

# Together we can



In September, we celebrated the launch of WFHA's first-ever video film, *Together we can*.

Our six-minute video is a moving and inspiring tribute to the work and values of WFHA, through eyes of tenants, support service users and the range of people who make our organisation work.

The film has been made for us by Artwell, who successfully captured the importance of WFHA as a small housing association, strongly rooted in our local community. It is subtitled for people who have hearing difficulties.

Among several tenants who appear in the film, Steven Gander explains how life-changing it has been to get a permanent home with WFHA. After a long period in uncertain housing, he now has somewhere safe to call 'home' – a place to invite his grandchildren.

Our staff, Board and Chief Executive share their commitment to housing local people and our WFHA values.



**Pictured on this page:** Staff, Board members and tenants at the launch of the film and (above) stills from the video.

You can view the film on our website.

**Seasons greetings from WFHA**



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# Our purpose, vision and values

**Our social purpose** is to provide housing and support services for vulnerable people.

**Our vision:** WFHA is working to deliver a future where everyone, in every community we serve, has a safe, truly affordable home and great life chances, in a society where they are valued and respected.



**we RESPECT**

People and communities through our belief in equality, inclusion and the value of diversity. We believe we have more in common than things that separate us.



**we EMPOWER**

People and communities by maximising strengths and opportunities and building resilience.



**we are AMBITIOUS**

Constantly improving, delivering better value for money and striving to provide more homes and services.



**we CARE**

About what we do, step up to take responsibility and are passionate about our social purpose and making a positive difference.



**we are HONEST**

Act with integrity and are accountable to our tenants, our partners and each other.

**REACH.** Oxford Dictionary definition: *(verb)* 1. Stretch out so as to touch or grasp something. 2. Be able to touch something. 3. Arrive at or get as far as. 4. Achieve or come to a particular point or state. 5. Make contact with. *(noun)* 1. The distance to which someone can stretch to touch something. 2. The extent to which someone or something has power, influence or the ability to do something.

## Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

from Duncan (Board Chair) and Shahron (our Chief Executive)





**Put your tenancy first this Christmas**

# Building a stronger Tenant Scrutiny Panel

To give the Tenant Scrutiny Panel a stronger role in our work, we have introduced a new independent Chair, Carol Saunders, who is a housing communications specialist.

We have also moved the Panel away from the Operations department. In future, it will be more directly linked to the work of our Board instead.

Housing providers have consulted tenants for many years – but scrutiny is different. Done well, it gives tenants the power to really challenge their landlords to improve their services.

A confident Panel can develop the skills to become completely tenant-led, with a tenant Chair and their own agenda.

Our existing Panel is a bit short on numbers and would like to represent more tenants. At their latest meeting, in mid-November, they agreed:

- to try different ways to get new people involved – with a leaflet and scheme visits, and
- to introduce a £20 payment for every meeting attended – to show how much we value your time.

The Panel also suggested ways we could improve our communications with you. Their ideas will feed into a future communications strategy in the months ahead.

If you would like to apply to join the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, please contact the office.



Jackie, Stephen, Sue, Pam and Quam are keen to put the Tenant Scrutiny Panel right at the heart of our work. They would love you to join them.

Longstanding Panel member, Jackie Ginger asks: “Do you feel there are things your Association could do better and want to get involved?”

Fellow Panel member, Stephen Dudmish says: “You really can make a difference.”

Contact the office if you would like more details.



## Christmas fire safety advice

Don't let Christmas end in tragedy, remember these safety tips.

- Fairy lights**
- Check your lights have a CE or BS safety rating on the box.
  - If bulbs blow, replace them.
  - Don't leave fairy lights on when you are out or asleep.
  - Don't let the bulbs touch anything that can burn easily.
  - Don't overload sockets.

- Decorations**
- Decorations made of light tissue paper or cardboard burn easily.
- Don't attach them to lights or heaters.
  - Don't put them immediately above or around a fireplace.
  - Keep them away from candles.

- Christmas trees**
- Stand the base of your tree in water, so that it doesn't dry out too quickly – a dry tree is a fire hazard.
  - Keep your tree away from heat sources.

- Candles**
- Candles are a common source of fires, so take extra special care.
- Put out naked flames before going out of the room or to bed.
  - Sit candles in heat-resistant holders, on a stable surface.
  - Keep them away from anything that could catch fire.
  - Be aware that when tea lights get hot, they can melt through surfaces like a TV or bath.
  - Keep naked flames away from children and pets.



