

Welcome to the winter edition of **HOME**. As the winter months settle in, we want to ensure that you're well-prepared and supported through the colder season.

This newsletter is packed with useful information, including tips for keeping your home warm and energy-efficient, important updates on Council Services and advice on staying safe during icy conditions. Whether it's ensuring your heating system is working properly or providing you with emergency contact numbers, we're here to support you.

Support with Jobs and Training Opportunities

We are excited to announce a new initiative aimed at supporting tenants in their journey towards employment and personal development. We are committed to empowering people with the skills and opportunities to prosper.

Whether you're just starting out in employment, or looking to return to work, in partnership with local providers, we can offer you courses in CV writing and interview preparation sessions to ensure you're ready to put your best foot forward.

Through local job fairs and events, you'll have the chance to connect with employers, helping you to secure your next role.



Success story

I became a Council tenant in June 2022 and have struggled to maintain employment. I completed a free course on employment and writing skills. I learnt how to write more professionally, update my CV and interview techniques. I have since been for an interview and have gained a part time position which has boosted my confidence. I can't thank the Council enough for the support they gave me.



Resident Engagement

We are committed to working closely with tenants to ensure that your voice is heard in shaping the future of our housing services.

We believe in building strong relationships between residents and the Council to improve local services, enhance community projects, and make our neighbourhoods better places to live. Your feedback and participation are essential to us.

How you can get involved:

Tenant Consultations

This is your opportunity to share your views before decisions are made.

Visit our website:

www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/housingconsultations



Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Join the panel to discuss specific issues that affect tenants. Your insights will help us improve services and make informed decisions.

Email: residentengagement@cannockchasedc.gov.uk

Christmas Jumper Competition

As the holiday season approaches, it's time to bring out your brightest, boldest and most festive Christmas jumpers!

Whether you're a fan of classic designs, DIY masterpieces, or over-the-top sparkles and lights, our Christmas jumper competition is the perfect opportunity to showcase your holiday spirit - and win some amazing prizes!

1 Wear Your Jumper: Dig deep into your wardrobe or create your own dazzling design. Whether it's cute, quirky, or outright hilarious, we want to see it!

2 Snap a Pic: Take a picture of yourself in your Christmas jumper. Be sure to include any fun accessories or poses that make your look stand out!

3 Submit Your Entry: Email your photo to: Residentengagement@cannockchasedc.gov.uk

Entries close on **Wednesday 18th December**

Fabulous Prizes!

FREE ENTRY



Dementia Friends

Our Tenancy Services team has undertaken the Dementia Friends training to enable them to understand how we can support our tenants who have been diagnosed with dementia.



A Dementia Friend is somebody that learns about dementia so they can help their community.

Dementia Friends help by raising awareness and understanding so that people living with dementia can continue to live in the way they would like.

Dementia Friends can help people in many ways, from visiting someone you know with dementia to being more patient in a shop queue, every action counts. Dementia Friends can also get involved with things like volunteering, campaigning or wearing a badge to raise awareness.

Would you like to become a Dementia Friend?

From January 2025 we will be hosting monthly training sessions at the Council Offices for tenants to attend. The training takes 40 - 60 minutes.

To book on to a session place email:

residentengagement@cannockchasedc.gov.uk

Winter support

Are you struggling with heating bills this winter?
Don't struggle in silence.

Beat The Cold are here to help you with home energy advice and support.

Our Neighbourhood Officers can refer you or you can refer yourself, for more information visit: www.beatcold.org.uk



5 top tip to keep your home warm this winter:

- 1 Draught proof your windows and doors
- 2 Bleed your radiators
- 3 Reflect heat back into your rooms
- 4 Don't block your radiators with furniture
- 5 Hang heavy weight curtains



Novus Property Solutions



Novus Property Solutions are working in partnership with the Council upgrading kitchens and bathrooms in our properties.

They are currently re-decorating the Housing Services bungalow reception area, in preparation of us re-opening for customers from early next year.

As well as providing you with a dedicated reception area for you to visit and speak to us about your tenancy and other housing matters, Novus will be displaying the sample choices available for the kitchen and bathroom programme and photographs of completed works.

Keep an eye on our website and social media for further updates about the re-opening of the bungalow reception in early 2025.

Tenancy Audits

The Neighbourhoods team conduct regular tenancy audits to Council Properties.

These are usually eight weeks after moving into a new tenancy, to ensure that our residents are settled into their new accommodation, and to remind them of the requirements of their tenancy agreement.

A further visit is conducted eight months into a new tenancy, to ensure our new tenants are adhering to their agreement and can become a secure tenant.

