Get Involved
Page 10

Keeping safe in winter
Page 4

Find our Christmas opening times inside
As we reach the end of 2016, we look back on another successful and rewarding year. In July, we placed 26th in 24housing Magazine’s Top 50 Landlords 2016 listing – this puts us in the top 2.5% of Housing Associations in the country!

Our staff told us earlier this year they wanted to give more back to their local community. So in September, we took part in 11 projects across Wellingborough, including decorating, D.I.Y, gardening and social events, all in just one afternoon.

You may have noticed there have been some design changes in this edition of Well Informed. It’s all thanks to the group of you who helped us shape our new branding which was launched in September. You will also find a summary of our new-look Annual Report later on in this issue, and to continue on improving our Value for Money, you can find the full version on our website.

Our Community Involvement Team have also been hard at work to introduce even more panels, groups and training sessions which you can get involved in.

Jo Savage
Wellingborough Homes Chief Executive

Let us know what you think of our new-look Well Informed on Facebook and Twitter.
You could lose some or all of your housing benefit

On 7 November, there was a change to The Benefit Cap.

In 2013, the Government ‘capped’ the amount of welfare benefit each household could receive to £500 per week. From 7 November 2016, the limit decreased to £385 per week. If your total household benefits are over this amount you could lose some or all of your housing benefit.

Get advice

Not sure if this affects you? Our Debt and Benefit Advisor, Dave Small, is here to help. He is at Thompson Court every Tuesday and Thursday from 1pm to 4pm. Alternatively, you can email him at dave.small@whomes.org.

Pay your rent online

Head over to www.wellingboroughhomes.org where you’ll be able to pay rent, report a repair and see your past rent payments via MyWHomes.
Keeping safe in winter

As the days and nights get colder and darker, making sure your home is safe, warm and hygienic is just as important as making sure you and your family stay healthy.

A problem with your heating?
Before it gets too cold, turn on your heating to see if it is working throughout your home and check the batteries in the thermostat. Don’t leave it until the first cold weekend.

Broken extractor fans?
Using your extractor fans in your bathroom and kitchen will help prevent the build-up of condensation and mould.

Worn out windows?
It’s important to make sure your windows are keeping the cold out. We can help if you are having issues with a couple of your windows.

Are you having issues with any of the above problems? Contact our Customer Services Team on 01933 234450.

Keep an eye out for elderly residents or neighbours and support them in the cold weather.

Stamp out condensation and mould

- Don’t block airbricks or air vents
- Open windows in all rooms for at least 10 minutes every day
- Try to keep temperatures between 18 – 21°C whilst you are indoors
- Close internal doors whilst cooking and open the windows
- Use your extractor fan, if you have one
- If not, open windows whilst bathing/showering and leave them open for 20 minutes after
- Put lids on pans when cooking
- Don’t put furniture, including beds, against any outside walls
Training

In the last six months, over 100 customers have accessed the Training Academy. Whether it be confidence building, IT, maths or employability courses, Wellingborough Homes are committed to providing excellent training opportunities for our customers.

We have a variety of courses coming up in the New Year. Why not try one?

So, you want to work in an office?
Start date: 11th January 2017
Duration: 7 weeks
This course will outline the type of work carried out in an office and guide you on using appropriate tone and manner when dealing with customers politely, helpfully and with confidence.

Coping with change
Start date: 17th January 2017
Duration: 7 Weeks
Change occurs when one thing ends and something new or different begins. It usually means moving away from the familiar to the unknown. Have you recently lost a job or a family member? Change can happen in many ways and affect people differently.

Social media and your career
Start date: 13th February 2017
Duration: 1 week
Learn about your ‘digital presence’ and how it affects employability. Learn to use social media sites to your advantage in job searching and networking to get a career.

Increase your income – How to sell online
Start date: 22nd February 2017
Duration: 6 weeks
Could you clear out the garage or make room in your wardrobe for a bit of extra cash? Are you looking for ways to sell things you have made? There’s a wider audience waiting online and we can help you learn to reach it.

