



EPIC NEWS

Issue 21 – July 2026

Message from CEO, Tracey Johnson

As we move through another summer, I hope you're able to enjoy some time with family, friends and neighbours. Whether you're spending time in the garden, taking a well-earned holiday or simply making the most of the longer evenings, I hope the season brings you moments to relax and recharge.

While summer often gives us the chance to slow down, it also provides an opportunity to look ahead. Across the country, social housing continues to evolve, with new legislation, higher expectations and greater opportunities for tenants to influence how services are delivered. At EPIC, we see that as something to embrace.

This edition of your newsletter reflects that future focus. You'll read about the launch of our new Tenant Insight Group, how we're beginning to shape our next Corporate Plan, improvements to the information we share with you, investment in your homes and neighbourhoods, and the many ways you can have your voice heard. These are all part of our commitment to building stronger relationships, better services and thriving communities.

We know that many households continue to face pressures with the cost of living, and we remain committed to investing in safe, warm and well-maintained homes while working alongside partners who can provide additional support when it's needed. At the same time, we're investing in the future so that EPIC continues to be an organisation you can trust and be proud of.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support, your feedback and your willingness to work with us. Together, we're not just improving today's services – we're helping shape what EPIC will become over the years ahead.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition, and I wish you and your family a safe, healthy and enjoyable summer.

With best wishes,

Tracey



EPIC NEWS

Your Voice, Our Future

At EPIC, we believe the best decisions are made with tenants, not just for tenants.

Our current Corporate Plan runs until March 2027, and we're starting to create the next one, which will guide our priorities and ambitions from April 2027 to March 2030. The choices we make now will influence how we invest in homes, support communities, improve services, and work with tenants over the coming years.

That's why we want your voice at the heart of the conversation. No one understands what it's like to live in an EPIC home better than you. Your experiences, ideas and aspirations will help shape the future direction of the organisation.



On Friday 18 September, we're hosting a special tenant event where you'll have the opportunity to share your views, explore new ideas and help us think about what matters most for the future. The session will be informal, interactive and enjoyable, with activities designed to make it easy for everyone to take part. To find out more [click here](#), and look out for an email from us when registrations open.

If you're unable to attend, there will be other ways to get involved, including shorter surveys and opportunities to share your thoughts throughout the year.

Together, we can create a plan that reflects the ambitions of the people and communities we serve. We hope you'll join us and help shape what's next for EPIC.

EPIC NEWS

Tenant Insight Group update

We are delighted to share that our new Tenant Insight Group (TIG) is now in place, marking an important step forward in strengthening tenant voice and influence across the organisation.

Following our recent open event and expression of interest process, seven tenants have been appointed to the group and will be joined by two Board Members, including one who is a tenant.

The group has been established to help shape services, influence decision-making and provide valuable insight into the experiences of tenants. Members will work alongside colleagues and Board Members to explore key issues, review performance and help ensure that tenants remain at the heart of what we do.

The group's first meeting took place in early July, where members got to know one another, agreed how they will work together and began shaping future priorities and areas of focus.

Thank you to everyone who expressed an interest in joining the group. We look forward to sharing updates on the group's work and the positive impact it will have in the months ahead.



Our Home Standard – thank you for your feedback

Thank you to everyone who has shared feedback on Our Home Standard. Your views are helping shape the revised standard and highlight what matters most to tenants.

Tenants told us that safe, secure, warm and well-maintained homes are a priority, alongside clearer communication about repairs, planned works, service responsibilities, communal areas, energy efficiency and what to expect when moving into a home.

We are now reviewing tenant and staff feedback alongside our existing services, legal and regulatory responsibilities, planned works and contracts. This will help us decide what should be strengthened in the standard, what needs clearer explanation, and what should be considered by other service areas.

Tenant feedback will continue to influence the revised Our Home Standard, which is due to be published in October. We will share what has changed and explain how your feedback helped shape the final version.



EPIC NEWS

How we'll measure success in 2026/27

We have a set of Board-approved Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), focused on the comfort and safety of your homes and communities, how quickly we turn around empty homes, the quality of our services, and our financial strength as an organisation.

These KPIs are reviewed regularly by both EPIC colleagues and the Board, and performance updates are published on our website for you to see. We are accountable for meeting these targets, and where trends or issues are identified, we will adapt our approach to ensure standards are maintained, you are kept safe, and our resources are used effectively.



