

# WHAT'S GOING ON!



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# Message to tenants and residents from WHA's Chief Executive, David Cummins



**Welcome to the Spring edition of our newsletter, in what has been a very unusual year. Hopefully we can now see light at the end of the tunnel, with the slow ending of restrictions and a return back to some normality.**

But as you will see from articles in this newsletter, WHA are remaining vigilant and sensitive to the needs of our customers, and while we do expect a return to normality, we will do this slowly and carefully over the coming months.

Despite the experience of Covid over the last 12 months, it's good to see that the work goes on. We are pleased to welcome a few new colleagues recently, including Jordanne and Mark, our new Housing Officer and Compliance officer respectively. Some of you will get to know Jordanne over the coming months as she gets to grips with the work of WHA and gets out on her "patch." It's good to see that we have been putting Mark's skills to good use with an article about Health and Safety and the role WHA and our customers, can play in making sure people feel safe and secure in their home.

Continuing a theme, helping you feel safe in your home is a key expectation of the Charter for Social Housing. This is new legislation which sets out what our customers should expect from their landlord.

"We know we have a good relationship with our customers, but we also know that sometimes we get things wrong and need to put things right, listen to our customers and learn from these experiences."

An important aspect of the Charter is to be clear about what you should expect and what we should be doing. You will be hearing a lot more about this, from us over the coming months.

It's great to see some real life stories in the newsletter, as I appreciate that some people might not get as excited about things like the Charter for Social Housing as we do!

"Part of our uniqueness as a small Housing Association, is the stories we can tell about the experiences of our colleagues and customers. Lorri's article about Equality and Diversity, as first reported in Digital Housing, is an excellent read and we are very lucky to have Lorri helping us on our equalities journey."

## Plus lots more...

We try and find the right balance with our newsletter to make it both interesting and informative - we'd love to hear from you about what sorts of things we should include in future editions.



**Happy reading,**  
**David Cummins**  
Chief Executive



## Spring has sprung!

**We know that the past year has been very challenging for many customers of Warrington Housing Association. WHA are committed to supporting our customers across Warrington.**

### New Beginnings



In 2020 we supported our most vulnerable and isolated customers, making hundreds of welfare calls to check on people's wellbeing and access to financial support and information. We were able to signpost many to local partners and support agencies which ensured that they remained fit and well through the pandemic period.

As the restrictions lift, we will be following Boris's Road Map and mirroring standard recommendations for reopening our offices and communal buildings.

We anticipate that pre-planned customer appointments in the WHA office will resume from the 21st June, your housing officer will contact you directly about any appointments in the office.

We are discouraging drop-ins at the present time but aim to make further changes as the country gets back to normal as we head towards the summer. Check out the WHA website or our social media pages for updates about this.

**As lockdown lifts, we have seen our wonderful town slowly return to cautious normality and it reminded us that Warrington has so much to offer.**

There are some great opportunities and advice for those who are looking at trying something new.

### **Priestly College Adult Learning Program**

During lockdown, many customers told us that the time at home allowed them to think about what they want to do as in the future so have started to think about retraining or getting involved in learning a new skill. Priestly College has a wide range of subjects and short courses for Adult Learners – take a look at their website on [www.priestley.ac.uk/adult-courses](http://www.priestley.ac.uk/adult-courses)

**Warrington Job Centre** website offers some valuable tips and advice for looking for new roles and updating your CV. It is packed with FREE advice and help so check it out on Jobcentre Plus: [jobcentreguide.co.uk](http://jobcentreguide.co.uk)

**Looking for an Apprenticeship?** Then look no further than Warrington Borough Council Website – the site has lots of information and guidance for people of all ages looking to get back into work or those looking to step onto the working life ladder for the first time; [www.warringtonlife.gov.uk](http://www.warringtonlife.gov.uk) or [www.warrington.gov.uk](http://www.warrington.gov.uk)

We hope that the spring months and the brighter weather have brought renewed optimism and plans for new beginnings, we can all look forward to the coming months with a positive mindset. Now sit back, grab yourself a cuppa and read the latest news in WHAT's Going On!

# Reopening of WHA offices

We are over the moon to share that from 21st June 2021 you can make appointments prior to attending the main office to see our colleagues.

To do this you need to email [admin@wha.org.uk](mailto:admin@wha.org.uk) or ring 01925 246810 to make an appointment.

## Retirement Living Schemes

We were so happy to re-open our communal Lounges in a social distanced manner in retirement schemes on 12th April 2021, this is in line with current lifting restrictions.



The Independent Living Coordinators delivering our retirement service have been diligent in reaching out to customers in the scheme to offer offering bespoke engagement and check in services have been keen to increase safe group interaction as soon as its allowed.

Kath Lee one of our Independent Living Coordinators said 'I've noticed some of the customers became low in mood and isolated, it has been so worrying, we offered a range of Covid safe activities but it's just not the same is it when all you want to do is catch up over a cuppa in the lounge. The announcement of re-opening is just what we needed to raise people's spirits'.

We had a celebration event at each scheme to mark this, we baked cakes, scones and drank plenty of tea, it was so heart-warming to see smiles and hear noise and laughter coming from everyone.



## WHASP

**Our fantastic scrutiny panel has been so busy this year with the Housing White Paper to digest and work on among everything else!**

It was lovely to welcome some of the members into the office for our April meeting (socially distanced with masks of course!). We still had members joining via Teams too which demonstrates the way we have adapted communication skills to engage with members where it's easiest for them to be.

Our Chair Julie said 'it is so nice to be back round a table meeting together but it shows that we were flexible and adaptable during the pandemic too! Our WHASP volunteers could join us in many ways as we can still utilise Teams or Zoom to meet. I hope we can attract some more members this year, it's still a key focus of the work we need to do, the difference our new members have already made to the panel is great so we are even more keen to love to grow our membership and represent the WHA customer voice.'

