

**be.**

magazine

NEW  
BEGINNINGS  
THIS NEW  
YEAR

**Meet our new Chief Executive, Julie**

Find out more about Julie and her plans for Staffs Housing.

**Page 3**

**Welcome our new Meir and Cheadle residents**

We welcome new residents from across Staffordshire and beyond.

**Page 8**

**Take a look at our new cost of living support hub**

We have created a brand new hub to support you through the cost of living crisis.

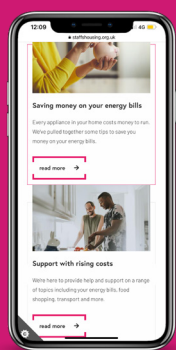
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# Important info.

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## A warm welcome.

Welcoming our new residents in Meir and Cheadle.

## Customer involvement.

Hear about our My Home Group and how you can get involved in the way we manage our services.



## Cost of living support.

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## It's all about you, our residents.

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## Helping you live in a home you're proud of.

## Say hello to new faces.

Meet our new Head of Compliance Kathryn and Housing Officer Katie.



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## Contact us.

[staffshousing.org.uk](http://staffshousing.org.uk)  
Customer Services 01782 744533  
Head Office 308 London Road, Stoke on Trent, ST4 5AB  
Hours 8.30am - 5.30pm Monday to Friday

## Let's get social.

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 youtube.com/staffshousing



# Welcome Julie.

SAY HELLO TO HONEYCOMB GROUP'S NEW  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**Firstly, hello! I've had such a fantastic month getting to know Staffs Housing, learning more about our services, homes, communities and of course, meeting residents.**

I am delighted to be working back in North Staffordshire. As a proud resident of this region, I am keen to do all we can to help the area thrive. I'm excited to continue our mission to provide quality, affordable homes in Staffordshire and the surrounding areas and to break down the barriers that prevent local people finding a place they're proud to call home.

During my first 100 days, my priority is meeting as many customers as possible. Hearing from you first-hand about the challenges you face and the ways that we

can improve our services. I have already received lots of valuable feedback, and I know that many of you have particular concerns about the repairs service. Whilst it's not possible to change things over night, we have shared an important update on page 4 about this service and the steps we're taking as a result of what you have told us.

With the UK economy at an all-time low, I'm also aware that many of you are facing challenges like never before and so we remain committed to delivering and improving services to support you through these tough times and beyond.

I look forward to meeting you or hearing from you soon. Please do complete the survey mentioned on page 5 as I'd really love to understand what is and isn't working for you.

**Julie Guildford Smith**

## Digital-only version coming soon.

Last June we trialled a digital edition of Be Mag which proved to be a success with 1,206 residents reading Be Mag from their phone, tablet or laptop. Digital editions not only save money, which can then be invested in your community, but reduces our environmental impact too.

Before making the change, we also listened to your feedback

from our recent survey and found 66% preferred an email or text link. Only 3% of you would visit our office to pick up a copy.

With this in mind, we'll be moving Be Mag to digital only editions from June. You'll receive a text and email (if we have your mobile and email address) with a link to our website. You'll then be able

to read online or print the magazine from your home printer. You can also read online using our website which is screen reader friendly and has magnifying options too.

We'll still be printing a small number of magazines for those without any internet access. Please visit 308 London Road or your local village to pick up a copy.



# IT'S NOT JUST A HOME,

## IMPORTANT info



### Repairs and maintenance contract with Ian Williams

After careful consideration and listening to our residents we have agreed with Ian Williams that the current repairs contract will end in August. We will be working hard to secure a new contractor to deliver the responsive repairs service and have agreed with Ian Williams that we want to manage this change well and minimise disruption to you. We will update you when we have more information. Our priority is to provide a reliable, trusted service that we know you expect and value.

## Thank you

A huge thank you to residents who got in touch last autumn hoping to improve their communal spaces. We are so grateful for your feedback and passion for your local area.

### Paragon Court carpet clean

Housing Officer, Alex, joined residents for a scheme inspection at Paragon Court. Residents fed back that the communal carpets had become heavily stained so the housing team have had them replaced. We hope our Paragon Court residents are finding the area much brighter.



### Car park improvements at Oakwell Court

After listening to residents' concerns around parking and ASB we installed a gate. This means only residents can now use the car park, so no surprise visitors in your spaces! We also hope this will reduce the ASB but are keeping a close eye on this for now.





# IT'S A COMMUNITY

## Customer services contact times

After consulting with our customer panels, we are proposing a change to our opening hours to 9am – 5pm. We have very few calls or visits to reception outside of these times and it will allow us to have more advisors on duty at peak times. Out of hours emergency repairs will still be reported in the usual way. If you have any comments or thoughts about this change, please email them to [involve@honeycombgroup.org.uk](mailto:involve@honeycombgroup.org.uk) by 17 February 2023 and we'll consider them before making a final decision.