Rent convergence update

As a reminder from our last newsletter, the government is introducing rent convergence from April 2027. This means rents for similar properties in similar areas will be gradually aligned.

As part of this, your rent will increase by an additional £1 per week, helping us to continue investing in the safety, quality and maintenance of your home.



Renters' Rights Act

There have been some important updates to the Renters' Rights Act that may affect tenants. The changes are expected to strengthen rights and improve standards across rented homes, with more detail on what this means available on our website.

Read the full update on our [website here](#).



EPIC NEWS

Community Voice events

Our latest Community Voice meeting took place in May, and it was great to hear from tenants about what matters to them – from raising individual concerns to sharing positive feedback about the support they've received.

These meetings happen every three months, and everyone is welcome. They're a great chance to hear updates, ask questions, and speak directly with EPIC about anything that's important to you. A Board member is always there too, so you know your feedback reaches the highest level.

Here are the dates and topics for our upcoming sessions:

- Saturday 8 August, 10am – 12pm, Meir. Tell us what you would like to see in our new and improved tenant newsletter. [Register here](#)
- Wednesday 11 November, 6:30 – 8:30pm, Meir. Tenant Satisfaction Measures and an update on the Renters' Rights Act
- Saturday 20 February, 10am – 12pm, Bentilee. Pride in Place update

We'd love to see you at one of these!



Stock condition surveys – helping us plan future improvements

We are continuing to carry out stock condition surveys across tenants' homes. These surveys are an important way for EPIC to understand the condition of key parts of your home, such as kitchens, bathrooms, windows, doors, roofs, heating systems and other building components.

The survey is not about how you live in your home. It is about checking the age and condition of the property and its main components, so we can plan future works, make informed investment decisions and make sure homes are being maintained to a good standard.

By allowing access for a stock condition survey, tenants help us build an accurate picture of their homes. This means we can better plan improvements, prioritise works where they are needed most, and continue investing in safe, warm and well-maintained homes.

Thank you to all tenants who have already supported this work by allowing access for a survey.

EPIC NEWS

Awaab's Law and damp and mould support

We are committed to providing safe, healthy homes and take all reports of damp and mould seriously. Awaab's Law has strengthened the requirements on social landlords to respond quickly to reports of damp, mould and other serious hazards, and we are committed to meeting those standards.

If you notice damp, mould, condensation or a leak in your home, please let us know as soon as possible so we can investigate and provide support. There are also some simple steps you can take to help reduce damp and mould, including opening windows when cooking or showering, using extractor fans where available, wiping away condensation and reporting any leaks promptly.

If you're concerned about damp or mould in your home, please contact us. Our team is here to help ensure your home remains safe, comfortable and well-maintained.



Start saving with our £40 incentive

EPIC has partnered with The Potters' Community Bank, powered by Just Credit Union, to help tenants build their savings and improve financial resilience. Through the scheme, tenants who open a savings account and increase their savings by at least £5 each month for six months can receive a savings boost of up to £40 from EPIC.



The incentive is available on a first-come, first-served basis and is limited to one payment per household. To find out more, apply for an account or register for the scheme, [visit our website](#).

If you would like to find out more about the scheme, The Potters' Community Bank will be holding a drop-in session at our office in Bentilee on Wednesday 9 September. Drop-in anytime between 10am and 2pm to ask any questions or get help applying.

EPIC NEWS

Charity of the Year update

As part of our Charity of the Year activity, colleagues were proud to present a £1,000 cheque to Bentilee Volunteers following a successful year of fundraising. The donation will help support their valuable work in the local community and make a positive difference to people across Bentilee.

We are also pleased to announce our new Charity of the Year, Stoke Thrive at Five, which focuses on improving outcomes for children in the early years. Over the coming year, colleagues will be supporting a range of fundraising activities to raise money and awareness for this important cause.

Find out more about our new Charity of the Year on our [website here](#).



Tenant Satisfaction Measures 2026/27

You should now have received information about the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) for 2026 – 27. These measures look at how well we are doing across key areas such as repairs, safety, complaints and overall satisfaction, helping us understand what is working well and where we need to improve so services better meet tenant needs.

You will have been invited to take part in a survey, including the option of completing a postal survey. As a thank you, everyone who completes the survey and leaves their details will be entered into a prize draw to win one of ten £25 vouchers. Your views are important in helping shape future services, and you can find out more about the measures and how the results are used on our [website here](#).

