

Trust talks

OUR TENANTS ARE BUILDING A NEW FUTURE



CONSTRUCTION
SKILLS FUND



"It feels like we are building the homes of the future."

If you are interested in a career in construction you can sign up for free training at www.construction-ready.co.uk



@ConstructReady

An exciting training programme to create homes of the future

Tenants Jayden Jones, Simone Hitchen and Leon Tomkinson are trainee house building operatives. The homes they are producing are highly-insulated Passivhaus's where most of the heating comes from electrical appliances, sunlight and body heat – meaning reduced heating bills.

We're proud to be among the first in the country to train people up to make these incredible homes – and the first four will be erected at Arleston in Wellington.

Jayden from Wellington said: "I've

learned so much, from power tool training to working at heights, and I'm hoping I can have a career building these fantastic houses. **It feels like we are building the homes of the future.**"

Trainees are taught key skills such as electrical, joinery, brickwork, plumbing and painting.

Simone was looking for a job she could fit in around school hours: "I knew I liked decorating and gardening, and I did woodwork at school – but I never thought about it as a career.

Now I would like to pass on the skills I have learnt and help train others."

Leon had been unemployed for seven months and thought he was too old to re-train. "I heard about the Marches Construction Ready Programme through my work coach. Construction wasn't something I had thought of doing, but I decided I would give it a go and I am very glad I did. It is great to be able to see what you have created – **building houses gives you great satisfaction.**"

Please note our offices will be closed from 5pm on Tuesday 24th December and reopen at 8.30am on Thursday 2nd January. You can still report repairs during this time by calling 01952 217217. Offices will also be closed on Tuesday 11th February when we hold our Group staff conference; only emergency repairs will be undertaken that day. In the event of extreme weather we may restrict services and prioritise more vulnerable tenants.



Wayne's Wrekin word



Welcome to the latest edition of Trust Talks, which also includes your 2020 calendar.

In the last edition of Trust Talks I wrote this column just after my appointment as Group Chief Executive. I am now six months into the role and I have been enjoying meeting tenants, engaging with our partners locally and working with our great team here at Wrekin as we strive to make a difference to people's lives.

I'd like to thank all of you who responded to the recent local standards consultation the results of which you will find on pages 3-5. The feedback we get from this consultation helps to shape how we do things and to enable us to deliver services, invest in your homes and to build new ones. We have been working on a corporate refinancing which has just been completed.

You will notice that we've done things a little differently with this edition of Trust Talks and our 2020 calendar. Firstly, they have been delivered to you in biodegradable wrapping that can be composted or disposed of in your food waste bin, and secondly the calendar is made up of the winning entries in our art competition. I'd like to thank everyone who entered the competition, I am sure you will agree that the finished product looks great.

I wish you all a happy 2020.

Wayne Gethings

In this edition

Wayne Gethings and..... Laura Hilditch	P2
Fire safety.....	P3
Tenant Charter.....	P3-5
Healthy New Year..... finances and debt free Christmas tips	P6-7
Highly allotments.....	P8
Competition.....	P8

The editorial team

The team would like to thank everyone who has got involved with this edition of Trust Talks. If you have any feedback or ideas for future editions, please email trust.talks@wrekinhousinggroup.org.uk

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The latest news from Laura Hilditch – Chair of the Tenants' Panel

Calendar 2020

We had a fantastic response to our calendar competition with over 75 entries and I was delighted to join Tenants' Panel member Mo Edwards to judge the entries along with the Group's Design Consultant Lois Harding and lecturers Joe Adams and Simon Wilks from Telford College.

Our thanks go to all of the local artists that took part in the competition and congratulations to the twelve whose artwork has been published in our 2020 calendar.

The Wrekin Housing Group is delighted to send you a copy of the calendar with this Trust Talks. Special congratulations go to Dave Hughes, a Wrekin tenant, whose painting of Coalport canal takes pride of place on the front cover as our overall winning artwork. Well done, Dave.



We are currently looking for new members to join the Tenants' Panel, our Audit group and Assurance Panel. If you would like to find out more contact **01952 217181** or email getinvolved@wrekinhousinggroup.org.uk



Our Fire Safety team has expanded



We now employ eight people, including two trades teams who undertake fire safety and compliance repairs. Phil Rowles, Fire Category Lead Engineer, and the team carry out various duties to ensure that fire and building safety is at the heart of everything we do.

