

Summer Estate Services

We want our residents to be proud of where they live and to enjoy living in a clean and tidy environment which is why our Estate Team are busy this Summer visiting our communal garden schemes to tidy up and to identify any additional gardening services that might be required.



Our usual contractors will be cutting the grass and shrubs across our various schemes and we have also taken on some additional gardening resource to help us tackle some of the problem areas that we have identified.

Your Garden

If you have your own garden that you are responsible for remember that it will also need maintaining, which means it will be time for you to get the lawn mower out and start to spruce up your outside space so that you can enjoy these warm summer evenings. Remember that as a tenant of the Society your garden should be:

- free from litter, household rubbish and animal waste
- not be overgrown
- you should regularly trim hedges, which shouldn't grow over neighbouring gardens or public paths
- your grass should be cut regularly

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.

If you have any particular concerns around the estates or neighbours gardens contact our Estate Team on 017892 968566.

Repairs Satisfaction

Here are the latest results from our repairs satisfaction survey (April to June 2018):

Do you feel that you were adequately updated throughout your repair?

YES	NO
100%	NA



Are you satisfied with how long it took to get the repair done?

YES	NO
100%	NA

Did the contractor clean up any mess and leave your home tidy?

YES	NO
100%	NA

In general do you think the repairs service is:

VERY GOOD	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
90%	7.5%	2.5%	NA

We're really pleased with these results and think that they reflect the responsiveness of our services and the customer focus of our staff and contractors. Of course we would like 100% of our customers to rate our service as good so we'll be working hard to achieve this.

If you have any feedback about our repairs service please let us know.

My Home

Tenants Home Contents Insurance

Although Stoke on Trent Housing Society are responsible for insuring your building, in the event of an incident in your home you will be liable to pay for damage to fixtures and fittings, décor and floor coverings etc.

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

Optional extensions are available for an additional premium, you can include extended accidental damage, personal possessions cover (away from home), wheelchairs and mobility scooters. Hearing aids, and cover is also available for the structure of garden sheds, garages and greenhouses.

It is easy, flexible and affordable, you can pay cash fortnightly or monthly using a swipe card, you can set up a monthly direct debit, or pay 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
- Visit www.thistlemyhome.co.uk

Affordable insurance premiums which you can pay-as-you-go



Your Voice - Your Views



Welcome to our **July 2018** newsletter, put together by staff and members of your Customer Panel. If you have any feedback on this newsletter or if there's anything that you would like to see included in any future editions then do please get in touch on 01782 968566.

Inside this Issue



- * contacting you
- * meet the team
- * keep in touch
- * universal credit
- * available homes
- * fire safety in our schemes
- * how to get involved
- * summer estate services
- * repairs satisfaction
- * my home tenants contents insurance

Contacting you

It's really important that we have your most current contact details so that we can reach you when we need to. This can be a mobile or landline number and/or an email address if you have one. It can also be handy to leave us with next of kin or third party contact information for any emergency situations that might arise.

If you would like to check that we have your most up to date details give us a call on 01782 968566.

Don't worry, we won't share this information with others, unless you give us permission to do so. [Go to our website for further information on data protection.](#)

Meet the Team

This newsletter we would like to introduce you to Helen, who has worked for the Society since 2004.

Helen was part of the old Parkvista Team, that looked after the Society's customers and their homes prior to the Society going independent in April 2017, so many of our customers may already know Helen.

Based at our Trevor Jones Offices in Ridgway Road, Hanley, Helen is now responsible for Estate Services. Her role as Deputy Housing Manager is to liaise with our customers and contractors and to provide an excellent service in respect of:

- day to day repairs
- empty property repairs
- health and safety
- our estate team



If you see Helen out and about stop and say hello, or if you would like to give her feedback about any of our Estate Services give her a call on 01782 968566.

Keep in Touch

Our website: www.stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk

Email: info@stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk

Telephone: 01782 968566 (9am to 5pm Mon to Fri)

In person: Customer Reception, Dickson House, Ridgway Road, Hanley, Stoke on Trent ST1 3AX (see website for opening hours)

Write to us: The Trevor Jones Office, Hammond House, Ridgway Road, Hanley, ST1 3AX

****Out of hours:** should you have an **emergency** repair or situation outside of normal office hours **call 01782 968566** and then **press 1** on your telephone keypad to be put through to our emergency service.



Universal Credit

Universal Credit (UC) is the new single monthly payment, administered by the Job Centre, that will affect everyone between 16 and 64 who claims:

- * *income support*
- * *income based job seekers allowance*
- * *income related employment and support allowance*
- * *housing benefit*
- * *tax credits*

In our last newsletter we talked about Universal Credit (UC) and how it was about to roll out in June 2018 for new claimants and for any existing benefit claimants who have a change in their circumstances.

