

Winter 2017/18

# voice

Informative news and advice from Watford Community Housing

- Win £50 in vouchers!
- Universal Credit is here
- Residents get confident online!
- Tenant Question Time



watford  
community  
housing

# How to win up to £50 in vouchers!

Every month, we give away vouchers to lucky prize draw winners.

There's two really simple ways to make sure you're in with a chance to win, so follow the steps below and you could be treating yourself in 2018.

## 1) Win a £25 voucher by keeping your first gas safety check appointment

We are required by law to check every resident's home for gas safety once a year, so by giving us access to your home to carry out the check you're helping us stay efficient. If you keep your first appointment, we'll thank you by entering you into that month's prize draw for a £25 Love2Shop voucher!

## 2) Win a £50 voucher by filling out our customer satisfaction survey

It's really important that you let us know how we're doing, so after every visit from our repairs team we ask you to fill out a satisfaction survey.

Once you've filled it out, you're automatically entered into a prize draw to win £50 of Love2Shop vouchers!



Congratulations to all of our winners over the last few months – including Mrs K of Hudson Close, Ms H of Ross Crescent and Mrs A of Boundary Way, all pictured here. We hope you enjoyed a bit of a spending spree on us!

# Helping our residents get online

Residents join our computer club to gain I.T. skills and a qualification.

**We've been helping residents to get online. After some people told us they would like to know more about how to use the internet, we arranged eight weeks of training to help our residents get more confident at managing their rent and finances online.**

One participant said: "I enjoyed the fact that the course was taken as a group. The tutor delivered the course well."

Another resident commented: "I now have the basic skills to use a computer. I am now much more confident using a computer."

We're really proud to say that over 70% of our learners passed their exams and now hold a City & Guilds qualification, increasing their skills and confidence. Congratulations, computer club!

We have now run several I.T. training courses, and we will continue to support our residents in gaining new digital skills.

If you would like to participate in future training sessions you can contact the Community Engagement team on **01923 209183** or by emailing **community@wcht.org.uk**.



# Universal Credit comes to Watford

The full Universal Credit service was introduced in Watford in December. This means that all new benefits claims, or changes to your current benefits, now become one Universal Credit payment.



Universal Credit only affects people of working age. It will apply to you if you receive any of the following benefits:

- Housing Benefit
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Income Support

You may well have to switch to Universal Credit if you change your circumstances – for example, if you move house, or if you need to make a new benefit claim. This means that most people who receive any of the benefits above will switch to Universal

Credit sometime in the next few years.

If you've not already made the switch, there are several steps you can take to prepare for Universal Credit, such as creating a monthly budget, planning ahead and making sure you keep your tenancy documents safe so that you can refer to them when you need them.

Most importantly, remember that we're here to help. If you have any questions or concerns, or if you'd like help with your application, our friendly and knowledgeable Tenancy Support Officers are on hand to help – get in touch on **0800 218 2247** if you'd like some assistance.

You can also find out more about Universal Credit by visiting the government website – [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) – and searching for 'universal credit'.

## Festive fundraising

Christmas is all about giving back to people!

This year, our annual staff Christmas Raffle raised an amazing £500 for Peace Hospice Care in Watford – the largest amount ever raised by one of our Christmas raffles!

We also took part in the nationwide Christmas Jumper Day, raising £128 for Save the Children (and we looked great doing it!).



## Changes to water charges

The way you pay your water and sewerage charge could be changing. At the moment, we collect these charges from most residents alongside your usual rent payment – but from April the majority of people will pay Affinity Water directly.

The changeover will allow you to discuss your bill in more detail with Affinity Water, and may mean paying less for your water.

There's no need to do anything right now – we'll be collecting your water charges right up until the end of March. Over the coming weeks we will be teaming up with Affinity Water to contact all tenants affected by the change to explain how to set up your new payments.

**Make sure you keep an eye out for these important letters as they will help make this process as smooth as possible.**

## Tenant Question Time – your questions answered



Over the last few months, the Gateway Membership Team (GMT) has been working to bring you a series of Tenant Question Time events, where you can ask questions on a variety of topics and get answers from experts in the organisation. Working with Watford Community Housing and an independent consultant, the GMT has helped to open channels of communication between staff and residents.

So far we've had sessions on repairs, asset management and housing, which have resulted in some really productive outcomes for staff and residents. Tenants

who attended had the opportunity raise concerns, helping us to take action and improve our services.

More events will be happening in the next few months – the events are proving to be a great success in encouraging constructive conversations for both staff and residents. Keep an eye out for the following Tenant Question Time events, coming soon in 2018:

- February 7th – Anti-social behaviour
- March 7th – Car parking

Come along and get your questions answered!

### Dates for your diary

#### Introduction to volunteering

Meriden Community Centre  
Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January

#### Tenant Question Time – Anti-social behaviour

Gateway House,  
Clarendon Road  
Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February

#### Parliamentary outreach event

Meriden Community Centre  
Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February

#### Tenant Question Time – Car parking

Gateway House,  
Clarendon Road  
Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> March

### Contact Us

T: 0800 218 2247

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[www.wcht.org.uk](http://www.wcht.org.uk)

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