You can increase your digital skills from the comfort of your own home using Learn My Way. Go to www.wellingboroughhomes.org/get-involved/increase-your-digital-skills for more information.

It has encouraged me to learn about using computers which I have previously shied away from. Although, I am slow to learn, I now have the confidence to go and buy a laptop.

Interested in joining a course?
Email: contact.cominv@whomes.org
Phone: 01933 231392
Visit us: Thompson Court (next to Morrison’s) every Tuesday & Thursday between 1pm - 4pm
Giving Something Back

Earlier this year, staff at Wellingborough Homes told us they wanted to volunteer and give more to their local community. In response to their feedback, an away day was planned for our staff to do just that.

Our Giving Something Back day, which took place in September, involved staff throughout all departments taking part in 11 projects across Wellingborough and the surrounding areas. Each project was carefully planned out by the team leaders, who were specifically selected for the task. They were in charge of partnering up with local organisations, schools and community centres and deciding what their project would be. Projects varied from decorating, D.I.Y, gardening and social events and were completed successfully in just a few hours. Following the Giving Something Back afternoon, we have launched a legacy to continue our voluntary work with these partners, and staff will be given two days each year to volunteer their skills into the community.

I am extremely proud of what our staff delivered in just under four hours and the impact that this has made across Wellingborough.

Jo Savage, Chief Executive
"I didn't know Wellingborough Homes could be so helpful... I just thought they were landlords who would only get involved with tenants if they were in arrears or not looking after their homes."

Salvation Army

“I have just walked passed the area and it is looking lovely; thankfully we have also had plenty of rain these last few days to help with the watering.”

Sir Christopher Hatton School
Hemmingwell Community Action Day

Our Giving Something Back day wasn’t the only time this year our staff made a difference in the community. In October our staff, residents and other organisations across Wellingborough came together on the streets of Hemmingwell to make it “safer, greener, cleaner”.

There are certain areas within the estate that were identified as an area of concern for residents and in need of some attention. Our Hemmingwell Community Action Day was planned in order for us to tackle those areas to make a cleaner and happier living environment. It was nice to see a few familiar faces from the community spend their free time helping clean the area.

The day was supported by:

- Hemmingwell Residents Association
- Goodwill Solutions CIC
- Norse
- Police
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Neighbourhood Dog Watch
- The Hub (Upcycling Centre)

As well as litter picking, our Estate Services Team and Norse took away and disposed of any large items. In total, there was approximately 6 tonnes of rubbish taken away by Wellingborough Homes and Norse.

The goals of the day were the removal of any large items, litter picking, decreasing the amount of messy gardens and nuisance parking.

What can you do to keep your environment “safer, greener, cleaner”?

Don’t drop litter
Dropping litter is a criminal offence which can result in a fixed penalty or prosecution. Use the street litter bins provided or take it home with you.

Don’t fly tip
Fly tipping is a serious offence, which upon conviction, can result in a maximum fine of £50,000 or a custodial sentence. Dispose of any unwanted items responsibly. You can take most unwanted items to your local household recycling centre.
Tenancy Fraud

Do you know someone who is committing tenancy fraud?

What is tenancy fraud?
It occurs when a housing association or council home is occupied by someone who is either not legally entitled to be there or has obtained use of the property fraudulently.

How does tenancy fraud affect you?
The Government estimates it costs the tax payer up to £18,000 per year to house someone who’s homeless. With so much demand for affordable housing we need to ensure that the people living in our homes are eligible to do so.

We are working hard to stamp out social housing fraud and are actively working to identify anyone who may be committing tenancy fraud in our properties. We will be doing this by utilising credit reference agencies, and carrying out data matching exercises where electronic data is matched within and between public and private sector bodies to prevent and detect fraud.

We need you
If you think you know someone committing this kind of fraud, please call 01933 234450. We will investigate all reports of social housing fraud and where there is a case, we will look to prosecute and recover money made fraudulently as well as recover the property being sublet or obtained fraudulently.

It is now an illegal offence and can carry a jail sentence for social housing tenants subletting their homes without consent.
Get Involved

Our Community Involvement Team are eager to thank all customers who have used their time to be involved in shaping and improving the services we offer. It is an important role to represent other customers and hold Wellingborough Homes accountable to the standards we set together.

