

Christmas Clear Out!

We understand that lots of people will use the holidays as an opportunity to have a clear out.

Please don't place bulk waste in the communal bins, it takes up space for general household waste and this year there will be a reduction in council waste collections over the holiday period. 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 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 waste items to the skip room - don't leave it 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.



Managing Condensation

As the colder winter weather sets in, we receive more calls about 'damp', which most often turns out to be condensation.

Where there is inadequate ventilation, condensation and stale air can appear. As energy prices are likely to rise and we don't want to keep our windows open, particularly when it's cold outside, we need to minimise the problem as much as possible.

Here are some tips on how to reduce condensation.

- When cooking, cover pans.
- Use an airer when drying washing indoors and ventilate the room.
- It's important to make sure your home is properly ventilated so when possible open your windows.
- When using the bathroom or kitchen, keep the door closed. This will help to contain the moist or stale air in the room.
- To help ventilate, put the extractor fan on, or leave the window open.
- Where furniture such as cupboards are against the wall, try to keep a small distance between the back of the cupboard and the wall.
- Remove mould regularly using specialist products and continue to clean the area to prevent it coming back

If you need any further advice on managing condensation contact us on **01782 968566**.

Resident Newsletter

Winter 2021



Hello and welcome to your Winter 2021 Newsletter

It's been a while since our last newsletter so there is lots to catch up on!

We understand that it's a tough time financially for many people. The significant increase in inflation, much higher energy costs, coupled with the reduction in Universal Credit will be making life more challenging financially for lots of residents. For this reason we have included in this edition information on our Give Something Back initiative, a scheme set up by the Society to help support the wellbeing of resident's.

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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

With rising energy costs and winter almost upon us, we wanted to share some top tips for staying safe and warm this winter, while keeping your energy bills down. There are lots of free and low-cost things you can do that will help keep you warm and save you money on your gas and electricity.



- * Move furniture away from radiators so that heat can circulate.
- * Close your curtains when it's getting dark and tuck them behind your radiator.
- * When using the kettle, only boil the water you need.
- * Keep lids on saucepans when cooking so that you can turn the hob down and use less gas or electricity.
- * Press the "eco" button on your washing machine if you have one. It usually takes longer, but this is because it heats the water more slowly, using less electricity.
- * When drying clothes inside, use a clothes airer in a room near an open window and close the door (this helps stop condensation too!).

Getting Help with your Energy Bills

If you're struggling to afford your energy bills, you might be able to take advantage of certain benefits, grants and help offered by the government and energy suppliers:

Winter Fuel Payment - www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment
Cold Weather Payments - www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment
Warm Home Discount Scheme - www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme

There's lots more information on our website about how to get help with your energy bills:

www.stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk

We want our customers to be aware that we are always here to offer help and advice. If you are worried about your energy bills or are struggling to apply for benefits or grants our Wellbeing Coordinator is here to give you advice and help.

Call Lynn on **01782 968566**.

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**.

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!

WIN FOOD VOUCHERS WORTH £50 READY FOR CHRISTMAS!

Complete the missing words in the sentences below:

1. Move _____ away from radiators so that heat can circulate.
2. We've fitted new electronic _____ and _____ at our underground car park.
3. Keeping our resident's and staff _____ is something that Hadrian is very passionate about.
4. Check your Christmas lights conform to _____.
5. This Christmas we'll also be sending out food _____ to over 40 residents.
6. Use an _____ when drying washing indoors and ventilate the room.

Now complete your name and contact details below and send us an image of your entry slip via **WhatsApp** to **07876897172** or email info@stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk. 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 **23rd December 2021** and must be a tenant or leaseholder of the Society.

Name:..... Address:.....
..... Mobile:.....
Telephone number:..... email:.....



Our offices close on Christmas Eve at 1pm and will re-open at 9am on Tuesday 4th January

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 Tuesday 4th January 2022.

