

# be.

m a g a z i n e

## Together with tenants.

Making sure your  
voice is heard.

page 15

## Our plans for 2021.

We have lots of exciting 2021 news to share with you including our online customer account.

page 4

## Cover star David, pens memoirs.

Resident David shares his story about growing up in Goldenhill in the 1940s.

page 5

## Working with you to ensure your homes are safe.

What we're doing to make sure your home is safe.

page 11

# 04

## Our 2021 plans.

We're sharing our plans for the new year, including our online customer account.



# 07



## Lime Tree Court a new annex for Rowan Village

We reveal our brand new, 18 apartment annex at Rowan Village, Meir.

# 08

## Be money savvy.

A quick round-up of the latest benefit and support changes.

## Be safe.

As always, we're working with you to keep everyone and their homes safe.

# 11

# 12



## Affordable homes to buy.

10 reasons to move to Saxon Gate, Crewe and a sneak peek at our brand new Cheadle development.

# 14



## Village residents give back.

Craft group sell their pieces to raise funds for local charities.

# 15

## Together with Tenants.

Making sure your home is safe, your voice is heard, you're treated with respect, and more.



# Welcome to our tenants' magazine, Be.

**First things first, a very happy, slightly belated, new year to you all.**

**Last year was tough and I hope that you and your families have managed to keep safe and well during this difficult time. Let's hope that 2021 is better and brighter.**

Like so many organisations we've had to adapt, adjust and follow government guidance which has sometimes had an impact on our services. We've worked really hard to make

sure we're still here for you and that the majority of our services have continued as normal, or with small changes.

A new year often brings new plans and opportunities, which is definitely the case here at Staffs Housing. We have lots of 2021 plans to share with you including our Together with Tenants project - which will transform the way we communicate with you, and make sure your voice is always heard. We're also opening our Lime Tree

Court annex at Rowan Village, as well as launching new shared ownership homes at our Saxon Gate site in Crewe and revealing our latest development in Cheadle.

We know the beginning of 2021 hasn't been the fresh start that many of us had hoped for but please remember, whatever the year brings, we are here to support you.

**Take care and stay safe.**



*Diane Thompson*  
**Diane Thompson**  
Group Chief Executive

**Contact us.**

www.staffshousing.org.uk  
Customer Services 01782 744533  
Head Office 308 London Road, Stoke on Trent, ST4 5AB  
Hours 8.30 - 5.30 Monday to Friday

**Let's get social.**

@staffshousing  
www.facebook.com/staffshousing  
www.youtube.com/staffshousing

# Be. Ready For 2021.

## Introducing online customer accounts.

You'll soon be able to check your account details and lots more with a brand new online account. You'll also be able to:

- Check and update your account details
- Check and pay your rent
- Set up a direct debit
- Check and report a repair
- View useful information and news

We'll be sharing more info and the online launch date soon.

## Village restaurants.

Although we have had to temporarily close our restaurants due to government guidance, our delivery food service is still available. If you live in one of our villages you can order hot and cold meals to be delivered straight to your door.

Hopefully we'll be able to re-open our restaurants and cafés once government guidance changes. Once we can, we have loads of exciting things on offer for you all including a new menu and afternoon tea.

## Prizes for repairs feedback.

Over the last few months we've been running a text message trial to get quicker feedback about your experience with a repair issue, helping us to respond sooner if there's a problem. It's been really successful so we are rolling this out to all customers.