Andy Lockyer, our Fire Safety Manager, explains what they do.

“Risk assessments are at the core of what we do. We carry out over 360 assessments a year: they’re a daily task undertaken in our flats, apartment blocks and anywhere that has any communal or shared space. We evaluate a number of key points, which include checking fire doors, the construction of the building, fire detection systems and evacuation procedures. It’s important that

everything is maintained well. If we discover a problem, our trades will get the repair sorted. Keeping our customers safe in our buildings is our priority and we work closely with the Fire and Rescue Services, our wider trades teams, risk assessors and customers to achieve this. Everyone has a part to play in fire safety.”

Both fire and smoke can kill. It’s important that everybody is mindful of fire. Regularly testing smoke alarms, planning your escape route,

keeping doors shut at night and ensuring door and hallways are kept clear can help you stay safe at home.

Let us know if you spot anything which could be a fire risk, like damage to fire doors, blocked hallways or items stored in communal spaces or corridors. If you have any concerns about fire and how to keep you and your home safe contact the Fire Safety team on **01952 217221** or FireSafety@wrekinhousinggroup.org.uk

Electrical appliances are the biggest cause of fire in our region so check out our seasonal safety tips.



Take care with candles



Unplug your Christmas lights before you go to bed



Don’t overload plug sockets



Switch off tumble driers and washing machines when you go to bed



Make sure decorations don’t come into contact with lights or heaters

The Wrekin Housing Group's Tenant Charter

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond to our recent consultation on our new Tenant Charter which includes our Together with Tenants Commitments, revised Local Standards and resident involvement structure. We had a great response with over 700 tenants telling us what they thought.

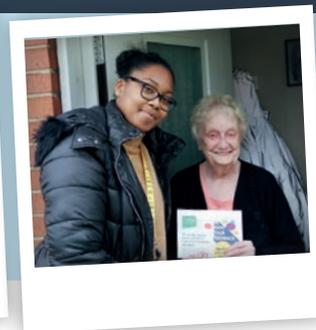
There was overwhelming support for the Charter and revised Local Standards (97.3%) with only a few suggestions for some slight wording changes, which have now been incorporated. **The final Wrekin Tenant Charter is set out on the next two pages.**

98% of you also told us that you were happy with how we currently involve you as residents so we will work on strengthening this framework in the future.

Four lucky winners

The four lucky winners of the £100 shopping vouchers, selected at random were:

Clare Passey from Shrewsbury, David Pullan from Newport, Mr & Mrs Tibblets from Dawley in Telford and Mrs B Hird from Leegomery in Telford.



Left: Morag Bailey, Group Head of Continuous Improvement, with David Pullan.

Centre: Micayla Beaumont, Group Business Administration Apprentice, with Mrs Tibblets.

Right: Micayla Beaumont with Mr and Mrs Hird.

Relationships

We will treat all tenants and residents with respect in all of their interactions. Our relationships with tenants and residents will be based on openness, honesty and transparency.

Local service standards that we work to:

1. We will treat you with fairness and respect.
2. We will publish our key operational policies and key performance on our website and update it on a quarterly basis.
3. We will aim to complete Subject Access Requests within one calendar month of an authorised request.

Communication

Tenants and residents will receive clear, accessible and timely information from us on the issues that matter to them, including important information about their homes and local community, how we are working to address problems, how we are run, and information about performance on key issues.

4. We will keep you informed about things that affect you in a variety of ways.
5. We will keep our Resident Agreement up to date, and regularly inform you of how you can get involved.
6. We will communicate with you in a way that's easy to understand and meets your needs – for example:
 - Large print or audio;
 - Use a translation service on our website;
 - Language Line for personal contact; or
 - Any other method that is needed and reasonable.

Voice and influence

Views from tenants and residents will be sought and valued, and this information will be used to inform decisions. Every individual tenant and resident will feel listened to by us on the issues that matter to them and can speak without fear.

