

# OUR VOICE

ENCIRCLE HOUSING NEWSLETTER

Encircle  
HOUSING

SPRING ISSUE 2023

## Welcome

We know that times are challenging with the cost of living, and energy prices increasing. Our team are ensuring that we are benefiting from the best utility tariffs and smart metering. We remain committed to providing all our tenants with value for money, and quality services, and we do not make a profit from the money we collect for our tenant's rent or utility bills. The team are always here to help answer any tenant's questions, and support with their queries.

Over the last few months, we were delighted to welcome new tenants into their homes in the West Midlands, Herefordshire, Cumbria, and Lancashire. The Regional Housing Managers have been visiting everyone and they are settling in well.

We help our tenants in many ways. Housing Income Officer, Caroline Field shares how she has been helping our tenants to claim their rent entitlement and maintain their tenancy, see pages 4-5.

Works from the Fire Risk Assessment Plan have now been completed. Our Repairs and Maintenance Team have got some fire safety advice to help keep tenants safe in their homes, see pages 6-7.

We have also produced some information for tenants on damp and mould. It explains the different types of mould that can be found in properties, what our responsibilities are, and how tenants can get involved to help stop mould. For more information visit the tenant information section on our website.

Plans for getting our tenant's involved are moving forward. Later this year tenants will be involved in producing our first Tenant Involvement Strategy.

Finally, as the weather starts to warm up, we are planning our next Making A Difference events across the country. I look forward to seeing some of you at one of the events.

Peter Aviston  
Managing Director

**Get involved and tell us what you think about the term tenants. Win £50 voucher in a free prize draw.**



**INSIDE:** MEET OUR INCOME OFFICER • FIRE SAFETY TIPS  
• DAMP AND MOULD LEAFLET

# TENANT INVOLVEMENT



## PEOPLE'S STORIES

Over the last 12 months we have been gathering stories to show how our tenants are choosing to live their life and the benefits of supported housing. Thank you to everyone who has been involved. You can meet some of our tenants on the next page.

## TENANT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

Over the next few months, we will be getting in touch with everyone who registered their interest. We would like to work together with our tenants to produce our Tenant Involvement Strategy.

## GET IN TOUCH

If you have any questions or would like to take part, please get in touch with your Regional Housing Manager.



## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

### What term should we use to describe all the people who we house?

We often use the term tenants to describe all the people who we house. We want to know what you think about this term.

The form enclosed with this newsletter gives you some suggestions for a description of the term. You can choose one of the suggestions, or tell us another term you would like us to use.

Please tell us your answer by Wednesday 31 May 2023. All completed responses will be entered into a free prize draw to win a £50 voucher for a shop of your choice. The winner will be chosen at random by Monday 12 June 2023.



## KATIE, VALERIE AND MICHAEL'S STORY

Katie, Valerie and Michael share their home with their friends in Middlesbrough supported by 1st Enable.

Some of the walls had become tired looking with marks from everyday wear. Together they decided to pay for a decorator to make their home more homely with some colour in the shared rooms.



# MEET OUR TENANTS



## MEET STEPHEN FROM CHESHIRE

Stephen lives in a lovely flat situated in a large, detached house set in open countryside supported by 1st Enable.

"I love my flat, and it has everything I want in it. Every morning I make my breakfast, and open the window in the lounge, it's got a lovely view.

Living here, I've got more freedom and enjoy socialising with friends in the other flats downstairs. There are many things that keep me busy. Walking, going for a coffee at the shop down the road, cooking, doing chores, going out and music. I think I'd like a voluntary job again; I might ask if there are any at the coffee shop."



## MEET TONY, JOHN, BETH, AND JUSTIN FROM DEVON

Tony, John, Beth, and Justin share their home with eight other friends, supported by Carmel Care.

### TONY'S STORY

Tony is enjoying life! "I go out for breakfast with my housemate Steve; we're good friends. I like living here. I do all my chores, clean my room, do the washing, and help with the cooking. The staff here are good too. Every week I do volunteering at the Children in Need charity shop," said Tony.