PAYING YOUR RENT

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

- * By standing order to A/C:20193291 & sort code: 20-36-50
- * Call 0844 557 8321 to make a payment
- * Online at www.allpayments.net
- * By Allpay payment card at a Paypoint outlet.

For more information on our services go to www.stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk



Keeping your homes safe and secure

Stoke on Trent Housing Society is committed to investing in your homes to ensure they are safe and secure.

This year has been another difficult year with the coronavirus pandemic and government restrictions continuing to impact our resources and plans. Despite this our new Head of Property, Hadrian, and his team have been working hard to achieve a number of their goals for the year:

- New windows have been installed and fire prevention works have been completed at **Imperial Court**, Hanley.
- We've completed a hard wired smoke alarm and heat detector installation programme within all of our properties in our 3 x **high rise schemes**.
- An electric storage heater replacement programme has started at Perrymount Court, and is due to be complete by the end of January 2022.
- We've fitted new electronic gates and doors at our underground car park and skip rooms at Dickson and Hammond House.
- We've reviewed our waste removal arrangements, which has resulted in the removal of an unsightly skip from Dickson and Hammond House.



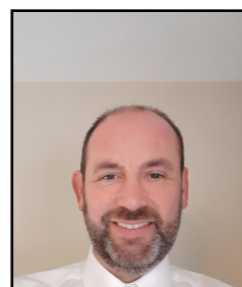
Moving forward it's going to be another busy year in 2022 as we plan to:

- * **Replace the communal heating system at Dickson and Hammond House.**
- * **Renew all of the windows at The Bottlekiln.**
- * **Carry on with our kitchen renewal programme.**
- * **Look at ways that we can be more environmentally friendly.**

Say Hello to Hadrian

Hadrian Noble joined the Society in January 2021 as our new **Head of Property**.

He's our lead officer for all planning and delivery aspects of our property maintenance, estate services and compliance functions and has brought a vast range of experience and knowledge to the team. With a background in asset management and having previously worked for a local housing association he's a perfect fit for the Society and is just what we needed to help us progress our services.



Keeping our resident's and staff safe is something that Hadrian is very passionate about, and part of his role is to ensure that our buildings are safely managed. He's also the person to contact should you have any concerns around the safety of the building that you live in.

If you have any feedback for Hadrian about our property maintenance, estate or building safety services email

info@stokeontrenthousingsociety.org.uk or call 01782 968566 to speak to him.

Fire safety

As well as the annual Fire Risk Assessments that we complete on every apartment scheme, our Estate team are constantly patrolling our communal areas to ensure our buildings continue to meet fire safety regulations.

The government is also now putting an onus on housing providers to regularly inspect fire doors that are fitted to residents homes. As a result of this, we have launched a new annual fire door inspection regime for resident and communal doors, which means that our staff will be assessing your fire door when they come to visit you. They'll be checking for any gaps and that it still closes automatically when you enter or leave your home.

If you're asked to provide access to any of the team so that we can inspect your fire door or so that we can complete any

Help us to keep you safe

- **Keep all fire exits clear.**
- **Always keep fire doors closed.**
- **Don't overload plug sockets.**
- **Check your Christmas lights conform to British Standards.**
- **Unplug Christmas lights when you go to bed or go out.**
- **Don't burn candles in your home.**
- **As most fires start in the kitchen don't leave cooking unattended.**
- **Remember! After drinking alcohol, the risk of accidents in the kitchen is greater.**
- **Unplug electric blankets before you get into bed.**



Dickson and Hammond House **Information Event**

The team have been very busy this year preparing plans to replace the existing communal heating system at Dickson and Hammond House in 2022.

As this is going to be another big project for the Society we are holding an information event to give residents opportunity to talk to staff about the changes and how it will affect them

Date: Wednesday 22nd December 2021

Time: Between 10am and 3pm (drop in anytime)

Where: Lower ground floor rear entrance of Hammond House

Please try to come along if you are a resident of Dickson and Hammond House, it will be a great opportunity to chat with staff and there will be treats for our first 20 lucky residents.



