

TENANT VOICE

Summer 2020



Going the extra mile to support you

PLUS

- Repairs Service back in operation
- How to prepare for a home visit from our staff or contractors
- Money worries? We're here to help
- Stress busting tips

WIN

garden vouchers

See back page



Produced in partnership with
Winchester City Council tenants and leaseholders



Winchester
City Council

This special issue of Tenant Voice is dedicated to providing you – our tenants and leaseholders – with advice and information around COVID-19.

Inside you can find details on how we are working to support our communities and protect our most vulnerable tenants, whilst keeping council services going.

A special message from The Minister of State For Housing

The Right Hon Christopher Pincher MP has written an open letter to all social housing tenants across the country to emphasise the range of advice and support available to ensure your safety, security and wellbeing now that society is reopening.

You can read the letter on our website at winchester.gov.uk/housing/council-housing-tenants/tenant-news or contact us to request a copy by emailing tenantvoice@winchester.gov.uk or call **01962 848 400**.

Going the extra mile

Our housing team has been working tirelessly to quickly and effectively adjust our services in line with government advice. We've been going the extra mile to support you.

From delivering food packages and prescriptions, putting out dustbins, checking up on our vulnerable tenants and increasing the range of our digital services available online – we've been doing whatever we can to provide support for those who need it most.

The strength of community spirit in Winchester has been remarkable, and many tenants are among the army of volunteers who have stepped forward to help others. On the back cover you can find useful contact information and details of local organisations offering advice and practical support at this time.



Check out pages 4 and 5 for details about the repairs service and important information if you need to request a new repair job or are expecting a visit from our tradestaff.

Feeling anxious?

If you're feeling stressed out or anxious there are simple steps you can follow at home to look after your mental wellbeing at this time.



Keep in contact with other people through phone calls or video chats.



Stick to a routine to keep a sense of normality and keep busy throughout the day.



Keep active – physical exercise will help you feel good and keep fit.



Keep your brain challenged – read books, do puzzles or learn new skills online.



Get out in the fresh air as much as possible.

For lots more advice and guidance about how to improve your mental well being visit [mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk).

If you've got green fingers (or want to learn) enter our gardening competition on the back cover and you could win a share of £100!

Welcome back

Shops, cafés, bars, restaurants and pubs are just some of the businesses that have started to open their doors again. You'll see that we've been making some changes to help our local economy to get back on its feet.

If you're a bit nervous about venturing out, here are some tips that might help:

- If an area looks busy, take a turn around the green spaces that are in reach of all our centres and come back a little later.
- You may wish to bring your own hand sanitiser for peace of mind.
- Some parking meters require button pushing – using a pencil may help you feel safe – but sanitise afterwards if you have any concerns.
- If you're using the outer ring car parks (thank you, we're encouraging this as part of our carbon reduction plan) do remember a face covering for travelling on the Park & Ride buses.
- The public toilets are open and there is social distancing guidance to support users.



Full repairs service resumes

In order to limit personal contact, we were initially only able to carry out essential repair jobs. But we are now able to increase the number and range of jobs available from our repairs service.



Need a repair?

Get in touch in the usual way and we will let you know the date of the repair job.

To report repair:

Telephone:

01962 848 400 (during office hours)

01962 865 405 (out-of-hour emergencies only)

Visit: winchester.gov.uk/mycouncilhouse and use 'My Council House'

Email: housing@winchester.gov.uk

Strict social distancing guidelines will apply during all repair jobs which means you need to keep at least 2 metres from the tradesperson at all times (see the article on the page opposite for important information about all home visits). In addition, tradestaff will clean the working area thoroughly before leaving your home.

When can you expect your repair to be carried out?

For emergency/urgent repairs there is no change to our usual service and we continue to carry out these jobs as a top priority.

We are now contacting anyone who reported a non-urgent job whilst restrictions were in place. The aim is to give everyone an appointment by the end of July. Thank you for your patience.

For new non-urgent repairs that have been reported since 8 June, it is business as usual and we will offer you an appointment.

We will shortly restart our planned maintenance programmes such as kitchen refurbishments, new central heating systems and roof replacements. If you are waiting for this kind of work we will be in touch to arrange a date and answer any questions.

