

WINTER BUZZ



WIRRAL
Methodist
HOUSING
ASSOCIATION

Winter 2020

info@wmhaltd.org.uk | 0151 647 5471 | www.wmhaltd.org.uk

Ways to Contact us

A guide to our
complaints process

Together with Tenants



A message from the Chief Executive

Hello, since March 2020 we have seen our whole lives impacted by the events of COVID-19, changing the way we live, work, socialise and even the way we shop. We've all had to face personal and professional challenges and find ways to respond and adapt to our changing environment, and the changes don't stop there.

With continued restrictions in place and likely to remain that way for the foreseeable future, we're all having to adapt to a 'new normal'. For Wirral Methodist Housing, this means reflecting on our services and exploring how we can continue to deliver services whilst ensuring the safety of everyone involved. These unprecedented times have certainly tested our risk and business continuity planning. Our prompt response to emerging Government advice served to reinforce our resilience and agility and as we continue to explore and implement new and innovative ways of working.

Together with the Board, I want to thank each one of you for your ongoing patience and support. In the coming year I know there will be more challenges to face as we continue to adapt to the circumstances of COVID19, however I believe we have laid solid foundations to support us through future challenges. Inevitably, some things will take longer as we adapt to working with increasing safety measures and different ways of communicating. Our commitment to delivering quality customer-focussed services hasn't changed and we'll continue to work to make sure that all of our customers are kept informed and have the opportunity to provide input where practical.

I hope you find the newsletter useful

Paul Carhart CEO



Anne Steel

All at the Association would like to pay our respects to Anne Steel, who passed away after a long illness. A dedicated and respected member of the senior management team, Anne was Head of Housing at Wirral Methodist HA since 2010.

Anne is very well known in the North West housing circle having previously worked for Plus Dane Housing, Liverpool City Council, and Rochdale Council. During Anne's decade working on Wirral she developed a customer centric housing service that put the tenant first, and was led by a desire to meet their housing and support needs.

Anne led on specialist and supported housing and this was particularly important to her knowing what a difference this made to young people's lives.



Contacting us and our services

For safety reasons and following the latest Government guidelines, our office is closed. We are still here to support you and there are lots of ways to contact us. You can read more about this in our newsletter.

You can email us on info@wmhaltld.org.uk or complete our online form. If you would like to talk to a member of staff call 0151 647 5471 and follow the message options you will hear.

Some of our services, the ways in which we do things or how we contact you, may be different.

If you are displaying coronavirus symptoms or self-isolating and we are due to visit you, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can rearrange the visit.



Repairs Service

We are operating our repairs services and staff and contractors have the right personal protective equipment and are able to maintain social distancing. We may ask you to wait in another room while they carry out a repair. Please observe social distancing guidelines, we would be very grateful if you could maintain a safe distance from our staff.



Rent and Service Charges

It is important to continue to pay your rent and service charges. If you think you are going to struggle to make payments please contact us .

If you have lost your job then you may be entitled to benefits and qualify for assistance with paying your rent. Please contact us and a member of staff will discuss this with you.



Finding a Home

You can continue to bid on properties by logging into your account via Property Pool Plus website www.propertypoolplus.org.uk . You can place bids by calling 0300 777 3022 or Text to 07537 402 602 and with your membership number and property reference to hand. Text bids will be charged at your normal network rate. You must let your Housing Officer know if you are moving.



General Information

If you are experiencing financial difficulty, have concerns about the wellbeing of yourself or your family, or if you are aware of a resident who is struggling to receive support whilst self-isolating, please get in touch and someone will call or email you back to explain how we can help.

The Department for Work and Pensions also has guidance on the support available for those receiving Universal Credit or other benefits and for those who may need to claim benefits in the future.



Wirral Council Coronavirus Helpline

For information about Covid and a range of services contact the Local Authority on line at www.wirral.gov.uk. You can phone Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm on 0151 666 5050, but due to high call demand the phone lines are extremely busy.

Making a Complaint

We don't always get things right and when we make a mistake we want to put things right as soon as we can. We value complaints and all feedback and use this information to help improve our services.

Complaints will be dealt with confidentially, fairly, impartially and consistently. Where possible, complaints will be resolved as soon as possible by our front of house team, preferably informally.

How can I make a complaint?



Email

info@wmhaltld.org.uk www.wmhaltld.org.uk

Request a visit by appointment. Which happen if it is safe to do so.



Visit



Call us

0151 647 5471 and
speak to a member
of staff, or Scheme
Manager



Write to us

42 Hamilton Street
Birkenhead CH41
5AE



Talk

Speak to a member
of staff, or Scheme
Manager

Quick guide to our complaints process

When things go wrong, we will always try to put it right as soon as possible. We have a two stage complaints process and we will keep you informed about who is handling your complaint, how to contact them, what will happen next and by when. If we can't respond within the timescales we have promised, we will let you know why, and when we will respond to you in full.

About our complaints process:

Front of House – fix it

When you choose this option we assume that you simply want to get the problem fixed as quickly as possible, therefore we will not normally carry out a full investigation or send you a full response in writing. We will always ask what we can do to resolve the problem.