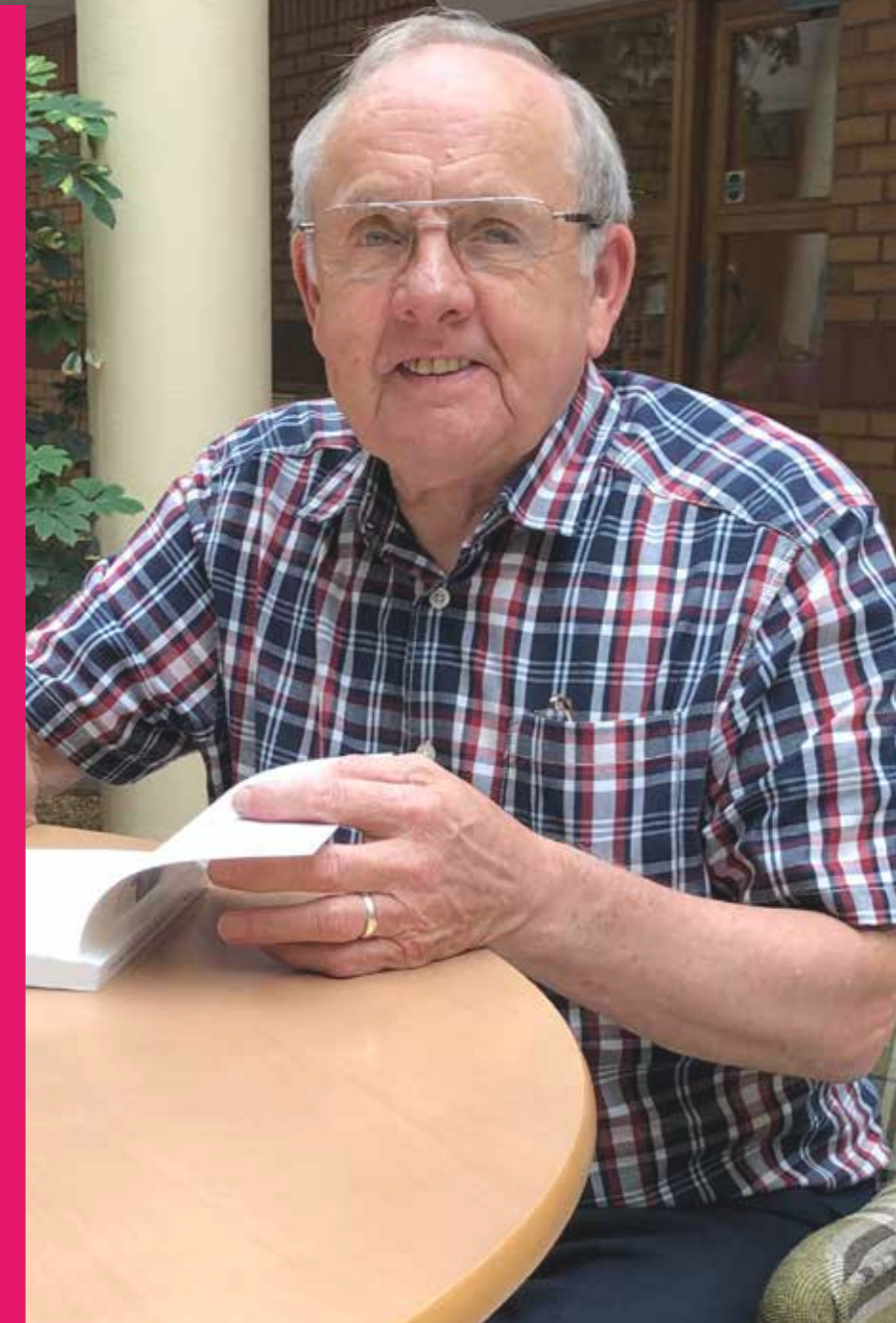
After a repair, we'll text to ask you to rate your satisfaction level on a scale of 1-5 and ask for your comments on the repair service. From April, everyone who gives feedback this way will be entered into a monthly prize draw where two lucky people will win a £25 Love to Shop Voucher.

## Resident David publishes memoir of growing up in Stoke mining town.

David began writing features for The Sentinel's 'The Way We Were' magazine which proved so popular, he decided to publish a book about his childhood in Goldenhill.

"I wanted to write this book to let future generations know how we lived and played. As my friend said, 'If you don't tell them, who will?'"

Although the book is based on David's childhood in Goldenhill, we're sure those who grew up in neighbouring Stoke-on-Trent towns can reminisce in the same way.



