely from any smartphone, computer, laptop or tablet.

With My Account you can:

- * Check your rent account balance
- * View or print your rent statement
- * Report a repair
- * Update your details

To register your **My Account** you will need to contact us by phone or email. We will then create your account and send you a registration link. You will then have 24 hours to register your **My Account**.

Call 01782 968566 or email info@stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk to register.

For more information go to our website stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk

HOUSING PERKS

You can now pay less with **up to 18% discount** for what you already buy online and in store with your Housing Perks. The free app will help you to save money on the essentials:

- ✓ GROCERIES
- ✓ CAR
- ✓ FUEL
- ✓ CLOTHING
- ✓ SCHOOL UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT
- ✓ HOME FURNISHINGS & DIY
- ✓ FAMILY DAYS OUT

HOW IT WORKS

- 1 Download the app for free to your device available from
- 2 Buy a voucher with up to 18% discount
- 3 Voucher appears in app within seconds ready for you to use

Scan Me

HOW TO SIGN UP

- ➔ When you download the app, enter organisation ID: **SOTHS**
- ➔ Your account will need to be registered to your SOTHS address, so keep your tenancy reference handy.

For more information visit www.stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk

My Home Contents Insurance

Get a quote today at www.thisismyhome.co.uk

Do you have **home contents insurance?**

If not visit www.thisismyhome.co.uk for more information

Resident Newsletter

Spring 2025

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We're giving away a £50 VOUCHER to 3 lucky winners — be sure to read this newsletter and complete the competition on the back page.

Noise App

If you are experiencing noise problems, and you have a smart phone, we'll ask you to gather evidence using our **Noise App**.

The **Noise App** is a tool that you can download that enables you to collect and submit noise recordings for us to review.

You'll need to contact us first to tell us about the type of noise you are experiencing, and we'll send you an invitation to **The Noise App**. You can then register your account and start to use it to record any incidents of noise nuisance. Your recordings will then help us to investigate your claims and to take any action where appropriate.

Please contact us if you would like more information.

Changes to our office opening hours.

To help us improve our services, from Monday 10th March we're making a slight change to our opening hours:

	MORNING	AFTERNOON
MONDAY	9 - 12.30	1.30 - 5.00
TUESDAY	9 - 12.30	1.30 - 5.00
WEDNESDAY	9 - 1.00	CLOSED
THURSDAY	9 - 12.30	1.30 - 5.00
FRIDAY	9 - 12.30	1.30 - 4.00

You can still speak to us when we are closed if it's an emergency. Simply call 01782 968566, and press option 1.

Other convenient ways to contact us:

- ➔ Email info@stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk
- ➔ Go to www.stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk
- ➔ WhatsApp 07876897172

Spring is on it's way!

Winter is hopefully behind us now and our Property Team is busy preparing for the growing season ahead as our contractors get back to cutting the grass and shrubs across our various schemes. Your garden will also need maintaining, which means it will be time for you to start to spruce up your outside space ready for those warm summer evenings.

Remember that as a tenant of the Society your garden should:

- * Be free from litter & household rubbish
- * Not be overgrown
- * You should regularly trim hedges, which shouldn't grow over neighbouring gardens or public paths
- * Your grass should be cut regularly
- * Your household bins should be put away in their allocated space and not left out where they can get stolen

We carry out routine garden inspections which identify any garden areas that aren't maintained to an acceptable standard. Should tenants gardens fall below these standards they will be contacted to discuss and rectify this matter, in line with their tenancy agreement.

Please contact us if you are concerned about a neighbours garden or if you are struggling to maintain yours.



The Radio Teleswitch Service switch-off: What you need to know!

Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS) electricity meters will be obsolete from June 2025 so consumers are being asked to act now and accept the offer of a meter upgrade from their energy supplier. RTS meters are older electricity meters, introduced in the 1980's that use radio signals to switch between peak and off-peak rates. The radio signal, supporting infrastructure and systems will be shut down from 30 June 2025.

If you have only electric heating you may have one, or there may be a separate switch marked RTS.

All RTS customers should have already been contacted by their supplier by the end of 2024.

If they're not replaced heating and hot water may be continually left on or off, or the charging-up happens at the wrong time of day, leading to higher bills.

CCTV / Camera Doorbells

CCTV and smart doorbells can add extra security to a home, so we understand that some of our residents may choose to install them.



We permit residents in houses to install CCTV cameras and/or smart doorbells outside their homes, as long as they use them responsibly and respect their neighbour's privacy. Such cameras must also be used in accordance with the law, which means you will need to:

Tell people: Use signs to let people know you have recording equipment.

Respect privacy: Have a valid reason for keeping footage of neighbours or passers-by. Delete footage if they ask.

Be considerate: Try to use your cameras in less intrusive ways. Talk to your neighbours and listen to their concerns.

Share footage if asked: Provide recordings if someone captured by your camera asks for it.

Delete footage regularly: Do not keep footage longer than needed. You will need to ask us for permission before you install the CCTV/camera doorbell, a form is available on our website or give us a call.

Using a CCTV camera or smart doorbell is not considered antisocial behaviour or a breach of tenancy, even if neighbours are unhappy about the camera. Disputes over CCTV and doorbell camera use are civil matters, and Stoke on Trent Housing Society will only intervene if there is clear evidence of antisocial behaviour.

To ensure that you don't break the law go to the Information Commissioner's Office for detailed information ico.org.uk

Apartments: We do not allow residents in our apartments to install smart doorbells or CCTV. This is because their entrance doors are fire doors and provide safety against fire. Fire safety laws say that screwing holes in these doors will damage them and reduce their ability to protect against fire. Also, in a shared access doorway, you are more likely to invade your neighbour's privacy. This is because your camera will often capture video and audio of areas outside your home where your neighbours expect privacy.

