



EPIC NEWS

Issue 13 – July 2024

Message from CEO, Tracey Johnson

Welcome to the latest edition of EPIC News!

It continues to amaze me how our last newsletter felt like yesterday, and then realising it was three months ago, with so much happening in that time, including a landslide victory for the Labour Party, marking the end of 14 years of Conservative rule.

Quite what this will mean for the housing sector, time will tell. There have been some bold statements about delivery of 1.5 million new homes, implementing measures to improve standards for households, changes to the planning system, and relaxing green belt policy. What I am delighted about is a renewed sense of hope to the housing market.

What does this all mean to EPIC Housing and to you – very little at the current time – as we continue to focus on improving your experience with us, through great service and responsive maintenance and repairs to your home. We continue to remain a stable and resilient organisation, maintaining our independence, learning, understanding, and focussing on what matters to you. We know we have some way to go, but we are absolutely on the right path, and I do hope that you see and feel this too.

Hearing and listening to you helps us shape the way in which our services are delivered. Please take the time to share your views as part of the STAR survey, you have until 13 August to do this. We are always open to listening to what you have to say and making positive changes.

As we move into the final months of the summer (if you can call it that!), I am delighted to share with you that with effect from 2 September 2024, our offices on Ubberley Road will be open Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm. This is in response to what you have told us. Our offices at Meir continue to be open every other Tuesday 9am to 4pm.

Enjoy the rest of the Newsletter!
Tracey



ST. STEPHEN'S
COMMUNITY
CHURCH
♥Bentilee



CHARITY UPDATES
Find out more on page 2.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- ★ The Big Conversation – Save the Date
- ★ Tenant Engagement Update
- ★ Help with Debt and the Cost of Living
- ★ Paying your Rent

...and much more!

Success for St. Stephen's Church

For the year 2023-24, [St. Stephen's Church](#) in Bentilee was our chosen Charity. Due to the fantastic efforts from our staff and contractors, we are thrilled to share that we raised a grand total of £738 for them.

In addition to the funds, we have supported them in other ways such as arranging for their shed to be painted with fire retardant paint, collecting chocolates at Christmas and Easter and much more.

St. Stephen's Church works tirelessly to support the local community and we hope that this money will assist them in continuing to do this. We will be meeting with the Reverend from the church in a few weeks to hand over the money raised so keep an eye on our social media for photos of that.



New Charity of the Year!

We are delighted to announce that we have selected [Alice Charity](#) as our Charity of the Year for 2024-25. This partnership reflects our commitment to supporting local communities and enhancing the lives of families in need throughout Stoke-on-Trent and the surrounding areas.

The Alice Charity believes in providing strong foundations and diverse services to help individuals thrive. Their unwavering commitment to wellness, kindness, and community advancement drives them to develop sustainable solutions, support families, and make a difference.

There are three main services they offer to the community:

1. Big Cup Parent and Toddler Group – this free group currently runs at 7 different locations throughout Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme.
2. People's Pantry – a three-day emergency supply of food, baby products and toiletries to local families who find themselves without the basic living essentials they desperately need. Families do not need to be referred to this scheme, they just reach out to Alice and they will help.
3. Family Support Services – Alice's extensive and experienced Family Services Team build the confidence and aspirations of vulnerable families in the local community. They work with families who need ongoing emotional support, for as long as they need it.



We would encourage our tenants to access the services provided by the Alice Charity if they are required. For those of you with young children, just some of the local parent and toddler groups are held at the Bentilee Family Hub, Hanley St. Luke's Academy, Breathe New Life Church and Westfields Family Hub. More information on these groups can be found [here](#).

Tenants who need this support with the supply of food who cannot contact Alice themselves can reach out to their Housing Officer or come into reception to discuss what assistance we can provide. For more information on the People's Pantry please [click here](#).

Family Support Workers from Alice will be using our new Resource Room at our office on Ubbertley Road to offer face-to-face support for families – please keep an eye on our social media and other communications for further information about how to access this service once it's launched.