EPIC NEWS

New information requirements for social housing

New legislation called the Social Tenants Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs) will come into effect from April 2027.

We're already preparing for these changes and will be updating our website over the coming months to make more information available in a clear and easy-to-find way.

We'll keep you updated as our preparations progress and let you know when new information becomes available.

IT Strategy development plans and tenant involvement

Over the coming months, we'll be developing our next IT Strategy, and your input will play an important part.

When we developed our last strategy in 2024, you told us that:

- Digital services are important
- Face-to-face contact still matters
- WhatsApp would be more useful than web chat
- A tenant portal is a priority



We've been working in the background to deliver these, making sure they are safe and reliable before rolling them out. We haven't delivered all these yet, but work is underway to make sure we introduce them in the right way.

Technology helps us deliver better services, but it works best when it reflects what you actually need. That's why we want your views to help shape what we prioritise next.

You'll have opportunities to get involved through:

- Short surveys
- Engagement sessions
- Reviewing and giving feedback on our plans

By sharing your views, you can help us shape services that are practical, inclusive and easy to use.

By working together, we can make sure our future services work for everyone.

EPIC NEWS

The EPIC Connection: putting people at the heart of what we do

The EPIC Connection is our way of putting people, relationships and trust at the centre of how we work. It is not a one-off project, but a long-term commitment to creating better experiences for tenants, colleagues, partners and communities.

For tenants, this means services that feel more personal, responsive and joined up. We want every contact with EPIC to be clear, respectful and helpful, whether someone is reporting a repair, discussing their tenancy, raising a concern or asking for support. It also means listening carefully, understanding individual circumstances and focusing on resolving things as quickly and fairly as possible.

We are embedding The EPIC Connection across the organisation through colleague training, coaching, leadership development, service reviews and the way we shape our future plans. It is helping us strengthen communication, improve how teams work together and make sure decisions are guided by what matters most to tenants.

The outcome we want is simple: tenants feel heard, valued and supported; colleagues feel empowered to deliver the right service; and partners work with us to create stronger communities. By building better connections, we can improve trust, strengthen relationships and deliver better outcomes for everyone.



Customer Experience Pledge update

As part of our ongoing work to embed The EPIC Connection across the organisation, we have reviewed our Customer Experience Pledge.

When it was introduced, the Pledge helped define the standards tenants could expect from us. Today, those commitments are firmly embedded in our policies, service standards and regulatory requirements, particularly in areas such as complaints, communication and customer engagement.

For this reason, we have decided to retire the Customer Experience Pledge as a standalone document.

This does not mean our standards are changing. The commitments within the Pledge remain an important part of how we work and are now reflected more broadly through The EPIC Connection, which is helping to shape our culture, behaviours and services.

As we develop our next Corporate Plan, and with your input, The EPIC Connection will continue to ensure that customers remain at the heart of our decisions, helping us build stronger relationships, improve services and deliver better outcomes for the communities we serve.

EPIC NEWS

Tenants' Annual Report

Our Tenants' Annual Report for April 2025 to March 2026 will be available early Autumn.

This report shares how we've performed over the past year, from the number of repairs completed to how we've handled complaints. It also highlights the improvements we're working on across our services.

We'll share a link as soon as it's ready and printed copies will be available if you'd prefer one.

Working with partners to support you

EPIC may be a small provider, but we've got big ambitions!

To make those happen, we work with a range of fantastic partners who can offer support where we may not have the expertise or capacity. This includes practical help from organisations like Citizens Advice and Green Doctor, as well as specialist support from groups such as Thrive at Five and North Staffs Mind.

We're looking at ways to build even stronger relationships with a smaller group of partners, so we can improve outcomes for everyone – especially tenants.

We'll be sharing more updates on this soon, including spotlight features in future newsletters so you know what support is available.

If you've had support from a partner organisation, we'd love to hear about your experience – who helped and what they did.



GREEN
DOCTOR



EPIC NEWS

Meir Morning Café

Join us on the last Wednesday of every month, 9:30 – 11:30am, at our community venue (on the corner of Burgundy Grove and Bordeaux Road).

There's no agenda – just pop in, enjoy free refreshments (including toast or cereal), meet your neighbours and have a chat. It's a relaxed space and everyone is welcome.

(In December, we'll meet a week earlier due to the holidays.)

Bentilee Community Lounge

We also attend the Bentilee Community Lounge on the first Thursday of every month, 10am – 12pm, at Bentilee Neighbourhood Centre.