**If you would like to learn more about joining our scrutiny panel, please contact us on [admin@wha.org.uk](mailto:admin@wha.org.uk) or ring 01925 246810**

## Raven Court

You wouldn't know it but after months and months of planning and risk assessing, Mark Myers and his team, have embarked on yet another future proof project to protect and enhance one of WHAs assets – this time at Raven Court.

The photo shows what a huge job this has been for all involved but when complete, colleagues and customers at the scheme plan to throw a magnificent party to really raise the roof!





# Covid-19 advice and stages

What a year it has been for us all living and trying to thrive in the shadow of Covid-19. Although the lifting of restrictions is brilliant, we urge our customers to remain mindful of keeping safe and following distancing guidelines.



WHA will continue to use our website and social media to keep you up to date and inform you of changes but you can check this out yourself by logging into [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) for immediate advice and guidance.

On [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) you can now order lateral flow tests that come straight to your home free of charge. It is recommended that we use these regularly to monitor and help reduce the possibility of increasing infection rates for Covid-19 in our local areas.

Check out our website [www.wha.org.uk](http://www.wha.org.uk) to look for Covid-19 guidance and information.



# #ADDRESS YOUR STRESS

We all use unhelpful coping strategies sometimes, but as with any skill we can learn new, helpful coping strategies.

Here's some **self-care tips** to help **protect against stress**:

## Try

**Get moving!** Physical and mental health are connected — so eat well and exercise to release endorphins. Find a fun activity that suits you and your schedule.



**Setting aside time** to have fun or indulge yourself — positive emotions can help build a buffer against stress.

**Learning a new skill** — whether painting, playing guitar or a new language.



**Sharing how you're feeling** — it's OK to ask for help and support.



**Switching off from distractions** — make time for yourself as a regular part of your routine. Schedule a reminder if you need to.



## Avoid

**Overdoing it** on sugar, caffeine or alcohol — they're a quick fix which can increase stress in the long term.



**Overworking** and checking your emails out of hours — we all need time to unwind.



Spending **too much of your free time** in front of a screen — phone included. Don't feel pressured to always be 'doing' something.

**Chasing perfection** — it can create unrealistic expectations. Accept that mistakes will happen.



**Bottling up your feelings** and assuming they will go away — this can make things worse in the long run.



There are simple steps you can take to **#AddressYourStress**. Check out our resources at [mhfaengland.org](http://mhfaengland.org)

# New colleagues



**Jordanne is our new Housing Officer and she has got off to a flying start – which she says is all thanks to such supportive colleagues.**

We caught up with Jordanne to find out a little more about her and to see what she has to say about her new role and the organisation she is now part of.

## **So, before we talk about your new job can you tell me a little about what you did previously?**

Before coming to work for Warrington Housing Association (WHA) I had actually worked in housing before when I was employed as an Apprentice Rents and Payments Advisor by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, but when I moved to Warrington I left there and started working as a Retail Admin Assistant at Warrington Wolves Rugby. Once Covid hit though I was furloughed, so I decided to look for something back in housing as I missed working in this area and I was fortunate to get the job here.

## **As a Housing Officer what does a typical day look like?**

It's very much a frontline role dealing with tenants, and it needs you to be approachable and helpful. I am mainly responsible for rent collections, but there is much more to the role.

“One day I could be involved with benefit queries, other times I may need to liaise over a neighbourhood issue. It's very varied and as the organisation is much smaller than the one I worked in previously it means I have more responsibilities and also more scope to do things my way and put my stamp on things.”

Obviously, making sure that I ask my colleagues when something is new to me. What they don't know isn't worth knowing!

## **What do you enjoy the most about the role?**

I am really enjoying getting to know the tenants and their homes. I love meeting new people and understanding what makes their homes special to them.

“Every day brings a new set of people and questions. It's also nice talking to the elderly tenants as often you may be the only person they've spoken to that day. You can really make a difference.”

## **What are you looking forward to in your role?**

I am really looking forward to growing in this role as the company faces new challenges and changes as the restrictions reduce. I am looking forward to developing my skills and knowledge of the housing sector and working hard to be a great Housing Officer.

## **What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?**

I am a trained performer and love all things musical theatre. I attended The Arden Theatre School in Manchester full time and always wanted to go into musical theatre professionally, growing up. That hasn't happened but I still get a kick out of performing and have taken part in several theatre productions in Oldham and Rochdale when I lived there. I haven't done anything in Warrington yet, but I hope to in the future.



## **Mark joined us recently and is our Asset Compliance Officer.**

Mark is responsible for all compliance issues and oversees our focus on gas, electric's, water, lifts, asbestos, and fire safety. Mark loves to be outdoors, he loves taking his dog for long walks rain or shine.

## **Fiona Evans has also been promoted to 'Head of Corporate Services'**

Fiona has worked at WHA for over 20 years and is so dedicated to making Warrington a fantastic place to live! The organisation values are at the forefront of everything she does.



## **Jodie started her journey with WHA as a compliance apprentice working within the maintenance department.**

Jodie's diligence has impressed us all at WHA, she has a commitment to volunteering in the Warrington community to help support those in need, she lives WHA values and is committed to developing her role within the organisation and delivering excellence as our new 'Performance & Policy Officer'.

# Health & Safety

**Our new Asset Compliance Officer, Mark Siveter wanted to give our customers a round up of health and safety information & issues within their properties.**

## Safety First – Helping us to keep you safe in your home

We would like to thank residents for helping us to keep you, your family and neighbours safe by continuing to allow us access into your homes to carry out gas and electrical safety checks, despite the difficulties and concerns presented by Covid-19. We have all spent more time in our homes over the last year so we thought it was important to remind everyone how we can stay safe.

