

IN TOUCH

Tenants attend National Tenant Scrutiny Conference: PAGE 5



Message from the InTouch Editorial Panel

The editorial panel is a group of involved residents working in partnership with the Resident Involvement Team to keep you informed on issues that affect tenants and leaseholders of North West Leicestershire District Council. If you would like to make any comments or contribute to the magazine, please contact the Resident Involvement Team on 01530 454605 or resident.involvement@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

CONTENT

Drop-in support in when you're struggling to cope	2
Money gurus on hand to provide help and support - Don't be afraid to ask for help	3
Our work with the Housing Ombudsman	4
Tenants hear first-hand from Housing Ombudsman	5
Tenants attend National Tenant Scrutiny Conference	5
Recycle more... in 2024!	6
Gardening in January – tips from the Royal Horticultural Society	6
Domestic abuse support and advice	7
Mental health and wellbeing	7
Recipe: Curry in a hurry	8
Don't go hungry this winter	8

Drop-in support when you're struggling to cope

Neighbourhood Mental Health Cafes offer local support for people who need immediate help with their mental health.

They are drop-in centres for anyone to talk to specialists in confidence about their mental health. No appointment is needed. They are run by partners on behalf of the NHS.

Access supportive, trained staff who can listen and provide the practical support you need.

If you need urgent mental health support, call our free 24/7 Mental Health Central Access Point on 0808 800 3302. Always call 999 if there is an immediate threat to life.

Coalville, run by Marlene Reid Community Action

Monday, 2pm to 6pm

Wednesday, 10am – 2pm

Friday, 6pm – 10pm.

85 Belvoir Road, Coalville, LE67 3PH.

Call 01530 510515

Measham, run by Age UK

Tuesday, 4pm to 7pm

Fridays, 1pm to 4pm

40 High Street, Measham, Swadlincote,
DE12 7HZ.

Call 07731 019 489

Money gurus on hand to provide help and support - Don't be afraid to ask for help

Our dedicated team of Tenancy Sustainment Officers is here to help you if you have money worries.

Alison Mugglestone, Sue Bradshaw and Katie Otter work in Housing Management, supporting tenants to help them make their money work for them. The team works with Housing Officers, Citizens Advice, Job Centre Plus and other organisations to keep people in their homes.

Whether you're behind with your rent, unable to pay your energy bills or in debts, the team could support you to keep your home and make the most of your money.

Sue said: *"We're here to help you maximise your money, many of the people we work with have enough money to pay their priority bills but it's not available when it's needed, so we work on budgeting."*

"We often advise people to set up a second bank account, so they have an account just for bills and the other account for everyday essentials so they can see exactly what is left at any time."

Alison added: *"Some tenants need a helping hand, whether it's their first tenancy, there's been a change in circumstances or there's illness."*

Success for the team isn't just about helping tenants to claim unentitled benefits. They work with housing officers to reduce the need for evictions and even social workers to secure aids or adaptations to properties.

Katie added: *"We're here to help and signpost where we can. We can't fix everything and we might need to get you more specialist financial advice, but we can help you manage the money you have and support you to have peace of mind."*

If you can't pay your bills or have money worries, communication is key. Speak to someone as soon as possible, it's never too late.

Top money tips this January if you're struggling

Ask for help, have a conversation

Pay your rent and council tax first

Look at the money you have coming in and going out

Use the new year as a new start

Where to go for help:

Speak to us. Contact your Housing Officer or email Housing Management at housing.mgt@nwleicestershire.gov.uk. or call us on **01530 454660**.

Citizens Advice. Make an appointment by calling **0808 2787854**, or visit our Customer Centre on Belvoir Road on Fridays; or the Pathways Community Café in Ashby.

Hope67 Community Money Advice. Free community money advice for anyone in North West Leicestershire. Email moneyadvice@hope67.org.uk or call **07776 98 68 54**.

Job Centre Plus Coalville. Call **0800 169 0190**

First Contact Plus. An online tool for advice and support across Leicestershire. Visit firstcontactplus.org.uk or email firstcontact@leics.gov.uk.

Step Change Debt Charity. Free confidential debt advice. Visit stepchange.org for 24/7 advice and support or call **0800 1381111**.