7. We will listen to what you tell us, and improve our services by learning from complaints and other feedback, and inform you what has changed as a result.
8. We will ask you if you are happy with the overall standard of service we provide and publish satisfaction levels.
9. We will involve customer representatives in the specification, selection of contractors and monitoring of contracts relating to:
 - Services provided to blocks of flats, communal areas or Retirement Living/ShireLiving schemes including communal cleaning and grounds maintenance; and
 - Contracts for improvements to individual homes, such as new kitchens/bathrooms.
10. We will make it as easy as possible for you to become involved and have your voice heard, individually and collectively through an agreed menu of involvement.

Accountability

Collectively, tenants and residents will work in partnership with us to independently scrutinise and hold us to account for the decisions that affect their homes and services and the quality of the homes and services we provide.

11. We will give you the appropriate level of support, mentoring and training you need, if you wish to be involved in the work of The Wrekin Housing Group.
12. We will agree and maintain our Customer Engagement Framework which results in direct representation by customers to the Board. These customers hold The Wrekin Housing Group to account.

Quality

Tenants and residents can expect their homes to be good quality, well maintained, safe and well managed.

13. We will let our homes to applicants who are ready to move and hold a tenancy.
14. We will develop a set of service standards for core operational services and we will comply with these service standards.
15. We will improve homes to a higher level than that set out in the government's Decent Homes Standard or an equivalent standard.
16. We will aim to complete repairs on the same day they are reported or by an agreed appointment, unless we agree that the repair needed is an emergency situation and we will attend this within two hours.
17. We will aim to get repairs right first time and use your views on whether we achieve this to measure and report on performance.
18. We will involve customers in our re-let process, which includes an accompanied viewing. We will base our approach on an agreed re-let standard and allow customers to influence additional works to be carried out to the home.
19. We will carry out periodic inspections at agreed intervals of communal parts of our properties to make sure that they are hazard free, healthy and safe areas, acting on any findings where possible on the same day.
20. We will fund a Community Support Officer in partnership with the Telford and Wrekin Council Community Safety team, who will be designated to work on The Wrekin Housing Group's estates in Telford.
21. We will provide a mediation service, free to The Wrekin Housing Group tenants and residents for anti-social behaviour or neighbour disputes.
22. We will second a member of staff to the Telford Community Safety Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) team as a partnership approach to tackling ASB in our neighbourhoods.

When things go wrong

Tenants and residents will have simple and accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints and seeking redress. Tenants and residents will receive timely advice and support when things go wrong.

23. We will provide a complaints service that deals with complaints fairly and is focused on finding a resolution, aiming to give a full response within five working days or keeping you informed if we can't.
24. We will provide an out of hours emergency service for both repairs and housing related emergencies.
25. We will make it as easy as possible for you to access our services:
 - In person, through a range of local offices or personal visits to your home;
 - By telephone, through our contact centre between 8am - 8pm, 7 days a week or an out of hours emergency call line; and
 - Digitally, through an interactive website and an app that you can use on your mobile phone.
26. If you miss any payments we will let you know quickly, to prevent you from getting into more debt. We will then work with you to agree an affordable payment plan.
27. We will offer a free money advice service to help manage household bills or debts and access benefits.
28. We will identify those who are vulnerable and offer them on-going support either through our Tenancy Support team or other agencies.

Are you getting ahead?

Lots of you have recognised the benefits of getting ahead, are paying your rent in advance, and are in a better position should your circumstances change. If something happens like losing your job or becoming ill, you may need Universal Credit. It can take up to six weeks to receive this benefit.

7/10 people are now ahead.

You can get ahead by paying a little extra each week; it soon adds up and you will have peace of mind that your

tenancy is secure. If you would like to get ahead, contact your Housing Executive.

If getting a head isn't for you, think about saving so that you have money aside for unexpected events or for bigger purchases like car insurance or furniture.

Jordan Rogerson from Market Drayton is getting ahead and says;

"Paying in advance gives me peace of mind. If something happens I know that my rent is covered."

Kevin Ford from Madeley has always saved and when circumstances changed he was grateful for the money he had.

"When I had to apply for Universal Credit my savings really helped. Having something put aside means I'm prepared for the unexpected things in life."

Have a financially healthy new year!

Here are a few tips to help you start saving and be prepared in 2020...

Make saving a habit



Transfer savings at the start of the month rather than waiting to see what's left at the end.

Small amounts soon add up



Try saving the cost of a coffee each week.

Try using a free savings app



Apps like Plum, Chip and Cleo can help you save a few pennies each time you spend.