### Gas Safety

We have a duty as your landlord to make sure all gas appliances, fittings and flues we own are safe. It is a requirement under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998, to carry out a gas service every 12 months. The gas servicing is carried out by our Gas Safe registered contractors. Any gas appliance in your home can produce carbon monoxide (CO), a highly poisonous gas which occurs when natural gas or liquid petroleum gas (LPG) doesn't burn as it should. This is the result of a gas appliance being improperly fitted, repaired or maintained, or when vents, flues or chimneys have become blocked – and that's why it's so important to have all of your gas appliances checked once a year by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

### Three main risks can arise from having an unsafe gas appliance in your home:

- 1. Gas leaks** – A gas leak can cause fires or explosions. If you think you can smell gas, then you'll need to call your emergency service provider immediately. During a gas safety check, a Gas Safe registered engineer will do a visual inspection of pipework and a tightness test to confirm there aren't any gas leaks.
- 2. Fires and explosions** – Safe appliances burn gas in a controlled way, but a faulty appliance or pipework may leak gas which can then be ignited, causing a fire or explosion.
- 3. Carbon monoxide poisoning** – Carbon monoxide (CO) is a highly poisonous gas that can be especially deadly because you can't see, taste or smell it.

We also highly recommend getting your gas pipework inspected at the same time as your annual gas safety check. As a landlord it is also law to maintain pipework.

### What is a gas safety check?

A gas safety check should only be performed by a Gas Safe registered engineer, who will test your gas appliances to make sure they're safe to continue operating in your home.

A gas appliance safety check ensures an appliance:

- Is properly set and adjusted so the gas burns correctly.
- Is suitable for the room it's located in.
- Is physically stable, securely fitted and properly connected to the gas pipework.
- There's an adequate and permanent air supply that's suitable for the appliance installed.
- All safety devices are functioning properly.
- Any flues, chimneys and air vents are operating correctly.
- Check the installation is in good condition by visually inspecting the pipework as far as reasonably practicable.
- Test the gas pipework to make sure there are no leaks.

### Know the warning signs

Look out for these signs. If you spot any of them, you'll want to get your gas appliance serviced straight away:

- Your appliance isn't working properly.
- It produces a floppy yellow flame rather than a crisp blue one.
- Black/brown marks on or around the appliance.
- The boiler pilot light keeps going out.
- Increased condensation inside the windows.



We would also like to remind you that if you have a gas cooker or fire installed you must check that the contractor is registered with Gas Safe before they undertake any work on gas installations. If you are unsure please contact Mark or your Maintenance Officer.

## Reminder – if you smell gas

If you smell gas, or if you have concerns about the safety of your appliances, you should **call the gas emergency service provider on 0800 111 999, and switch off appliances, put out any flames, including cigarettes and open the windows** until the gas emergency supplier, or a registered gas engineer, has attended and advised that the appliances are safe to use.



### Electrical Safety

Electricity is one of the biggest causes of accidental fires in the UK. As your landlord we carry out an electrical check every time someone new moves into one of our homes and are now carrying out checks on your home every 5 years to ensure that the electrical wiring in your home, including plug sockets and switches is properly installed and maintained. All electrical work and testing is carried out by NICEIC registered contractors.

We also ask that residents ensure any appliances you buy are regularly checked, you comply with the manufacturer’s safety guidelines and do not overload sockets or extensions.

### Covid-19 screening

If you or anyone in your household have any Covid-19 symptoms, test positive for Covid-19 or are self-isolating, you should inform us and we will rearrange the safety check to take place after your isolation has ended.



### Fire Safety

We have recently commenced a programme of reviewing and updating our risk assessments for schemes with communal areas so you may see our contractors at some schemes over the next few weeks. Once completed we will consider any recommendations and prioritise any follow up works required.



Please ensure that you regularly test the smoke alarms in your home, do not leave candles or cigarettes burning and do not leave appliances such as mobile phones or e-cigarettes plugged in overnight or when you are away from the property.

WHA is running a free prize draw for all tenants to

# WIN £50

## WORTH OF VOUCHERS

**The Prize Draw is subject to the terms and conditions below:**

The Prize Draw will commence on 1st July 2021 and will continue on a bi-annual basis until discontinued by WHA.

You will be entered into the Prize Draw if you allow us to enter your property at your first Gas Servicing appointment. Please note that you are able to change your first appointment by informing us more than 48 hours before the appointment.

Prize Draw winners will be selected at random from first time entry gas servicing appointments that have taken place that have allowed access. There shall be one prize winner. The winner will be informed and the prize of £50 worth of vouchers will be sent to the winner. Only one entry into the Prize Draw is permitted per household.

**To be eligible for the Prize Draw entrants must:**

- Be a WHA lead tenant
- Allow the WHA Gas Contractor Engineer access to your home to carry out your Annual Gas Safety check as the first appointment made
- Be 18 or over
- Not be an employee of WHA

All prizes are non-transferable and there is no cash alternative. By entering the Prize Draw each entrant accepts to be bound by these terms and conditions.

**WHA reserves the right to:**

- Refuse to award the prize to anyone in breach of these terms and conditions.
- Postpone, void, cancel, suspend, or amend the Prize Draw at any time.
- Amend these terms and conditions at any time, including changing or substituting the prize.

These terms and conditions are governed by the laws of England and Wales and any dispute arising out of or in connection with them is subject to the jurisdiction of the English courts.

This Prize Draw is run by WHA, with its offices at The Gateway, Sankey Street, Warrington, WA1 1SR.

We will publish winners of this competition in our magazine/on social media.



# LIFETIME VIRTUAL PROGRAM

## OUR AIM

'Our aim is to help make Warrington a great place to live, in which the potential of individuals and communities can be realised.'

Our virtual sessions aim to keep our members and WHA tenants 50+ connected, active and learning throughout the pandemic

Life Time aims to bring a wide range of interesting, useful and fun services for older people together under one banner.

By joining us, you will be the first to hear about the Life Time activities that are right for you, your interests and the time of life you are at.

