



EPIC NEWS

Issue 14 – October 2024

Message from CEO, Tracey Johnson

Welcome to the latest edition of EPIC News! There continues to be a lot going on at EPIC and we are working hard to ensure that every tenant has an opportunity to have a say in how we deliver services to you and understanding what really matters. Some of you may recall that we have historically run what we referred to as the 'Big Conversation'. This has been rebranded from November to 'Community Voice' and events will be split across Meir and Bentilee, as well as a change in times to hopefully suit as many of you as possible. We'll also be putting on some food too! The first one will be on the 13th November at Normacot Grange Community Centre, Meir and will start at 6.30pm for a couple of hours. Transport can be arranged for you if needed, free of charge. We do ask that people book on to the event so that we can plan in enough food to go round!

If you'd like to know more about the event, let us know you'd like to come along, or discuss any personal requirements with us, you can do so by:

- Calling reception (in person or over the phone on 01782 252575) Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm
- Emailing reception@epichousing.co.uk
- Book in using EventBrite using this link: [EPIC Housing Community Voice Tickets, Wed 13 Nov 2024 at 18:30 | Eventbrite](#)

Community Voice events will be held quarterly and are one of the ways in which you can hear about what's going on at EPIC and for us to hear what's going on for our tenants and the wider community. I do hope you will take the opportunity to join us and if you are interested, please let us know by Friday 8th November.



Enjoy the rest of the Newsletter!
Tracey

IN THIS ISSUE...

- Alice Charity update
- Together with Tenants Charter
- Keeping your home warm
- Seasonal pumpkin muffin recipe
- Pension Credits
- ...and much more!

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Tenant Satisfaction Measures

A huge thank you to everyone who took part in our recent STAR survey. The feedback you provided and the points you raised will help us to ensure we're directing our time and resources towards tackling the issues that matter most to our tenants.

The results from the STAR survey will be made available to all of our tenants in the near future, so you can see what our tenants think of the services we provide and also compare these to other Housing Associations.

We're working hard to ensure our tenants' voices are heard and that your opinions are integral to everything we do here at EPIC Housing. In order to do this, we're encouraging tenants to get involved and work with us directly. There are a number of ways to get involved and we hope the range of activities on offer will mean that everyone can be involved in a way that suits them. We're also open to suggestions for other ways that tenants can get involved and will always try to meet our tenants' expectations.

Getting Involved

To find out more about getting involved, please click [here](#) which will take you to our website. There is a short form to complete if you're interested in joining in or finding out more about how to engage with us and improve the work we do for the benefit of all of our tenants.



Meir Morning Cafe

Since the end of July we have been holding a free monthly breakfast event at the Normacot Grange Community Building in Meir from 9:30am to 11:30am. The event is held on the last Wednesday of every month.

The event offers tenants a chance to catch up with neighbours as well as chat to EPIC staff, while enjoying cereal, toast, tea, coffee and juice (with gluten-free options also available).

Feedback from the first session was positive – tenants said they found it beneficial and enjoyed socialising with staff and other tenants.

If you have any questions, please contact Mark Bourne on 01782 252577 or m.bourne@epichousing.co.uk.

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Alice Charity

Alice Charity are EPIC Housing's Charity of the Year and the beneficiaries of our fundraising work throughout 2024/25. Alice Charity was created in 2011 to support vulnerable and disadvantaged families across Stoke on Trent and Newcastle Under Lyme.

So far we've raised over £200 to help support the Charity to help them deliver on their excellent and much-needed work. Alice Charity are also holding regular advice sessions at our offices in Ubberley Road – dates will vary but are published on our website and via regular email updates. Any family can come along to ask about the support available from Alice Charity.

Our staff can also make referrals through to Alice Charity so if you think you need their help, please get in touch with us and we can pass your details on – so you can get support outside of the drop-in sessions.

More information about Alice Charity can be found on their website at [Alice Charity | Supporting families in our community](#).



Resource Room

EPIC Housing is proud to announce the opening of our Resource Room at our offices in Ubberley Road.

This room will be used by our partners to offer drop-in advice sessions, or hold targeted one-to-one advice sessions. Keep an eye out for future information from us to tell you what sessions are available and when.

The room is also available for our tenants to use – we have a computer with internet access so any tenants that struggle to access the internet at home, or need access to a PC to complete job searches or benefit applications, will be able to book in and make use of the facilities.

To check if the Resource Room is available, please contact our reception team on 01782 252575.



Coming soon! Tenants' Annual Report 2023/24

HAVE YOUR SAY

Together with Tenants Charter

Following consultation with tenants we have now adopted the Together With Tenants Charter, which has been produced by the National Housing Federation.



Adopting the Charter shows our clear commitment to empowering our tenants, by:

- Establishing meaningful resident engagement in our decision making;
- Working collaboratively with residents to design mechanisms for oversight;
- Supporting residents to hold EPIC Housing to account; and
- Being open to the challenges that all of this brings.

To find out more about the Charter, how you can get involved, and give us your feedback about the Together With Tenants Charter, visit epichousing.co.uk/together-with-tenants-charter/

Tenant Portal and Website

We'll soon be starting work to introduce and test our new Tenant Portal. The Portal will allow tenants to log in and check their rent balance, make payments, tell us about changes to their contact details, or complete forms to ask for permission to keep a pet or make their own alterations to their homes - amongst other things. Before we launch the Tenant Portal, we're looking for some tenants who are willing to help us shape how it looks and works, and to test the features. Technical knowledge is not necessary - in fact, the less tech-savvy you are, the better, as our aim is to make it easy to navigate and use. All testing can be done at home, at a time that suits you, and help will be available if you need it.



