

WINTER 2023



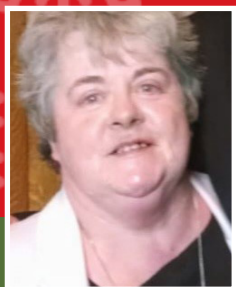
**Wirral Methodist
Housing Association**

BUZZ

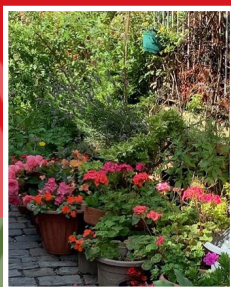
info@wmhaltd.org.uk

TEL.0151 647 5471

www.wmhaltd.org.uk



**Meet
Board
Member
Sandra**



**'Blooming
marvellous'
gardening
competition**



**Look after
yourself
this Winter**

Welcome from the Chief Executive

Hello and welcome to another edition of your Buzz Newsletter. As we approach the New Year, we can reflect on the past twelve months, which I know have brought a number of challenges. But I've also been really proud to see the ways in which tenants and staff have worked together to do so much good in our communities.

In the past year we have continued to work hard to deliver our main priorities for you:

- To be a provider of Excellent Services
- To be Financially Strong and Compliant
- To be an Excellent Association
- To Build Thriving Communities
- To be Environmentally Sustainable

The Board and staff of the Association have set some challenging targets and actions to help us achieve these and we place our values at the forefront of everything we do.

We want to ensure we always act with Integrity Respect and Fairness and to take Responsibility and be as Customer Focused as possible.

We take your views seriously and in this edition of The Buzz, you see how we put this into practice through appointing tenants to the board, carrying out our Tenant Satisfaction Survey and encouraging participation in TAG, the Tenant Advisory Group.

As ever, we can only provide a snapshot of what we have been up to in this newsletter – there is lots more information and advice on our website.

I hope you have a happy and peaceful Christmas and I wish you all the very best for the New Year.

Paul Carhart
Chief Executive Officer



Our new Office

We are always looking at ways to provide a good working environment for staff, and to get better value for money and plough as much as we can back into your homes. So, we are converting empty space on the first and second floor of our Hamilton Street offices into eight apartments to rent and closing our old offices on the ground floor.

We will be moving across the road to Partnership Building 45 Hamilton St, Birkenhead CH41 5AA from 1 December and sharing a reception facility with Magenta Living. You'll still be able to make an appointment to see us by calling 01516475471 or e-mailing us at info@wmhaltd.org.uk but like now, there won't be an option to drop in.



**Wirral Methodist
Housing Association**

However, our Board has been clear that whilst we take advantage of better value-for-money offices, we still remain a proudly independent Housing Association, with the same community focus.

Board Member Profile – Sandra Simmons MBE

We caught up with Sandra, one of our Board Members and asked her to share her experiences of being involved at the Association. Sandra is a tenant and lives in Birkenhead.



Hi Sandra, can you tell us a little about why you became a Board Member at Wirral Methodist



I became a Board Member as I felt that residents need to have a say in what happens in our homes and our town, and also to be a voice for tenants.



And why do you think it is important that tenants have involvement at Board level and throughout the Association



Tenants need to have an involvement at Board level as we know what is happening locally and some Board Members do not have this local knowledge. It also gives you a voice on improving standards, planned changes and developments.



What advice would you give anyone wanting to get involved in their community or with Wirral Methodist



I would encourage anyone interested in becoming involved in their community, schools or with Wirral Methodist to make enquiries, it is a first step which might lead to a very rewarding experience. If you are open-minded and happy to embrace opportunities, this is ideal for you.



What do you enjoy most about being involved at Wirral Methodist



I have been very impressed with the warm welcome I have received from everyone at Wirral Methodist including Board Members and staff. I have been told that my views help greatly. I know from my own perspective this is important, it is possible we will be tenants far longer than staff and Board Members are part of the organisation. Also, we need to have a voice in what happens in our future and the future of the Association.