**DISCOVER.  
CONNECT.  
GET  
INSPIRED.**

## Keeping active with LifeTime

### **Mondays**

Puzzle and Triva Morning 10.30am  
NEW Virtual For the Love of Art 1.30pm

### **Tuesday**

Come Dance With Us Online 10.30am  
Zumba Gold with Diva Fit UK 11am  
Let's Get Social 11am  
NEW Armchair Travel 1.30pm

### **Wednesday**

Mindfulness With jt-health matters 11am  
Sing-a-Long with Rob 12-1pm  
NEW Music & Company 2pm  
Games Evening 8pm

### **Thursday**

LifeTime Coffee & Chat  
with Guest Speaker 11am  
Tai Chi 3pm

### **Friday**

Zumba Gold with Diva Fit UK 11am  
Yoga with jt health matters 12pm  
General Knowledge Quiz 1.30pm

### **Why Not Try Yoga at LifeTime**

Our yoga classes are run every Friday from 12pm by Julie from JT Health Matters, the yoga classes are currently held virtually via zoom until we are able to get back into our center at the Gateway.

Yoga helps to improve and maintain mobility and flexibility, something that is important especially when getting older.

It helps to improve your posture, manage pain and helps promote happy hormones through movement.

#### **Want to take part in yoga with lifetime?**

You do not need a Zoom account to access the online sessions just enter the following URL: [www.zoom.us](https://www.zoom.us) to access zoom. Go to Zoom >Join a meeting> Input meeting ID and password obtained from [mail@lifetimegateway.org.uk](mailto:mail@lifetimegateway.org.uk)

**Email** [mail@lifetimegateway.org.uk](mailto:mail@lifetimegateway.org.uk) **Mobile Number** 07429094935  
**lifetimegateway.org.uk**



# WHA welcome the Housing White Paper 2020

The Social Housing White Paper was published on 17 November 2020. It sets out a charter for what social housing residents should expect from their Housing Association.



The White Paper identifies seven key aims to meet in order to support social housing tenants in their homes. There remains a keen focus on ensuring people are safe in their homes, that complaints are dealt with effectively and that landlords, where relevant be held to account when things go wrong.

The horrific fire at Grenfell Tower in London has led to a number of changes leading to the White Paper publication.

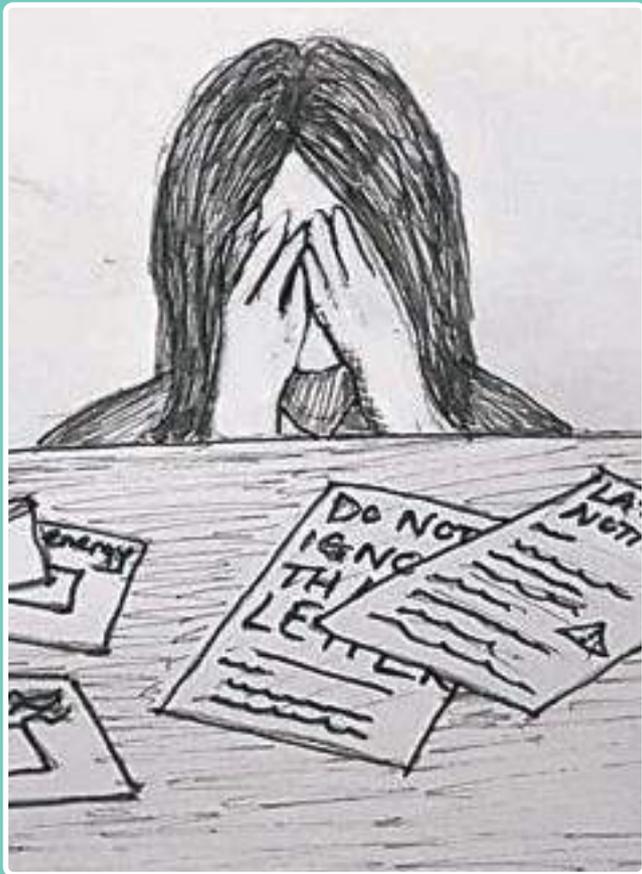
As a committed Housing Association we strongly believe in the charter and we have been working

with our WHA scrutiny panel – WHASP over the past 5 months to study and understand all areas of the document so that we can ensure that we do the right thing first time!

We have noted the charter expectations below:

- 1. To be safe in your home.** We will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.
- 2. To know how your landlord is performing,** including on repairs, complaints and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
- 3. To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly,** with improved access to a strengthened complaints procedure (Housing Ombudsman) which will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
- 4. To be treated with respect,** backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.
- 5. To have your voice heard by your landlord,** for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board. The Government will provide help, if you want it, to give you the tools to ensure your landlord listens.
- 6. To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in,** with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
- 7. Government will ensure social housing can support people to take their first step to ownership,** so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

# New options for tackling problem debt



Dealing with debt can be confusing and scary. There are hundreds of reasons why people put off getting debt advice – some fear they’ll be judged, others bury their head in the sand and hope things will improve, and many simply aren’t aware that free, impartial debt advice is available.

“StepChange Debt Charity estimates that the average person waits 12 months between realising they’re in financial trouble and getting debt advice for the first time, during which their situation can get even worse.”



## The Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space)

It is with these issues in mind that a new scheme was launched on 4th May 2021. The Debt Respite Scheme, commonly referred to as Breathing Space, is designed to give people protection from their creditors for a short time so they can get proper advice to deal with their debts.

There are two types of breathing space: **standard breathing space** and **mental health crisis breathing space**.

Standard breathing space is available to anyone with problem debt. It gives them legal protections from creditor action for up to 60 days. The protections include pausing most enforcement action and contact from creditors and freezing most interest and charges on their debts.

A mental health crisis breathing space is only available to someone who is receiving mental health crisis treatment and it has some stronger protections. It lasts as long as the person’s mental health crisis treatment, plus 30 days (no matter how long the crisis treatment lasts).



The debt adviser who set up the breathing space period will work with the person in debt to put in place the best solution, whether this is a debt management plan, Individual Voluntary Arrangement, Debt Relief Order or bankruptcy.

## Debt Relief Orders

4th May 2021 also marked changes to the rules on who can qualify for a Debt Relief Order (DRO). A DRO can be a good way of dealing with your debts if you can't afford to pay them. It means you don't have to pay certain kinds of debt for a specified period (usually 12 months). At the end of the DRO period, the debts included in it will be written off and you won't have to pay them. It is a type of insolvency, similar to bankruptcy, but it is much easier and cheaper.