## Tenant satisfaction survey

You may remember in 2022, the housing regulator worked with residents across the country on a new set of satisfaction measures.

Many of you gave feedback and as a result, there will now be new measures introduced in April 2023.

Results will be reported to the regulator each year, based on a sample of our residents.

To understand what you think about our services and to respond to feedback, we will be launching a new survey ahead of the April launch.

**You will soon be receiving a link to this survey via text message or email** if we have your details on file.

If you have any questions please get in touch with the customer engagement team or customer services.



**Katie**  
*Customer Engagement Officer*

## 2023 coffee morning dates announced

We enjoyed meeting lots of you at our coffee mornings last year.

We now have our 2023 calendar ready. Join our housing team, property services and repairs team, as well as our other Staffs Housing teams.

There'll also be plenty of coffee, tea and treats from our catering team. Come along to share your thoughts and feelings or even to just say hello and meet new neighbours.

No need to book, just turn up on the day. We'll be visiting:

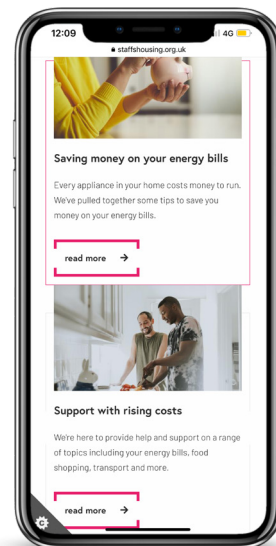
- Rowan Village – 7 Feb
- Brunswick Mill – 18 April
- Uplands Mill – 19 June
- Oakwell Court – 22 August

Find out more and take a look at all of our dates for 2023.

[staffshousing.org.uk/coffeemornings2023](https://staffshousing.org.uk/coffeemornings2023)



# Cost of living support hub.



**We've created a new information hub to support you through the cost of living crisis.**

## **We're here for you**

The most important thing to remember is that we are here for you and will help and support you through any difficult times.

If you're feeling overwhelmed please reach out. We can make sure you're receiving the right support and making the most out of any government funding.

## **If you're struggling to pay your rent**

If you don't think you'll be able to pay your rent please get in touch. We can work together to find a solution.

Falling behind on rent not only builds debt but it also breaks the terms of your tenancy agreement.

There is support out there for gas, electricity, council tax and other bills which can help lower your monthly costs, helping you to keep up with your rent payments. Give the team a call or send a message if you'd like to chat about your rent.

**You can find our hub by visiting [staffshousing.org.uk/SupportHub](https://staffshousing.org.uk/SupportHub)**

**Or you can get in touch with the Money Advice Team on:**

01782 744533 | [hello@staffshousing.org.uk](mailto:hello@staffshousing.org.uk)



**Jez**  
Income Officer



## Money saving checklist

Complete our 10 minute money saving checklist, it could save you £000s!

### ☐ 1. The Warm Home Discount

If eligible, you could have a one-off £140 payment applied to your electricity bill. Available for people on a low-income or pension, this scheme helps people to cover their energy costs over winter.

### ☐ 2. Cold Weather Payment

Depending on what benefits you claim, and if the weather in your area was below zero degrees Celsius for seven consecutive days, you might be eligible for a Cold Weather Payment. There is no need to apply. The payments are made automatically through your benefits.

### ☐ 3. Winter Fuel Payment

If you were born on or before 26 September 1956 you could get between £250 and £300 to help you pay your heating bills. You will get your Winter Fuel Payment automatically (you do not need to claim).

### ☐ 4. Energy provider trust funds

If you've found yourself in debt trying to meet your gas or electric bills, you might be able to apply for a grant to reduce the amount you owe them.

### ☐ 5. Cost of Living Payments 2023-24

The government has announced further Cost of Living Payments that will be made in spring 2023 and 2024. If you're eligible, you'll be paid automatically, in the same way you usually get your benefit or tax credit payments.

You could get up to three different types of payments depending on your circumstances:

1. A Cost of Living Payment of up to £900 could be paid to people on an eligible low-income benefit.
2. A £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment for those who receive a qualifying disability benefit.
3. A Pensioner Cost of Living Payment of up to £300 could be paid to those who are entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment for winter 2022-23, and will be paid alongside your Winter Fuel Payment.

Find out more about the eligibility and T&Cs at:  
[staffshousing.org.uk/SupportHub](https://staffshousing.org.uk/SupportHub)



# IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU,



## 90th birthday surprise for resident Jean

Jean moved to Bradeley Village from Wales several years ago, leaving behind her friend Kevin. Although they managed to stay in touch, Jean had an incredible birthday surprise when Kevin travelled to see her. "I was over the moon. I was very shocked as I hadn't seen Kevin in person for a very long time." What a lovely surprise and a very happy 90th birthday!