- Check out the government's Help to Save Scheme - they add a bonus if you are on a low income. Visit [Tax.service.gov.uk/help-to-save](https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/help-to-save)
- Credit Unions are not-for-profit and are owned and controlled by their members. They can help you save or borrow if needed. Visit www.findyourcreditunion.co.uk
- Remember Direct Debits will go out later if they fall on a holiday.
- Making your rent payments on time can help improve your credit rating.

UC Universal Credit

Just Credit Union is offering people who open a savings account before Christmas the chance of winning an iPad! Check their Facebook page for more information.

just
Credit Union



Don't forget to make the switch to Direct Debit for a hassle free way to pay your bills. Get in touch with your Housing Exec for more info!

Debt free Christmas



Around 7.9 million people admit that they are likely to fall behind with finances following Christmas. Our new debt advisor, Dan Bebbington, has 12 ideas for a debt free Christmas!

01 debtfree

Sell your unwanted stuff. It's a great time of year to sell things as people will be looking out for cheaper toys, books and clothes. Try using eBay or a local selling page.

02 debtfree

Give gift cards. They can help you stay in budget and you won't have to spend on gift wrapping.



03 debtfree

If older children ask for the latest gadget or designer gear consider a joint gift and split the cost with other family members.

04 debtfree

Use your skills to give free Christmas gifts like gardening, painting or babysitting. If you like baking, homemade treats wrapped with ribbon look amazing.

05 debtfree

Cut down the amount of gifts you buy. You could agree with friends and family only to buy gifts for the children.



06 debtfree

Use the four present rule. Buy your child something they want, something they need, something to wear and something to read. This is a great rule if you have lots of children.

07 debtfree

If you're hosting this Christmas do a Secret Santa, that way everyone can save!



08 debtfree

The Christmas meal is just a roast dinner. Don't go overboard buying food or drinks you wouldn't usually enjoy. It is, after all, only one day!

09 debtfree

Getting together to rediscover old board games, watch a nativity or go carol singing are great free things to do.



10 debtfree

Don't splash cash on the baby! Babies are too young to understand gift giving. If you're struggling for cash, concentrate on older children rather than expensive baby gifts which could go unused!

11 debtfree

Instead of buying new Christmas decorations get your friends round, crank up the festive music and make them!

12 debtfree

Get saving for next year. Collect all your odd change in a jar. Then just before Christmas count it all up and use it in your Christmas budget.



Look out for more ideas in our videos on Facebook.

Dan offers free, confidential, impartial and non-judgmental debt advice. You can contact Dan on DebtAdvice@wrekinhousinggroup.org.uk or **01952 217251** or ask your Housing Executive for more information about our debt advice service.

