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magazine

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**Welcome to our customer magazine, Be.**

**There is no doubt that the last 18 months have been tough, but it's clear to me, that despite Covid-19, there are some fantastic things happening within our community.**

This magazine brings together some brilliant examples of our staff and customers living and breathing our values and demonstrating how proud we all are to be part of Staffs Housing.

Despite the pandemic we've been able to make

a difference by supporting people like Emma and Bill.

It's evident that our staff are passionate about putting you at the heart of everything we do. Housing Manager Laura is bringing change to benefit our communities and Housing Officer Nic's passion for the environment, will help the next generation.

We also have an added extra to this edition. Your voice and opinion matter to us and our Customer Voice supplement will explain

how we want to build a stronger relationship with you based on openness, honesty and trust.

The future is now starting to look a little more certain with the roll out of vaccines and Covid-19 restrictions slowly lifting and I hope you all enjoy a summer that is happy, healthy and safe.

**Take care,**

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

**Contact us.**

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

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# A life changing home.

**“ We are really proud to call this bungalow our home**

**EMMA**  
Staffs Housing resident



**Last year we built 10 bungalows on the derelict Swallows Nest pub in Newstead.**

Two of these bungalows were specially designed for families supported by the Donna Louise Trust.

Emma and daughters Violet and Ivy; who has hypoplastic left heart syndrome (or a special heart as Ivy calls it) moved in last April. They had been living in a home that no longer met their needs and after a separation, Emma

was living in her friends spare room with Violet and Ivy.

Each home has a larger bedroom with space for medical equipment and direct access to a wet room. The entrance hall and door ways are also wide enough for wheelchair use, with a level access garden too.



“My friends house only had a bathroom upstairs so we were having to carry Ivy upstairs which was becoming impossible as she grew older. It was also really frustrating for Ivy who couldn't get to her bedroom without having to ask for help. We did try to adapt the house but the hallway was too small for a stair lift and an extension would've taken years to complete”

Emma joined the local council housing list but struggled to find a home that fitted their needs. Four months later the Donna Louise Trust, who have supported Emma and Ivy, got in touch to ask if they would like to view a Staffs Housing home.

**“My first thought was wow these look really good! We loved the idea of the wet room and the three bedrooms were a great size. It had been built really well for a wheelchair user.”**

Now almost 12 months later, Emma, Violet and Ivy have settled into their new place and are proud to call it home.

“My children absolutely love it here. I no longer have to worry about Ivy falling on the stairs or having an accident. It's not only been amazing for her physical health but her mental health too. She can get around wherever she needs to and doesn't have to rely on others. She is completely independent which was so important to me as she grew older.”

## Be scam aware.



**We've had lots of residents get in touch about potential scams either over the phone or online. We want to share quick and simple tips to stop you and your friends and family falling victim to scammers.**

**Never give your personal details.** Your bank will never ask for information like your bank account details or your PIN over the phone.

**Hang up.** If you feel intimidated, or if the caller talks over you without giving you a chance to speak, end the call. You may feel rude hanging up on someone but if they are legitimate they will understand your concerns.

**If you're not sure, call them.** If you're unsure whether the caller is genuine, you can always call them back. Find the number on their website and verify the call.

**Don't be rushed.** Scammers will rush you into making a decision or providing your details. They may even say they have a time limited offer or claim your bank account is at risk if you don't provide the information they need.

**HMRC answer phone messages.** We've had a lot of reports of scam messages claiming to be from HMRC. They would never contact you in this way so please don't give them your financial information.



## Creating memories in the middle of a pandemic.

**Bill and his wife have lived at Rowan Village for over nine years and love being surrounded by a community of people. When the Covid-19 pandemic started Bill was forced to shield and everything changed.**

Bill found it really tough not seeing his family and friends. Luckily he had a

passion which could help: photography.

Bill discovered photography later in life but it soon became a favourite hobby. When the New Homes and Growth Team began work at Lime Tree Court they hoped Bill could capture the site transformation and create a photo montage of the once derelict site.

"The team knew I was a keen photographer and asked if I was interested

in photographing the site progress. Living over the road and loving photography I jumped at the chance."

"Things were a little slow to begin with, but once the demolition of the old site started, that's when things got interesting!"

"Towards the end of the build I took over 350 photos! I was even there when the builders handed over the keys."

It was only when Bill retired, he able to take his love for photography seriously. With a little extra money and a lot of extra time Bill bought a camera and began taking photographs.

"I love photography because it helps me to get out of the house. It's one of the reasons I jumped at the chance to help the team out.

*"Being able to get out of the house once a week, especially during Covid-19, really gave me something to look forward to."*

"Over the years photography has taken me to so many different places like Tatton Park, car shows and even civil war re-enactments. I just love to make memories and document them. My photos have even been featured in newspapers and marketing campaigns too!"

"Before the Covid-19 pandemic, I would put on a slide show of my photographs in the village lounge whenever we'd been on holiday or to anywhere interesting."

"I'll be sharing the Lime Tree Court photographs as a presentation for Staffs Housing later this month and hope to share them with fellow residents very soon too."

