

Spring 2021

voice

Informative news and advice from Watford Community Housing

- Delivering for you during the pandemic
- Are you eligible for Healthy Start vouchers?
- Artists capture their feelings about Covid
- Fire safety in your home
- And more!



watford
community
housing



Fire safety in your home

With people spending more time at home, it is increasingly important that you understand how to protect yourself in the event of a fire. Here's some top tips.

- Test your fire alarm regularly – and let us know if it's not working. Press the button for a second or two and make sure it makes a noise.
- Know your evacuation plan. If you're in a house, talk to your family about how you would escape. If you are in a block, then check the signs in your block so that you would know what to do in the event of a fire. If you have a 'stay put' policy, then stay in your home in the event of a fire – the fire service will inform you if you need to evacuate.
- If a fire starts in a room, do not re-enter – leave the property and do not return.
- Keep access routes clear.
- Keep doors closed when the room is not in use as they can limit the spread of fire.
- Try to avoid using candles.
- Take care when cooking, especially if you are using a deep fat fryer.
- Don't leave electrical appliances such as laptops on beds or other furniture as they can overheat.
- You can get a free fire safety check from Herts fire service if you want additional reassurance.

[Click here to visit our website for more advice and tips.](#)

Remember that in an emergency you should call 999!

Delivering for you during the pandemic

It's now over a year since the first lockdown began. We've all faced challenges together over the last year and our top priority has been maintaining vital services, while keeping our customers and communities safe.

During the pandemic we have kept the vast majority of our services running for customers, in line with the government's safety guidance. We've continued to carry out urgent repairs and maintained our day-to-day customer services wherever possible.

Since the government announced its four-step plan out of lockdown, we have also started to reintroduce some of the services that we had to put on hold – starting with non-urgent repairs.

You can now request new non-urgent repairs through your online account, by calling our Customer Service team on **0800 218 2247** or by emailing enquiries@wcht.org.uk.

Over the next few months, we will continue to adapt in line with the government's roadmap and restore services when we can make changes safely. We are aiming to offer our full range of services again once the national restrictions are lifted.

[Click here for the latest government advice on coronavirus.](#)

[You can find out more about what we're doing to keep you safe and read our full FAQs here.](#)

Hands



Face



Space



Hoarding project funded with money raised by Captain Sir Tom Moore!

During the first lockdown the late Captain Sir Tom Moore raised a whopping £32.7 million for charity – and became a national hero in the process!

NHS Charities Together have awarded Watford Community Housing £3,500 – raised directly by Captain Sir Tom – to go towards a hoarding support project.

The project will ensure our customers receive suitable support by moving them to a safe environment, arranging storage and removal, and referring them to relevant services that can provide tailored mental health support.

If you have any concerns about hoarding please get in touch to find out how we can help on **0800 218 2247** or email enquiries@wcht.org.uk.



Artists capture their feelings about Covid

We recently supported a coronavirus-themed competition celebrating talented Watford artists.

Brick by Brick Communities recently hosted a competition in celebration of Black History Month with the theme 'Covid & Me'.

The competition – which was funded by a grant from Watford Community Housing – was entirely Covid-safe, as the entries were either scanned or photographed and then emailed to Brick by Brick. The entries were then judged by Dean Russell, M.P. for Watford, and Watford Football Club legend Luther Blissett.

All winners received a voucher and will have their art displayed at Watford Museum as part of its permanent collection about Covid-19 in the town!

Brick by Brick Communities is a community interest company with the admirable aim of fighting poverty and inequality in all forms.

[Click here for more information about Brick by Brick Communities.](#)



Hamnah (aged 3-6)



Salha (aged 7-11)



Raphael (aged 18+)



Fabiana (aged 12-17)



Andy (aged 65+)

Are you eligible for Healthy Start vouchers?

Did you know that you could be entitled to Healthy Start vouchers to help buy essential food items if you're pregnant or have a young child?

The vouchers can be redeemed at local retailers, and can be spent on milk, fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables, fresh, dried and tinned pulses, and instant formula milk.

You can also swap your voucher for free Healthy Start vitamins, which are specifically designed for pregnant and breastfeeding women and growing children.

Find out if you qualify by [clicking here](#).