Before 4th May 2021 you could only qualify for a DRO if you owe less than £20,000, have less than £50 per month spare income and your assets are worth less than £1,000. The Government has proposed to increase these limits so you can qualify if you owe less than £30,000, have less than £100 per month spare income and your assets are worth less than £2,000.

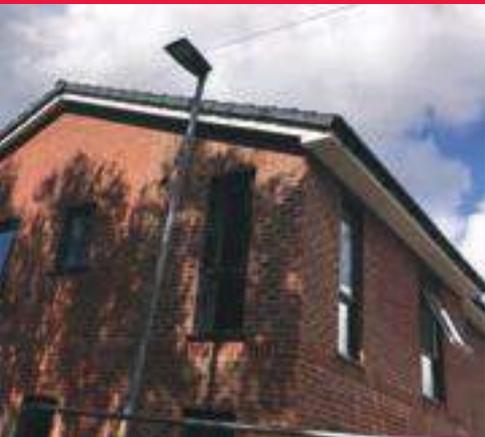
These changes mean many more people can qualify for a DRO and will give them a new solution to deal with debt that they cannot afford to repay over a reasonable period.



If you want support tackling a debt problem, help and support is available. We are unable to apply for Breathing Space or DRO's for you at this time, but we can advise on suitable options and signpost you to an organisation that can offer these solutions if they are appropriate for you.

For more information email us on [admin@wha.org.uk](mailto:admin@wha.org.uk) to arrange contact with our Money Advice Officer or a referral to a local support agency if you prefer.

## More new homes for WHA customers!



**Andrew Lewis our lead on development met up with Bernie to chat about his latest development.**

"I'm so proud to work with WHA, it's humbling to know that their only focus is to bring great things to Warrington and to increase the number of great homes to rent in areas our customers know and have been brought up."

As soon as I came to work here, I could tell that the focus was about building strong communities, helping people put down roots and doing that in lovely areas where people want to live.

My latest project is the Chester Road one, only small but it packs a positive punch! We've constructed 4 new build self-contained apartments in the area of Stockton Heath. These apartments will be completed mid-June 2021 and are available for affordable rent.

### Key features in each property include;

- 1 double bedroom.
- Open plan kitchen/living area.
- Vinyl flooring to kitchen area and bathroom.
- Gas central heating.
- Double glazing and secure by design accreditation.
- Resident only parking space is also available.

# Housing Diversity Stories

Liam Turner talks with Lorri Holding, Head of Customer Services at Warrington Housing Association, about how normal it was when she was growing up to hear people shout racist abuse; Britain's first black trade union leader, Bill Morris; and the work that still needs to be done to improve equality for both women and minority ethnic groups.



## How did you get started in housing?

About 25 years ago, I started off as a primary school teacher. One thing I quickly started to learn working with young people is that, if you didn't have a stable home or a stable background, you really struggled. And a lot of the work that we do with these young people is quite complex work. A lot of young people have had all sorts of behaviour issues. I found that where young people had stable backgrounds, somebody there for them, somewhere safe and clean and tidy, with their own bedroom or space, they were able to thrive and they seemed to do much, much better.

Wherever young people didn't have that, they really struggled, their behaviour often when they came back into school was really marked against the young people that did have what you could call a 'safe environment'.

It really opened my eyes, but I don't think I really understood it to the level that you'd expect to at that time, until you see it in action, and you can see that actually if there isn't somewhere where somebody wants to go home too and feel safe I think they really struggle. So, that was where the obsession of making sure that the young people that I was working with had somewhere safe to be, and that just kind of grew and grew.

## Have you always worked in an inclusive environment?

No, of course not, I think we need to be realistic. When I first started in housing, there were lots of opportunities for people who came from all sorts of backgrounds to get involved in housing, all sorts of schemes and you were supported all the way through, to encourage people to get into housing.

After I'd been in housing for a short while, those courses, those opportunities, seemed to drop off. I don't know whether the money fell away to support. I suppose there are apprenticeships now, and certainly at Warrington Housing Association, we've been really focused on apprenticeships and volunteering as a way to encourage new people, new opportunities. But in general, if I think about my experience in housing - no.

"If BME people and LGBTQ people are in the minority, you're not going to be the same as them - you're automatically going to be something that's outside people's comfort zones"

For somebody who is not white, it's not always the easiest environment to work in. People in any industry recruit in their own image. Those of us who have been in housing for a long time tend to either stay in where they've really connected with customers and get that feedback directly from customers every day, so that's the key driver for them that means they stay connected. That's certainly been a component for me in housing.

But if you just think about just general housing, often you'll find if you look at stats, people of colour don't stay in housing for very long, you have to ask why and actively want to understand and do something about it.



## Why do you think that is?

It is harder to travel up the ladder. It's more difficult for a range of reasons, there are less opportunities for us. Like I said people want to employ somebody who looks like them, who sounds like them, and we don't.

aware of that. Though, if you think about unconscious bias – I’m not a true believer that people are biased without knowing that they’re biased, but there has to be an element of that. People feel more comfortable around people who look like them, sound like them, who come from the same backgrounds or have similar experiences as them. And if BME people and LGBTQ people are in the minority, you’re not going to be the same as them, are you. You’re automatically going to be something that’s outside some people’s comfort zones.



### Things might be getting better, but is progress slower that it needs to be?

Yes, the Black Lives Matter movement, I’ve probably seen this about four or five times in my time. Through teaching, housing, and all sorts of careers. It’s been up and it goes down when people get bored of it, and it goes up when an event happens and it goes away and it comes back and it goes away.

Unfortunately, although I hope I’m really wrong, I do believe something similar will happen again, I see it already, I read it already, people saying that now the government think tank are writing a report we should stop talking about it. I do see differences with the events from the summer though, young people are open to being more aware about it, more challenging, and so I think it’s probably got a little bit more traction than the previous years.

