

Fire Safety

Fire safety is everyone's responsibility and it is important that we all work together to stay safe and help prevent fires.




Here's how you can help to keep, you, your family and neighbours' safe

- Read the information we provide on our website or in schemes about fire safety in your home
- Each week, check that the smoke detectors in your home are working and if not please contact us.
- If your smoke detectors have batteries, never remove them, test regularly and ensure that they are changed at least once a year.
- Do not smoke in communal areas and if you see anyone doing so, please report it to us.
- Ensure your front door closes on its own upon entrance and exit. If not, report it to us immediately.
- Do not wedge fire doors open, internal fire doors should always be kept closed as they stop fire and smoke spreading.
- Make sure exits are kept clear – both inside your home and in communal areas.
- Keep all communal areas free from pushchairs, bikes, clutter, rubbish and trip hazards.
- Close interior doors before you go to bed to help stop a fire from spreading whilst you are asleep.
- Turn off and unplug electrical appliances that you are not using – unless they are designed to be left on 24/7.
- Don't leave the washing machine or dishwasher running or tumble dryer on when you are out.
- Regularly check the condition of the wiring on your electrical appliances. Check for loose plugs, frayed cables and if any sockets should burn marks or feel hot, report it to us immediately.
- Never use a 'block' adapters as they can be easily overloaded, use proper extension lead adapters.
- Turn heaters off when they are not needed. Use fireguards for extra safety and never leave washing drying over or in front of them.
- Be extra careful with lit candles and cigarettes as well as appliances that get hot such as irons, kettles and hair driers. Keep flames away from fabrics.
- Keep door and window keys where everyone can find them, so you can get out quickly in an emergency.
- Read the fire escape plans and signage displayed in communal areas. Prepare, plan and ensure that you, your family and visitors know how to get out safely in the event of a fire.

Contact us immediately if you think you would have any problems being alerted in the event of a fire, evacuating your building or complying with the guidance provided.

Keep in Touch

Website: www.stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk	Email: info@stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk
Tel: 01782 968566 (9am– 5pm Mon to Fri)	Facebook: 
Write to us: The Trevor Jones Office, Hammond House, Ridgway Road, Hanley, ST1 3AX	Person: Customer Reception (see website for info)

***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.

Your Voice - Your Views



Welcome to our **October 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.

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We've recently launched a Stoke on Trent Housing Society Facebook page as another way for our residents and potential new customers to keep in touch with us.

We'll be posting events and information that might be of interest to residents and we'll also be advertising our vacant homes on the page.

Let us know if you like it!



Meet the Team

This newsletter we would like to introduce you to our Housing Services Manager, Sue Davies, who has worked for the Society since April 2017.



Sue has worked in Social Housing for 28 years, starting her career in 1990 working within the City Council's Housing Department. It was here that Sue developed her appetite for Housing as she managed and delivered front line services to council tenants. Her final role at the City Council was managing the City Council's allocation service before leaving in 2009 to join a large North Staffordshire based Housing Association to manage their allocation service and customer service centre.

Sue has a passion for customer service and understands the frustration that customers often feel due to poor processes and lack of communication. Here's what Sue has to say about her role at the Society:

"Having previously worked for larger organisations the opportunity to work for a small Housing Association was an exciting prospect for me. The usual departmental barriers don't exist here and so managing every aspect of service delivery gives me the opportunity to work with staff, contractors and customers to develop customer focussed processes. The Society Team is working hard to help our customers feel happier, safe and secure in their homes and for Stoke on Trent Housing Society to become a landlord of choice and recommendation within the City."

Sue understands the importance of customer feedback and is happy to receive your comments. See our [Keep in Touch](#) section on the back page for details of how to contact the Society.

Direct Debit for your Convenience

We provide an any day/any frequency Direct Debit service to make it easier for you to pay your rent or other charges. Set up is simple and can be done over the phone in just a few minutes.

For more information call us on **01782 968566** or go to our website www.stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk



Universal Credit - Get Ready

Universal Credit (UC) roll out started in June 2018. At the moment it is only affecting new claimants and any existing benefit claimants who have a change in their circumstances.....**but** this will change next year when anyone aged between 16 and 64 claiming any of the following benefits will be moved across to UC:

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



Even if you are not claiming under Universal Credit yet, you should still get ready.

- 1. Get a bank account:** UC is paid direct to you via your bank account or building society account as one lump sum payment every month. If you are struggling to get one the Job Centre can help you.
- 2. Get online:** most applications for Universal Credit and notifications of changes will need to be made online. Having access to broadband internet access and a suitable computer will help make this easier for you.
- 3. Plan to make monthly payments:** under Universal Credit, you will receive all eligible benefits payments at the end of each month (not weekly). When the time comes 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.

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 already in receipt of Universal Credit and 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.

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



Did you know that the Society Team can issue foodbank vouchers to customers who are having financial difficulties such as benefit issues, delayed wages or ill health. Contact us on **01782 968566** for more information.

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



General Data Protection Regulation



GDPR is a new set of regulations that replace the existing Data Protection Act. The regulations came into force on 25th May 2018 and they place a greater responsibility on all organisations to ensure that personal data is secure, accurate and up-to-date. It places greater emphasis on transparency and accountability, being transparent with you about what personal data is collected, stored and potentially shared with other organisations and being accountable will require us to keep records of all personal data processed.

Our website contains more detailed information about this (see our Privacy Policy Notice) and we have also tried to summarise this for you below:

Privacy Policy Notice Summary

Personal data that we collect and hold about you and your household will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

We collect information in a variety of ways including using our website; on various forms, tenancy agreements, and contracts and through our ongoing contact with you.

When you applied for housing, we collected and processed information about you and members of your household to process your application. This includes information from other housing providers / private landlords. In some circumstances we may collect information from the Police, Probation Service, support workers and social workers.

During your tenancy we will collect and process information about you and members of your household. This will vary on a case by case basis but may include financial information and warning information.

We use this information :

- To manage your tenancy and the Stoke on Trent Housing Society property it relates to
- To monitor compliance with the terms of your tenancy agreement and to offer/signpost to support and services
- To conduct surveys in order to monitor and improve our services

Unless we specifically advise you otherwise, we will only collect and process personal information that we need in order to carry out these functions. This personal information may be stored on our computer systems and/or a tenancy file. It is held securely and we have security measures in place to prevent it from being accessed by any unauthorised person.

Your personal information will be kept confidential. Usually we will not disclose personal data without consent but we may share information with contractors or third parties and other agencies we work with, including Local Authorities, Social Services, Police, other social landlords and other agencies when we believe it is in yours or the public's interest to do so, or as required by law. In particular, please be aware:

- Current or forwarding addresses may be shared with utility companies and Council Tax offices to ensure billing details are correct.
- If you default upon any tenancy/licence conditions information about you may be provided to authorised debt recovery agencies, to enable them to recover the debt. This may affect future applications for tenancies, credit and insurance.
- We may discuss your financial situation, rent payments (including any arrears) and any claims made for welfare benefits with; an external debt advice agency, Welfare Rights Advisor, the housing benefit department or the local authorities housing advice and homeless prevention team to make sure that benefits are paid correctly.

Personal data will be stored in line with guidance from the **National Housing Federation** in terms of storage timescales.

If you would like a paper copy of our full Privacy Policy Notice or have any questions on the above let us know.

Get involved

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 at the Society.

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 the Society on **01782 968566**.