If you are unhappy about the use of a neighbour's CCTV camera or smart doorbell, or need further information about this matter go to ico.org.uk or contact us on 01782 968566.

If you're unsure if you have RTS equipment, contact your electricity supplier who will be able to confirm for you and arrange a meter upgrade.

Note - Customers should be wary of scams as the meter replacement is free.



Bulky Waste Removal

Did you know that Stoke on Trent Housing Society provides a bulky waste removal service for its tenants? Bulky waste is large household items that are too big or heavy to fit into the standard bins. Our charges are:



ELECTRICAL GOODS REMOVAL	£25 per item (£30 fridge/freezers)
OTHER BULKY WASTE ITEMS (e.g. sofa, chair, table)	£40 (for 1 to 5 items)
OTHER BULKY WASTE ITEMS (from 6 items onwards)	An additional £8 per item

You will need to plan ahead and call us to arrange payment and a collection before you put the items outside.

Dumping bulky waste without an agreed collection date is considered anti-social behaviour and can put your tenancy at risk. Dumping rubbish is unhealthy, unsightly and attracts vermin and can become a fire risk.

If you witness anybody dumping rubbish/waste please let us know as we can charge the cost of collecting the rubbish to the correct household and not put it on everyone's collective service charge.

Call us on 01782 968566 for further information.

Fire Service Familiarisation Visit

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service recently visited Northwood Court for a familiarisation visit, which involves Firefighters visiting the premises to gather information on what hazards they may face should a fire occur. It also includes checking the details of any emergency plans, or firefighting provisions that are in place.

The crew from Hanley fire station were very happy with all the emergency provisions in place at Northwood Court, the Fire Action notices, how clear and clutter free the corridors and landings are and how all the information that they would need in an emergency was up to date and at hand.

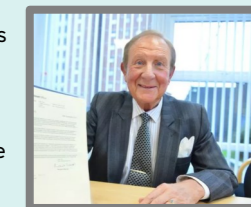
It is important that the local fire service conduct these visits so that should an emergency arise they have good understanding of the building.



Well done to our property team for helping to keep our residents safe.

Remembering Trevor Jones MBE

Stoke on Trent Housing Society has recently completed the building of 20 family houses and 6 apartments on two sites off Woodbank Street in Burslem. To celebrate the completion of the developments, a formal opening recently took place in the apartment block named 'Trevor Jones Court' in honour of the former Chair of the Society, who after over 30 years voluntary service to the Society, sadly passed away in 2019. As well as his huge commitment to affordable housing in the City and his fierce passion for keeping the Society local and independent, Trevor had been awarded the MBE for his tireless fund raising on behalf of the Donna Louise Trust.



Current chair, Glyn Morrey welcomed Trevor's family to the official opening.

Also in attendance were the Society's voluntary Board Directors, representatives from Homes England, Aspire Housing, Epic, Honeycomb Group and various local businesses involved in the design and construction of the development. Members of the Society's Housing and Property Teams, who continue to work with residents to help support and maintain their homes were also at the event.

Change Ahead!

Following consultation with tenants in 2017, the Society took the bold decision to become independent and provide it's own strategic and operational services. This saw the creation of a new team, based at Hammond House, Hanley taking on responsibility for all services to residents, with just IT and Accounting support provided via another local Housing Association.

Since then resident's have seen many changes, with the team growing in size and skills to ensure that the Society can continue to meet all regulatory requirements and provide excellent services. With the recent introduction of our new Property and Housing Teams we hope you agree that things have improved even further.

This year we plan to make further changes by recruiting a new finance team ready to provide and manage our own accounting and IT services from April 2026. This is a change that was always envisaged by former Chair, Trevor Jones MBE, as it would give the Society better control over it's business planning process. It also will make us more robust as we work through some of the current regulatory and legislative challenges faced by the sector. **We'll keep you updated on this project as it progresses!**

Making Alterations to Your Home

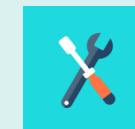
If you want to make any internal or external physical alterations to your home, you may need our written permission. In many cases, we'll be able to grant permission in writing without asking you for more information, but in some instances we may need to visit your property to assess your proposals in more detail. Alterations can be either cosmetic or structural, for example:

- * Putting up a shed or greenhouse
- * Replacing an internal door
- * Electrical or plumbing alterations
- * Adaptation to your home due to a disability, for example, grab rails or installing a stair lift

You will need to complete an application form providing details of the improvement/s. Find one on our website or call us.

Consideration will be given to all requests for alterations however permission will be refused for the following reasons:

- * If the work is likely to reduce the value of the property or make it less suitable for letting
- * If the alteration has any affect on your neighbour or the neighbourhood



If you carry out any alterations or improvements without our permission, we are entitled to restore your home to its previous condition during, or at the end of, your tenancy. If we do so, we may charge you for this work.

If you are in any doubt please speak to us first.

Scheme Walkabouts

Now the weather is starting to improve we'll soon be starting our scheme walkabouts. Scheme walkabouts can help us to build stronger communities where residents can lead on or identify issues that may be cause for concern and help improve the area in which they live.

During these walkabouts we want to encourage and support tenants to identify areas such as:

- * Repairs or minor improvements to external and communal areas.
- * ASB or crime-related issues.
- * Fly-tipping, parking and abandoned vehicle issues.

We want you to take pride in your area and to work with the Society and other residents to make the area safe and a well-maintained place to live. The walkabout will help us to:

- * Target areas of concerns.
- * Promote ways for you to become involved in scrutinising and shaping Society services.
- * Identify improvements including opportunities to reduce anti-social behaviour (ASB).
- * Work in partnership with other services.



We'll be sending out text messages to residents once we have dates in our diary for the walkabouts. We look forward to seeing you there !