## Tenant survey results:

# Your feedback

A year ago, we arranged for a company called Acuity to carry out a tenant satisfaction survey for us. These surveys allow us to track your feedback, every three years. The results below came from 124 people.

**84%**

Satisfied with our overall services (nearly half said things had got better over the past 18 months)



**80%**

Satisfied with the quality of their home



**81%**

Satisfied with the value of money they get for their rent



**74%**

Satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service (but 85% were satisfied with their last repair)



**62%**

Satisfied that we listen to your views and act on them



**91%**

Satisfied that we keep you informed about things that affect you



## Sheltered housing

Our sheltered housing tenants told us:

- 82% are happy with how often they see their Independent Living Officer
- 87% like their scheme facilities, and
- 92% are happy with their community alarm system.

## What happens next: our plans

We are now:

- looking closely at your answers
- drawing up an action plan for improvements
- ready to involve the Tenant Scrutiny Panel in the fine detail to make sure we really do make the most of understanding your feedback.

# Tips to stay warm at home



## Make the most of your controls

Keep each room to the right temperature by adjusting your radiator thermostats. Use your timer to switch off when you don't need heat. Save on your bills by turning your heating down slightly and keeping track with your smart meter, if you have one.



## Bleed your radiators

When radiators have trapped air, they stop working properly.

If your radiators are not heating evenly and up to the top, you need to 'bleed' the air out.

You will need a radiator bleed key (about £1 in any DIY shop) to open the little valve at the top and something to catch any water in.

As you turn the key, you will hear the hiss of air. As soon as you see a drip of water, close it up again.

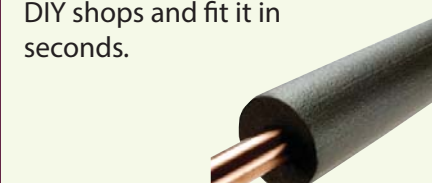
## Use heat from your oven

You've cooked the dinner, but the oven is still warm. Make the most of the heat and leave the door open while it cools. Be very careful that children don't go near the door.

## Lag your copper pipes

Putting foam tubes over your hot water pipes keeps the water inside hotter for longer. This makes your heating and hot water more efficient.

You can buy pipe lagging from DIY shops and fit it in seconds.



## Give us access to service your boiler

Your annual gas service is essential for keeping your boiler safe and working well.

Make sure you give our Gas Safe contractor access when we send your appointment.



## Keep your curtains shut to keep the heat in

Your windows are a big source of heat loss. If you have curtains or blinds, close them before it gets dark, or when you are out, to keep the heat in.

Thick, lined curtains or blinds work best.



## Draught-proof your home

Go round your home and fill gaps wherever there are draughts. Use rolls of insulating tape from a DIY shop to fill in the gaps around windows and doors. Or you could get polythene sheeting (or a ready-made kit) to make DIY secondary glazing.

Ordinary draught-excluders work well in front of doors too. They are easy enough to make. Buy some material off-cuts, sew a simple sausage shape and stuff with old tights or socks.



## Don't forget to look after yourself

If you are older and less active, the best advice is to wear more layers, eat well to keep up your energy levels and drink warm drinks. You should also move around as often as you can.

If you're younger, don't forget that putting on an extra jumper is cheaper than turning up your central heating.

## Homes fit for human habitation: access to law

The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act, introduced in March 2019, offers tenants greater access to law in compelling landlords to make sure their homes are fit to be lived in. This includes communal areas and shared facilities.

This law is designed to catch rogue landlords in the private sector who are not already regulated in the same way as housing associations.

Tenants who signed tenancy agreements before 20 March 2019 will not be able to use the Act in this

way until 20 March 2020. New tenants from 20 March 2019 will be able to use the Act straight away.

We would encourage you to contact us first if you wanted to pursue any concerns. (See details on the back page of this newsletter.)



# Climate crisis: Things you can do

With flooding in the north of England and fires raging out of control in the forests of Bolivia and Australia, climate change is now constantly in the headlines.

**Don't forget that any small changes you make for the environment can also be good for your health, as well as your bank balance.**



## Think twice before travelling

- Flying is a major producer of CO2. We should all fly less.
- Cars are big polluters. If you have one, use public transport more and save on petrol.
- If journeys are very short, better still, keep fit and save on fares by walking or cycling.



## Cut down on plastics

Plastics choke our rivers and oceans, and items for 'recycling' often end up unprocessed in poorer countries. Reducing your plastic footprint can also save you money.