Run by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, these sessions bring together a range of local organisations. It's a great chance to drop in for a chat, get advice, or find out what support is available in your area.

EPIC NEWS

Pride in Place brings residents together

Residents and local organisations recently came together at a Pride in Place Meet and Greet event to learn more about plans to support and strengthen the Bentilee and Ubberrley community.

The event gave local people the chance to meet partners involved in the programme, share their views, and discuss what matters most to the area. Pride in Place is a community-led initiative that aims to improve opportunities, strengthen neighbourhoods, and ensure local people help shape future investment.

The Meet and Greet was an important first step ahead of the formation of a wider steering committee and the selection of members for the new Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board.

Further opportunities for residents to get involved will be announced in the coming weeks as the programme continues to develop.

Since the event, the new Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board has held its first meeting. We are pleased to share that EPIC Chief Executive Tracey Johnson has been appointed to the Board, which will help oversee investment in Bentilee and Ubberrley and ensure local people remain at the heart of decision-making.

Community involvement will continue to play a key role as the programme develops, with opportunities for residents to share their views and help shape future priorities. Keep an eye on the EPIC website and social media channels for the latest Pride in Place news, events and opportunities to get involved.



Upcoming office closures

Our office will be closed all day for the bank holiday on Monday 31 August.

During this time all calls will be diverted to Brenden Fern, who will be dealing with emergencies only.

- If you need to report an emergency repair, please call 0800 6940434
- If you need to make a rent payment, please [click here](#)
- Otherwise, please email mailbox@epichousing.co.uk and we will reply when we are back in the office

YOUR HOME

Keeping your home safe

Please remember to report any repairs, faults or planned changes in your home to us so we can make sure they are carried out safely and correctly. Attempting to fix issues yourself or making alterations without approval can create risks in your home.

If you have any questions or concerns, no matter how small, please contact us and our team will be happy to help.

Do you have home contents insurance?

A recent blog from the National Housing Federation highlights why it is important for tenants to consider home contents insurance. Written by Dean Seager of Thistle Insurance Services, the article explains that while landlords are responsible for insuring the structure of a property, tenants are usually responsible for protecting their personal belongings, which are not covered if they are damaged or lost.

Home contents insurance can help cover the cost of replacing everyday items such as furniture, clothing and electrical goods if something unexpected happens, such as a fire, theft or flood, helping to avoid large, unexpected expenses.

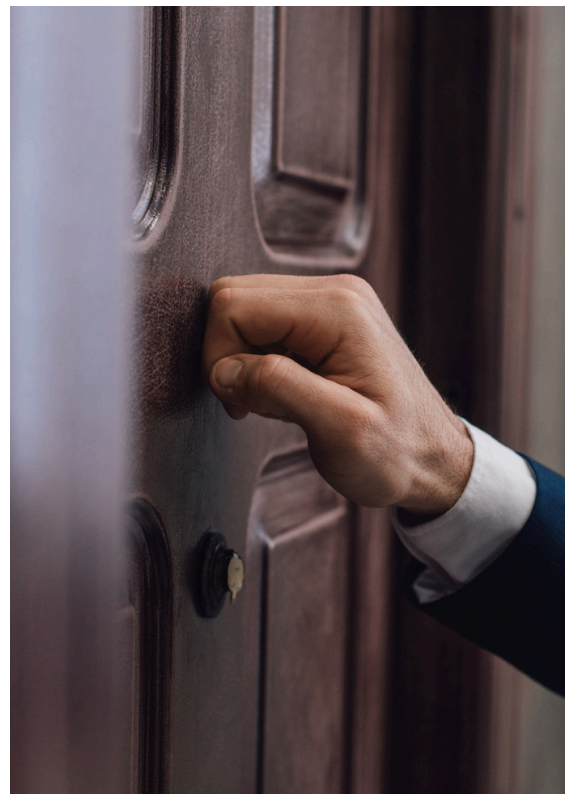
[Find out more in the full article here.](#)

Be aware of doorstep callers

We've received reports of people knocking on doors and encouraging tenants to make housing disrepair claims or discussing repairs. Please be cautious if anyone claims to represent EPIC or another organisation and cannot provide valid photographic ID or details of a repair appointment.

Remember, EPIC colleagues and contractors will always carry ID. If you're unsure about a visitor, do not share personal information, sign any paperwork or allow them into your home until you have checked who they are. You can contact us on **01782 252575** and we'll be happy to confirm whether someone is visiting on our behalf.