If you have money worries, our Tenancy Support team can provide a range of advice, including helping you review your benefits if you are not sure where to start. Call us on **0800 218 2247** or email TSsupport@wcht.org.uk.

You can also use the benefit-checker on Hertfordshire County Council's website, and access free information about benefits that you might be missing out on by [clicking here](#).

Want to join our funding panel?

We're investing £1 million into the local community between 2020 and 2025 – and you could be involved in deciding where the money goes!

We want to create vibrant communities that people are proud to live in, not just for our customers but for everyone!

To make sure our investment is having a real impact, we want to put our customers at the heart of our decision-making and we're looking for dedicated individuals who want to support their local communities. This is a voluntary role that lets you have a say in where the money is spent and which projects will benefit the community most.

If you are interested, or you want more information, please email community@wcht.org.uk.

Spotlight on: The Dan Tien

The Dan Tien is the home of high-quality training in singing, dancing, acting and music in Watford. They usually run their classes from our Harebreaks Community Hub, but the school adapted quickly to online teaching during the pandemic – so fast that the kids didn't even miss a class!

They pride themselves on giving their students a huge variety of training, teaching kids singing, dancing, acting and music lessons, so there truly is something for everyone. Students can do one class a week and just go for fun or attend every day and take part in exams and performances – the choice is yours!

To find out more about The Dan Tien [visit their website by clicking here](#).

The latest news from the Gateway Membership Team - which represents you!

How you can have your say over what we do

Did you know that Watford Community Housing is a special type of housing association that gives residents the chance to have more of a say over what we do?

We are one of only five 'community gateway' housing associations in England, meaning that our tenants and local residents have more of a say in decisions we make about homes and services.

Under the community gateway model you can become a full member if you are a tenant or an associate member if you live in our local communities. Members vote on key decisions at our annual general meeting (AGM), which takes place every September.

This year's AGM - get involved!

We are now planning for this year's AGM, which will be on Monday 13 September. Last year we held our first 'virtual' AGM, using video conferencing to comply with social distancing rules, giving more people the opportunity to attend. This year we are hoping to have a mixture of people in attendance with others able to join the meeting online, from the comfort of home.

If you're not a member, but you'd like to get involved this year, you can head to our website to find out more about becoming a member by [clicking here](#).

If you are already a member, we will email you in August with a link to your AGM information pack. Please make sure we have your up-to-date email address - you can update your details through your online account at www.wcht.org.uk or you can email us at enquiries@wcht.org.uk.

If we do not have an email address for you, your information pack will be sent by post.

Giving you a voice

We also give residents opportunities to get directly involved with our work, improving communities and delivering better services. Whatever skills you have, and whether you have plenty of time to spare or just an hour here and there, there's something for you in our Involvement Menu.



You could help us to review funding bids from community groups, join one of our scrutiny panels to help improve our services, or apply to join our Gateway Membership Team (GMT).

Made up of residents from our communities, the GMT are your representatives within Watford Community Housing. The team meets regularly, working with us to help set our priorities and influence our decisions, keeping residents at the heart of what we do. Over the last year, the GMT has been working with our Community Engagement team to help provide vital support to residents who have been having a difficult time as a result of the pandemic.

Why join the team?

Develop your career - if you've got passion, ideas and a few hours to spare each month, we want to hear from you. You'll be helping us to be the best we can be and, hopefully, we'll be returning the favour. You could gain key skills in management, communication, IT, finance or customer service to boost your CV, or help you get back into training or work.

Gain business experience - help to shape a multi-million-pound business by becoming a tenant Board member, contributing to conversations at the highest

level as part of a talented and diverse Group Board.

Make your voice heard - have your say about how your home is managed and the services you receive. Use your skills as a 'champion' for one of our key customer focus areas, like making our services more digital or helping us to be more environmentally friendly.

Make a difference - between 2020 and 2025 we're investing £1 million in community projects that offer support and change lives. You can influence how this funding is allocated, helping us make sure it goes to the people who need it most.

Champion diversity - we're committed to promoting equality and diversity in all our work. Why not work with us as a diversity champion to make a positive difference to people's lives?

If you want to join the GMT, we'll give you all the help you need to make it work. We will provide you with a laptop and training, and support you with expenses like internet costs and childcare if you need it.

Ready to get involved?

Email us at community@wcht.org.uk or [click here to visit our website](#).