Neighbourhoods Officers will be conducting regular audits over the next 12 months to properties that have not received a visit and will be there to inspect the properties for any damage, alterations made, and to ensure both property and the gardens are in a satisfactory standard.



New Tenancy Agreement

The Housing Team are planning to change the Tenancy Agreement in 2025 and will be launching a consultation with tenants over the next few months.

After the tenant consultation we will be seeking Cabinet approval of the new tenancy agreement, with a summary of tenants' comments.

You can have your say by completing a short survey on the website, visit

www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/housingconsultation



If you would like an early look and comment on the draft tenancy agreement, please email: EMTeam@cannockchasedc.gov.uk or ring Housing Receptionist on **01543 462621** or visit the Civic Centre Housing Reception Monday to Friday.

Ending Your Tenancy

Every year around 250 Cannock Chase Council tenancies come to an end. But there are a number of myths around what you need to do and what happens when you want to move. Here are some answers to frequently asked questions



Frequently asked questions

1 Can I just hand my keys in next week if I want to?

You have to give 4 weeks' written notice to end your tenancy, ending on a Monday.

2 If I leave without paying all my rent, nothing will happen, will it?

If you leave owing arrears, we will pursue these from you, including taking legal action if we need to. This will add costs to the amount you owe to us. If you can't pay them all before you go, make a payment agreement with us and save the hassle. Also, we won't normally allow anyone with arrears to become a Council tenant again in future.

3 I have accidentally damaged some doors and walls - what do I need to do about these?

We'll arrange to inspect your home when you give us notice, so we can determine anything you need to put right before you go. This will save you from being charged for repairs or damage after you leave.

4 Do I need to bring my keys to the office?

No, as long as we receive notice from you, we can arrange to fit a key safe outside your home, so you can leave your keys there. It's important you leave all your keys, including entrance fobs for flats and keys for outbuildings as well as main doors.

Fire Risk in communal blocks



Our Neighbourhoods caretaker visits all of our communal blocks on a weekly basis, to ensure fire checks are made and conducts a general inspection, in addition to the monthly visits that are made for all emergency lighting checks.

Despite repeated requests buggies, pushchairs and scooters continue to be left in our communal areas, these are a fire risk to all of our residents.

From November 2024, any items left out will have a notice placed on them and if not put back within your home within 24 hours will be removed and compounded at our local Hawks Green Depot, where the owner will have to make contact and arrange for collection from the Depot.

Universal Credit migration

For the last year, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has been writing to people whose tax credits or benefits are ending and being replaced by Universal Credit.



If you're on any of the below benefits and tax credits, you'll receive a Migration Notice letter, if you haven't already, from the following dates:

- Income Support - From **1 April 2024**
- Tax credits and Housing Benefit - From **1 April 2024**
- Housing Benefit only - From **1 June 2024**
- Employment Support Allowance with Child Tax Credit - From **1 July 2024**
- Pension Aged Tax Credit, including mixed aged couples - From **1 August 2024**
- Jobseekers Allowance - From **1 September 2024**
- Employment and Support Allowance - From **2025**

The letter will tell you the deadline date by which you have to claim Universal Credit. If you don't apply by the deadline date, the DWP will be able to stop your existing benefit claim. You may be able to apply for an advance payment to assist with the transition and we would ask that you consider using some of this towards your rent account, please contact the **Income Management Team** to discuss further.

More information about your move to Universal Credit can be found on the Government's website, Move to Universal Credit - www.ucmove.campaign.gov.uk

Are you receiving Universal Credit payments towards your rent?

Don't forget...

This year, Universal Credit won't pay all of your rent, regardless of what has been paid before. This is because Universal Credit will only pay 52 of the 53 weeks' rent due this financial year.

If you haven't been in contact with us already to arrange payment, please call **01543462 621** or email incomemanagementteam@cannockchasedc.gov.uk



Get in touch

For any questions about your rent, Universal Credit, help with your benefits or if you're struggling financially, please get in touch and we'll do our best to help.



If you need any more information or assistance from Citizens Advice

If you are struggling to pay your rent, don't ignore it - we can help!

We will be able to advise you what to do or help you to get the support and advice you need.

Call or email your **Income Management Officer** on **01543 462621** or email incomemanagementteam@cannockchasedc.gov.uk



Have you tried HomeSwapper?



If you're a tenant who is looking to move home, you may have applied for a transfer or looking to move outside the district.

Unfortunately, we have less homes available than the amount of people who want to move - both for existing tenants and new applicants. We have around 1,000 people on our housing register but only around 250 empty homes each year.

We have had lots of successful swaps, with people moving to a bigger or smaller home, moving closer to schools or work or just moving to a different area.

You could consider a mutual exchange. This is where you swap homes and tenancies with another social housing tenant.