If you have repairs that need attention, please report them directly to EPIC. If you've already spoken to a doorstep caller, allowed someone into your home, or signed any documents and have concerns, please get in touch with us so we can provide support.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Bentilee Youth Club

Transform Communities Staffordshire run a youth club at the Bentilee Neighbourhood Centre every Friday, 4:30 – 6pm.

It's a welcoming space for young people aged 7 – 14 to relax and try something new. There is plenty to get involved with, from pool, darts and table tennis to arts and crafts, football and board games.

Young people can also get involved in preparing hot food with the support of staff.

To find out more, [click here to visit their Facebook group](#).



Community fun days

Join the Police Community Support Officers for a series of free community fun days at St Stephen's Church in Bentilee during the summer holidays, with the next ones taking place on 13, 19 and 26 August from 11am to 1pm.

These sessions include activities for children and families, with snacks provided, offering a great way to stay active and connect with others over the summer.



Summer Play and Read

EPIC's Charity of the Year, Stoke Thrive at Five, is hosting a free Summer Play and Read event at Bentilee Family Hub on Wednesday 5 August from 11am to 2pm. Open to children under five and their older siblings, the event will feature stories, games and activities designed to encourage learning through play in a fun and welcoming environment.

EPIC colleagues will also be there with outdoor games, including Swingball and Giant Connect 4, so there will be plenty for families to enjoy throughout the day. Children attending will receive a free lunch bag, and places are free to attend but must be booked in advance.

[Click here to register.](#)



SEASONAL RECIPES – ETON MESS

Purists would insist Eton mess should only contain strawberries, but other British summer berries like raspberries, redcurrants and even blackberries are delicious. You can always buy meringues which turns Eton mess into a 10 minute pudding.



Prepare

Less than 30 mins

Cook

One to two hours

Serve

Serves six

Ingredients

- 600g/1lb 5oz strawberries, green leafy top removed
- 2 tbsp icing sugar
- 600ml/20fl oz double cream
- 200g/7oz seasonal berries (such as raspberries, cherries, currants, or more strawberries)
- 5 ready-made meringue nests or 1 batch of the homemade meringues (recipe below)

For the homemade meringues

- 2 large egg whites
- 120g/4¼oz caster sugar
- ¼ tsp vanilla extract

Method

1. If you are making homemade meringues, preheat your oven to 110C/100C Fan/Gas ¼ and line a baking sheet with non-stick baking paper.
2. Put the egg whites into a clean mixing bowl and beat with an electric whisk until stiff peaks form when you lift out the whisk. Whisk in the caster sugar, one tablespoon at a time, until the mixture is really thick, glossy and will hold in a stiff peak. Briefly whisk in the vanilla.
3. Place five large dollops of the meringue on the prepared baking sheet, leaving space in between. Bake on the lowest shelf of your oven for an hour, or until the meringues easily peel away from the paper. Cool and keep in an airtight container for up to three days before using.
4. For the mess, put 150g/5½oz of the strawberries into a blender or food processor with ½ tablespoon of the icing sugar. Pulse to form a smooth purée. You can also crush the strawberries with a fork which will be slightly rougher but just as delicious. Halve or quarter the remaining strawberries into bite-size pieces.
5. Whip the double cream to very soft peaks with the remaining 1½ tablespoon of icing sugar together. Don't overwhip the cream at this point, it should still be quite loose. As you stir through the fruit and meringues, it will continue to firm up.
6. To assemble, crumble four of the meringues and add to the cream along with all the berries. Fold in lightly, then very briefly stir in the strawberry purée to make swirls in the cream (as you spoon the mess into bowls it will ripple more). Divide between six bowls or glasses, crush the final meringue over the top and eat immediately.

Do you have a recipe that you would like to share? Email it to us and it could be included in the next newsletter – marketing@epichousing.co.uk.

Don't forget to follow us on social media!

To keep up to date with all the latest news and events at EPIC, make sure you are following us on social media.

Click the buttons to access our pages.



Save money online or instore with the Housing Perks app.

Discounts are available on everything from everyday supermarket shops, DIY, and fashion to jewellery and experience days. Throughout 2024 – 25, tenants who signed up to the app saved a combined savings total of just over £2,800. If you aren't already signed up to the Housing Perks app you can find out more [here](#) or contact our reception team on 01782 252575.



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