- Avoid plastic straws – they are banned from next year.
- Reuse shopping bags (to save on bag charges) and take your own cloth bags for loose bakery and fresh items.
- Buy loose items if you can.
- Buy soap powder in boxes – this is usually cheaper than laundry liquid in bottles.
- Buy milk and juice in cartons or glass bottles.
- Reuse containers.
- Take your own bottle or mug for takeaway drinks – you may get a discount.
- Ask for tap water when eating out, instead of paying for bottled water.
- Buy fewer cleaning products. You don't need them with an ecloth or microfibre cloth.
- Use a wet flannel instead of wet wipes – most contain plastics.

## Buy less stuff and recycle more

- Always ask "Do I need it?", "Can I afford it?" and "Will I use it?" before buying anything.
- Buy, sell or swap items on ebay – or one of the popular local Facebook groups.
- Give or receive free items as a member of Waltham Forest Freecycle and meet interesting people living in the area. Go to [www.ilovefreecycle.org/explore/WalthamForestFreecycle](http://www.ilovefreecycle.org/explore/WalthamForestFreecycle) to get started.



# Students gain experience in our teams

In October, we welcomed three young people from Leyton 6th Form College, who are joining us for work experience.

The trio will spend one day a week with our teams for a total of 46 weeks, gaining skills and experience of working life.

**Aaron Bachu** is studying for a BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in IT. He is working alongside our Governance Manager, Linda Wright, around IT and communications.

**Daniel Iyare** and **Hana Qureshi** are both studying for a BTEC Level 3 in Business.

Daniel is working with our Operations Manager, Nicky Anderson, while Hana is gaining experience working with our Asset Services Manager, Sally Rowe.



Pictured left to right: Aaron Bachu, Daniel Iyare and Hana Qureshi.



## Investors in People award

**We are proud to announce that we have been awarded Investors in People accreditation for our best practice approach to managing and developing our staff.**

As well as wanting to be good employers, we also recognise that well-managed staff do a better job for our tenants.

After hard work preparing for our assessment, we were pleased when our assessor reported back: *"Your approach and commitment to high standards of people management has helped create an environment where staff feel valued, where talent is recognised and developed and people can thrive. It is an impressive achievement and something to be very proud of."*

The report included recommendations that we have used to create an action plan. The plan will go to the Board in March 2020.

## Gas checks and servicing

We carry out annual gas checks to make sure the appliances in your home are running efficiently and safely.

Please make sure you are in for our contractor's appointment. A wasted journey costs time and money, and we may have to pass on the cost to you.





# Universal Credit tips for couples

Universal Credit has now replaced six working age benefits. If you are of working age, any new or updated claim you make is for Universal Credit.

Existing claimants are being moved to Universal Credit between now and 2023.

Here are three tips for couples:

1. You each have to make an online claim – so you both need your own email address.
2. Once you have each made a claim, you need to link your claims together.
3. You will get one payment for your household – so you need to decide which bank account you will use.

Remember that you are both responsible for:

- providing the right information
- updating your claim if your circumstances change, and
- meeting the conditions of your claim.

## How your Universal Credit is paid

You will get one payment for your household and it is up to you to pay your rent.



You will wait for approximately six weeks before payments start and the benefit is paid in arrears.

You may be able to get an advance before your first payment, but you will have to be able to prove you can pay it back within 12 months.

We strongly recommend getting ahead with your rent now, with small extra payments, so that you are ready for the change.


Contact us for more information.




## Waltham Forest Housing Association

Energy Centre, 31 Church Hill  
Walthamstow, London E17 3RU  
Phone: 020 8524 6987  
(Answerphone when office is closed)

Email: [info@wfha.org.uk](mailto:info@wfha.org.uk)

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

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

## Office opening hours

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday:  
9am to 5pm

Wednesday: 12 noon to 5pm

## Report a repair during office hours

Non-gas repairs, call 020 8524 6987  
or email [repairs@wfha.org.uk](mailto:repairs@wfha.org.uk)

Gas repairs, call Purdy Contracts on  
01992 703410, choose option 7.

## Report an emergency repair outside office hours

Non-gas repairs, call 020 8524 2822

Gas emergencies, call 01992 703412

## Christmas office closing dates



Over the Christmas period, our  
offices will close from 12.30pm on  
Tuesday 24 December 2019.

We will re-open at 9am on  
Thursday 2 January 2020.

When our office is closed, please  
report any emergency repairs  
using our normal out-of-hours  
phone numbers.