## Helping people move on up to a better home and a better future.

Goldenhill remains a much-loved place to live. That's why we're building affordable apartments and family homes on the Goldenhill Working Men's Club site.

Find out more at

[www.staffshousing.org.uk/goldenhill](http://www.staffshousing.org.uk/goldenhill)



**Each two bed apartment is over 62 square metres with:**

- Modern open plan style kitchen/lounge
- Wet room
- Large master bedroom
- Smaller bedroom ideal for guests or dining room
- Parking with electric vehicle charging point
- Juliet balcony overlooking a communal courtyard



# We've extended our popular over 55's scheme Rowan Village.

**Lime Tree Court is our new annex to Rowan Village. Completed in January it has 18 two bed apartments.**

Each apartment has an open plan living, kitchen, dining area, two bedrooms and a wet-room with level access shower.

Customers living at Lime Tree Court will have access to all of the facilities at Rowan Village, and will be able to

get involved with social activities in the same way as our Rowan residents too. One of our residents commented:

*"We're really looking forward to meeting the new residents and can't wait for them to join our groups and social events."*

The extension was built on the former Station Hotel pub and hopes to bring a new lease of life to the site.

Head of New Homes and Growth Marshall Fear says:

*"We know the area like the back of our hand and have put our experience and knowledge to develop more affordable homes for over 55's. We really believe Lime Tree Court is a fantastic addition to the local area, and hope our new residents will be very happy living here."*

## FLOOR PLAN



Find out more at [staffshousing.org.uk/limetreecourt](http://staffshousing.org.uk/limetreecourt)

## Helping your money go a little further.

2020 was a tough year for us all. Our Money Advice team has been working hard to provide benefit updates, budgeting and lots of other advice for tenants worried about money. Team member Mick shares a recent example of a resident who got in touch...

"Jane\* contacted us for help during the first lockdown. She's self-employed and was unable to work because of coronavirus restrictions. Her partner was furloughed too. They have three children to support and were really worried about how they would get by.

We completed a benefit check and helped them to apply for Universal Credit. They were also entitled to a small amount of Council Tax Reduction including a one off payment of £150 from the Council Tax hardship fund and support from the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

We worked with Jane and her partner to reduce their bills through Severn Trent's Big Difference scheme and helped them to get a payment holiday on the bank loan and credit card they were struggling to pay. All of this made things more manageable and reduced the stress of the situation."

If you're worried about money please get in touch. We can help you claim the benefits you're entitled to, create budgets, manage your bills and much more. All of our advice is completely free and available to all of our tenants. Get in touch by visiting [staffshousing.org.uk/your-money](https://staffshousing.org.uk/your-money)

\*name changed to protect identity

# Be. Money savvy.

## Reducing your utility bills.

### Severn Trent Water's Big Difference Scheme.

Severn Trent Water have a scheme offering a water bill discount of up to 90% if you're struggling to pay and on a low income. However, they will share this with credit reference agencies so it may have a negative impact on your credit rating. So double check this is right for you by visiting [bigdiff.co.uk](https://bigdiff.co.uk)

### Warm Home Discount.

You could get a £140 reduction on your electricity bill for winter 2020/21 (apply now as some suppliers have already stopped taking applications for this winter).

Find out more at [gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme](https://gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme)

## Changes to benefits due to Covid-19.

There have been several changes to welfare benefits. Firstly, the government are now providing an extra £20 per week to claimants of Universal Credit and Working Tax Credits.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council have also set aside £3 million to provide an extra £150 to people who receive a Council Tax Reduction.

These are both temporary and due to end in April. If you're eligible you will automatically be enrolled in both schemes.

**Did you know?** Every year there are around £10billion worth of unclaimed benefits. Make sure you're not missing out by visiting [staffshousing.entitledto.co.uk/home/start](https://staffshousing.entitledto.co.uk/home/start)

## If something goes wrong it's important you know how to make a complaint.

It's really important for you to be heard if something isn't right. That's why we have reviewed our complaints process and changed it from three-stages to just two to make it quicker and easier to resolve the issue or complaint.