If you're interested in finding out more, please contact Mark Bourne at m.bourne@epichousing.co.uk or call 01782 252575.

NEW BENTILEE OFFICE OPENING TIMES

Our reception in Bentilee is now open on a Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm.

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

YOUR PROPERTY & COMMUNITY

Noise Nuisance

Following a number of recent cases, we'd like to remind all of our tenants about their responsibilities around noise nuisance in your homes.

We have had a spike in complaints about noise nuisance and would like to remind all tenants:

- Your tenancy agreement states that you will conduct your tenancy in a way that does not negatively impact on your neighbours.
- Excessive and loud noise, either music or from a TV, counts as a nuisance and can have a negative impact on your neighbours.
- You are responsible for everyone in your home, even visitors.
- There is no time limit noise – it makes no difference if it is the middle of the day or the middle of the night. If you are creating loud noise that disturbs your neighbours, they can report you and we'll take appropriate action.



Keeping Your Home Warm this Autumn/Winter

It's important to keep your home heated in the winter because:

- it protects your home from issues like damp, mould and frozen pipes.
- it helps protect against a range of health concerns such as respiratory and cardiovascular issues.

If you're struggling with heating bills following the government's change to the Winter Fuel Payment please get in touch on 01782 252575 or email mailbox@epichousing.co.uk

TOP TIP: It's a good idea to turn your heating on at this time of year, so if there are any issues with your boiler or radiators we can resolve them before it gets really cold! If you do find an issue with your heating, contact us on 01782 252575.

SEASONAL RECIPE - PUMPKIN MUFFINS



Method

STEP 1

Heat the oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4. Cut the pumpkin or squash in half and scoop out any seeds. Put cut-side down onto a baking tray lined with baking paper. Roast for 30-40 mins or until completely soft. Leave to cool, then scoop out the flesh into a blender (discarding the skin) and whizz to a purée.

STEP 2

Weigh out 300g of the pumpkin purée (you can freeze any leftovers for another time). Mix the flour, baking powder, bicarb, spices and a pinch of salt in a bowl.

STEP 3

Put the butter and sugar in another bowl, and beat with a whisk until light and fluffy. Whisk in the eggs one at a time, then add the vanilla, flour mixture and the pumpkin purée, and whisk until it just comes together, but don't overmix.

STEP 4

Line a muffin tin with 12 cases then divide the mixture between them. Bake in the oven for 20 mins until risen and a skewer comes out clean when poked into the thickest parts. Leave to cool completely.

STEP 5

To make the frosting, put the butter in a bowl and beat with electric beaters for 1 min. Gradually add the icing sugar and beat for 3-4 mins or until smooth. Add the soft cheese and vanilla, and keep beating until smooth again. Spoon or pipe onto the cupcakes, then finish with a little pinch of cinnamon, if you like.

Ingredients

- 450g small pumpkin or butternut squash
- 250g plain flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon, plus extra to finish
- ½ tsp ground ginger
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- 150g butter, softened
- 150g caster sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

Cream cheese frosting

- 100g butter, softened
- 100g icing sugar
- 200g full-fat soft cheese
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

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

PENSION CREDIT

If you're aged 66 or over and finding it difficult to make ends meet, you may be entitled to Pension Credit to top up your income.

What is Pension Credit?

Pension Credit is a means-tested benefit for people over State Pension age who have a low income. It comes in two parts: 'Guarantee Credit' and 'Savings Credit'. It's separate from your State Pension.

What is 'Guarantee Credit'?

Guarantee Credit tops up your weekly income to a guaranteed minimum level. This level is currently:

£218.15 if you're single;
£332.95 if you're a couple.

However these amounts can increase if you're disabled, or you care for someone.

What is 'Savings Credit'?

Savings Credit is extra money if you've got some savings or if your income is higher than the basic State Pension. It's available to people who reached State Pension age before 6 April 2016. You could get up to:

£17.01 extra per week if you're single;
£19.04 extra per week if you're a couple.

What other help may you be entitled to?

- You can get free NHS dental treatment, help with the cost of glasses and also transport to hospital.
- If you care for someone, you might get an extra amount known as Carer Addition, which is worth up to £45.60 a week.
- If you have a disability, you may get an extra amount known as Severe Disability Addition, which is worth up to £81.50 a week.
- You probably won't have to pay Council Tax (unless other people live with you).
- You may qualify for Housing Benefit (or more Housing Benefit if you already claim this).
- If you're 75 or over, you can get a free TV licence.
- You'll be eligible for a Cold Weather Payment during particularly cold weather.
- From winter 2024 onwards, only people who claim Pension Credit (or certain other benefits) will be eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment (an annual payment to help with heating costs during the colder months).

You have nothing to lose by applying and if you've previously been turned down, you can still make a new claim each year.

How to claim Pension Credit

To claim Pension Credit, you can either:

- claim online at www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim
- or call the Pension Credit claim line on 0800 99 1234 and they can fill in the application for you over the phone (lines are open Monday to Friday, 8am-6pm).

If you would like to discuss initially with EPIC, please contact 01782 252575.



EPIC Housing are now on Instagram!
Follow us for all the usual updates
@epic.housing



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