Give Something Back!

Our **"Give Something Back"** initiative, was launched in April 2020 to help promote and support wellbeing for Society residents. So far each year the initiative has provided:

- A Wellbeing Coordinator to support and offer wellbeing advice to residents
- A hardship fund to help Society tenants and their families who may be experiencing hardship or unexpected and unplanned financial difficulties
- Funding for any projects and good causes that could positively impact our resident's wellbeing
- A recycling and gifting scheme for unwanted furniture items
- A referral arrangement with a local charity that provides furniture items to those in need

This year, Lynn, our Wellbeing Coordinator, Lisa, our Senior Housing Officer and Rachel our Assistant Housing Officer have all been busy reaching out to residents, with their visits and chats resulting in:

- **10 x Beat the Cold** referrals
- **20 x Universal Credit, Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payment** applications
- **12 x Warm Home Discount and Big Difference** referrals
- **4 x Staffordshire Fire Brigade** referrals (for Safe and Well visits)
- **2 x Salt box** referrals for specialist financial advice
- **3 x Mental Health and social service** referrals
- **Assisted a small number of residents to claim £6,000 between them in backdated claims or appeals**

In addition to all of the above we've helped a number of residents in their homes by providing cleaning and decoration services, carpets, window coverings, furniture and white goods items and generally been there to coordinate services and improve their wellbeing.

This Christmas we'll also be sending out food vouchers to over 40 residents that the team has identified as being on low incomes or that have generally worked well with us to resolve some of their wellbeing issues.

All of the above is supported by **Our Annual Tenancy Visit Programme**

We're aiming to visit every tenant on an annual basis to discuss their needs and make sure that our records are up to date. These visits also provide the opportunity to reach out to residents to offer help with their wellbeing.



The visit will be based on a short questionnaire giving you the chance to discuss aspects of your tenancy and tenant life. The information we gather will help us to make future plans and tailor services to suit you. These visits also allow us to update our tenancy records, such as who lives in the household and your contact details. If you live in one of our apartments we'll also inspect your fire door whilst we are there to make sure it is safe.

We'll write to you beforehand to arrange an appointment date and time that's convenient for you. Our officers will continue to follow Government guidance during their visit, wearing a face covering and taking no longer than 15 minutes in your home. If they need any further information after this time they will phone you when they return to the office.

If you would like to bring your visit forward so that you can have a chat about your wellbeing please let us know.

COMING SOON ..

Our new Burslem development of 20 x 2 & 3 bedroom houses and 6 x 1 bedroom apartments.

Ready to move into during late summer 2022 we'll be advertising these homes later next year via www.homehunt.co.uk and the City Council will also be providing us with nominations from their waiting list.

Anyone wanting to be considered for these properties will need to register their details with Homehunt (www.homehunt.co.uk) and the City Council (www.stoke.gov.uk).



Foodbank

If you are struggling or are in crisis and need emergency food supplies the Society team can make you a Foodbank referral. Contact us on **01782 968566** or go to www.stokeontrent.foodbank.org.uk



Foodbanks that are open over Christmas:

Fri 24th Dec	Tunstall Methodist Church, Tunstall	4.30pm till 6.30pm
Mon 27th Dec	Wesley Hall Church, Sneyd Green	3.00pm till 5.00pm
Wed 29th Dec	Grace Church, Hanley	7.00pm till 9.00pm
Thurs 30th Dec	Temple Street Methodist Church, Fenton Wesley Hall Church, Sneyd Green	10.00am till 12.00pm 4.00pm till 6.00pm
Fri 31st Dec	Tunstall Methodist Church, Tunstall	4.30pm till 6.30pm
Mon 3rd Jan	West End Church, Stoke St Johns Church, Knypersley Wesley Hall Church, Sneyd Green	10.00am till 12.00pm 11.00am till 1.00pm 3.00pm till 5.00pm

Please give us a call if you are struggling, we may be able to help in other ways too.