We made this change after listening to our customer assurances group and customer services committee. Two really important groups that help you share your experiences with us. We have also made sure our new process and procedure fits the Housing Ombudsman good practise guidelines.

Handling your complaints as part of a formal process means we do so fairly, promptly, privately and in line with our complaints policy.

We're human and don't always get everything right, but we want to hear from you if you have an issue or complaint so we can put things right as quickly as possible and learn from our mistakes.

If you'd like to make a complaint or want to understand how the process works, visit [staffhousing.org.uk/complaints](http://staffhousing.org.uk/complaints)



# Be. Safe.

## Making sure you feel safe and well at home.

Now we're spending more time than ever before in our homes, we need to make sure your home is a safe space where you can feel your best.

With this in mind, we've been focusing on our health and safety measures to keep you and your home safe. As always, our routine programmes and inspections continue to take place with our building quality control officers now carrying out scheme visits every three months.

Here's a full list of what we're up to:

### Gas servicing

As usual we will check your gas-fired boiler every 12 months.

### Electrical inspections

We will be carrying out full safety checks on electrical wiring every five years or each time a property is re-let.

### Legionella

This is a virus living in water that has been left standing for a long period of time. We will continue to monitor and report on the safety of water systems, to make sure they are safe to use.

### Fire safety

All our schemes have an up-to-date fire risk assessment. The assessments tell you what safety measures are in place and let you know of any changes.

This year we will be providing residents with their own summary of the

risk assessment - so you know what you can do to help reduce fire risk in your scheme.

Each scheme has a nominated person who is responsible for all recommended safety actions.

If your communal area has emergency lights and smoke alarm systems, they will be tested monthly to make sure they're working correctly.

We're also planning to replace the fire doors in some schemes to ensure they meet the latest standards. We'll be in touch if we need to replace any of your doors.

### Asbestos

Some of our properties have asbestos in them. Where practical, we've removed asbestos in homes, but where we can't, we manage the asbestos in its current situation.

Living with asbestos in your home is fine so long as the material is not disturbed. We carry out regular inspections to check the condition of the asbestos and tell our contractors where it is so they can take the right safety measures when carrying out repairs.

If you have any questions about asbestos and your home - ask to speak to one of our Quality Building Officers who have all been trained in asbestos inspections.

### Other safety checks

This year we'll also be checking the following:

- lifts and chairlifts
- coal fires
- smoke detectors
- carbon monoxide alarms
- smoke extractors
- pressurised hot water cylinders
- fire extinguishers

You can report repairs online any time at [staffhousing.org.uk/repairs](http://staffhousing.org.uk/repairs)



# Affordable homes. FOR SALE

**Looking for a new home? After a huge increase in shared ownership demand last summer, we are excited to announce four new homes at Saxon Gate, Crewe and five homes at a brand new development Cecilly Mills in Cheadle.**

## Saxon Gate.

We have two and three bed homes available to buy from just £75,000 with shared ownership.

For more information and to reserve your dream home for £250 go to [staffshousing.org.uk/saxongate](http://staffshousing.org.uk/saxongate)

## Cecilly Mills.

We have five beautiful homes at our new development in Cheadle coming very soon... Register your interest to find out more at [staffshousing.org.uk/cecillymills](http://staffshousing.org.uk/cecillymills)



↑ Crewe Lyceum is over 100 years old and is based in the heart of the town centre

## Lots of family fun.

Crewe Lyceum theatre hosts fantastic entertainment from dining events, comedians, tribute bands, musicals, pantomimes and drag acts.

