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magazine

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Contact us.

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.

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Welcome to Be Mag.

SUMMER 2022 EDITION

Welcome to our summer Be Mag edition.

It has been so lovely to see some of you enjoying the summer weather in our communal gardens and spaces. I have my fingers crossed that the sun decides to stick around and let us catch up on missed BBQ, summer gatherings and holidays this year.

This edition of Be Mag is a little different. It features a health and safety special which answers your frequently asked questions, explains our new projects and also shares an incredibly important five minute health and safety refresh, which

could help save your life.

We also need to share some news about our rent increase with you. We know this might be worrying but we are here to help you. Our Money Advice Team can help you claim support available and offer guidance around budgets, utility bills and lots more.

As usual, we'll be sharing your stories and event information too, including our brand new Big Green Summer Clean project.

I really hope you find this edition an interesting read.

Diane Thompson
Group Chief Executive



CELEBRATING WITH ROYALTY

Volunteer Mal celebrates the Platinum Jubilee with Royal garden party invite.

Last month, volunteer Mal was invited to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee in style with an afternoon tea and Trooping of the Colour invitation.

Mal devotes most of his time to helping other people and supporting his local community. As a retired veteran and after a life-changing event he wanted to give back.

"It was after I'd had my leg amputated that I decided I wanted to help other people and give back" explains Mal. "Almost to say thank you for all the help and support I'd received in my recovery.

"After my operation, I saw an advert for a fully-adapted home at Bradeley Village and I decided to go for it. The Staffs Housing team and Housing Officer Maggie couldn't have done enough for me. She visited me in hospital and supported me through the whole process and helped me settle in."

Mal now spends a lot of his time helping other people, charities and organisations, as well as volunteering here at Staffs Housing.

"I volunteer because they helped me. Since becoming a volunteer I have found a purpose which is using my voice and experience to influence and improve services."

"I was so excited to be invited to the Queen's Jubilee celebration. I feel proud that I'd been nominated for the work I do to support others and my local community."



BRADELEY VILLAGE RESIDENTS



We want to hear from you. Katie and Jo from the Customer Involvement Team will be at the village this summer asking for your thoughts and feelings about the recent communications you've received. We'll share more information with you in the next Bradeley Village newsletter.

Find out more about volunteering opportunities at staffshousing.org.uk/volunteer

ADVANCED NOTICE

Your rent will increase in December 2022.

We need to let you know that when your annual rent review is due in December, we will be increasing your rent by 4.1%.

It's really important to us that we keep our rents as affordable as possible, but we must balance this with the promises we have made to you to maintain your home, keep your properties safe and provide you with essential services and support.

We are a not-for-profit organisation so all of the rent you pay goes back into providing quality homes and maintaining communities.

We increase our costs in line with the Government's rent setting policy to make sure our organisation can

continue to operate now and in the future.

So, what will this mean for you?

As an example, if your rent is £80 per week, it will increase by £3.28 per week to a total of £83.28 per week. If you pay a service charge this will also be reviewed - but the change will depend on the actual costs of the services provided.

We know that it's a difficult time for many of you with increasing energy, fuel and food prices and we are committed to supporting you in every way we can.

If you're struggling to pay your rent, our money advice service can help



Tim Sheail

Director of Housing Services

you access any additional benefits you may be entitled to and offer advice on budgeting, managing your money and reviewing your energy costs.

We'll write to you in November to formally let you know of the increase but in the meantime if you're worried about your bills, managing your money or have any other questions about the rent increase email us:

hello@staffshousing.org.uk

WE'RE HERE FOR YOU

If you're worried about the rising cost of living our expert Money Advice Team is here for you. We can help you claim the right benefits by applying for new support like:

£400 energy bill support scheme

£400 credit will be given to most energy customers to help with the cost of rising energy bills. This will be a grant and won't need to be repaid. It will be spread over six months from October 2022-March 2023. People that pay their energy bills by direct debit should get the money paid directly into their energy account or if you're on a pre-payment metre, you may get vouchers instead.

