

Summer 2025

voice

special
edition

Informative news and advice from Watford Community Housing



THE BIG DOOR **KN** **CK**

Thursday 26 June 2025

What matters to you matters to us!

We want to find out how we can improve our services for you.


watford
community
housing

All set for the Big Door Knock!

We are hand-delivering this issue of **Voice** to thousands of our customers, as part of our annual Big Door Knock on Thursday 26 June 2025! Whether or not you got to speak to a member of our team today, this issue is packed full of useful information and updates from Watford Community Housing.



What is the Big Door Knock?

Around 200 Watford Community Housing staff members, including Board members and Gateway Membership Team members, head out into our neighbourhoods to chat with residents.

This is more than just a flying visit - by allocating each group just a small number of homes to visit during the day, we have the chance to discuss whatever matters to you.

You can tell us about any repairs you haven't reported yet, or let us know how we can improve your neighbourhood and communal areas.

We can help you to sign up for an online account and make sure you know how to get involved with our work, become a member and get exclusive discounts.

If you need a bit of extra assistance, we can give you information on the support we can offer and how you can access services from other local organisations.

Did we miss you?

We know that some residents may be busy or away from home when we visit. If we didn't manage to catch up with you during the Big Door Knock you don't have to wait until next year!

If you'd still like to speak to us in person, you can arrange a visit at a time and date that suits you by emailing community@wcht.org.uk.

Or you can give us feedback at any time - email enquiries@wcht.org.uk, visit wcht.org.uk/feedback, call us on 0800 218 2247, or speak to our staff in person.

What improvements have we made since the last Big Door Knock?

- **Supporting residents with concerns about damp and mould** - we visited every resident who reported issues at last year's Big Door Knock
- **Helping customers to maintain their gardens** - we now have 91 residents on our assisted gardening programme
- **Customers reported mobility issues in their homes** - we helped 38 people move into more suitable homes
- **You wanted better play areas** - we used grant funding from Watford Borough Council to improve two play areas
- **Chiltern Pines residents wanted their communal areas improved** - we replaced carpets and painted and decorated the walls



How we are making a difference

We worked closely with our customers to shape our ambitious plans for the next five years, including a commitment to invest £1.25 million into community initiatives.

We recently launched our new 2025-2030 Business Plan, which sets out our commitment to delivering for our customers and communities.

One of our key promises is to invest £250,000 every year into community projects. This will include tackling issues such as social isolation, improving the safety of our neighbourhoods, supporting the health and wellbeing of residents, and helping people to sustain their tenancies.

Along with investing in communities, some of our other key priorities are:

- delivering a reliable repairs service and excellent housing management
- acting on residents' feedback and working to make communities safer and more attractive
- building at least 750 new homes
- ensuring all our homes are safe, energy-efficient and fit for the future
- building productive partnerships with other local organisations

Find out more – scan the QR code or visit wcht.org.uk/makingadifference to read our full Business Plan and accompanying strategies.



Setting clear standards

Following consultation with our customers, we've updated our service standards to make sure they are easy to understand and reflect what matters most to you.



You told us that your top priority was us getting the basics right.

To ensure that we consistently deliver good-quality services, we have created a new set of service standards that sets out what you can expect from us and what it should feel like to be a Watford Community Housing customer.

The service standards highlight what we will do to support you, and what you can do to help us maintain the level of service you expect from us.

You can read our service standards in full by scanning the QR code or by visiting wcht.org.uk/servicestandards

Take a look around Robin House

Robin House is our brand new development in the Meriden, which includes a range of beautiful homes for older people. Come and take a look inside!



The first residents recently moved in to Robin House and are settling in well. Here are just some of the great facilities available to them.

Mobility – The flexicare rooms are designed for wheelchair users and have wider doorways and points to attach a hoist, if necessary. There is also a room for residents to safely store and charge their mobility scooters.



Intercom system – Each home has an intercom system so residents can see who is at their door, contact the on-site

Scheme Officer, and even call their neighbours through it.

Guest rooms – Robin House has a stunning guest room for family and friends to stay in.

Communal areas – There is a communal lounge for hosting coffee mornings, lunch clubs, bingo and much more.

Garden – There is a beautiful communal garden for residents to enjoy and the green-fingered among them can also plant their own flowers.

Shopping – Robin House is right across the road from a shopping parade where residents can get all the essentials.

Find out how to apply for an independent living or flexicare home by scanning the QR code or visiting www.wcht.org.uk/independentliving.



Robin House consists of 45 flexicare homes and six independent living homes – but what does this actually mean?

Flexicare

In our flexicare homes you will live in your own flat with access to 24-hour on-site care and support. You can rent a home within a safe community, with housing-related support and care services on site that are flexible and can be adapted to suit your changing needs.