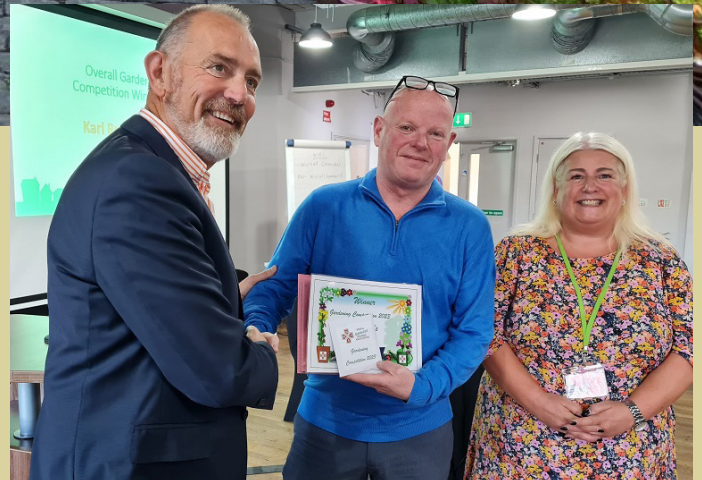
Coming next

in the next edition, we will catch up with Tenant Complaints Champion and Board Member, David Smith, who will tell us all about his role at Wirral Methodist.

From petals to prizes: 2023 Gardening Competition

When we are out and about in the community, we are always impressed with the hard work that you put into your lovely gardens. This year we decided to once again celebrate your efforts with a gardening competition.

There were lots of entries for the two categories, communal garden and private garden, all with inspiring stories about what gardening means to you. Judging was a tough job for Chief Executive Paul Carhart, who said: ***"It was very difficult to choose a winner as each garden was uniquely beautiful."***



Private Garden

Private garden winner, Karl Reynolds from Aldersgate in Birkenhead created a unique sanctuary, with beautiful, raised flower beds and a stunning summer house.



Communal Area

The joint winners of the communal area category were the residents of Cloughton Road and Hornby Street in Birkenhead, residents at each street worked to create an oasis in their alleyways.

Your community notice board

Tell your housing officer if there's something you want to share

Starts at Home Day 2023

On 1st September we celebrated Starts at Home Day, which is our day to celebrate the positive impact of supported housing on our communities across the Wirral. It's also a day of action to call for policies that make sure every person who needs extra support will always have a safe, secure home that meets their needs.

One of our new residents in supported housing in Bromborough said: "I am really enjoying my new home! I love the fact that I can go to my room and listen to my music, but then when I want to, I can come and watch TV with the other residents. Since moving here, I feel at home and enjoy having more space than in my last home."

Wesley Grange Macmillan Coffee Morning

In September, Wesley Grange in Woodchurch hosted a Macmillan coffee morning to raise money to support people suffering from cancer. Every penny donated supports Macmillan in helping the many people sadly living with cancer to live life as fully as they can.

Some of the tenants made their own cakes and bread and others bought cakes to be sold. On the day we raised over £150. A huge thanks to everyone who donated!

TAG - Our Tenants Advisory Group

It's important to us that we get Tenants input on our policies that guide how we deliver our services and to what standard. We also need to understand whether your priorities match ours. We are always open to ideas and feedback – you can use our website form, contact us at info@wmhaltd.org.uk or talk to one of our Housing Officers



For those that want to get a bit more involved, we have a group called our Tenants Advisory Panel or TAG for short that we pull together a few times a year, sometimes in person and sometimes online. We are always looking for new members for TAG, so if you want to get involved or find out if it's right for you, then contact info@wmhaltd.org.uk

Your views matter

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM took place on 29 September at the Laurie's Centre in Birkenhead. We were delighted to see so many of our partners and supporters join us to celebrate all that we have achieved together in 2022/23. Around 50 people attended the event including Board Members, staff, shareholders, tenants and friends of the Association. We were extremely pleased that Birkenhead MP, Mick Whitley was able to join us and learn more about our work.