Autumn disability benefit payment

A £150 payment will be paid to certain people receiving disability benefits. To be eligible you will need to be receiving one of the qualifying benefits or have made the claim before 25 May 2022.

Autumn pensioner cost of living payment

All pensioner households will receive an extra £300 to help them cover with the rising cost of energy this winter.

It will come as a top-up to annual Winter Fuel Payments in November or December.

£650 cost of living payment

For anyone receiving universal credit, income-related employment and support allowance, income support, job seekers allowance, working tax credit, child tax credit or pension credit, the DWP will make two payments of £325 in July and in Autumn.

*This information was accurate at the time of printing.

An update on our repairs service.

We want to say thank you for your patience. We understand our repairs service hasn't been meeting your needs and our usual standards. Due to higher staffing levels we're confident that the service is improving but issues out of our control, like global material shortages and increased costs, are still making it difficult to complete repairs in our usual target times. This is an issue across the housing sector.

Our contractor Ian Williams has now recruited a full team and has made good progress on reducing the number of jobs in the last couple of months. Our customer service team is now fully staffed but demand remains very high with call volumes higher than they have ever been.

We understand it might not always be possible, but we recommend contacting us by email if you can or call after 2pm unless it's an emergency. It's really important that you listen to voicemails from our contractors. They will try and call a few times but if they can't reach you the job will be cancelled.

We will be trialling a new way for you to report repairs later this Summer.

If you would like to suggest ideas or improvements for the repairs service please join our customer panel by emailing:

involve@honeycombgroupp.org.uk

Mary Walker

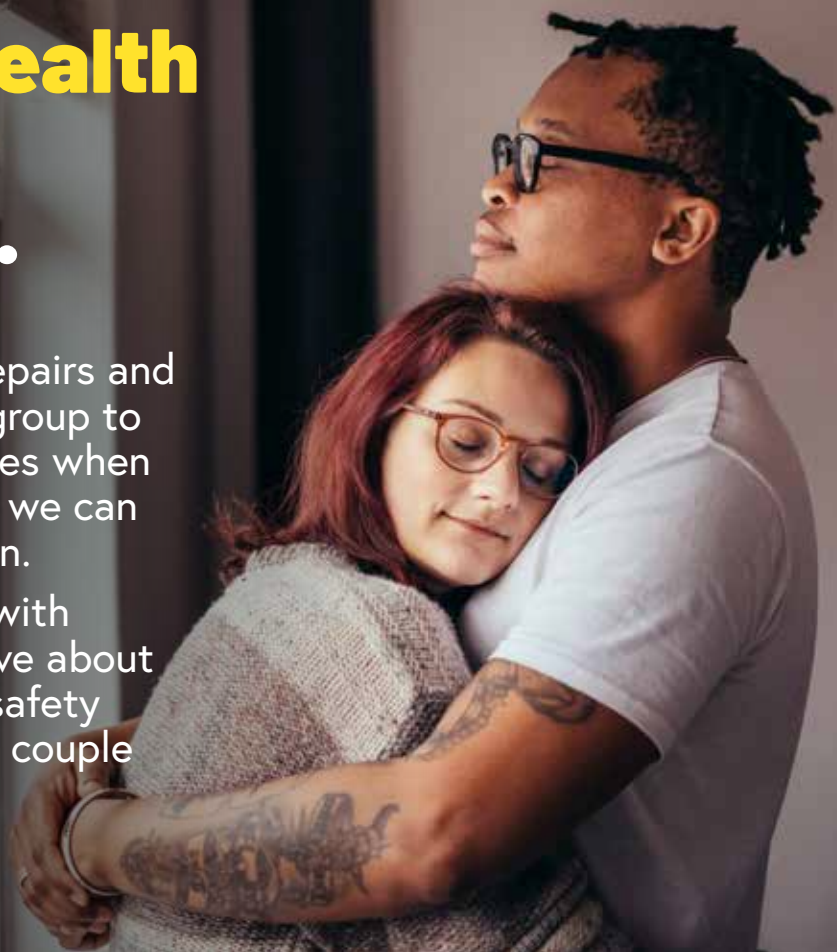
Head of Customer Experience



Important health and safety information.