Gas safety

It is essential that every home has a gas safety certificate so when you receive details of your gas servicing appointment please work with us to allow the engineer access to your home. The page opposite has important information on how to prepare for a visit and what to do if you're shielding.

Are you or someone in your household self-isolating and/or shielding?

Please let us know if someone in your household is showing signs of COVID-19, self-isolating and/or shielding when you report your repair or arrange a visit from any member of council staff.

If this is the case, we will only visit if it's completely necessary such as an urgent or emergency repair job – and only if you are happy for a tradesperson or council officer to come into your home.

Any non-urgent elements of a repair job (such as plastering repairs following a leak) will be completed after the period of self-isolation and/or shielding is over.

If your repair does not require immediate action we will agree an appointment with you for a later date.

Will the tradesperson/officer wear personal protective equipment (PPE)?

Whilst it is not mandatory for tradestaff or council officers to wear PPE like masks or gloves, some are choosing to do so – and if you would prefer that a tradesperson visiting your home wear a mask or gloves, please let us know.

The Government guidance continues to remind us of the importance of regular hand washing and/or sanitising, maintaining social distancing during home visits and, where appropriate, thoroughly cleansing surfaces before leaving each property.

What to do if you don't feel comfortable with the repair going ahead?

If you are concerned about any safety aspects, social distancing, or the conduct of the tradesperson at any point during the repair job please call **01962 848 400** and we will deal with the issue.

How to prepare for a home visit by a tradesperson or council officer

If you are expecting a visit from any member of council staff, or one of our contractors or tradespeople, there are certain things you can do before and during a home visit.

Before the visit:

- Let us know if you or anyone in your household is self-isolating or shielding and that you are happy for a home visit.
- Tell us if you would like the person visiting your home to wear a mask and/or gloves.
- If you are expecting a repair job please clear the area of your home where the tradesperson will be working.

During the visit:

- Keep 2 metres away from your visitor if possible.
- Open all internal doors to improve ventilation and prevent the need to touch door handles.
- Keep windows open during the visit.
- We suggest that only one person should open the door to the visitor. Keep the rest of your household in another room or outside for the duration of the visit.
- Remember to wash your hands immediately after the visitor has left.



Rent arrears? We're here to help

If you are waiting for your first Universal Credit payment please remember to credit your account as soon as your benefits arrive.

Worried about money? We can offer advice on support that might be available to you at this time.

If you're struggling to pay your rent please get in touch by emailing rents@winchester.gov.uk or call us on **01962 848 205** and we can help work out a way forward together.

If you are worried about paying your Council Tax please contact us on **01962 848 288** or email counciltax@winchester.gov.uk. We can provide tailored assistance based on your individual situation and work with you to arrange a suitable payment plan.



Support for domestic abuse victims

For many, spending more time at home has been a welcome opportunity to enjoy quality time with family. But for anyone living with domestic abuse it's a frightening and potentially dangerous situation. Our housing staff can offer advice and support and even arrange to meet you in a safe place if needed.



#NOEXCUSEFORABUSE

FIND SUPPORT AT:
Hampshire Domestic Abuse Service
Advice Line: **03300 165 112**

Looking after tenants

Our Tenancy team has continued to provide services and has been keeping in contact with tenants using phone, email and text. We have made calls to over 950 of our older tenants living in general needs properties to see if they are OK and to offer support if needed.



Supporting rough sleepers

Working with our local partners we have been able to provide accommodation, daily meals and vital support to all rough sleepers across the district so that no one has had to sleep on the streets at this time. We have also been working hard to prevent homelessness and provide alternative accommodation for those who have had to leave their homes.

Tenant Handbook online

We have updated the Tenant Handbook. See the latest version online at winchester.gov.uk/tenant-handbook

Empty properties

Where possible, we have been carrying out work in empty properties (also called voids) to get them ready for new tenants. From 26 May we were able to resume viewings of empty homes and begin new lettings.

Looking out for our sheltered housing tenants

It has been a top priority to protect our older and most vulnerable residents. We've kept in close contact with everyone in sheltered and extra care housing to ensure tenants are well and can access support if needed. We've been calling particularly vulnerable tenants weekly to check they are OK. We have also been lending a hand with shopping and picking up prescriptions for anyone who is unable to. A reminder that for now, communal lounges and guest bedrooms are closed.



