



EPIC NEWS

Issue 9 - July 2023

Message from CEO, Tracey Johnson

Welcome to our latest edition of EPIC News!

You may have seen that on 31st May this year, we were able to announce our move from a non-compliant to a compliant governance rating, granted by the Regulator of Social Housing. This followed a comprehensive and transformative 21-month period of change to the way in which EPIC Housing does business. It's been a tough time, but I am delighted with the news and this has motivated us to continue to do more for you, our tenants, and your homes.



I know that the current economic climate is tough and that the work we do in ensuring that we listen and respond to you is critical. We have recently held two 'Big Conversation' events, which were an opportunity for you all to be involved in the way our services are delivered and to have your voice heard and an influence in what we do. Please do come along to these when you can and watch out for more news and ways in which you can get involved. We already offer a number of ways to get involved and also to get help with your tenancy [here](#). If you would like to get involved more please email mailbox@epichousinghousing.co.uk.

Shaping our service delivery so that it meets the needs of our tenants can be difficult and we can sometimes get it wrong. You should have recently received a STAR survey (Survey of Tenants and Residents), which is a great and easy way to share your experience of the services we provide. The survey is managed through an independent third party and all responses are anonymous. I would urge you to please complete it as it will absolutely help to support and underpin the need for us to reshape the way we do things.

Enjoy the rest of this edition and the summer!

Best wishes
Tracey

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- ★ Charity of the Year
- ★ Damp and Mould
- ★ Grounds Maintenance
- ★ Help with Debt and the Cost of Living
- ...and much more!



Don't forget –

Reception at our office in Bentilee (131–141 Ubblerley Road, ST2 0EF) is open Monday to Friday, 9.00am – 2.30pm.

Introduction and welcome from Chair, Simon Wilson

I am delighted to have been appointed Chair of EPIC Housing and took up my role officially on 1st April this year. I've worked in the housing sector for over 25 years and am looking forward to working alongside the Board, Executive Team and colleagues at EPIC Housing in shaping and steering the direction of travel for the benefit of you, our tenants. There is much happening across the social housing sector, with changes in regulation, knowing our tenants and the spotlight on the quality of homes.

One of the things I know, since joining EPIC Housing, is that the drive and commitment to do the right thing so that you can enjoy a safe, secure, and well-maintained home is our key focus.

If you would like to know more about my colleagues on the Board, details can be found by [clicking here](#).



Tenant Satisfaction Survey

We have commissioned Acuity, a market research company that specialise in the social housing sector, to carry out a STAR survey (Survey of Tenants and Residents) with you, our tenants.



The survey will ask what you think about your home and the services provided by us at EPIC Housing. We really hope you are able to find time to complete the survey as it will help us make improvements in the future. As a thank you, all tenants who complete the survey will be entered into a draw to win 1 of 10 £25 high street shopping vouchers.

More information on the survey can be found on our website [by clicking here](#). If you have any other queries, please email mailbox@epichousinghousing.co.uk.

Tenant Consultation, Involvement and Engagement

We would really like to hear your views on the services we deliver to you as well as any issues affecting you or your community. This will help us fulfil our commitment to listen, understand and be accountable to our tenants.

We don't believe in a 'one size fits all' when it comes to engaging with our tenants. We want to hear from you on how you would like to connect with us.

Engagement could include a panel, surveys, virtual meetings and much more. We will work with you as much as we can.

If you would like to be involved, please contact Cindy Gleghorn by email – c.gleghorn@epichousing.co.uk.

Stock Surveys

Please be aware that members of staff from EPIC Housing are in the process of carrying out stock surveys on properties.

We are assessing the internal and external conditions of the property which will help us to plan our 5-year investment programme.

EPIC Housing staff can be identified by a green lanyard and ID badge similar to the one shown in this picture.



Charity of the Year – St Stephen's Community Church

By way of a staff vote, EPIC Housing has chosen to support St Stephen's Community Church (SSCC) in Bentilee for the current financial year. We have a foodbank collection point in the office and we will be volunteering with them as opportunities become available.



SSCC run a number of events for the community that you may wish to get involved in:

- Tuesday afternoon – foodbank items are collected by people with a voucher
- Tuesday evening – Stormbreakers, a youth club for 5-10 year olds
- Wednesday – Parent Power, a parent and toddler group
- Thursday morning – community café, pick up a full English for less than £5!
- Sunday – congregation

Please visit their Facebook page to find out more – www.facebook.com/SSCCBentilee

The Big Conversation

In June we hosted The Big Conversation where we met with some of our tenants.

During the tenant engagement sessions, CEO Tracey Johnson and Director of Housing Management Cindy Cleghorn covered:

- An overview of the changes we have made in the past year
- Updates on what we are delivering this year
- Information on how tenants can get involved

Attendees also had the chance to ask questions and raise any concerns they had.

Please [click here to visit our website](#) to read the whole story and to find out how you can get involved.

Staff Litter Pick

During May we carried out two litter picks in the local area. We would like to thank all staff who took part and helped to make the community a tidier place.

This is something we plan to do approximately once every three months.



Meir Office Opening

We are excited to announce that starting soon, our office in Meir will be open every Tuesday. Lucy Heath, Housing Officer and Nicola Keates, an expert in debt recovery and rent arrears, will be available on-site to provide support and valuable advice to residents. We will let you know as soon as this becomes available and we look forward to assisting you and addressing any concerns you may have.