We have already shown our commitment to helping this worthy charity by raising £210 at the Discovery Academy Summer Fayre held at the end of June. Our beanbag toss game was a crowd favourite, attracting visitors eager to win exciting prizes. Prizes ranged from games and chocolates to bath sets, all generously donated by our staff and contractors [AICO](#), [Brenden Fern](#), and [Hankinson Whittle](#).



EPIC Housing CEO Tracey Johnson and Alice Charity CEO Heather Sheldon.



EPIC Housing staff at the Discovery Academy Summer Fayre.

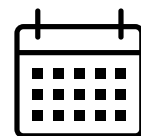
Tenant Satisfaction Survey

Don't miss out on the chance to win one of ten £25 shopping vouchers by completing your Tenant Satisfaction Survey by Tuesday 13 August.

As well as helping us to better understand your needs, the survey will ask what you think about your home and the services provided by us. The results will help us shape our services in the future.

[Visit our website to find out more.](#)

The Big Conversation – Friday 30 August 2024



Save the date for our Big Conversation event on Friday 30 August. Join us anytime between 10am and 2pm at St. Stephen's Church in Bentilee.

Talk to EPIC Housing staff, meet CEO Tracey Johnson and get support from local services such as money management, training and support for families.

Keep an eye out for an email from us with further information. We look forward to seeing you there!

Together With Tenants

We are aiming to adopt the National Housing Federation's "Together with Tenants" charter. This shows:

- That we are serious about working alongside our tenants and listening to your views; treating you with respect and ensuring that we give you opportunities to tell us about the things that are important to you.
- How you can hold us accountable and scrutinise the decisions that affect the quality of your homes and the services we provide.
- That we are providing information at the right time, in the right format, that is accessible and relevant to you, your family and community.

We will be launching our consultation around the Together with Tenants charter at the Big Conversation, where our Chief Executive, Tracey Johnson, will be talking about what it means for EPIC Housing and you, our tenants, and how you can help guide our decisions to make services better for everyone.

If you are unable to come to the Big Conversation, then more information will be available online.

Tenant Engagement Update

We have been working with a group of tenants to explore how we can get more feedback from everyone, so that we can improve our services, overcome problems, and discuss what we can do for tenants and the wider community to help them thrive.

We are looking for people who want to get involved to help us identify and influence where we can improve services to benefit everyone.

If you are interested in finding out more about this, [please click here](#) to see the different ways you can give us feedback and get involved and let us know if you are interested in any of the activities on offer, or if you have other ideas that you'd like to share with us.

Remember – it's with your help and input that we'll be able to make sure that our services are meeting your needs and that we're doing the things that you want us to do!

If you have any questions, please contact Mark Bourne by email – m.bourne@epichousing.co.uk or leave your comments on [this form](#).

Office Opening Times

Our reception in Bentilee is currently open on a Monday, Tuesday and Thursday.

You can pop in anytime between 9.00am and 2.30pm.

From 2 September, the office will be open on all weekdays, 9am – 4pm.

Address: 131-141 Ubberley Rd, Stoke-on-Trent, ST2 0EF



You can visit us at our community building in Meir every other Tuesday, 8.00am – 3.00pm.

The next date that we will be there is Tuesday 23 July.

Address: Normacot Grange Community Building, Burgundy Grove, Meir, ST3 7GW



YOUR PROPERTY AND COMMUNITY

Cleaning Up After Your Dog

To enable our contractor to cut the grass during the summer months, we would like to remind you to ensure that your garden is kept clear of dog mess.

Dog mess should always be cleaned up immediately and dogs must not be left unattended in shared gardens.

If you are thinking of getting a pet, please contact us before doing so.



Ending Your Tenancy

Please don't forget that if you wish to end your tenancy with EPIC Housing you need to submit a 'Notice to Terminate Tenancy' document, giving 4 weeks' notice.

You can download a copy of this form in Word or PDF format from our website [here](#).