## Welcome to our new Meir residents

Last summer we took ownership of 100 homes from Great Places Housing Group.

We look forward to meeting you at the Rowan Village coffee morning.



## Congratulations Drew and Harley!

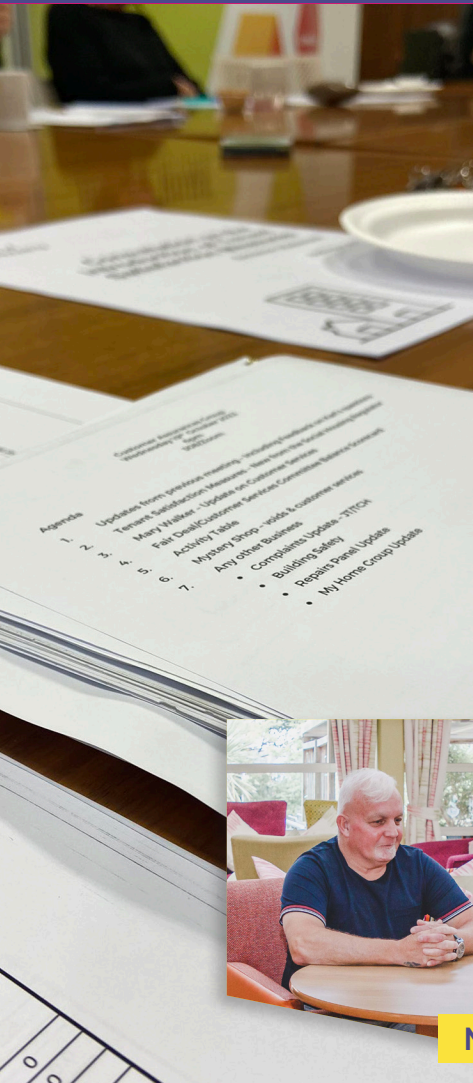
Congratulations to Drew and son Harley who moved into their brand new Cecilly Mills home last autumn.

*"I couldn't believe how nice the homes were, they were built to such a high standard. Our new home will be the fresh start we need."*

Cecilly Mills, built by Bellway, sits just outside of Cheadle in the Staffordshire Moorlands. We have 13 affordable rent homes on the site as well as five shared ownership homes.



# OUR RESIDENTS



## Thank you

A big thank you to residents who have got involved and kept us informed about the things that matter to you through My Home Group.

Karen, a resident, joined the group to become more involved with decision making processes that affect her home. She has since shared her ideas and experiences which have then helped to improve our customer documents and the quality of our homes.

Health and safety officer, Mal felt his experience could benefit the group, as well as being the perfect opportunity to meet new people. Mal has provided feedback on customer documents and says it is "a privilege" to belong to the group.

Resident, Angela joined the group to become more involved and meet new people. She has supported the group with mystery shops, where she views empty homes ready to be let to new customers. Angela then shares her thoughts with our housing team so we can share the positives or correct any problems.

Anne has been involved since 2015. She recently supported the group by sharing her thoughts about proposed changes to our complaints process. Anne met fellow resident Marjorie during a similar scrutiny panel group over seven years ago and they have been close friends ever since.

## We want to hear from you!

Are you passionate about people? Would you like to help make changes and improvements to our services? We're looking for people to join our board members on the customer service's committee.

### How could I become a committee member?

If you...

- have good communication, debating, report reading and problem solving skills,
- can set aside your own personal interests and think about what is best for all residents
- commit to our meetings (around four times a year) and make time to prepare for them
- have an open-mind and a non-judgemental attitude.

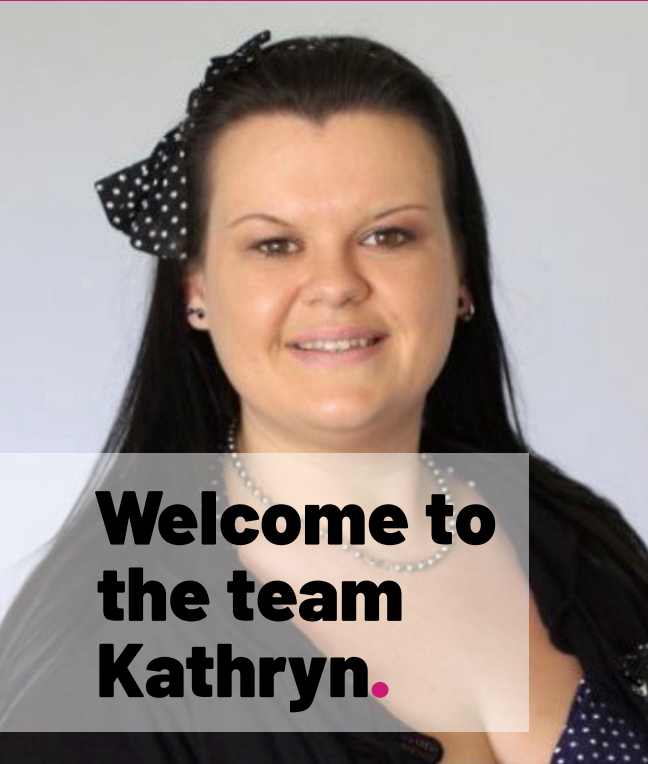
To find out more please call 01782 743854  
or email [Katie.Wakefield@honeycombgrou.org.uk](mailto:Katie.Wakefield@honeycombgrou.org.uk)