Our Chair, Bryan McPaul opened the meeting and explained that our aim is to engage more with tenants over the coming year, allowing us to continue to improve the organisation and concentrate on the issues that matter. The Chair also explained that we were sad to say goodbye to Mike Thorne, who stepped down as a Board Member after many years of service, and the meeting thanked him for his contribution.

Making sure your voice is heard

We were delighted to welcome so many tenants from the local area to join us for an engagement session at the AGM. Tenants were asked before the session to send their questions in and they would be answered on the day. We also gave all tenants in attendance at the event an opportunity to ask further questions. We are extremely grateful to all of the tenants who took time out of their day to join us, scrutinise our work and shape our future plans.

We discussed the new homes we have recently built across the local community.

We then shared some case studies on the complaints we have received and provided tenants with details about the learning that has taken place as a result.

Following this initial discussion, we held a Q&A session where community safety, improvements to homes and how new tenants are selected were amongst the topics discussed.

We surveyed tenants who attended and 100% of tenants said they would attend another similar event.

Our Annual Report 2022/23

Our Annual Report contains important information on how we performed in 2022/23 including our financial performance, how we've managed our properties, our compliance with regulations as well as our future plans. The annual report is available on our website here: **www.wmhaltd.org.uk/annual-report-to-tenants-2022-23**

Or by scanning a QR code

If you'd like a printed edition, email **info@wmhaltd.org.uk** or give us a call on **0151 647 5471** and we'd be happy to send you a copy.





Satisfaction Survey Update

In September, we embarked on an exciting journey to hear from you directly about the things that are important to you through the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey. The response from our tenants has been outstanding. Since the survey's launch, we've been inundated with valuable feedback from tenants across the community.

As we approach the survey's closing date in December, we want to thank all those who have taken the time to contribute their thoughts and insights. Your input is invaluable, and we will share the results next year.



Changes to regulation

The Regulator of Social Housing is responsible for making sure that tenants' interests are protected, by ensuring that no housing association goes bust, or that no housing association is so badly run it can't keep your home safe and well repaired.

The way that the Regulator works is by setting detailed "Regulatory Standards" that all housing associations have to meet. The Regulator wants to strengthen this approach and plans to bring in new or updated "consumer standards" from April 2024:

The Safety and Quality Standard is about making sure landlords offer tenants homes that are good and safe, warm and dry by:

- Doing checks on things like gas, electricity, boilers and smoke alarms in each home.
- Keeping good notes about all of their homes and what condition they are in.
- Looking after their homes, including fixing things it is their job to fix when they are broken.
- Carrying out repairs in the right way and as quickly as possible and making it easy for tenants to report a repair.
- Working with others to meet people's needs to live safely and independently in their homes.

The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard says that landlords

should have good relationships with their tenants, treating people fairly and with respect. This includes involving tenants in plans and decisions and asking tenants for their ideas about how to do things better in future. It also includes ensuring that complaints are dealt with fairly and quickly.

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard requires landlords to work together

with others to keep neighbourhoods safe, clean and well-maintained.

The Tenancy Standard sets out that landlords must let homes in a fair and transparent way. Where - as a last resort - there is a need to evict a tenant, support and advice must be offered.

Look after yourself during the winter months.

With the cost of food and heating still very high, this is shaping up to be another challenging winter for many of us. Here at Wirral Methodist Housing Association, we want you to know that we are here to help and support you.

Whether it's support with being able to keep warm and eat well or dealing with an unexpected issue with an essential household item, please do not hesitate to contact us if you need some support.

Help with your energy bills

If you're feeling worried about the cost of heating your home this winter, then you're not alone. The good news is that you can get help.



Involve North West The team at Involve offers professional free advice with issues such as welfare benefits and debt and money management issues.

For more information or to find out where you can see an advisor, please call

0151 644 1100 or visit
www.involvenorthwest.org.uk



Wirral Borough Council

Wirral Borough Council can offer advice and cold weather payments for tenants who are on certain benefits.