This year has seen the start of many new customer panels, groups and associations where you can get involved to help shape the future of Wellingborough Homes. We have had a mix of customers getting involved recently including leaseholders and those in our shared ownership properties.

How can you get involved?

Mystery Shopping

Mystery Shoppers are very important to any organisation. Why? Because your confidential feedback helps identify where there may be a need for improvement. We want to provide excellent customer service to every single one of you and by being a Mystery Shopper you are helping us to achieve this. We will provide training and provide a set questionnaire to help you carry out your task. It’s not time consuming – all you need is a spare hour a week over a short period of time. To say thank you, we will give you some shopping vouchers.

Neighbourhood Champions

Neighbourhood Champions is a scheme where local residents take responsibility for reporting all environmental issues such as flytipping, graffiti and damaged street lights, near their home. They learn which organisation is responsible for which issues and what sort of response to expect. All issues are recorded on a log sheet which is then submitted to us on a monthly basis.

Neighbourhood Services Panel

The Neighbourhood Services Panel looks at the services provided by the Customer Services Team, the Neighbourhood Housing Team and the Estate Services Team. This means monitoring performance against agreed service standards and regulatory requirements. To focus on specific services more in depth, panel members can volunteer to join a subgroup.
Other panels you can join

The **Customer Assembly**’s main role is to ensure that customers are given a wide range of appropriate opportunities to influence and be involved in the service provided by Wellingborough Homes.

Our **Scrutiny Panel** takes a detailed look at specific services provided by Wellingborough Homes. They then present their recommendations and findings to the Executive Team.

Our **Asset and Development Panel** is concerned with day to day repairs, planned maintenance and new housing developments, including major remodelling works.

Other ways you can get involved

**Residents Associations** are a great opportunity for local residents to work together to identify common issues in their area.

Our **Designated Tenant Panel** works with customers who have made a complaint and would like Wellingborough Homes’ response reviewed by a group of trained tenants.

**Wellbeing Together Group** is a social group of people with a common interest in improving services for older customers and customers with support needs.

Furniture items are being donated to the **Up-Cycling Project** located on the Hemmingwell so that they can be refurbished and spruced up, ready to be sold on at a reduced rate to customers needing to furnish their home.

Want to get involved?

You can get more information about any of the customer groups and panels by visiting [www.wellingboroughhomes.org/get-involved/](http://www.wellingboroughhomes.org/get-involved/). Alternatively, you can email contact.cominv@whomes.org or call the Community Involvement Team on 01933 231392.
Women In Property

In recent years, more and more women are being recruited for roles that, in the past, have traditionally been done by men. Industries such as development and maintenance are seeing many more women join them and at Wellingborough Homes, all four of our directors are women.

We talk to two women within Wellingborough Homes who have broken the gender stereotype.

Rabinder Samrai
Head of Development

Responsibilities: Delivering the organisation’s new build growth and planned investment programmes.

How long have you been at WH?
I started as an interim in June 2015 and I became a permanent member of staff from February 2016.

How did you get into development?
I studied for a Public Administration (Economics and Politics in layman’s terms) degree at University so I’m not sure how I fell into housing.

What are your thoughts about ‘women in development’?
Over recent years, we have seen a rise in women working in property. Gone are the days when it was a man’s world. Like any progression, we have more women who are ambitious and striving to reach the top of their game. Also, I think there is an emergence of women who have a genuine interest in all things property and development.

Gemma Hall
Trainee Property Technician

Responsibilities: Carrying out day-to-day inspections in tenants homes and I support the Voids Inspector with inspections and admin work.

Why did you go into maintenance?
I started in Customer Service in Wellingborough Homes but quickly developed an interest in the property side of the business. When I started my secondment in voids, it encouraged my interest further. After that, I was looking for an opportunity to join the team on a permanent basis.