Independent living

Residents are free to come and go and invite friends to visit, just as they would if they lived elsewhere. Each home is connected to an alarm system which means that in emergencies you can always call for help. There are communal facilities to build a sense of community.



Everyone has a story to tell

We spoke to some of the new residents to find out how they feel about their new homes and how they are enjoying life at Robin House.

Maureen: “The day I came to visit I just looked at the front door and thought, I don’t care what it is like inside, I have my own front door on the ground, which meant so much to me. We had a look around and I thought, this is my lucky day – it was well worth waiting for.”

Mary: “My daycare centre made a referral for me as they thought Robin House would be perfect, and I managed to get fast-tracked. My home is on the ground floor here and is spacious enough for me to move around freely in my wheelchair. I can even go across the road and get my own newspaper – I feel like I have my independence back.”

Norma: “My grandson and I used to drive past here and he would always say you are going to live there one day – and here I am! It is so beautiful, and I love that the whole building is a part of our home – we can come together as a community and have coffee mornings, bingo night and play games. Every day is different now!”



Left-right: Maureen, Mary, Norma

Let’s find you the perfect home

Is your property no longer suited to your needs?

Are your living costs causing you strain?

Pop along to our drop-in session in August and speak to our team about your housing options.

**The Lounge, Gateway House –
13 August 2025 – 2pm-4pm**

Did we support you with finding a new home recently?

Tell us your story by emailing housingoptionsteam@wcht.org.uk and you could feature in the next edition of Voice!





Love your neighbourhood!

Through our 'Love your neighbourhood' campaign, we're working to improve communities with the help of local residents. We asked Jane and James from our Estates team how the campaign came about and how residents can get involved.

Jane: "The idea of 'Love your neighbourhood' actually came from residents!"

"During a Tenant Question Time session last year, we got feedback that residents wanted to be more involved in their neighbourhoods and take pride in where they live.

"We encourage our residents to work with us and help us to continue to improve, so of course we loved that idea, and the campaign was born!"

James: "We wanted to bring the community spirit back into our estates, so we have been coming up with lots of ideas on how residents can work with us in a way that suits them – so there is something for everyone!"

"If there are any other ways you want

to get involved – for example, painting or tree planting – just let us know!"

Here are just some of the ways that residents can get involved:

- Attend our litter-picking and skip days – and report fly-tipping when you spot it.
- Become a Neighbourhood Champion and join in with our Coffee & Conversation sessions with our contractors.
- Join us on estate inspections.
- Why not ask us for some funding and work with neighbours to spruce up communal areas?
- Take part in our next gardening competition! We held our latest

competition on 17 June and the winning entries will be announced shortly.

- Give us feedback so we can keep improving.

For information on all this and more, scan the QR code or visit wcht.org.uk/Estates-Toolkit



Making our repairs service a priority

In partnership with building materials supplier Travis Perkins, we are making improvements that will help to make our repairs service more efficient.



Priority lane – Travis Perkins' new branch in Rickmansworth now has a dedicated collection point for our operatives to quickly access tools and materials, so they spend less time waiting and more time on repairs.

Kerbside delivery – Travis Perkins will deliver some bigger items directly to properties for us, making our team available to complete more repairs.

Automated van stock replenishment – when items have been used on a job, Travis Perkins will make sure they are available to pick up on the next visit to the branch. This means that standard items will always be in our vans when needed.

This partnership will help us deliver a more efficient and reliable service, and to meet our aim of resolving 80% of repairs on the first visit.

Raise a repair appointment with ease

Your online account is the fastest and easiest way to book repairs – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!

You can use your account to request, view and manage your repairs appointments online, at a time that suits you.

To log in or register for an online account, go to www.wcht.org.uk/your-account or scan the QR code.



Supporting Awaab's Law

Awaab's Law – named after the two-year-old who died as a result of direct exposure to mould in his home in Rochdale – will be introduced in phases from October 2025.

The new law sets out timescales for social housing providers to fix problems such as damp and mould.

We support the aims of Awaab's Law, to improve services for people who live in social housing across the UK.

We are working to ensure we are ready for the introduction of the law and we are committed to acting quickly when customers raise concerns about damp and mould.



Got damp and mould concerns?

If you have signs of condensation, damp, or mould in your home you should contact us straight away.

Get in touch by emailing enquiries@wcht.org.uk or calling us on 0800 218 2247.

Affordable meals made simple

On 19 May and 17 June we held free sessions for our residents to learn how to cook delicious slow cooker recipes. Did you know that you can even bake a cake in a slow cooker?

Communities 1st, a local organisation, hosted two brilliant sessions about the benefits of cooking with a slow cooker, and provided useful information about shopping on a budget and energy consumption.