And we will:-

- try to find a way to solve your problem within five working days, usually contacting you by phone or email
- agree a solution with you and give you any information you need.

If you still feel that we have not addressed the problems you have raised, you can do this more formally under a 'Management Review' of your complaint.

Stage one – Management Review

When you choose this option, we assume you want a thorough investigation and are prepared to wait for a properly considered response. The review can take up to 10 working days and is overseen by a senior manager

- We will investigate your complaint fully
- We will discuss the problem with you to understand what solution you are looking for
- We will reply to your complaint in writing

Stage two: Check it

If you are still not satisfied, you can contact us and let us know why and what we can do to resolve the problem. A senior manager will reassess your complaint and reply in writing within 15 working days of the request being received.

The Housing Ombudsman Service

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service. The Ombudsman will not usually consider a complaint until it has been through the Association's internal complaints process. This gives us the chance to respond and try to put things right. Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152 Liverpool L33 7WQ.

Keeping you safe

The safety of our tenants is always a priority. It's also important to be mindful of fire safety at home, particularly at a time when we're all spending more time than usual there. Here are some tips for you:

- ✓ Most fires start in the kitchen, so don't leave cooking unattended.
- ✓ Never place candles near your furnishings and don't leave them burning unattended
- ✓ If you smoke, make sure that your smoking material is extinguished before you go to bed.
- ✓ Keep your home warm and prevent costly heat loss. We carry out an annual gas safety check and service to the heating system annually by a qualified professional.
- ✓ Don't overload plug sockets and switch appliances off at night or when you go out.
- ✓ Check your Christmas tree lights conform to the British Standard and always switch them off and unplug them before you go to bed.
- ✓ It is very important to regularly test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and check their batteries. (Make it a habit to change the batteries at the beginning of every season.)



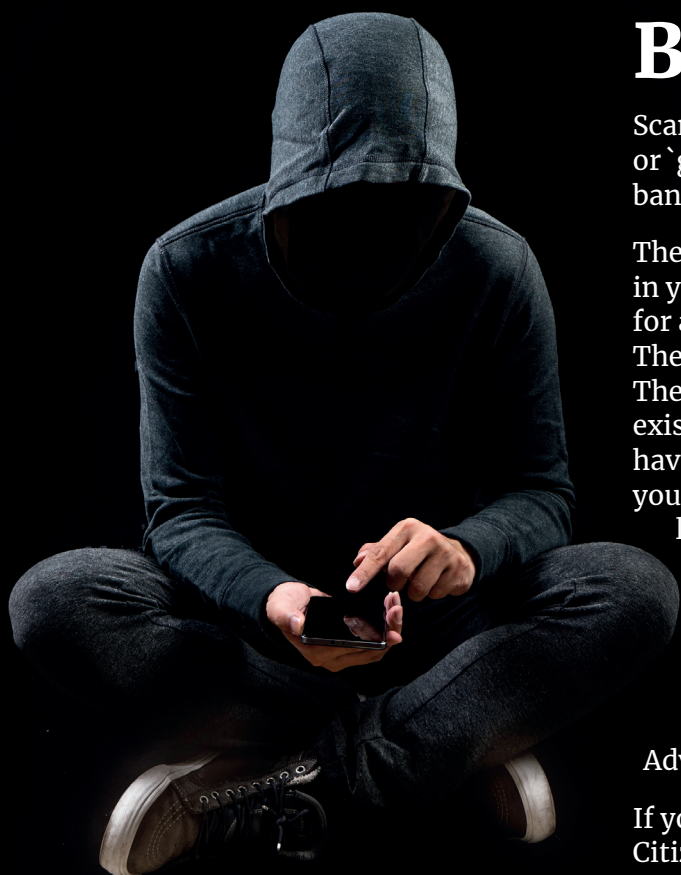
Beat the Scammers

Scammers have been offering people 'interest free loans' or 'government grants' in return for proof of identity, bank account details and a fixed fee.

These details are used to set up a Universal Credit Claim in your name, verify your identity with the DWP and apply for an advance payment or Universal Credit in your name. The scammers take their fee from this advance payment. They don't tell you this is a benefit and that it stops any existing benefits and tax credits claims that you may have. You also can't go back to these legacy benefits once you have claimed universal credit and you may receive less money per month than you did before. You may have to pay back the entire loan from your benefits, including the 'fee' the scammer takes from you.

If someone tries to scam you, or you have been scammed, contact Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 to report it and seek advice from your local Citizens Advice.

If you need help to claim Universal Credit, contact the free Citizens Advice help to Claim service on 0800 144 8444.



Composition of the Board

New Members have joined the Board at Wirral Methodist Housing Association. They bring valuable skills and experience to help develop the association further. The new editions bring a range of skills in finance, human resources, housing management and health and safety to the organisation.