That roll out has started and staff at the Society have attended training provided by the Department of Works and Pensions so that they understand the UC process and can support and sign post customers that need help with UC.

Here are the basics that you need to know if you are affected by UC:

- You will need **access to the internet** and an **email account** as UC is administered online.
- You will need a **bank account** as UC is paid direct to you as one lump sum payment every month. If you are struggling to get one the Job Centre can help you.
- ♦ Any payment towards your rent will no longer be sent to us direct and instead will be paid to your bank account. You will then need to pay us your rent. **You can set up a Direct Debit with Stoke on Trent Housing Society** to pay your rent. It's easy and can be done in a couple of minutes over the phone.



It can take several weeks for you to receive your first payment of UC. If you think you will have financial difficulty while you wait, you may be entitled to an advance payment until your claim is assessed. You will have to pay it back from your future monthly payments. To request a hardship payment you will need to call the **Universal Credit Helpline on 0345 600 0723**.

Potteries Gold is a lottery funded project to help people in Stoke on Trent cope with the effects of welfare reform. They have lots of useful information on their website at www.snsocab.org.uk or you can call them on **03444 111 444**.

We also have lots of information about Universal Credit on our Stoke on Trent Housing Society web page www.stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk

If you are struggling to pay your rent or are struggling with any of the above you need to talk to us as soon as possible so that we can help. We have a confidential team who can help set up an affordable arrangement so you can pay any rent arrears and keep you from losing your home.

Call us on 01782 968566.

Available Homes

Stoke on Trent Housing Society advertises its vacant homes via HOMEHUNT, a national website that holds the UK's biggest collection of affordable and social housing to rent and to buy.



Why rent a home from us ?

- * **no administration fees**
- * **no rent deposit required**
- * **24/7 repair service**
- * **locally based staff for housing advice and assistance**
- **focused estate services helping to keep our schemes and communal areas clean and tidy**

If you have family or friends looking for a home to rent please ask them to get in touch on **01782 968566** or sign post them to: www.homehunt.co.uk

Fire Safety in our schemes.

Since February 2017 the Society has been working with our independent fire risk assessor to complete fire risk assessments (FRA's) on some of our high rise and low rise apartment schemes.

The table below shows the progress that has been made so far :

SCHEME	FRA COMPLETED	PROGRESS ON ANY RECOMMENDED WORKS
Dickson House, Hanley	✓	ALL COMPLETE
Hammond House, Hanley	✓	ALL COMPLETE
Northwood Court, Hanley	✓	1 ACTION OUTSTANDING (ALL OTHER WORKS COMPLETE)
Perrymount Court, Penkhull	✓	IN PROGRESS
Marchwood Court, Penkhull	✓	TO COMMENCE IN AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

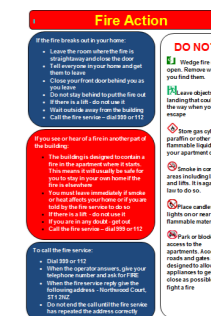
We aim to complete further FRA's on our remaining schemes once all of the above works have been completed.

Progress on Fire Safety is reported to the Society's Board at our quarterly Board meetings and our Customer Panel discuss fire safety at every meeting that they hold.

In terms of day to day fire safety management our Estate Team carry out a weekly schedule of fire safety checks at our schemes and any issues that they pick up are dealt with quickly.

Here are a few simple steps that you can take to help us to reduce the risk of fire:

- ♦ Test your smoke alarm to make sure it works.
- ♦ Be careful with candles and keep them away from curtains, carpets, furniture etc.
- ♦ If you smoke stub cigarettes out properly and never smoke in bed or in communal areas.
- ♦ Make sure your electrical appliances, plugs and cables are used properly and safely.
- ♦ Don't use or store devices that run on a gas cylinder.
- ♦ Keep communal areas clear of obstructions. This includes external door mats, pictures, plant pots or anything that could get in the way if someone is trying to exit or enter the building - visibility could be reduced due to smoke..
- ♦ Get rid of your rubbish properly and don't block any exits.
- ♦ Never prop open fire doors. They are there for a reason and need to be kept closed at all times.



Should you have any concerns about Fire Safety please call us on 01782 968566.



The Society would like its customers to be involved. We want customers to talk to us, engage with us and help us to improve services.

Becoming a member of the **Customer Panel** is something that all customers can do. Getting involved can help you to develop new skills, meet new people and influence the way that things are done.

The Customer Panel meets every quarter to discuss a range of subjects and its ideas, suggestions and comments are fed back to the Society's Board at their Board meetings.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Customer Panel please contact:

Allan Guest, Customer Panel Chair allanbnre@gmail.com or call Allan on **07936325264** or contact

Lisa Liston, Housing Officer info@stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk or call Lisa on **07841492984** or **01782 968566**