**Jean and Helen**  
*Alhambra Court resident and  
Independent Living Officer*



# HELPING YOU LIVE IN A



## Welcome to the team Kathryn.

**We are excited to welcome our new Head of Compliance, Kathryn to the team.**

Kathryn, was born in Stoke-on-Trent but now lives just outside, with her partner and dog Dylan.

She brings a huge wealth of knowledge and experience having worked at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in

Birmingham and other housing organisations.

*"I have felt so welcomed by everyone I have met so far - Staffs Housing really is such a friendly place."*

As you know, we're investing in your health and safety.

Our new compliance team is growing quickly with two Compliance Surveyors joining the team soon.

**Here are our plans for the next couple of months.** 



### Fire risk assessments

This year we continue to complete fire risk assessments across schemes with communal areas. Once the assessment is complete we'll share our findings with you.

We want to make sure all residents understand fire safety and what to do in the event of a fire. If you have any questions about fire safety please get in touch.



### Fire doors

We'll also be inspecting fire doors this year.

There is a change in legislation that means we'll check communal fire doors and front doors depending on the scheme or village you live in.

If you live in a scheme or village that needs the fire doors checking we'll be in touch.



### Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms

Your home should have a smoke detector and will have a carbon monoxide detector if you have a gas boiler installed.

We'll test them when you have a gas safety check. As a minimum it will be every five years. We'll always get in touch to arrange this and you'll just need to let the safety expert in.

It's recommended you check smoke detectors are working once a week. You can find information on how to do this by visiting [staffshousing.org.uk/healthandsafety](http://staffshousing.org.uk/healthandsafety)

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

One of our residents recently had a close call when their extractor fan caught fire.

The fire was started by a large amount of dust which had built up on and inside the extractor fan.

Please make sure you keep your fans clean and free from dust, grease and other build up. It's also worth taking a look from outside as it has been known for birds to build nests in the outside part of the fan.

If you have any worries or concerns about your extractor fans please get in touch.

Call 01782 744533 or email [hello@staffshousing.org.uk](mailto:hello@staffshousing.org.uk)



# HOME YOU'RE PROUD OF



## Welcome new Housing Officer, Katie!

We're transforming the way our Housing Officers support you. Last year our Housing Officers moved from location based to lettings, anti-social behaviour (ASB), shared ownership and neighbourhoods specialisms.

Katie is part of the neighbourhoods team who make sure residents have a home and community they're proud to live in.

They do this by making sure customers are safe, supporting them with tenancy worries, helping to manage their tenancy and provide additional support to those who need it.

If you need to get in touch you can now go direct to the right team. Just use the new contact details below.

## Get in touch with the housing team.



Neighbourhoods  
[@staffshousing.org.uk](mailto:@staffshousing.org.uk)



Lettings  
[@staffshousing.org.uk](mailto:@staffshousing.org.uk)



ASB  
[@staffshousing.org.uk](mailto:@staffshousing.org.uk)



Shared Ownership  
[@staffshousing.org.uk](mailto:@staffshousing.org.uk)

## Supporting you when things go wrong

Housing Officer, Nic, recently supported residents with a difficult, anti-social behaviour (ASB) case.

We were made aware of a resident causing

property damage and intimidating neighbours.

We tried to engage with the resident but they refused to cooperate.

We decided to take out an injunction against

them. This meant that they had to leave their home and will not be able to apply for one of our properties again.

This is something we don't like to do

but making sure our communities remain happy, positive places is our priority.

We thank the residents and neighbours who provided information.



☆☆  
CUSTOMER  
APPROVED



Thank you to all the residents who shared their feedback on this edition and helped to make sure Be Mag works for you.

Have some feedback about the edition or want to be part of the team that review it? Get in touch using the contact details below.



## Contact us.

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

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

**Customer Services** 01782 744533

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