It’s difficult for people to accept. People don’t deliberately try to be unfair to people – well, some people do – but the majority of people don’t come to work to make somebody else’s life difficult, they really don’t. They’ll go to work, do a great job, and go home.

The way things have always been done are stacked against people so often and so things just carry on. It takes quite brave people, people who are really looking at things to say, actually, let’s try something different. And I’ve always tried to choose organisations where I think there are individuals within that organisation who want to work like that.

### What can be done to keep the conversation going and make lasting change?

I used to believe that if you change laws or if you change processes and policies it wouldn’t make a difference. But actually, the older I’ve got, I think that sometimes when you do that it eventually changes people’s psyches.

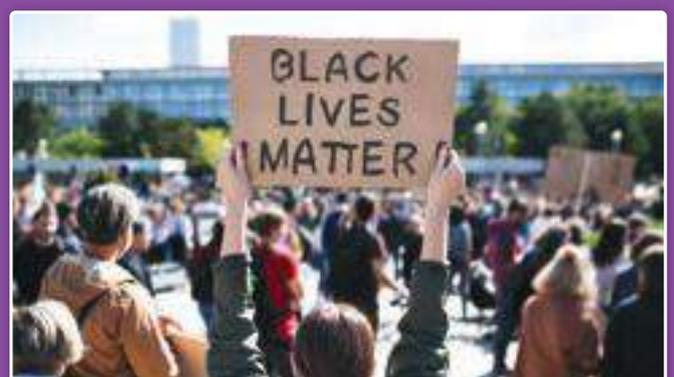
When I was growing up, though it still happens now, it would be the norm for somebody to shout racial abuse at me on the way home from school or college. That was the norm. Not that we thought it was okay, but it happened that often that we didn’t think it was a big deal, it’s just what happened.

Then laws changed, the race hate laws, all those things came into force; and people would challenge other people on the street. If you said something to me, I could go to the police and say, you know, Liam said this thing about me, and it would be dealt with. Not always well, but it would absolutely be dealt with. And that’s because it’s written in law, there are rules that say Liam could get into trouble if he does that. And over time, people don’t do that now because it’s seen as unacceptable.

So there’s an element there where changes in policy make a difference. It doesn’t get to people’s hearts and minds, but actually sometimes it gets to people’s minds in the respect of, actually, I don’t want to do that, that’s not the person I want to be seen as outside.

“When I was growing up, it would be the norm for somebody to shout racial abuse at me on the way home from school. Not that we thought it was okay, but it happened that often that we didn’t think it was a big deal, it’s just what happened”

So policies can make a change, and I definitely think that there is more policy changes that should be done. And that’s not just for BME that’s also for LGBTQ, I think we all struggle with those same negative impacts when society or individuals or organisations aren’t as comfortable with difference as they could be.



People don't think it's polite to talk about colour, don't think it's polite to talk about sexuality, so they don't, thinking they're doing the best thing. One of the worst things someone could say to me is, you're just the same as me, because I'm not. I don't want to be either. I don't want you to be the same as me, I want you to treat me how I should be treated. I don't want you to treat me the same as your next door neighbour or somebody that you see in your private life. I think most people want to be treated as fairly but as an individual as well.



### Again, with gender inequality in the workplace, is it a case of progress being too slow?

People who want change always want it to move faster than it can, and maybe for the people who are trying to catch up with people who want to make a change, it feels too fast. I think there has to be an understanding that it's difficult for everybody and we have to all be open to that too, and that it's not a level playing field for each individual.

Jobs that you might go for, I would never be considered for because of certain things like my experience or my qualifications. It might be that whoever is interviewing me or both of us two has an idea of what they want that candidate to look like or be like or sound like as well as expected role requirements.

**"I think there has to be an understanding that it's difficult for everybody and we have to all be open to that too, and that it's not a level playing field for each individual."**

Change is hard for people in lots and lots of different ways, and rather than banging a drum saying, it's not fast enough, and it never is fast enough, I think the bigger thing is helping people with that journey, being open to supporting someone to understand how to do things slightly differently. We've all got a responsibility to do that, there is a joy in helping people on that journey, even if we don't think it's as fast as we want it to be.

### Should people be more proactive then when it comes to combating racism and inequality?

I definitely think a lot of the narrative last summer was saying that doing nothing is just as bad, and now I wouldn't go as far as to say that because I think that's a bit harsh. We have to help people who struggle to have that conversation to feel more relaxed, more comfortable around that.

But I do think not stepping up and people not feeling as though they've got the right words or not wanting to say anything at all, that hasn't helped, that has slowed progress over decades. It does need people who've got the courage to say, right, okay, this is what needs to happen.

Certainly, in the summer, I've come across a number of people this time round who have actively approached me and said, what can we do differently. I see much more of that, I've been approached by a lot of people doing work in the community, a lot of volunteering for various different groups, and I've actively been approached by organisations and people doing lots of different things saying, what can we do to help? How could we do things differently?

I don't think I can ever remember a time in my career or private life where that has been so prevalent. That feels good, but now I want to see that they are true to their word, not just saying the same old thing with no follow-up actions.



### Who do you see as an inspiration?

Bill Morris. He was the first black British trade union leader, he was one of the first people of colour that I ever saw on the news in a positive light. I think he started off a bus driver, he was the first black leader of any British trade union.

There's him and there's Nelson Mandela of course, and I had the pleasure of hearing him speak at an event my dad took me to many, many years ago. I guess they're the two people that I really look up to – him and Bill are absolutely fantastic people. People in my opinion to aspire to

Certainly, Bill, as a black person, faced all the same things my dad did, and his family faced all the things that we did as a family. He kind of always stood his ground and had everybody looking up to him, not just black people, everyone. To be voted as a union leader, surrounded by white men and women, I reckon that was really hard to get to those heights and have the strength to be a great leader.



**Tell me a bit about the work you do with Village Angel & Haven (LGBT Foundation).**

Initially, it was to make sure people were safe in the village or safe when they were having a night out, but actually, that work has turned into much more about supporting people who are really struggling.