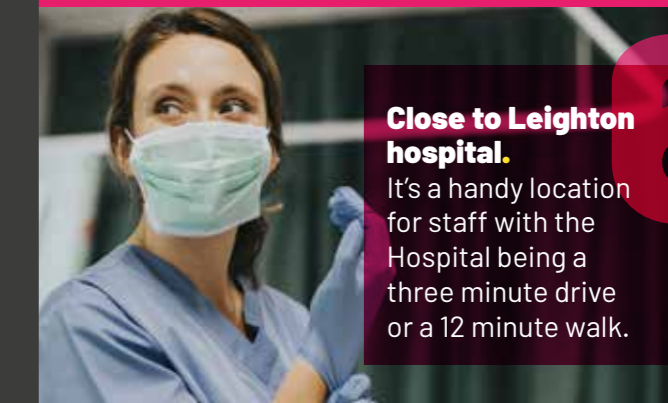
If you love football, you're in luck! Crewe's Alexandra Stadium is just four miles from Saxon Gate.

Phoenix Leisure Park is a short drive away too - home to bowling, bingo, pizza and a cinema.

## Lots of places to eat out.

Crewe has plenty of places to eat and drink, from independent restaurants and coffee houses, to well-loved chains and bars.

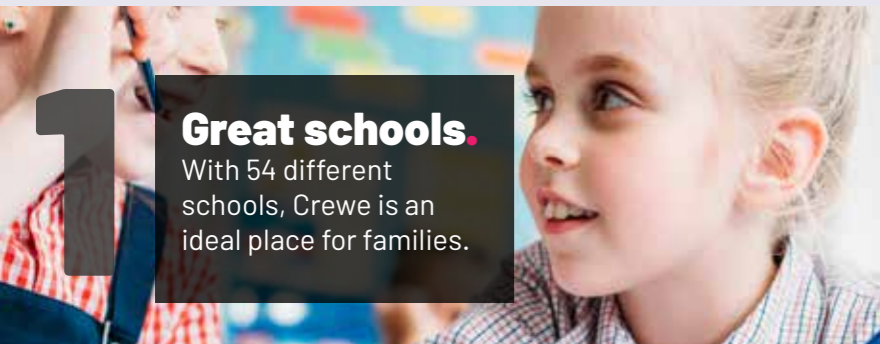
There are over 300 places to eat or drink so you're guaranteed to find somewhere to suit everyone's taste buds.



## Close to Leighton hospital.

It's a handy location for staff with the Hospital being a three minute drive or a 12 minute walk.

## 10 Reasons to move to Saxon Gate.



### 1 Great schools.

With 54 different schools, Crewe is an ideal place for families.

### 2 Great transport links.

Crewe is ideal for those working in the city but wanting to escape the hustle and bustle of city life.

Crewe train station is just a 10 minute drive away, where you'll be able to reach Manchester in 30 minutes, with London a direct 90 minute train ride too.

It's also great for Stoke, Stafford and Birmingham commuters with the M6 a short drive away.

### 3 Some of the finest countryside on your doorstep.

Crewe is surrounded by some of the most beautiful countryside in the UK.

You not only have the stunning Peak District with The Roaches, Dovedale, Chatsworth House and Ladybower Reservoir a short 90 minute drive away, but the beautiful Welsh hills within easy access too.

↓ The Peak District is a short drive from Saxon Gate



## 7 Up and coming area.

Crewe is part of the Northern Powerhouse Initiative which means the government is investing in local transport, business growth and culture. This support will not only help to develop the area, but could add serious profit on to your home if you later decide to sell.

### Your favourite big cities less than an hour away.

If you fancy a day or night away you can easily visit Manchester, Liverpool or Chester either by train or car.

Each city has fantastic restaurants, bars, shopping and attractions.

## 9 Great places to shop.

The Market Shopping Centre, a community hub where more than 100,000 people meet each week to do more than just shop, is a short drive away.

Grand Junction retail park is also nearby with a great selection of high-street shops, restaurants and free parking.

## 10 Great history.

Crewe has a great amount of history from railway to car manufacturing and everything in between.

# Bringing birds and bees back to forgotten spaces.

**We've joined the National Lottery Community Fund project Homes in Bloom, to help transform empty pieces of land into wild-flower areas. The project not only hopes to make spaces look more attractive but increase local wildlife including bees and birds.**

We've been working with the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to clear vacant grassland on scheme car parks and plant wild-flower seeds. Shaun Rimmer, Senior Community Engagement Officer at Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, explains: "These urban areas are really important. We're trying to create more nectar sources for the bees and other insects, which help pollinate our favourite plants, fruits and vegetables. They're also great food sources for other insects, which are then great food for birds and other animals."