## Lime Tree Court.

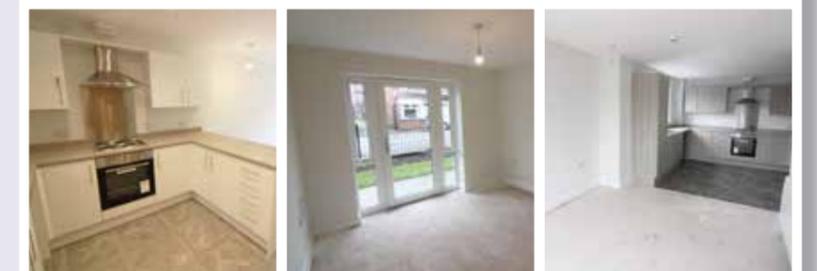


### A HOME BUILT AROUND YOU

We have a small number of apartments available at Lime Tree Court. Perfect for those over 55 years old wanting to remain independent.

The apartments are modern and neutral with an open plan living area, two great sized bedrooms and a wet-room. Outside you can find private parking and lovely maintained gardens.

Lime Tree Court residents have full access to all of the fantastic facilities at Rowan Village. There's a hair salon, cafe, restaurant, gym and shop, plus social activities, day trips and hobby groups too!



### Interested? Contact us!

**Call:** 01782 744533

**Email:** hello@staffshousing.org.uk

**Website:** staffshousing.org.uk/LimeTree





## Meet new Housing Manager Laura.



### A big welcome to Housing Manager Laura who joined us in October 2020.

Laura brings a huge variety of experience and knowledge having worked in community development, specialised homes for over 50s, anti social behaviour teams and lots more.

Laura also brings a passion for making a real difference to residents and is excited

to share our brand new community fund project.

"One of the most important things is providing excellent customer service and this is definitely a priority of mine. I want to make sure that all residents have a great Staffs Housing experience."

"A home is so much more than just bricks and mortar, so I wanted to create a stronger focus on community development

and maximizing support for our most vulnerable residents."

With this in mind, Laura introduced the Staffs Housing community fund project. A £500 fund customers can apply for to support small projects that improve or develop communities.

"The fund was introduced to help develop positive projects within our neighbourhoods. Creating

homes our residents are proud of doesn't stop at the front door. If residents are happy and like where they live, they're more likely to stay and care for their neighbourhood."

"In my last role I was able to introduce a similar community fund and saw first hand the amazing impact it had within the community."

*"We would love to see as many residents as possible involved in projects that help to improve the wellbeing, mental health and the physical health of the people living in our communities."*

"Residents help us grow and develop our services which in turn gives back to them. If you're involved in a community project or have an idea which would bring positive change to your neighbourhood please apply!"

## Want to find out more, or are you ready to apply?

COMPLETE YOUR ONLINE APPLICATION FORM HERE:

[staffshousing.org.uk/fund](http://staffshousing.org.uk/fund)

## Important money updates.



### Reduced price broadband packages

In June BT introduced a reduced price broadband package for customers receiving Universal Credit, Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance. To find out more go to: [www.bit.ly/3gvccX1](http://www.bit.ly/3gvccX1)

### Universal Credit uplift

The £20 Universal Credit uplift, which has been paid for the last year because of Covid-19 will stop in September 2021. The government might extend this payment but make sure to prepare for the reduction.

### Face to face assessments resume

Face to face assessments for Personal Independence Payment, Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit will resume for those unable to work.

### Post Office account cards

In November 2021 the Pension Service, DWP and HMRC will stop making payments into Post Office account cards. Customers will need to provide alternative account details before their card comes to an end.

## For more money advice:

-  **Call: 01782 744533**
-  **Text: 'SUPPORT' to 07520 634032**
-  **Email: [hello@staffshousing.org.uk](mailto:hello@staffshousing.org.uk)**

## Reopening village facilities post lockdown.

**It was heartbreaking closing our much-loved facilities following government guidance, but we're happy to say we're now back open!**

West End Village resident Heather was more than ready to get back in the hairdresser's chair last month.

"I like to be presentable and have my hair done. It helps me feel confident.

***"Not being able to visit the salon had me feeling really low."***

"The carers tried to do it for me, but it wasn't the same as the hairdresser. They always do a fab job. As soon as they reopened, I was one of the first to get an appointment!"



Heather came to West End Village after her husband died suddenly and didn't want to be on her own.

"I knew I wouldn't be able to cope on my own, so I asked my carer to find me somewhere where I'd have lots of people surrounding me. She brought me to visit West End Village and I was really impressed. I love it here and my son doesn't have to worry about me any more."

Lockdown has been tough for Heather.

"I haven't been able to see my son since last March, I've not seen any of my friends either and I've missed them all so much. I wasn't able to get out and do my own shopping either, but thankfully the village staff and carers helped me get everything I needed."

**"I love my home. The village has everything I need. There's always something going on and great people around me."**

## Easy access to health and safety advice.

**You can now access all of our health and safety advice 24/7 via our website.**

We've refreshed our website's health and safety section to make accessing advice and information easier for you.