So, very often, our work will involve supporting people who've been made homeless, and they're in Manchester, they haven't got anywhere to go, so we might end up supporting those. People may have had a lot to drink and may not be a great night for them and might feel suicidal.

Our job is really to make sure that people have a safe night, or we contact them to make sure they get home safely. So, we might contact a cab or family if you've lost your phone or left it in a bar and you can't remember – we make sure they get home safely.

It reduces a lot of work with the police, so when we go out of Friday and Saturday, before we go out for our shift, we will meet with the police and they will give us an update of what's going on in Manchester city centre and anything they want us to be aware of.

They need to be dealing with crime, don't they? Not somebody who's drunk and throwing up, so we end up doing that sort of stuff. So, yes we do clean up a lot of sick, you do wipe a lot of tears, give people lots of water, but it means that they're not stuck with somebody who just needs to be looked after safely while a cab is coming or family members are coming or something like that. It means that we can look after people, its actually fun and it's a great service.

**What can we all do as individuals to help create a more equal and diverse society?**

If we care about the impact we have on the next person, I think that would make a difference. So you care about how you say things to people in your life, being as positive and as nice as you possibly can, and that doesn't take any effort – it just happens doesn't it?

And I think if we all have that approach to never do harm, whether it's BME, whether it's anything, I think we have a duty to try and be the best that we can be, and by that mentality you can't help but pass something good onto that next person.

And that's not about being better in terms of what's going on now with Black Lives Matter and all these other sorts of things. Just try to be as decent as you possibly can, because that makes a difference.

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# What's on in Warrington

**We want to keep you updated on what is out there in YOUR town - as places are opening, here is a roundup of some brilliant days out for you and the family.**

**Warrington Museum & Art Gallery**

Due to maintenance the Museum and Art gallery are moving temporarily into the Golden Square shopping Centre along with the library. You can still enjoy the delights and relics of our 'Pop up' museum and art gallery in there temporary home. Head to [www.culturewarrington.org](http://www.culturewarrington.org) for further information.



**Walton Hall & Gardens**

A beautiful park set in the lovely area of Walton in Warrington. There are beautiful gardens, park and Zoo area that are all free.

[waltonhallgardens.co.uk](http://waltonhallgardens.co.uk)

There are some other activities for all of the family for a small charge.

The much anticipated high ropes course is finally here! Brought to you by Jungle Parc, this new adventurer course has over 60 different activities with six different levels of difficulty. £15 per child or adult.

**Book here - [jungleparc.co.uk/book](http://jungleparc.co.uk/book)**



**Gulliver's World**

This wonderland of fun for all the family is now open and welcoming visitors to have a great day out that is not miles away. Their website is very informative and you can book using the link:

[gulliversworldresort.co.uk](http://gulliversworldresort.co.uk)

**And if you want to go further afield...**

**BeWILDerwood Cheshire**

Welcome to the wonderful, wacky, and wonky world of BeWILDerwood Cheshire! Based on the magical books by creator and author Tom Blofeld, this outdoor woodland adventure park is perfect for explorers of all ages and packed full of all your favourite characters! Just a 25 minuet drive out of Warrington to have a wonderful day filled with adventure and fun!

[cheshire.bewilderwood.co.uk](http://cheshire.bewilderwood.co.uk)

# Customer Portal

**The HomeMaster Customer Portal is a service that gives you secure access to your housing information online.**



## **You can use HomeMaster to do the following:**

- View our rent/leaseholder account – including the balance on your account and any payments you have made.
- View any new repairs that you request – you can also request a repair via the portal and track its progress.
- Make payments via the Allpay rent payment system.
- Update your personal and household information.
- Request contact with a member of our team.
- View the latest information that is relevant to you as our customer. And so much more...

## **How do I use HomeMaster?**

To use Home Master, you must be a tenant or a leaseholder of a Warrington Housing Association, have an active email account and have access to the internet. You must register to use this service with us and registration and site use are free.

Security is paramount and you will only gain entry to the system if you enter all login data correctly. You are required to enter a username; password and you will also be asked to confirm your date of birth. Once your account has been created, you will only be able to see the information relating to your own tenancy/leaseholder account.

## **How do I register?**

If you haven't already received your login details from us, you will need to request access to the portal by emailing [admin@wha.org.uk](mailto:admin@wha.org.uk)

Olufemi, one of our customer service advisors who is focusing on rent accounts has been encouraging our customers to consider direct debit.

Direct debit is a much easier way of paying rent and going forward all WHA tenants will be encouraged to make rental payments in this way.

We are pleased to say we have had an increased number of customers switching to this method of payment.

**To reward customers who have taken the plunge to move to direct debits we are entering every customer who pays by direct debit into our prize draw to win £50!! The Prize Draw will be drawn on 1st July 2021.**

# WIN £50 WORTH OF VOUCHERS

Prize Draw winner will be selected at random from those entered into the draw.

There shall be one prize winner per draw and WHA's decision on winners will be final.

The winner will be informed using the contact details shared and a prize of £50 worth of vouchers will be sent to the winner.

Only one entry into the Prize Draw is permitted per household.

## **To be eligible for the Prize Draw entrants must:**

- Be a WHA tenant.
- Use Direct Debit as the preferred and ongoing method to pay all charges for their home (rent and service charge).
- Be 18yrs or over.
- Not be an employee of WHA or the spouse of a WHA employee.

Prizes are non-transferable and there is no cash alternative.

**By entering the Prize Draw each entrant accepts to be bound by these terms and conditions.**

WHA reserves the right to:

- Refuse to award the prize to anyone in breach of these terms and conditions.
- Postpone, void, cancel, suspend, or amend the Prize Draw at any time.
- Amend these terms and conditions at any time, including changing or substituting the prize.

These terms and conditions are governed by the laws of England and Wales and any dispute arising out of or in connection with them is subject to the jurisdiction of the English courts.

This Prize Draw is run by WHA, within its offices at The Gateway, Sankey Street, Warrington, WA1 1SR.