Mutual Exchanges are subject to checks and you must not swap homes until you have approval from us (and if applicable the other landlord).

HomeSwapper is a website which makes it easy to advertise your home and for you to search and find others who are interested in moving - why not take a look?

www.homeswapper.co.uk



Could you or someone you know be missing out on

Pension Credit?

It is a benefit that 2.58 million older people are entitled to, but only around 4 in every 10 of those who qualify make a claim.

The amount of Pension Credit you could get will depend on your circumstances, but it's worth checking if you qualify. Pension Credit can also be a gateway to other benefits, so even if you are only entitled to a small amount, it's worth claiming, because other benefits could be unlocked. You have nothing to lose by applying and if you've previously been turned down, you can still make a new claim each year.

Making a claim is easy.

You can call for **FREE** on **0800 99 1234** or visit: www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim.

If you would like to apply by post, you can download the application from the website or ask a local voluntary organisation like Citizens Advice to call and ask the Pension Service to request a paper form for you.

With energy bills increasing it makes sense to try and make a claim before the winter.



Independent Living Schemes

We're all getting older, and Cannock Chase Independent Living Scheme offers good quality independent living for the over 55s, alongside the reassurance of emergency alarms and the option of some personalised independent support.



Grace Moore Court

Residents of Grace Moore Court enjoyed an afternoon of excitement and socialising thanks to Wiltshire Farm Foods, who hosted a lively Buzz Bingo event. The event brought together residents for a few rounds of bingo, where laughter and friendly competition filled the room.

“Our schemes also have social clubs, lots of activities and a strong sense of community.”

Wiltshire Farm Foods, known for their nutritious meal delivery service, wanted to give back to the community by organising this special event. They not only provided the bingo cards and prizes but also served a selection of delicious snacks, giving residents a taste of the quality meals they offer.

Prizes included hampers filled with treats and meal vouchers, adding to the excitement of the game.



Longford Court

Residents of Longford Court have transformed an underused green space into a vibrant community garden.



“The garden brings a fresh burst of life to the neighbourhood.”

The Longford Court community garden project was launched to encourage residents to connect with nature, get to know their neighbours, and promote mental and physical well-being.



Caxton Court

“The garden provides a peaceful area for relaxation.”



St Barbara House

Excitement has been growing—quite literally—at St Barbara House, where residents recently took part in a friendly potato growing competition.

“The initiative, aimed at bringing the community together and encouraging sustainable gardening.”

Each resident received a starter kit with seed potatoes, soil, and pots to grow their spuds in the communal garden. Throughout the growing season, there was plenty of friendly rivalry as residents compared tips and tricks.

The harvest day saw an impressive turnout, with residents proudly presenting their potato crops for judging. Three prizes were given out, 1st place £20, 2nd place £10, 3rd place £5 by the Rugeley Town Crier.



If you're thinking of your next move and would like to know more, visit www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/independentliving



You said...

The operatives showed poor workmanship throughout my bathroom installation and it was not finished to an acceptable standard.

We did...

Reiterated to our contractors the importance of customer service expectations and advised them we will continuously monitor the contractors conducting future works to ensure customers remain satisfied throughout the process.

You said...

We do not understand our rights when it comes to our Tenancy Agreement and we need assistance with changing our tenancy type.

We did...

Included the customers feedback in our current review process for our Tenancy Agreement and obtained further training and support from our Legal Team to ensure policies and procedures are explained accurately and clearly to tenants.

You said...

The mutual exchange of my property is taking longer than I expected and I have not received any guidance or support on this.

We did...

Streamlined our Mutual Exchange process by implementing regular follow-ups with applicants. Enhanced our communication both internally and externally to allow us to achieve target exchange dates and to address and prevent any delays, where possible.

You said...

I visited your offices for an update on my application, but the service I received was poor and I did not receive a clear response when I asked about the progress of my application.

We did...

Implemented a new induction and training programme for reception staff to ensure they can confidently answer queries when approached by applicants. We are also planning to produce a Housing Reception Satisfaction Survey for customers which will allow us to review and improve our reception service.



working in partnership



Garden Waste Subscriptions 2025

To continue to have your **brown bin** collected you will need to renew your subscription.

You can do this via the Council's website from **13 November 2024**.

When you receive your new green permit, please ensure it is displayed on your bin underneath the handle.

If you didn't subscribe to our garden waste service last year and want to subscribe you can sign up and pay online via our website.

2025 brown bin collections will start week commencing **20 January 2025**.

PRICE
FREEZE

The annual fee is

£38.50
per bin



For more information about this service
and to make your payment, visit
www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/brownbin

Keep in touch...

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