This year we launched a repairs and building safety customer group to hear about your experiences when using the service and how we can improve our communication.

We had a great response with many of you feeling positive about the increased health and safety measures but you raised a couple of questions...



1. Why do you need to access my home for safety checks?

To make sure you are safe. We also have a responsibility as a housing association to complete health and safety checks within set time periods. In most cases your home will need the following checks:

Emergency lighting checks	Monthly (communal areas only)
Gas inspection	Each year
Electrical safety inspection	Every 5 years
Smoke alarm replacement	Every 10 years
Carbon monoxide replacement	Every 10 years
Fire risk assessment	Annually (for schemes with communal corridors)

We know it can be a bit of a pain making sure you or a family member is home for these checks, but keeping you safe is incredibly important. Our team will always try to arrange a time and day which works for you and really appreciate you being at home to welcome our team or contractors.

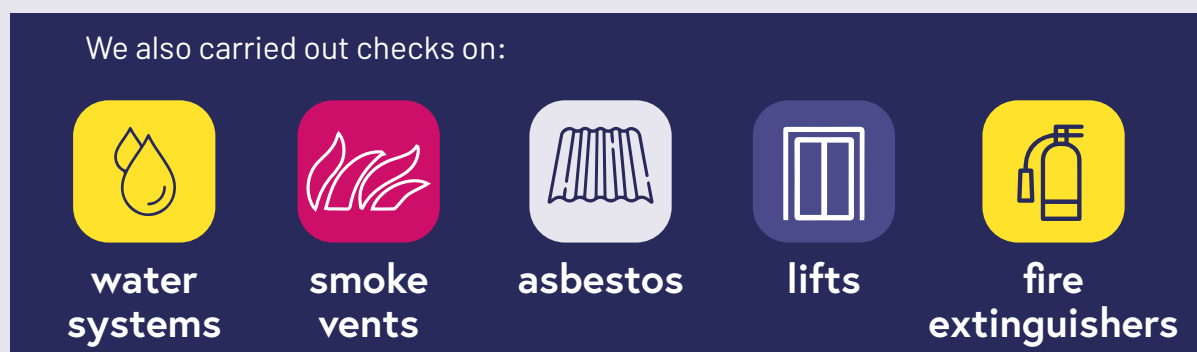
In rare cases, if we can't get in touch with you when an inspection is due we might have to take legal action to gain entry. This is a last resort but it is something we have to do if we believe an overdue safety check is putting residents at risk.

2. How do you get in touch to arrange an inspection or health and safety check?

In most cases we'll send you an email or text message but if your preference is a phone call we'll contact you that way.

3. How much did Staffs Housing spend on health and safety last year?

We spent £463,000 keeping homes safe, here's a breakdown on how it was spent:



To make sure we are managing home safety we also employ a health and safety advisor to review our policies and procedures.

4. How much will you spend this year?

We'll be increasing our budget this year to **£763,000**. To begin our fire door replacement programme. Flat entrance fire doors are essential in apartment buildings to help prevent fire travelling into corridors and neighbouring homes. Our programme will see current doors assessed and updated if needed to the latest standard.

From January 2023 new laws are being introduced for fire doors to be checked more frequently. To manage this and all of the additional requirements we're increasing the size of our health and safety team.

A 5 minute health and safety refresh to keep you and your home safe.

IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE!



Help to minimise the risk of a fire

- Keep cookers and other electrical items well maintained and keep any equipment which gets hot, like the hob or microwave, clear of things that could catch on fire.
- Keep communal areas clear. Smoke from a fire reduces visibility so escape routes must be clear.
- Don't alter or change your front door as it could make it less effective in a fire. It's designed to withstand fire and smoke for 30 minutes. If you're worried about your front door please report any issues to our Customer Services Team.