WHA will publish winners of this competition in our magazine/ on social media.



Join the conversation #DAW2021

## Dementia Action Week 2021



**This year Dementia Action Week is 17th–23rd May. Led by Alzheimer's Society, Dementia Action Week is a national event that sees the public coming together to take action to improve the lives of people affected by dementia.**

Coronavirus has exposed the fact that families facing dementia have increased in need and have been one of the sections of society who have been hit hard by the pandemic.

“This Dementia Action Week, Alzheimer’s Society needs your help and we are calling on you to get involved. 34.5 million of us know someone living with dementia in the UK. Together we can bring about change”.

Our retirement living schemes plan to hold coffee mornings during ‘Dementia Action Week’ to raise funds for Alzheimer’s society and raise awareness of Dementia.

If you would like information about our wonderful retirement housing schemes please email [admin@wha.org](mailto:admin@wha.org) or call 01925 246810.

## Covid Stories

**Do any of our customers have a story that they would like to share with WHA? Tell us about a positive experience that you have been through during the Coronavirus pandemic.**

We know that the pandemic has been a really tough time for many but we have also seen so many positive things the people of Warrington have been getting involved in too! Let us help tell that untold story and share it with our customers via social media or on the WHA website.

Get in touch at [admin@wha.org.uk](mailto:admin@wha.org.uk) or call 01925 246810.



DO  
MORE OF  
WHAT  
MAKES YOU  
HAPPY

**This is Sheila one of our retirement customers living at St Johns court. Sheila had a visit from Rita, one of our team who works across our 5 retirement housing schemes throughout Warrington.**



WHA have always loved pets and dogs in particular – we have seen the positive benefits that bringing pets into work has on colleagues and customers alike! Rita often brings her dog a Cockapoo called ‘Baxter’ to the schemes to help bring some fun and cheers to the customers, particularly as we are all missing seeing an hugging our loved ones at this time. Look at the smile on Sheila’s face. Baxter makes everybody smile, is well behaved and enjoys the cuddles and smiles he knows he brings.

### **What makes YOU happy?**

Is it family, home, watching the sunrise? Over the past year we may not have had a lot to be happy about but this year has also taught us how small things, small gestures improve how we feel and make us happy.

## **WHAT IS HAPPINESS?**

‘It is a feeling or showing contentment or pleasure’

The Office for National Statistics found that personal well-being significantly worsened during April to July 2020 compared to the same time in 2019. At the same time in 2020 the levels of anxiety increased to a record high since 2011 when data was first collected on the UK’s wellbeing.

These statistics are understandable due to the Covid – 19 crisis but still concerning and this is why WHA is working with local partners, colleagues and customers to focus on increasing positive mental wellbeing.

Let’s focus on making a special effort to check in on our family, friends and neighbours or that person you usually see up the road, just a smile, or a hello could be a life line that a person needs – sometimes we can make a huge difference without realising the positive impact we have had.



WHA are committed to the wellness of everyone it works with and has trained Mental Health First Aiders who work with colleagues who deliver services to you to ensure that when we offer services, we offer a whole person service, we don’t just rent a property to you! How you live in that property, how you feel in that property is important to us so let us know.

We would love to know what makes you happy and then share with our other readers in our next edition. Email [www.admin@wha.org.uk](mailto:www.admin@wha.org.uk) or message our Twitter account @WHAorguk

WHA want to say a huge thank you and well done to all our partners in The Gateway for getting through this year and still managing to be available in a number of ways to support the residents of Warrington during the pandemic. We hope that as restrictions ease we can welcome the public back in to The Gateway safely and we can all continue to deliver vital support and services to Warrington residents.

In each edition we will focus on one of our partners within the gateway and share what service they provide to you, our customers.

## Spotlight on...

Warrington Voluntary Action supports the development of a vibrant, thriving and sustainable third sector to meet the diverse needs of local communities.



### To do this we:

- Provide information, guidance and resources enabling local voluntary, community and faith organisations to deliver effective quality services.
- Promote, support and develop social action and volunteering for individuals and local communities to make a positive difference.
- Initiate and nurture the development of new groups, schemes, enterprises or activities to meet identified needs.
- Support local networks and forums to facilitate and encourage effective partnerships and strengthen cross sector working.
- Enable effective representation and involvement on key strategic partnership bodies to ensure third sector organisations have a strong voice.

### The Values we believe in are:

**Being Passionate:** Utilising energies purposefully and committing to the development and enrichment of others.

**Thinking Creatively:** Seeking to get the best from available resources and unlocking potential by thinking differently.

**Working Collaboratively:** Developing effective relationships that aim to benefit all partners as well as the wider community.

01925 246 880 [www.warringtonva.org.uk](http://www.warringtonva.org.uk)



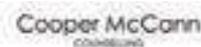
Acorn Recovery Projects  
078640995413 / 07702635253  
0161 484000



Citizens Advice  
National Line: 0300 3309 091  
Universal Credit Line: 0800 144 8 444



Connect Sexual Health Clinic  
01925 644 202



Cooper McCann Counselling Services  
07828 941637



Cheshire Without Abuse  
01925 243 853 / 01270 250 390



Eating Disorder Service  
01925 248 475



Footsteps  
01925 244 524



Healthwatch Warrington  
01925 246 893



Housing Plus  
07583 011341 / 07970 273509  
07967 468763  
Out Of Hours 01925 444 400



Lifetime  
01925 246 824



National Education Union



Private Sector Housing  
01925 248 482



Signing Solutions  
01744 808810 / 07493 436099



Speak Up  
01925 246 888



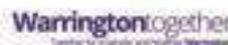
VTSS  
01925 592 800



Warrington Community Living  
01925 246 870



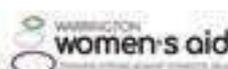
Whia  
01925 246 812



Warrington Together  
01925 246 923



Warrington Wellbeing  
01925 248 460



Warrington Women's Aid  
01925 417 138  
National Helpline 0808 2000 247

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