Changes When Reporting a Repair

Please be aware that the options have changed when you ring Brenden Fern to report a repair. When contacting them on 01782 818577 to log a repair, please choose option 2.

More information on how to report a repair can be found on our website [here](#).



Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)

The Hubb Foundation recently announced their HAF sessions for the summer holidays. All sessions, which are free for children in the local area who fit certain criteria, include a meal along with a range of activities and new experiences.

Find out more and book early to avoid disappointment by [clicking here](#).

Staff Litter Pick

Back in June we carried out a litter pick on Aylesbury Road, close to our Bentilee Office. We would like to thank all staff who took part and helped to make the community a tidier place.

This is something we do every three months so if you have any suggestions on where we could litter pick next, please let us know.





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

Housing Perks

With the Housing Perks app you can get discounts on everyday spending to help you save money on the essentials.

The app is easy to download and install, but you will need your tenancy reference number which you can find on letters and emails from us. [Click here to visit our website to find out more and get saving.](#)

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](#)



The bread and butter thing – Bentilee Family Hub

The bread and butter thing affordable food hub recently launched at the Bentilee Family Hub, formerly known as the Treehouse Children's Centre.

By signing up for this initiative, you can save over £20 per week on your groceries! The food assortment varies every week, but you can expect to receive a range of items, including fresh fruits and vegetables, chilled foods and essential pantry staples.

Find out how you can sign up by visiting [The bread and butter thing website.](#)





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, please email us – rents@epichousing.co.uk.

6 Ways to Pay

There are several 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.



SEASONAL RECIPE

Rainbow Fruit Lollies

Pack in the fruit with these fun rainbow lollies, made with mango, banana, kiwi and berries.

[Recipe inspiration from BBC Good Food](#)

Prep: 20 minutes plus overnight freezing | Makes: 6 lollies

Ingredients

- 100g mango, peeled, stoned and chopped
- 2 bananas
- 400g yoghurt
- 2 kiwi fruit, peeled and roughly chopped
- 100g frozen raspberries
- 100g frozen blackberries



Method

STEP 1

Blitz the mango with ½ banana and 100g yogurt in a blender until smooth. Divide between six ice lolly moulds and insert a stick into each. Hold each stick upright in the mould, and secure on both sides with tape. Freeze for 1 hour until set.

STEP 2

Repeat with another ½ banana, 100g more yogurt and the kiwi fruit, and pour that over the banana layer. Freeze for another 1 hour until set.

STEP 3

Repeat with the raspberries, then the blackberries, freezing each layer before topping with the next.

STEP 4

Cover and freeze the lollies overnight. Run under warm water to remove from the moulds.

These lollies will keep in the freezer for up to 2 months.

Do you have a recipe that you would like to share? Send it to s.tatton@epichousing.co.uk and it could be included in the next newsletter!



10 reasons to choose My Home Contents Insurance Scheme

- 1) Apply over the telephone or complete an application form
- 2) Covers loss or damage to food in a fridge/freezer (excludes damage caused if the electricity supplier deliberately cuts off the supply to your home)
- 3) Covers theft, water damage, fire and many more household risks
- 4) Covers tenant's improvements (up to £2000 or 20% of the sum insured whichever is the greater)
- 5) Covers theft or attempted theft of contents in sheds, outbuildings and garages (up to £3,000)
- 6) Covers damage to external glazing for which you are responsible
- 7) Covers replacement and installation of locks for outside doors or windows and alarms, if keys are lost or stolen
- 8) You don't need to have special door or window locks (just a lockable front door)
- 9) Up to 35% of the contents sum insured for damage to your landlord's fixtures and fittings which you are legally liable for as a tenant (excludes loss or damage whilst your home is unoccupied)
- 10) Flexible regular Pay-As-You-Go payment options (fortnightly and monthly premiums include a transaction charge)

Exclusions & limits apply. A copy of the policy wording is available on request.

Ask your landlord for an application pack or
to apply for cover today, call My Home on:

0345 450 7288

email: myhome@thistleinsurance.co.uk or
visit www.thistlemyhome.co.uk



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