The attendees were all given a free slow cooker to practice their new skills with their friends and family!



Over 100 residents showed an interest in attending one of these sessions!

To be the first to hear when we run more sessions, email community@wcht.org.uk



What's on at...

There's always something happening at our community hubs. Here's just a flavour of what goes on and how you can get involved.



Harebreaks Community Hub

Watford Deaf Club – First and third Tuesday of the month (12pm - 4pm) and first Wednesday of the month (7.30pm - 10pm)

Watford Deaf Club meet to socialise and to share information, help and advice with other deaf members of the community.

If you would like to find out more, search 'Watford Deaf Club' on Facebook.

Luther Blissett Community Hub

Stay and Play sessions – Thursdays, 10am - 11am

Stay and Play sessions are run by Little Blossom Nursery.

Suitable for babies and children up to three years old.



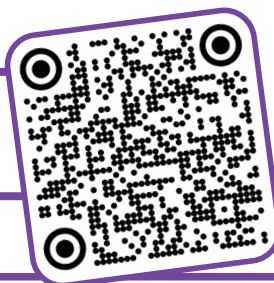
Leavesden Green Community Hub

Active Together – Thursdays, 10.30am - 12.15pm

This is a 50+ exercise programme, offering the opportunity to get active, meet new people and have fun in a range of fantastic tailored classes.

The sessions include a warm-up, a workout, and then a game of either badminton, short tennis or cricket.

Check out the full list of what's on at each hub and how to book them at www.wcht.org.uk/hubs



Money worries?

We're here to help

Did you know we have lots of helpful resources on our website to support you with your finances?

Help with managing money

Use our online budgeting tool to quickly and easily create your very own personal budget plan. It is free to use, completely anonymous, and you can make multiple budgets in minutes.

You may be entitled to more than you think!

Find out what benefits you are entitled to with our free, easy-to-use online calculator. Simply put in information about your savings, income, pensions and existing benefits (for you and your partner) and it will do the rest.

Applying for Universal Credit

Applying for Universal Credit may seem daunting – take a look at our



handy step-by-step guide to help you through the Universal Credit application process.



To try out all these tools, and for more advice and support, visit wcht.org.uk/moneyadvice or scan the QR code.

Do you know how to raise a complaint?

In the last Big Door Knock, 88% of residents said they knew how to escalate a complaint.

1 Firstly, report the issue to us – use your online account at wcht.org.uk, call 0800 218 2247 or email us at enquiries@wcht.org.uk.

2 If you aren't happy with how we dealt with the issue, raise a complaint! You can use your online account, email feedback@wcht.org.uk, or you can fill out the form at wcht.org.uk/feedback

3 If you aren't happy with our final response to your complaint, you can escalate it to the Housing Ombudsman.

- Visit housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint
- Call 0300 111 3000
- Email info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

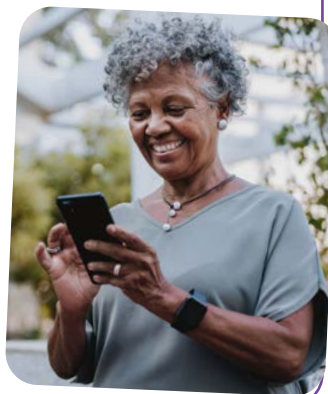
Thank you for your feedback

In July 2024, we asked a random selection of residents for feedback as part of the government's Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) – thank you to the 619 customers who gave us their honest feedback.

The TSMs help us understand what's working, what's not, and how we compare to other housing providers. We can then ensure that we focus on the key areas that matter most to you.

Compared to 2023/24, overall satisfaction improved and we made progress in three other satisfaction measures. While there's always room for improvement, we're on the right track and we are glad that customers are feeling more positive about the services we provide.

We'll soon be launching the next round of TSMs and will be sharing the full results on our website soon, so watch this space!



No excuse for abuse

We are committed to treating our customers with respect at all times – and we expect the same in return.

In order to keep our staff safe, we take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of any kind, which may lead to action against your tenancy.

Have a safe summer

During the summer, Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service will attend many fires caused by barbecues. **Crew Commander Carley-Jo Rackley** offers some important tips to keep you and your home safe.

Don't use barbecues on balconies

Having a barbecue on your balcony is **not safe** and it puts you and your neighbours in danger:

- There is high risk of fire
- Burning material can be carried by the wind into other flats
- Carbon monoxide is likely to collect in your home, causing CO poisoning

It is against Watford Community Housing's policy on fire safety to use barbecues on your balcony – your tenancy may be at risk if you do.