The address for the office is: Normacot Grange Community Building, Burgundy Grove, Meir, ST3 7GW.

Reception Opening Times Survey

We have recently conducted a survey asking tenants when they would prefer for our reception to be open in Bentilee. We are in the process of reviewing the comments received and will update you soon on any changes.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey.



YOUR PROPERTY AND COMMUNITY

Damp and Mould

Condensation is the most common cause of damp and mould so it is important you try to reduce it as much as possible. There are several things you can do to minimise dampness and condensation in your home:

- Reduce the amount of moisture produced in the property.
- Keep lids on pots and pans when you cook.
- Close the bathroom door when you are having a bath or shower.
- Put lids on pots and pans when you are cooking.
- Provide ventilation, particularly in moisture-prone areas. Open windows to allow humid air to ventilate out of the property.
- Increase heating to raise the temperature of the air and the cold surfaces.
- Use thermal or lined curtains, keeping them open during the day and closed before dusk to capture the heat from the sun and lift the temperature inside.
- Wipe excess moisture from windows so it doesn't re-evaporate during the day.
- Try to keep furniture away from outside walls to allow air circulation.
- Dry clothes outside wherever possible.
- If you use a tumble dryer, make sure it is vented outside (please ensure you get our written permission to make any alterations to brickwork).
- If you dry your clothes on a clothes rack inside, do this in a well-ventilated room with doors closed to the rest of the property.

Condensation isn't the only cause of damp and mould, it can also come from:

- Leaking pipes and waste overflows.
- Rain seeping through the roof where tiles or slates are missing.
- Overflow from blocked gutters penetrating around window frames or leaking through cracked pipes.
- Rising damp due to a defective damp course or because there is no damp course.

If you suspect one of these issues, please report it immediately. Full details on how to do this can be found [on our website here](#).

Grounds Maintenance

In our communal gardens our garden maintenance contractors ([Croppers Ground Maintenance](#)), have resumed the grass-cutting service. Please ensure these areas are accessible and free of anything that may cause an obstruction.

If you want to report any garden work that has not been done, please do so by emailing mailbox@epichousing.co.uk.

Dogs

Dog owners – please take responsibility for your pets by cleaning up after them and not leaving them unsupervised in communal gardens.

If you are thinking of getting a pet, please ensure you get our written permission to keep one at your property.



MyStoke App

Do you want to help keep our community clean and safe? Download the MyStoke app to report incidents of flytipping, litter or blocked gullies. You can also see bin collection days, leisure centre timetables and much more.

[Click here to download it](#).



MONEY MATTERS

Help with Debt and the Cost of Living

We know that times are difficult and you may be struggling. Lots of things are increasing in price such as energy and food and it can leave you feeling overwhelmed and worried. If you are struggling with debt or the current cost of living, please speak to us – we are here to support you. We can provide basic money advice, mental health support and refer you to other useful support services and organisations.

The following organisations also offer free advice and access to debt counselling:



<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/>
0800 240 4420



<https://nationaldebtline.org/>
0808 808 4000



<https://www.stepchange.org/>
0800 138 1111

Local Foodbanks

Our local foodbanks are part of The Trussell Trust's network of 428 foodbanks, working to tackle food poverty and hunger in our local communities, as well as across the UK.

Click on the links below for information on the different locations:

[Stoke-on-Trent](#)

[Newcastle-under-Lyme](#)

[Leek and District](#)



BBC News: How can I save money on my food shop?

As price rises bite into budgets, many people are cutting back on the weekly food shop.

As well as buying less, people are looking for ways to make their money go further and to make the most of what they have. The BBC spoke to money bloggers for their tried and tested tips:

1. Keep track of what you already have
2. Head for the reduced section first
3. Make better use of your freezer
4. Understand packaging
5. Make use of experts

[Click here to read the full article.](#)



PAYING YOUR RENT

Rent Reference

When submitting your rent payment, please ensure you include your rent account reference in the 'reference' section of your bank account. Without the correct reference, your rent could get posted to an incorrect account.

You can obtain this information from the rent payment card provided at the start of your tenancy or from other correspondence received from us. If you require this information again, do not hesitate to contact us.

6 Ways to Pay

There are various different ways for you to pay your rent.

If you require any further information or support please email us – rents@epichousing.co.uk.

1

The EPIC Housing website –
<https://epichousing.co.uk/manage-my-home/make-a-payment/>.
Please quote your rent account reference e.g. ABC123A or REA000000

2

Set up a standing order from your bank account.
EPIC Housing account number: 50069842
EPIC Housing sort code: 08-90-09
Don't forget to quote your rent account reference.

3

Using online banking.
Don't forget to quote your rent account reference.

4

Using your EPIC Housing rent card at any PayPoint outlet or Post Office.

5

Card payment over the phone. You can call us on 01782 252575.

6

Through the housing costs element of your Universal Credit form.



My Home
Contents Insurance

Many tenants suffer **loss** or **damage** caused by **burst pipes!**

Contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions. No matter how careful you are, there's always a risk that your belongings could be broken, damaged or stolen so home contents insurance may help provide peace of mind.

The **My Home Contents** Scheme covers against loss and damage caused by burst pipes, fire, theft, flood damage, and much more.

Terms and conditions, limits and exclusions apply. A full policy wording is available on request.



Protect your home contents and belongings, call **My Home** and apply for cover today on

0345 450 7288

Or visit

www.thistlemyhome.co.uk
where you can request
someone to call you back.



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