What are your thoughts about ‘women in development’?
It’s encouraging that more and more women are taking on these roles at every level. It gives inspiration for women like me, who are just starting out. It shows there is plenty of opportunity for progression within the development sector, regardless of gender.
Day in the life of Owain

Owain does a lot more than just answer the phones. He’s one of our customer-facing staff at Thompson Court. Here’s a glimpse of a typical day...

8.15am
I arrive at this time every morning. Mornings are usually the busiest time for me.

8.30am
I’m working at our Sheep Street offices this morning taking calls from customers. Phones go live at 8.30 and, on average, Customer Services take 250 to 300 calls each day. This morning alone I raised 26 repair orders, took 18 rent payments, completed two anti-social behaviour logs, advised two people on parking and made our Estate Services Team aware of grass and rubbish issues at three properties.

11am
Within the organisation, there are a series of focus groups and panels which representatives from each department are encouraged to participate in. I am involved in the Value For Money Group. This looks for ways in which we can be more efficient and make cost effective choices in some of the services and processes we have. Every meeting is different and interesting, and being a part of this group means I can get involved in aspects that make a difference to the organisation.

12pm – 1pm
It’s lunch time!

1pm
Anyone who has contacted us in person will be familiar with our customer office, Thompson Court located next to Morrison’s. This afternoon, I am covering the Reception Desk, greeting customers as they arrive. I deal with queries about anything from rent and payments to applications for housing and repair requests.

2pm
As well as working on the reception, I also work in the duty room at Thompson Court. I assist tenants with more detailed or personal queries in a private room. Often, these matters are more sensitive. This is a really challenging part of my job as people can be very upset or angry and I want to help them the best I can. I have had training specifically for this part of my role and have to follow many policies to make sure we’re treating our customers fairly and consistently.

4pm
One of my weekly responsibilities is to carry out a Health and Safety check of the reception and duty area at Thompson Court so I check the fire alarm, doorways and electrical items. This is all recorded in detail.

5pm
It’s home time!
Useful contacts

Wellingborough Council  01933 229 777
Wellingborough Norse  01933 234 520
Citizens Advice  0344 488 9629
Wellingborough Police  0300 011 1222
[TO REPORT A NON URGENT POLICE INCIDENT]  101

Age Concern  01933 229 577
Support Northamptonshire  01933 449 377
Wellingborough Family Support Link  01933 227 078
Wellingborough Mind  01933 223 591
Pest Control  01933 231 960
[Wellingborough Council Environmental Health]

Job Centre Plus  0345 604 3719
Northampton County Council  0300 126 1000
Olympus Care Services  01604 366 000
Transco  0800 111 999

Christmas contacts

Here are our full opening hours over the festive period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friday 23rd December</th>
<th>Saturday 24th December</th>
<th>Sunday 25th December</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offices close at 3pm</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Monday 26th December</th>
<th>Tuesday 27th December</th>
<th>Wednesday 28th December</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closed all day</td>
<td>Closed all day</td>
<td>Normal office hours</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Thursday 29th December</th>
<th>Friday 30th December</th>
<th>Saturday 31st December</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal office hours</td>
<td>Offices close at 3pm</td>
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<tr>
<th>Sunday 1st January</th>
<th>Monday 2nd January</th>
<th>Tuesday 3rd January</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closed all day</td>
<td>Closed all day</td>
<td>Normal office hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can’t reach us over Christmas?

Call our Out Of Hours service on 01933 234450 and they will arrange call outs for emergencies. Any routine repairs or things not classed as an emergency will be dealt with once we return to the office.

Rent payments can be made via Pay Points in local shops and via our website. Other issues relating to tenancy matters or antisocial behaviour can be reported via our website and will be dealt with once the office is open.
Wellingborough Homes will work successfully with its customers and communities to provide great services and high-quality living environments.

Wellingborough Homes
Thompson Court,
9F Silver Street,
Wellingborough,
Northants, NN8 1BQ

Call: 01933 234450
Email: customer.services@whomes.org

www.wellingboroughhomes.org

Wellingborough Homes is the trading name of Wellingborough Homes Limited. Registered office: 12 Sheep Street, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN8 1BL.
Benefits are changing
We are here to help you understand them

Call us 01933 234450

Email us customer.services@whomes.org