Using gas appliances safely

- Never cover or block air vents or outside flues they safely remove gas from your home.
- If you smell gas, put out any naked flames or cigarettes, turn off the gas supply, open your doors and windows and leave your home quickly. Calmly tell your neighbours and contact your gas supplier as soon as possible.

Staying safe when using electrical appliances

- The easiest way to stay safe is to make sure plugs, cables and sockets are well-maintained and kept away from water. Damaged electrical items should never be used. It's also important to buy your electrical items from trustworthy companies and follow the guidelines when using them.

Water safety and reducing the risk of legionella

■ Legionella is a bacteria that can develop in warm, stagnant water. It can't survive below 20 and above 60c, and is less likely to multiply when water is moving. There's lots of easy ways to prevent legionella:

1. Run hot taps and showers weekly to prevent warm water staying undisturbed.
2. Remove limescale from your showerheads.
3. Keep hot water temperatures above 50 degrees.
4. Report any failures with hot water systems and any unused pipework, for example if a hot supply to a washing machine is no longer used.

Asbestos in your home

- If left alone asbestos is no risk to you and your family.
- There is only a slight risk if you interfere with or damage materials that contain asbestos (e.g. some floor or roof tiles).
- We have inspected all of our homes where we think there is a risk of asbestos and explained what this means to those living there. We have also made our contractors and maintenance staff aware.



If you are worried about asbestos in your home, or any other health and safety issue, please get in touch.

01782 74455

hello@staffshousing.org.uk

Keeping you and your family safe at home.

Head over to our online health and safety hub to find more information and advice.

staffshousing.org.uk/healthandsafety



BBC3 BRICKIES

Building new homes and futures in Stoke.

Our Goldenhill affordable housing scheme features in BBC3 series Brickies.

The show follows bricklayers from Hodgkinson Builders as they create new homes for communities across Staffordshire and Derbyshire.

The first show featured our latest development at Goldenhill,

with a focus on the apprentices working on the site.

The apprentices share an insight into their lives and how their bricklaying journey is progressing.

It's a great watch and really highlights how building new homes not only creates quality new spaces for our residents, but new career opportunities for young people!



DIY SOS

Giving back to local spaces.

Helping transform derelict land into community spaces.

Did you spot our volunteers on BBC1's DIY SOS last month?

Members of the gardening, communications and business support teams headed over to Fegg Hayes back in February to volunteer at the latest DIY SOS project.

The project transformed a derelict piece of land into a brand new community hub. Recycled shipping containers were converted into workshops and a kitchen to create meeting spaces for local people, support groups and schools.

The surrounding area was landscaped with a miniature woodland, flower beds and wheelchair friendly paths to make sure every member of the community can enjoy the area.

If you're local to Fegg Hayes why not pop by or visit the community group at the church to find out more.





THE BIG GREEN SUMMER CLEAN 2022

Monday 4 July - Friday 8 July

**This summer we're
launching our very own
community clean up week.**

From Monday 4 July - Friday 8 July volunteers, staff and partners will visit schemes around Abbey Hulton to help transform the green spaces and local community by litter picking, gardening and painting.

We'll be visiting Malcolm Court, Felbrook Court, Stirling Close, Bishop Court and Ruxley Court.

If you want to make a difference to your community and can spare some time during the week sign up online today!

staffshousing.org.uk/TheBigGreenSummerClean

The garden competition is back!

1 JULY - 12 AUGUST

Launching on 1 July, our gardening competition returns for its second year. You'll be able to enter by submitting your photo online and sharing what your green space means to you.

For each category, runners up will receive a £25 gardening gift card and winners a £50 gift card.

Take a look at last years entries or enter online at:

staffshousing.org.uk/gardencompetition



Jean Jory



Doris Dunn



Kelly Bryne



David Stewart



Jackie Cooper



Laura Thompson

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



Contact us.

Online staffshousing.org.uk

Email hello@staffshousing.org.uk

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