The project began last November at our Bishops Court and Moreton House schemes. The wild-flower areas should bloom this June and to celebrate we are hoping to host an event with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. The event will be open to scheme residents and children who would like to find out more about local wildlife, nature and plants. Keep an eye out for more information soon.



Mark Quinn Gardening Team Leader Staffs Housing and Shaun Rimmer Senior Community Engagement Officer Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

## Village craft group gives back to local charities.

**Bradeley Village residents have been turning to arts and crafts to help them get through the pandemic and support local charities. The group have been selling their pieces to raise funds for local charities.**

Resident Joanne has been crocheting blankets for babies at the Royal Stoke Hospital.

Doreen has been making bags, aprons and washable face masks to sell, with funds going to the Douglas Macmillan.

Betty has been painting since she was 19 years old, and has been selling her oil paintings to raise money for the Douglas Macmillan and Air Ambulance.

Sandra, who started to learn pyrography two years ago, has been creating unique remembrance plaques, anniversary and birthday gifts.



## Together with tenants.

We're working with the National Housing Federation on our commitment to the standards you can expect as a tenant of Staffs Housing. Our Customer Involvement Team will be leading on the project. Here's what you can expect from us.

### Keeping you safe in your home.

It's important to feel safe in your home. That's why we're sharing the latest building safety standards and how your home meets these with you. The Property Services Team will be rolling this information out on a scheme by scheme basis.

### Treating all tenants with respect.

Last year, all of our staff members took part in customer service training. We want to make sure we're giving you the best experience and that we're taking on all feedback from our customer scrutiny panel. We hope you've felt the benefit of our customer service training and that you always feel respected.

### Dealing with complaints quickly and fairly.

We've made it easier to make a complaint by reducing the process from three-stages to two and have also introduced a new compensation policy. Find out more on page 10.

### Creating quality homes and neighbourhoods our tenants feel proud to live in.

A quality home in a great neighbourhood has never been as important as it is now. That's why we want to know if COVID19 has changed your needs or priorities. Help us discover what's most important to you now by getting in touch with the Customer Involvement Team.

### Making sure your voice is heard.

We're using our **Honeycomb Group Customer Engagement** Facebook group to get feedback on a range of topics to help us develop our new customer service standards. We'd love to hear from more of you. If you have Facebook make sure you join the group, if not get in touch by calling or emailing the customer involvement team (details below).

We've also created a panel of customers who will attend review meetings and be part of our contractor selection process. Another aim of the Together with Tenants project is to make sure we involve you more in decision making.

#### The next stages of our project include:

- Agreeing our approach with customers and our board
- Engaging staff with the project
- Agreeing and promoting our commitments to the project
- Providing you with regular updates

If you'd like to get involved, contact the customer involvement team on **01782 743854** or **involve@honeycombgroup.org.uk**



## We'd love to know what you think!

Let us know what you thought about our magazine and if you have any suggestions or story ideas for future editions. Get in touch with our Communications Team on:  
[communications@honeycombgroup.org.uk](mailto:communications@honeycombgroup.org.uk)



## Contact us.

**Online** [www.staffshousing.org.uk](http://www.staffshousing.org.uk)

**Email** [hello@staffshousing.org.uk](mailto:hello@staffshousing.org.uk)

**Customer Services** 01782 744533

**Head Office** 308 London Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 5AB

**Hours** 8.30 - 5.30 Monday to Friday

## Let's get social.

 [@staffshousing](https://www.instagram.com/staffshousing)

 [@staffshousing](https://twitter.com/staffshousing)

 [www.facebook.com/staffshousing](https://www.facebook.com/staffshousing)

 [www.youtube.com/staffshousing](https://www.youtube.com/staffshousing)