## JOHN, BETH AND JUSTIN'S STORY

Housemates John, Beth, Justin have known each other for over 50 years. They first met at school, and years later they began living together with others. In 2018, the registered care home they are living in changed to supported living. Now they have more choice in their everyday life.



## HOUSING



## The life of our Income Officer, **Caroline Field**

Moving into supported housing includes being responsible for paying your rent and bills. We caught up with Caroline who explains what her job involves.

### WHAT DO YOU LIKE THE BEST?

I enjoy helping people. Every day is different in my role. It's all about helping our tenants with their financial responsibilities and working with other people who are supporting or acting on behalf of them.

### HELPING PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND

Dealing with benefit claims and the process can be confusing. I provide help, advice and guidance in so many ways. It starts when a person becomes a tenant and then it continues throughout their tenancy.

### WHO ARE YOU IN CONTACT WITH ABOUT A TENANT'S RENT OR BILL?

Sometimes several people can be involved in just one claim, bill or query. I liaise with tenants and their family members, care providers, appointees, advocates, social workers, and Housing Benefit teams, other professionals and service providers. Often, it's talking on the phone, other times emailing or face to face.





## HOW DO YOU SUPPORT TENANTS TO CLAIM THEIR HOUSING BENEFIT ENTITLEMENT?

Most of our tenants are entitled to claim Housing Benefit. We act on behalf of a tenant to apply for Housing Benefit and work with the Housing Managers, the tenant and their support team to provide the documentation required to submit the claim. If there are any queries, I will deal with them and liaise with everyone involved.

I am part of the team supporting tenants to appeal against a Housing Benefit decision not to pay their entitlement.

If a person moves out of an Encircle Housing property, our team contacts the Housing Benefit team, so they stop paying rent for them at that property.

## HOW DO YOU SUPPORT TENANTS TO KEEP THE COSTS OF UTILITIES DOWN?

We have tried our best to keep tenants on the lowest possible tariff by changing energy supplier. We only charge tenants what they need to pay, Encircle Housing do not make any profit from utilities.

## WHAT PAYMENT METHODS DO TENANTS USE TO THEIR RENT AND BILLS?

There are 3 ways our tenants can pay their rent and bills; by Direct Debt, Standing Order or cash paying in slips, I often help them to set up their preferred method of payment.

## DO YOU GIVE ADVICE ON BUDGETING AND REPAYMENT PLAN?

Tenants sometimes need advice on budgeting or a repayment plan. I spend time going through this with them, we talk about what are the priority bills that need to be paid first to maintain their tenancy.

## HOW DOES EVERYTHING GET RECORDED AND MONITORED?

Much of my time is spent in this area. We receive payment of rent and bills which are then recorded in the relevant tenant account on our computer system. We use a tracker to monitor the claims we are dealing with.

Dealing with benefit claims and the process can be confusing. I provide help, advice and guidance in so many ways.

**We're here to help!** Caroline and her team offer help and guidance dealing with rent and bills.

If you have any queries call 0330 390 0517 or email [contactus@encircleha.co.uk](mailto:contactus@encircleha.co.uk)

# REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE



Round up from Mark Felton,  
Head of Assets at  
Encircle Housing

"We warmly welcome Clare Hurd, our new Repairs and Service Charge Coordinator to our team. Clare joined us in March and has been getting to know some of our tenants within her role."



We are continually improving our Repairs and Maintenance service and its delivery. We are currently creating some repairs and maintenance leaflets that also gives tenants some helpful advice and tips. Our latest leaflets on how to report a repair, damp and mould and fire safety can be found in the tenants' information page on our website."

## Meet Clare Hurd, Repairs and Service Charge Coordinator

"I'm very excited to be working alongside such dedicated and talented people to deliver the services to our tenants and help to meet their needs. It's great to know that I'm making a difference."