Our work with the Housing Ombudsman

We're committed to getting things right first time, but we know that sometimes our services don't meet your needs or expectations. Our complaints process not only helps you, but also means we can learn from our mistakes and explain why we have done something. If you reach the end of our complaints process and are still unhappy with the outcome, you can speak to the Housing Ombudsman.

The Housing Ombudsman acts as a voice for social housing tenants, whether your landlord is a council, housing association or charity.

Between April 2022 and March 2023:

- Six complaints about our housing services investigated by the Housing Ombudsman
- Two decisions issued by the Housing Ombudsman
- One complaint review – Tenants and landlords can ask for an Ombudsman decision to be reviewed.

Case one, house fire – Tenant complaint that their concerns about the cause of a house fire were not properly responded to, the handling of the repairs after the fire, the level of support and financial assistance provided, our complaint handling and decision that we

were not liable for the fire at the property. The tenant also requested compensation for the damage cause to their belongings (no contents insurance) and their families mental health.

Housing Ombudsman's decision

The Housing Ombudsman agreed with the tenant that there were issues with the way the fire was responded to, how the repair and the complaint were handled.

We were ordered to apologise to the tenant, pay compensation and write to the tenant to explain why an electrical inspection test wasn't completed on time. We also had to appoint an independent consultant to implement a review of the evidence from the case.

What we did:

- Electrical testing now completed at least every five years
- Fire policy reviewed
- Tenants will have a named point of contact in the event of a fire to make sure activities are coordinated
- Housing Fire Management process reviewed



Tenants hear first-hand from Housing Ombudsman



Thank you to all tenants who joined us and EMH Group in October to learn more about the Housing Ombudsman service.

More than 50 of you attended in person or joined in online for the joint Meet the Housing Ombudsman event. Requested by our Tenant Scrutiny Panel, the meeting gave tenants a chance to hear from the Ombudsman about the services available to all social housing tenants.

Tenants attend National Tenant Scrutiny Conference

Scrutiny panel members Laura Quinton, Pauline Gamble and Elaine Hill represented our tenants at this year's National Tenant Scrutiny Conference.

Organised by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) the event is an opportunity for tenants across the country to meet and learn more about social housing.

The conference included a session about the Social Housing Regulator and the opportunities and expectation for tenants to get involved in reviewing the performance of their landlord.

After the event, Elaine said: *"I got a good view into how other scrutiny members are progressing, giving me a lot to think about how we can go forward into the future."*



Recycle more... in 2024!

Following these tips will help us to collect your waste and recycle more this year

- Flatten all cardboard to 2ft x 2ft. Cardboard that doesn't fit in the yellow bag should be flattened to this size and neatly stacked next to your bins and containers, or put into small cardboard boxes.
- Rinse, squeeze and squash your recycling to keep it clean and fit more in your bin or container
- Keep batteries and electrical items out of your bins and recycling containers as they can cause fires! Find out how to safely recycle these items at www.nwleics.gov.uk/recycling_az
- Take care to put the right item in the right bin or container. You can check what can and can't be recycled at www.nwleics.gov.uk/recycle or request a recycling guide from your Housing Officer
- Keep your recycling loose – please do not use plastic bags as they cause issues during the recycling process
- Disposing of a large bulky item such as furniture, a mattress or fridge? Leaving large items on the street or in your bin store without a collection arrangement can attract fly-tipping. You may be eligible to book a free bulky waste collection instead at www.nwleics.gov.uk/bulkywaste

Still have your real Christmas tree?

Real Christmas trees can be put inside garden waste bins, so they can be made into compost. Bin lids should be fully closed so you may need to trim the tree for it to fit. We cannot collect Christmas trees left next to bins.

Households without a garden waste bin can take the tree to a local Recycling and Household Waste Site or ask if a local animal sanctuary is collecting Christmas trees.



Gardening in January – tips from the Royal Horticultural Society

January might be the middle of winter but the garden starts to grow as the days get longer.

Now is a great time to plan for the coming gardening year and to order seeds and plants. Enjoy the fresh air, on dry sunny days, and check your winter protection, stakes, ties and supports are still working after any severe weather. Also put out food for birds and leave some garden areas uncut, a little longer, to provide shelter for wildlife in your garden.