Find out more at
www.wirral.gov.uk/benefits-and-money/cost-living



Cheshire West and Chester

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Wirral Borough Council can offer advice and cold weather payments for tenants who are on certain benefits.

Find out more at

www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/benefits-and-welfare-help/cost-of-living



National Energy Action

If you're struggling to pay your energy bills, the first step is to tell your energy supplier. They **MUST** work with you to find a solution. If you need some help with contacting your supplier, then National Energy Action will help you.

You can call them on

0800 304 7159

or visit **www.nea.org.uk**



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Wirral Methodist Housing Association

Paying your rent

If you are worried that you might get into difficulties, please keep on paying your rent and service charges and contact our team for support. There are a range of ways that we can help, including assisting you with accessing the benefits that you might be entitled to.

You can ring us on **0151 647 5471**

email us at **info@wmhalttd.org.uk**

or complete our online help form on our website at

www.wmhalttd.org.uk

There are other people and organisations that will help too:



Call **0151 482 3456**
or visit **www.ageuk.org.uk/wirral**



Call **0808 278 7848** or visit
www.citizensadvicewirral.org.uk



Support with food Please don't go hungry this winter – help is available. If you need emergency support, Citizens Advice Wirral will help you if you ring their free number on 0808 278 7848. They will ask you a few questions so they can understand your situation. If they're able to help, they'll issue an electronic voucher which you can use to get a 3-day supply of essential food items.

There are nine different food banks across the Wirral. You can find the addresses and contact details at:
www.wirral.foodbank.org.uk/locations



Keep warm at the Community Village You can get support, keep warm and access free tea and coffee at Involve North West. Visit The Community Village, 330-334 New Chester Road, Rock Ferry, which is open Monday to Friday 9am-5pm. You can chat with other people and if you need some advice about benefits or employment opportunities, then the team at Involve will be happy to help you.

For more information call
0151 644 1100 or visit
www.involvenorthwest.org.uk



Have you heard of social supermarkets?

Social supermarkets are community-based shops that provide good quality fresh food at lower prices than you can find elsewhere. Some also offer activities, social events and a chance to eat something hot and have a chat if you want to.

We work very closely with Make it Happen who are based on Market Street Birkenhead. They are a community based organisation that offer a “pay as you feel shop” on not only food but on other products such as clothing, CD’s, DVD’s, etc. They offer food at a heavily discounted price. There are several social supermarkets throughout the Wirral including:

- Make It Happen, Market Street Birkenhead, tel: **0151 306 4840**
- Hoole Road, Woodchurch, tel: **0151 522 0738**
- Shaftesbury Youth Club, Tranmere, tel: **0151 608 7165**
- Neo, Rock Ferry, Email: **info@neocommunity.org.uk**
- Gateway Church, Birkenhead, tel: **07838 155828**
Email: **thegate@gatewaywirral.com**
- Nightingales café and social hub, Birkenhead, tel: **0151 647 0286**
- Fed up Wallasey at Sandbrook Community Centre, tel: **0151 604 0374**
Email: **sandbrookcommunity@hotmail.com**
- Bargain bags, Seacombe, Email: **info@citcuk.org.uk**

Other organisations offering support

- St Vincent De Paul can offer a range of support including a community hub and help with second hand white goods. Visit them at St Vincent’s Wirral, 15-19 Grange Road West, Birkenhead, CH41 4BY or call **0151 673 1313**
- Wirral Borough Council offer emergency financial support, advice and assistance to families and individuals in crisis. Call **0151 606 2005**
- Wirral FUS can offer help if you are struggling to afford school uniforms. Contact them on **07731 831936** or **wirralfuss@gmail.com**
- Wirral Mind provide services to support & promote positive mental health. Call **0151 512 2200** or visit **wirralmind.org.uk**