Head to our website [www.staffshousing.org.uk](http://www.staffshousing.org.uk) and search "health and safety" or use the menu to find the updated section.

You'll be able to find gas, electrical, water and asbestos safety guides to help keep you and your home safe. There's also information about the safety checks we need to carry out on your homes and lots of easy tips to reduce risks.

We have also created a brand new fire safety section where you can watch Health and Safety Officer Phil explain how to reduce the risk of fire. Head over to our website to view!



**Alongside this edition of Be Magazine you will have received our customer voice guide.**

The guide explains our response to the together with tenants campaign and how we are working to improve our openness and accountability through greater customer involvement with you.

**Make sure you take a look and get in touch if you would like to get involved.**

## We're sorry.

During the Spring we experienced phone line issues where we sometimes couldn't hear the caller or were cut off.

**We are really sorry if this happened to you.**

We have now resolved the issue and are making sure it doesn't happen again.





## My garden is my happy sanctuary.

The National Garden Scheme survey showed 92% of people found their gardens and outdoor spaces extremely important for their health and wellbeing during lockdown.

78% also said their outdoor space helped them appreciate nature, which is definitely the case for resident Tracey.

Tracey, who lives with son and dog Lily, transformed her outdoor space to help her through the long lockdowns.

"I'm up at 6am in the week for work, but always start my day sitting in the garden with a cup of coffee. Even when it's raining I'll sit in the kitchen looking out there. Those 15 minutes just enjoying my little sanctuary really make the difference."

Tracey has lived in her home for 10 years after renting her very first home with us over 30 years ago.

We're really proud to call this house our home

**TRACEY**  
Staffs Housing resident

*"My home and garden mean so much to me, especially after planting my Nana's flowers. It's so special when they bloom each year and really make me feel close to her. I love it here and I'm so proud to call it my home."*

Gardening has always played a part in Tracey's life thanks to a family allotment, but she now hopes to share her passion with the children at the nursery she works at.

"I remember visiting my families allotment when I was young and watching our vegetables grow. It's so important to learn where your food comes from."

"I can't wait to share that experience with the children at work and perhaps help them develop a love for nature too."

## TIPS FOR YOUR GARDEN

1

### Add colourful pots

A pop of colour will brighten up even the smallest of spaces.

2

### Grow your own veg

Veg doesn't take up a lot of room and seeds can cost as little as £1.

3

### Just get stuck in

You can't really go too wrong with gardening, if something doesn't grow, there's no need to worry, just try something else.

## WE WANT TO SHARE YOUR STORY!



**We love to meet residents and share your stories!**

If you'd like to get involved contact the Communications Team using the details on the back page.

# Talking rubbish.



WE KNOW IT'S A BIT OF A RUBBISH TOPIC BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP.

**Only 42% of household waste is recycled in the UK. We want to increase this percentage to stop more natural habitats becoming landfill sites.**

Housing Officer Nic is helping residents find out more about recycling.

"Looking after our planet is really important to me. It's home to our children, grandchildren and the next generation. I can't help but feel that we have a responsibility to make sure it's the best place for them to live.

In the last 12 months we've seen the impact of landfill first hand in Newcastle, and the more we can do to reduce what goes in it, the better.

There are so many easy changes you can make that would have the biggest difference. It's as simple as just recycling everything you can and buying items that are better for the environment. I also always have two bags by my back door one for paper and one for plastics and when they're full I take them out.

If everyone made just one change, together we could make the world a better place."

**Take a look at more tips here >>**

## Nic's top tips.

1

### Buy multi-use items

Whether it's bottles or bags there are plenty of re-usable options you can buy. You can now even take your own cup to most coffee shops!

2

### Use energy efficient appliances

I don't mean go out and buy a new washing machine! But when an appliance breaks and you need to buy a new one, look at the energy rating.

3

### Shop around for your utilities

Compare utilities on comparison websites and look at their green ratings too. You can usually find good deals on green electricity suppliers.

4

### Recycle your clothes

When you're done with your unwanted clothes put them on selling apps or websites. It will help you earn a few £'s and reduce waste.

5

### Buy second hand

Fast fashion is really bad for the environment, instead of buying new clothes try buying second hand. There are plenty of bargains to be had.

6

### Go paperless

Most of your post can now be delivered online or by email. To do this log into your online accounts and chose to go paperless.

## Gardening Supervisor Mark celebrates 30 years at Staffs Housing.



## A huge congratulations to Gardening Supervisor Mark who celebrates 30 years at Staffs Housing.

Although a lot has changed over the past 30 years, our commitment to looking after you, your home (and of course your garden!) is still the same.

*"Most of my team weren't born when I started all those years ago. Although a lot has changed over the years, our commitment to our customers is something we'll never lose."*



# LET US 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.

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**Email** [hello@staffshousing.org.uk](mailto:hello@staffshousing.org.uk)  
**Customer Services** 01782 744533  
**Head Office** 308 London Rd, ST4 5AB  
**Hours** 8.30 - 5.30 Monday to Friday

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