Take care with disposable barbecues

Disposable barbecues are contained in an aluminium tray which can get hot enough to ignite any flammable material it is placed on, including wood and grass. If you do wish to use one, make sure it is somewhere safe.

Tips for safe barbecuing

- Make sure your barbecue is in good working order
- Ensure the barbecue is on a flat site, well away from a shed, trees or shrubs
- Keep children, garden games and pets well away from the cooking area
- Never leave the barbecue unattended
- Keep a bucket of water or sand nearby for emergencies
- Ensure the barbecue is cool before attempting to move it
- **Do not** use barbecues in an enclosed space
- Dispose of ashes in a fireproof container and damp down with water



Book a FREE home fire safety visit

Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service can visit your home to offer advice on fire safety.

Find out more or book now:

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/fire

0300 123 4046

Charcoal barbecues

- Use only enough charcoal to cover the base to a depth of about 50mm
- Only use recognised fire lighters or starter fuel and only on cold coals
- Never put hot ashes straight into a dustbin or wheelie bin

Gas barbecues

- Make sure the tap is turned off before changing the gas cylinder
- Only change cylinders outdoors or in a well-ventilated area
- After cooking, turn off the gas cylinder before turning off at the controls to ensure any residual gas in the pipework is used up

Do you have contents insurance?

Fires, floods and theft can happen to anyone, and it's your responsibility to make sure that your belongings are protected in case they are broken, damaged or stolen.

Having insurance in place gives you peace of mind that you are covered if the worst were to happen.

Find out more: wcht.org.uk/contents-insurance



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



What have we been up to recently?

Making a Difference

Last summer Watford Community Housing consulted with residents and the Gateway Membership Team (GMT) to find out what customers' top priorities were. This helped to shape plans for the next five years which form part of our 2025-2030 Business Plan.

The GMT will continue to make sure that we do what we say we will and help us to meet the needs of our customers.

Community funding

One of the tasks that the GMT enjoy the most is seeing how the funding we provide helps the local community. These are just some of the organisations we've supported.

Watford Football Club Sports and Education Trust run Premier League Kicks, a programme aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour in young people and building strong communities through football.

Citizens Advice Watford provide fantastic financial support to those who need it.

We are pleased to say that the GMT reviewed the contracts for both of these projects and have agreed to extend funding for the next three years!

How can you get involved?

Have you ever considered a career in housing?

The GMT are giving two residents the chance to do a free level 2 Chartered Institute of Housing qualification - fully funded by Watford Community Housing!

This 16-week course will give you a basic understanding of the housing sector and introduce you to some of the skills and knowledge to support you to participate in housing-related activities.

Our next Tenant Question Time and scrutiny topic

Following an increase in resident feedback, the GMT decided that the next Tenant Question Time and scrutiny session will focus on parking, including the use of parking permits, EV chargers and parking management.

Dates and times are on the back page.

If you are interested in joining the course or attending the Tenant Question Time, or if you would like more information, please email community@wcht.org.uk.

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

Become a member and get hundreds of discounts!



Do you want to have a say in how we're run AND get discounts on your daily shopping?

By becoming a Watford Community Housing member you can access the Housing Perks app and claim discounts from your favourite retailers and charity shops, and save money on the essentials that you use every day!

1. Become a member – scan the QR code, visit wcht.org.uk/membership or send us the tear-off slip below. If you are already a member, just follow the steps below.
2. Once approved, download the **Housing Perks** app for free from your app store
3. Select Watford Community Housing as your landlord
4. Enter your tenancy number
5. Start saving!



Dates for your diary

Tenant Question Time (see page 10)
– 16 July 2025 from 6.30pm to 8.30pm at Gateway House and online via Zoom



Scrutiny session with GMT (see page 10) – 23 July 2025 from 10am to 2.30pm at Gateway House and online via Zoom

Skip day – 24 July 2025 from 10am to 12pm at Coates Dell. Need to clear some items from your home? We will be providing a free skip to residents.

Rightsizing event (see page 4) – 13 August 2025 from 2pm to 4pm at Gateway House

Herts Pride – 30 August 2025 from 12pm at Cassiobury Park

AGM & Tenant Question Time – 15 September 2025 from 6pm to 8pm at Gateway House and online via Zoom

Fill out this form to become a member!

We are looking for more Watford Community Housing members to help us make a difference! As a member you can attend our AGM, get exclusive discounts, influence our policies and ensure that residents' voices are heard.

Tick the correct option – I am a: tenant ☐ / leaseholder ☐ / shared owner ☐

Full name:

Address:

Email:

Pop this form in an envelope and send it to our freepost address at:

Freepost RRXH - LZUR - LKHG, Watford Community Housing, Gateway House, 59 Clarendon Road, Watford, WD17 1LA