Happy Christmas

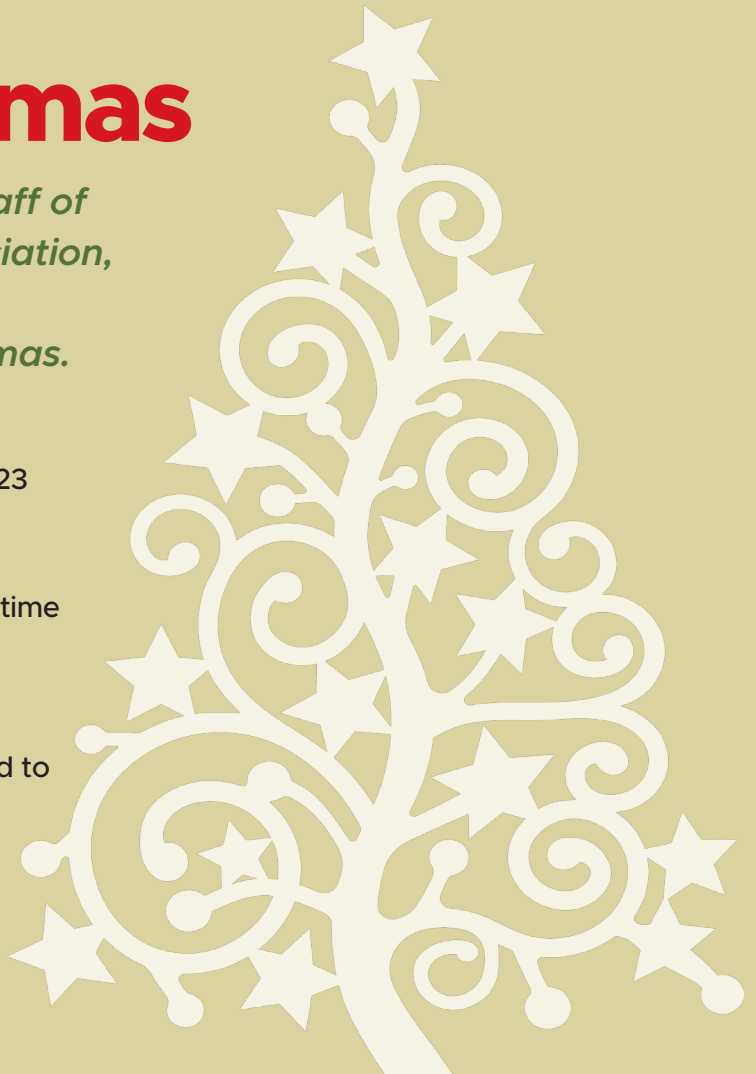
*On behalf of the Board and staff of
Wirral Methodist Housing Association,
we wish all our tenants
a Happy and Peaceful Christmas.*

Our office will close at
12pm – midday – on Friday 22nd December 2023
and reopen at
9am on Tuesday 2nd January 2024.

Emergency repairs can be reported during this time
via the My Home website or by telephoning
0151 647 5471 and selecting option 1.

You can also email **info@wmhaltd.org.uk** for
non-urgent matters and these will be responded to
in January.

Visit our website at
wmhaltd.org.uk
or scan our QR code
on your phone:



Do you have Home Contents Insurance?

Some of our tenants and leaseholders may not be aware that we do not provide insurance cover for your belongings, so you may not be protected against issues like theft, fire, vandalism or burst pipes. We strongly recommend that all residents take out suitable cover to make sure that your contents are fully insured against possible loss.

While you are free to make your own arrangements, we have a low-cost policy that is offered through the National Housing Federation.

The insurance provides cover for:

All electrical goods for example televisions

- Freezer contents damaged due to electrical failure
- Lost or stolen keys
- Decoration inside your home
- And damage caused by your pets

You can pay premiums every week, month, or year. If you are interested in this scheme, please contact us for an application form. You can email us at: **info@wmha.org.uk** or ring **0151 647 5471**.

Feedback on Buzz

We hope you're enjoying the latest edition of our newsletter! Your opinions matter, and we want to ensure Buzz continues to be a valuable source of information for you. Whether suggestions for improvements or ideas for future content, we welcome your feedback.

Give your views by emailing us at **info@wmha.org.uk**



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