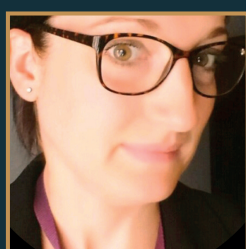
Lionel Bolland
(Board Chair)



Bryan McPaul
(Deputy Chair)



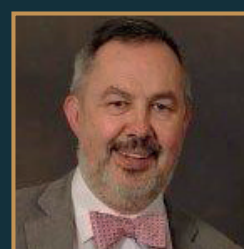
Noel Schorah
(Hon Secretary)



Claire Fouracre



Tom Sault
(Chair of the Governance and Internal Control Committee)



Ian Cubbin



Mike Thorne
(Chair of the Tenants and Communications Committee)



Maggie Cornall



Chris Page



Letrice Thomas



David Smith



WIRRAL Methodist HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Tenants Annual Report and Accounts

Our Tenants Annual Report 2019/20 and Accounts are available on our website www.wmhaltd.org.uk.

If you would like a copy of our Annual Report please contact us on info@wmhaltd.org.uk or phone 0151 647 5471 and our staff will assist.

The Annual Report tells you how we have performed in 2019/20 and our achievements in the year.



Together with Tenants

The National Housing Federation aims to create a stronger relationship between housing associations and residents and have been working with stakeholders to develop a four-point plan for change:

1. A new requirement in the National Housing Federation Code of Governance for boards to be accountable to residents.
2. A new Together with Tenants Charter
3. Resident oversight and reporting of progress against the Charter.
4. Giving residents a stronger collective voice with the regulator



**NATIONAL
HOUSING
FEDERATION**

Wirral Methodist Housing Association will support this plan and adopts the Together with Tenants Charter which aims to ensure that tenants' voices throughout the country are heard and that customers have more opportunities to influence the decisions that are made about the homes and services provided by housing associations.

'By adopting the Charter we commit to :



Relationships

Relationships between residents and housing associations will be based on openness, honesty and transparency.



Communication

You will receive clear, accessible and timely information on the issues that matter to you.



Voice and influence

Your views will be sought and valued and this information will be used to inform decisions.



Accountability

Working in partnership with you to scrutinise the decisions that affect the quality of your homes and services.



Quality

You can expect good quality well maintained, safe and well managed homes.



When things go wrong

You will have accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints and seeking redress, receiving timely advice and support.

To find out more about Together with Tenants, visit housing.org.uk/tenants

GIVE INPUT - Ways to help us improve

We want Tenants to have a wide range of opportunities to be involved in improving our services. This is vital to us in shaping our services based upon what you think is most important.

Our Tenants Advisory Group (TAG) was set up last year so that tenants can scrutinise our performance or the introduction of new policies or services. We are looking to increase the number of TAG members. If you are interested contact info@wmhaltd.org.uk or phone 0151 647 5471

Wirral Methodist Ways to INPUT

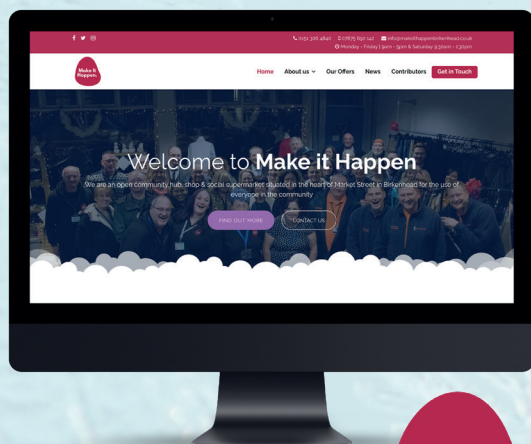
Do you know of ways in which we could improve our service? Have you a proposal to make our information clearer? Would you like to tell us about your experience of our services? How can we make our website better? You might want to comment on how well we responded to a request for a repair. We are always keen to hear your feedback! Please get in touch with us if you want to give us any feedback use feedback@wmhaltd.org.uk



Neighbourhood walkabouts

In August and September we carried out a number of walkabouts, a great way of finding out what is going on in the area. They give tenants and residents the opportunity to let us know about anything we could do to make neighbourhoods safer or tell us about anything else to do with your home or tenancy.

Housing Officers checked areas where we have not accessed during lockdown. We let you know when walkabouts are happening either by letter or text message and some tenants came out to speak to staff. We would love tenants to join us on our walkabouts so ask your Housing Officer when the next walkabouts are due to take place.



Make It Happen.

Make It Happen

Make it Happen, is a Community Hub, which consists of a community space, social supermarket and pay as you feel shop where customers pay what they can afford for clothes, enabling people to gain the means and ability to improve their quality of life whilst enjoying a unique retail experience.

For more information visit their website

www.makeithappenbirkenhead.co.uk

Phone **0151 306 4840**

Email info@makeithappenbirkenhead.co.uk

Address 72-74 Market St, Birkenhead, Wirral, CH41 5B

We want to hear from you about the Buzz

Your feedback about this newsletter is important to us and will help us improve our communication with tenants.

Please send your views to feedback@wmhaltd.org.uk or write in to the office.



Wirral Methodist Housing Association. A not for profit organisation
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Registered Society under the Co-operative & Community Benefit Act 2014 -16740R.