Top gardening jobs this month

- ✂ Prune apple and pear trees
- 🧹 Clean pots and greenhouses ready for spring
- 🌱 Dig over any vacant plots that have not been dug already
- ♻️ Recycle your Christmas tree by shredding it for mulch
- 🌱 Plan your vegetable crop rotations for the coming season

Domestic abuse support and advice

Confidential advice and support for domestic abuse is available in person or over the phone with our specialist Domestic Abuse Link Worker.

Victims or survivors of domestic abuse can speak to the link worker in a safe space, and be referred to specialist services if needed.

What is domestic abuse?

Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse can be a single incident, or repeated acts, but is always unacceptable and should not be tolerated.

It includes physical violence as well as sexual, emotional, psychological or financial abuse. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse are also victims.

How can you contact the link worker?

Arrange an appointment by calling **01530 454545** or dropping into our Coalville Customer Centre on Thursdays. The Customer Centre is a safe environment and our staff are here to listen and help. All communication will be treated in the strictest confidence.

What other services are available?

Specialist services are available across Leicestershire to support everyone.

Including services for:

- Male victims
- LGBTQ+ victims
- Child victims

Support can be given to find housing, including temporary refuge, advice on safety planning and counselling.

If you are concerned that your behaviour towards your family or partner may be abusive, and would like to make a change, we can also provide help.

Remember: if you or anyone else you know is in immediate danger call 999.



Mental health and wellbeing

Wellbeing is a term that is used a lot, but what does it mean and why should it be a top priority?

Often good wellbeing is thought to mean always being happy, but no one is happy all the time. Wellbeing is feeling good and enjoying day to day life, but, also feeling able to deal with the more difficult times and the challenges we face. Here are some tips to look after your wellbeing.

1. Take Notice: Make time to appreciate the world around you. Be aware of the moment and your feelings and thoughts.
2. Keep learning: Make time for learning to keep your brain active.

3. Give: Doing good deeds is shown to increase wellbeing.
4. Physical Activity: Improvements in **physical health** can help improve your mental health. Try to find an activity that you enjoy that fits in with your routine, it doesn't need to be strenuous.
5. Connect: Evidence suggests that feeling close to, and valued by, others people is as important to wellbeing as eating and drinking.

You never have to face life's challenges alone. Please reach out for support.

More details on page 2.

Recipe: Curry in a hurry

You will need

- 2 x sweet potatoes
- 1 x onion
- 1 x mug of red lentils
- 1 x garlic clove or paste
- 1 x jar of curry paste
- 1 x stock cube
- Tomato purée
- 1 x tin of coconut milk
- Salt and pepper
- Dried spices – turmeric, ginger and cumin

To make

- Wash and chop sweet potatoes into chunks
- Chop onion and crush garlic clove
- Add ingredients to a saucepan
- Pour in all the coconut milk
- Add stock cube to 200ml of boiling water, stir and add 150ml to the saucepan, keep 50ml stock back to use later if needed
- Add 3 teaspoons of curry paste – use more or less to suit your tastes



- Add teaspoon of cumin and turmeric and half a teaspoon of ginger
- Add the red lentils
- Add tablespoon of tomato purée
- Stir and cook on the hob for an hour, stirring regularly and adding more stock if needed.
- Serve and enjoy
- Can be served with naan bread, rice, jacket potato or vegetables

Don't go hungry this winter

Whether you need a one-off food parcel or extra support to feed yourself and family this winter, there are places to help. Here are just a few of the places available:

Plenty 2 Cook Social Supermarket, Coalville – open to all. Bring the price of your weekly shop down. Marlene Reid Centre, Belvoir Road.

Wednesdays and Fridays: 8.45am - 10.45am

Thursday: 8.45am to 10.45am and 4.30pm to 6.30pm

Pop-up Social Supermarket, Thringstone – open to everyone. Plenty 2 Cook pop-up market at the Charles Booth Centre.

Wednesday 11.30am to 1pm

8

Castle Donington Food Bank – Referral needed. St Edwards Church Hall.

Thursday 10.30am to 12.30pm

Need an emergency food parcel? Call us on **01530 454545** for help and support, or contact Citizens Advice on **0808 2787854**

Learn to cook:

Join our Food Poverty Officer and learn how to cook the basics and improve your skills.

Three-week course starting Wednesday 17 January. 12.30pm to 2.30pm. Email helen.crouch@nwleicestershire.gov.uk to join.