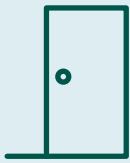


# FIRE SAFETY

## TIPS AND ADVICE

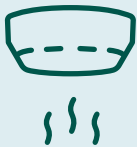


Below are a few of fire safety tips. For more information read our Fire Safety leaflet on our website.



### FIRE DOORS

Fire doors are fire resistant for up to 30 minutes and they should always remain closed. They are designed to hold flames back and restricting the spread of the fire and toxic smoke into escape routes, corridors and other areas in your home.



### FIRE ALARMS

A fire can start anywhere in your home. A smoke alarm is vital for the early detection of a fire and are there to help protect you. We have fitted alarms in different rooms in your home and we check them every year.



### FIRE ESCAPE ROUTES

It is important to have a fire escape plan in case there is a fire in your home.

#### Plan your fire escape route

- Make an escape plan and practise it regularly to make sure everyone knows how to get out safely.
- The best route is the normal way in and out of your home.
- Plan a second route in case the first one is blocked.
- Never store anything in communal areas including balconies. Items can block your escape route and be a fire risk.
- Always keep door and window keys where everyone you live with can find them.

### FIRE SAFETY IN 2022/23

**100%**

FIRE RISK  
ASSESSMENTS  
CARRIED OUT AT  
OUR PROPERTIES

**97%**

OF FOLLOW UP WORK  
FROM THE FIRE RISK  
ASSESSMENT WAS  
COMPLETED



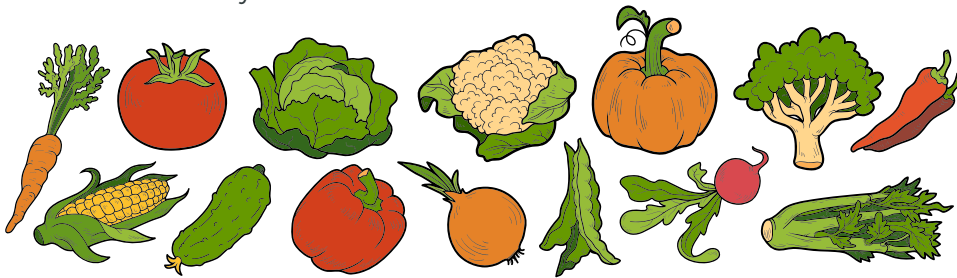
# GARDENING TIPS

The weather is starting to get warmer. Soon everyone will be heading back into their gardens or finding ways to brightening up their outside area. We have got some advice and tips for you on our website, go to [www.encircleha.co.uk/tenant-information/](http://www.encircleha.co.uk/tenant-information/)



## WORDSEARCH

There are 14 different foods in the word search.  
Can you find them?



U	P	E	P	P	E	R	B
C	U	C	U	M	B	E	R
A	M	E	O	Z	E	T	O
U	P	L	R	R	A	O	C
L	K	E	F	X	N	M	C
I	I	R	C	I	Q	A	O
F	N	Y	O	W	B	T	L
L	K	N	Z	B	H	O	I
O	J	C	A	R	R	O	T
W	U	G	T	O	Z	U	Q
E	E	C	H	I	L	L	I
R	A	D	I	S	H	W	A

Encircle  
HOUSING

## CONTACT US

For more information about  
Encircle Housing:

Call: 0330 390 0517

Email: [contactus@encircleha.co.uk](mailto:contactus@encircleha.co.uk)

To report a repair call: 0330 094 0142

Email: [repairs@encircleha.co.uk](mailto:repairs@encircleha.co.uk)

2 High Street House, High Street,  
Yeadon, Leeds, LS19 7PP

Encircle Housing. Registered Provider of Social  
Housing Number 4784 and Co-operative and  
Community Benefit Society FCA Number 8071.  
Encircle Housing has charitable rules.

## IN JUNE'S ISSUE YOU'LL FIND...

ADVICE ABOUT KEEPING YOUR HOME SAFE AND  
SECURE, AND OUR MAKING A DIFFERENCE EVENTS