Clean Cut bring Highley allotments to life



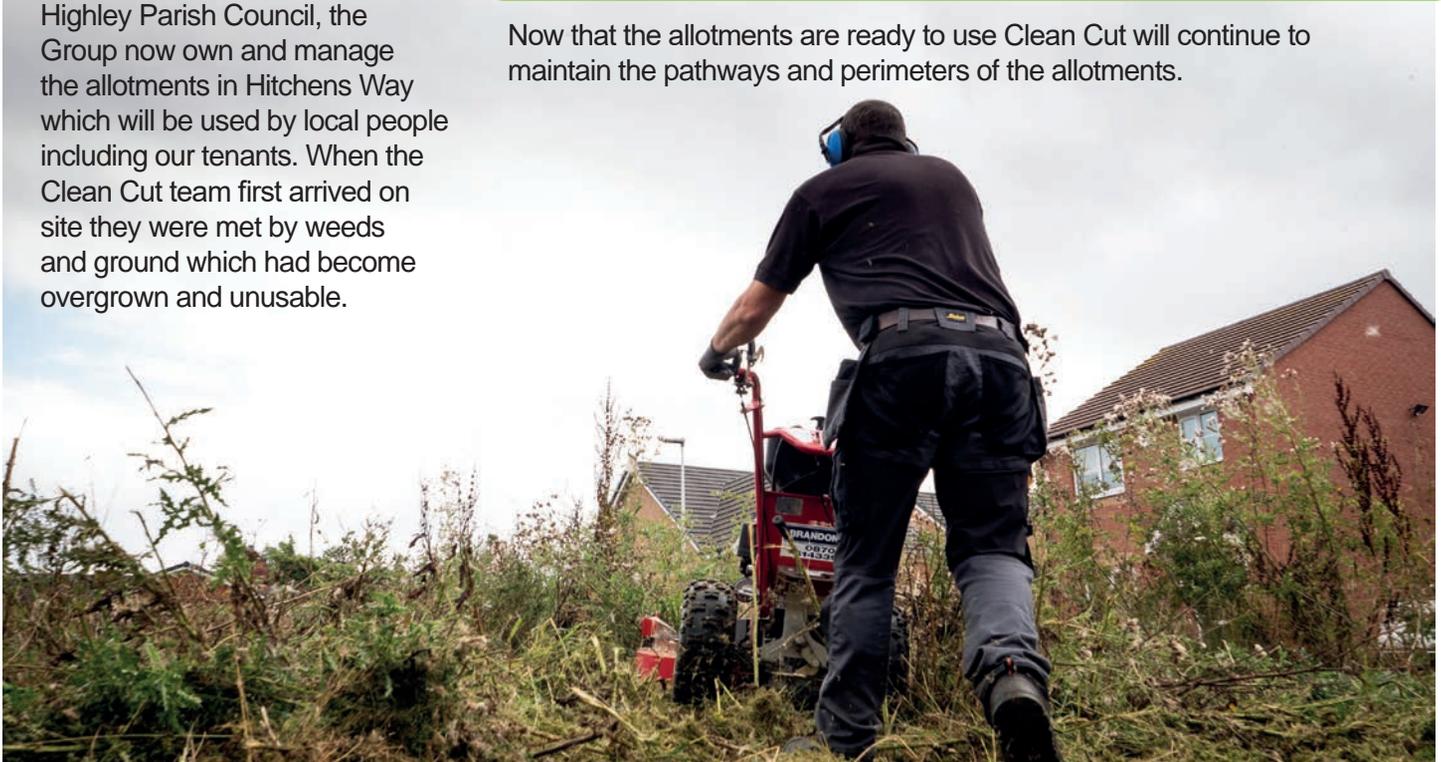
The Clean Cut team have revived overgrown allotments for community use in Highley, near Bridgnorth.

Working in partnership with Highley Parish Council, the Group now own and manage the allotments in Hitchens Way which will be used by local people including our tenants. When the Clean Cut team first arrived on site they were met by weeds and ground which had become overgrown and unusable.

Mike Bolton - Clean Cut's Business Development Manager said;

"It's fair to say that this was no ordinary mowing job. The weeds, in particular the thistles, stood nearly 6ft tall across the whole of the site. It was tough work but with the help of industrial mowers we got the job done."

Now that the allotments are ready to use Clean Cut will continue to maintain the pathways and perimeters of the allotments.



Win, Win, Win!

To be in with a chance of winning a £50 shopping voucher, find the missing word in our construction search and send this sheet back to us at the freepost address below.



G F X N H X H Q T P F I O G S
 R N U C F A S Z Z U K P C N K
 D G I T R N Q V J J P Q M I I
 U E J D U Z E L L O O L W N L
 T E G S L R M B R N O F J I L
 E Z D K A I E T W Q S Y T A S
 F Q M K M D U K X O Q Y S R L
 P Q W D P N U B D H R O A T L
 N R K F I U D I R T W T G E Y
 N O I T C U R T S N O C A F A
 L R I A J E H U B N I F Z Z R
 K E W X A H D N B E G O I E Z
 S O W D G N H O U S I N G U A
 E T Y L I E T I S W L T G P G
 K B S H Q B G I O D U W V Y M

Building	Industry	Site
Construction	Opportunities	Skills
Future	Partnership	Training
Housing	Ready	

The missing construction word is

.....

By entering our competitions, you agree to having your photo taken for promotional purposes. All competition entrants must be Group tenants. If you are entering on behalf of a child, please include their name as well as your details when sending in.

Send your entries with your name and contact details to: Trust Talks competition, M&C, The Wrekin Housing Group, FREEPOST RTSU-ATXA-ZATE, Colliers Way, Old Park, Telford, TF3 4AW or email trust.talks@wrekinhousinggroup.org.uk by midnight on Friday 31st January 2019.