Keeping neighbourhoods safe and clean

Our Neighbourhood Services team continue to regularly check communal areas are clear of clutter and rubbish. The team has been dealing with an increase in fly tipping, clearing sites and gathering evidence for prosecutions where possible.

Our cleaning contractor YBC has been visiting extra care, sheltered housing and temporary accommodation schemes more often, paying particular attention to high touch surfaces in communal areas like door handles, handrails and lift buttons.



Have your say

Although our Tenant Involvement team has had to pause the tenant training programme, we are focusing our energies on developing virtual engagement options to enable you to have your say without leaving home. In fact, some residents have already been holding successful tenant engagement meetings using Zoom.

We're also busy enhancing the team's social media presence and keeping the website information up to date. You can still contact the team by emailing: tenantinvolvement@winchester.gov.uk or calling Freephone **0800 716 987**. Find out more online at winchester.gov.uk/housing/get-involved

New homes

Construction work adhering to social distancing guidelines has resumed onsite at several of our new developments. Although completion dates will be delayed, work is progressing well to develop more much-needed affordable housing. Work is onsite to build:

- 77** new homes at The Valley, Stanmore
- 2** new houses at Dolphin Hill, Twyford
- 7** new homes at Rowlings Road, Weeke
- 35** new homes at Hookpit, Kingsworthy

Thank you...

to all staff and contractors for safely carrying on essential work during this difficult time. Contractors from Drew Smith have continued building new homes, Osborne staff have been busy getting empty properties ready to let to people in desperate need, plumbers from P H Jones have carried on repairing and servicing gas boilers in tenant's homes and engineers from Kone have made emergency repairs to lifts.

Please help our staff and contractors to work safely by keeping at least 2 metres away from anyone at work in your block or neighbourhood.

WIN!

Win a share of £100 in our gardening competition



If you've been keeping busy at home by developing your green fingers, we want to see the results!

Send us a photo of your colourful garden, balcony, hanging baskets or veg patches and you could win a share of £100.

It doesn't matter how big or small your outdoor space is, the competition is open to all tenants and leaseholders who are helping to inject some colour into council neighbourhoods, gardens, patios and balconies.

1st prize – £50 gardening vouchers
2nd and 3rd prizes – will each receive £25 of gardening vouchers

Email your photos to tenantvoice@winchester.gov.uk or post to:

Tenant Voice Gardening Competition
Winchester City Council
Freepost Plus RTLH-KXUA-SEEC
Tenant Involvement
Winchester, SO23 9ZT



Closing date: 21 August, 2020. We will publish the winners and their green fingered creations in our next issue. For full terms and conditions visit winchester.gov.uk/tv_competition

Useful phone contacts

Winchester Citizens Advice

The Citizens Advice team has adapted services to help support people at this time. Here's how to get in touch with them:

- Local Call Back Service: **01489 890 940** or **01962 848 003** (Mon to Fri)
- Regional Adviceline: **03444 111 306** Operating: Mon to Fri 9.30am to 5pm, and Sat 10am to 12pm)
- Universal Credit Help to Claim: **0800 144 8 444** (Operating Mon to Fri 8am to 6pm)
- Consumer Issues: **0808 223 1 133** (operating 9am to 5pm)
Email: advice@winchesterdistrictcab.org.uk
Visit their website – citizensadvicewinchester.org.uk

Online advice

Visit our dedicated website pages for all current COVID-19 information – winchester.gov.uk/covid19

Out of hours housing repairs **01962 865 405**

Winchester City Council services

Although our reception is currently closed to visitors, the city council still remains open for business by phone, email or through online digital services. Some useful council contact numbers:

- General enquiries **01962 840 222**
- Housing – General Housing enquiries **01962 848 400**
- Housing Options – Homelessness **01962 848 163**
- Sheltered Housing **01962 848 335**
- Waste **0300 300 0013**
- Benefits **01962 848 539**
- Council Tax and Business Rates **01962 848 288**
- Environmental Health **01962 848 097**

Get in touch

Winchester City Council
Freepost Plus RTLH-KXUA-SEEC
Tenant Involvement
Winchester
SO23 9ZT

Freephone: **0800 716 987**
Email: tenantvoice@winchester.gov.uk
winchester.gov.uk/tenantvoice



WinchesterTenants



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