

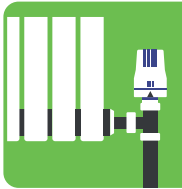
Tenants' Newsletter

March 2023

Welcome to the Cost-of-Living Newsletter for tenants of Cannock Chase Council. We know that it is a worrying time for our tenants, with the rising costs of living. We are here to support you or signpost to the relevant agencies, through this difficult time.



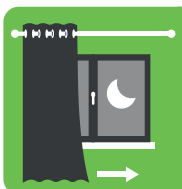
Energy tips and advice



Turn down radiators in rooms you don't use much. Use your central thermostat to control overall temperature.



Turn your heating down by one degree. You could save up to £80 a year. Don't go below 18°C if you are elderly, ill, or have small children.



Keep the heat in. Close the curtains when it's getting dark and tuck them behind the radiator. Shut the doors to rooms you use most.



Move your furniture away from radiators. It will be absorbing the heat.



Use LED bulbs. Each LED you fit can make you a lifetime saving of £180. Plus, they don't need changing as frequently.



Consider investing in a 'slow cooker'; they use far less electricity than an oven.



Instead of the electric hob, use a microwave where possible, they are cheaper to run.

Economy 7 Tips



Set your hot water timer. Make sure your water is heating up at night. An hour a day of on peak water heating adds around £200 to your annual bill.



Use washing machines and tumble dryers during 'off-peak' night hours when it's cheaper

Benefits

We would encourage tenants to check that they are receiving all the benefits that they're entitled to, as around one in ten people are missing out.



There are **FREE** online benefit checkers you can use.

www.gov.uk/check-benefits-financial-support
www.entitledto.co.uk/

Tenancy Services Team

Tenancy services are split into four teams: **Allocations, Income Management, Neighbourhoods and Independent Living Service.**

Allocations are responsible for processing housing applications, accompanied viewings and the sign ups of all new tenancies. Officers ensure that properties are advertised and adhere to our policies and procedures.

Allocations also nominate interested parties for Housing Associations in the District. Although all our housing applications are now on our Housing Online service, we can assist anyone with their housing application.

The team also manage the sheltered schemes across the District; St Barbara's in Rugeley, Caxton Court, Gracemore Court and Longford House in Cannock.



For left to right: Carolyn Storer, Zoe Tropiejko, Catherine Smith, Tracy Dawes, Julie Scott and Rhona Gudgin

There is a new Team Leader for **Independent Living Services** who is due to start in May 2023 and details of the service and team will be in future newsletters.

If you are interested in sheltered accommodation, please contact the **Allocations team** on **01543 462621** for advice and guidance.

Income Management deal with all rent queries, and recovery of arrears from low-level to court action. Officers also provide benefit and budgetary advice and signpost to other support agencies.

This year there is a rent increase of 7% in line with Government guidance, to maximise funding. If you are concerned please contact the Income Team to discuss payment plans.

Our Income team can also assist you with applying for direct debits. This can be done through our online portal, but again we will be happy to assist.



From back left: Kim Hodson, Peter Griffiths, Natasha Howells; front left: Eleanor Ward, Lyndsey Brewer, Lisa Gardiner.

Looking after your home

Last year, we had temperatures dropping down to -5. Due to increased energy costs several tenants had chosen not to put their heating on. This caused a number of council properties to suffer from burst pipes and damage to their properties.



If you have chosen to not have your heating on this winter because of the rising costs, we would ask that you contact the **Citizens Advice** on **03444 111 444**, to see if there is any help available to you.

For more information, visit www.south-staffs-water.co.uk/household/my-water-supply/leaks/wrap-up-for-winter

It is also important to ensure that you have sufficient home contents insurance. The Council works with an insurer specifically for Cannock Chase Council customers, to offer home contents insurance at very competitive rates. Unlike some insurances there are no excesses to pay in the event of a claim. Visit: www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/residents/housing/tenants-contents-insurance

To help prevent your pipes from freezing, it's important to:



Know where the internal stop/tap valve is and how to turn it off



Minimise draughts and keep the home as warm as possible even if you are out



Set your thermostat to keep a low level of heat (stay above 12 °C) throughout the night and while you are out during the day.



Check your radiators



Make sure you had your regular boiler check

Neighbourhoods manage the tenancy, which includes dealing with all anti-social behaviour from our tenants, tenancy breaches and regular checks and audits.

They also manage our vulnerable grass cutting service, if you think you may be eligible for this, please contact our team for advice.

All our new tenants have a New Tenancy visit to ensure they are satisfied with our service.

The Neighbourhoods team have held many community events over the last 12 months, working with a large variety of agencies, including Victim Support and Staffordshire Police.



For left to right: Sikemi Thompson, Sarah Jane Cooper, Heather Sturland, Neil Deakin, Tracy Evans, Gemma Biddulph, Lisa Harvey, Tracey Baggott, Joanne Dowling, Andy Smith and Danny Ryan

The Team is also keen to reintroduce more tenants group, so their voices can be heard, a new group in Hednesford is starting shortly, as well as our ongoing groups.

If this is something that you feel your community would be interested in, we would really like to hear your views and work together to improve your community.

Officers assist at **Rugeley foodbank** for advice and assistance every **Tuesday 2pm- 4pm**.

There are **ASB darker foot patrols** in **Rugeley** with **Housing Officers, Victim Support and the Police weekly**.

We also have a surgery at **Hednesford Library**, with the next date being **16 February 2023**.

The next community event is at **Avon Business Park** on **3 March** from **10-3pm**.

There are job fairs planned in **Rugeley and Cannock February and March, Rugeley community events April, August and October** and the reopening of **Springfield community gardens in April 2023**.

Look out for more details on social media.

Mould, damp, and condensation

During the winter months condensation and damp can become a problem. Damp is often caused by condensation forming on cold surfaces. There are lots of things you can do to reduce condensation. These include:

- Cover boiling pans and turn kettles off after use
- Avoid portable gas heaters as these add moisture to the air in the dwelling
- Vent tumble dryers using correct vent kits
- Avoid drying clothes on radiators/heaters
- Dry washing outdoors or in the bathroom with the door closed, window open



Looking after your mental health

It is important to remember to look after yourselves, and each other. Exercise, taking time for yourself, and eating healthily can all help improve your mental health. The Mental Health Foundation has links to organisations providing support in all these areas and can also provide referrals to foodbanks and other organisations.



Visit the Mental Health foundation blog for some great advice on looking after your mental health.

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/blogs/cost-living-and-your-mental-health

Disrepair Claims

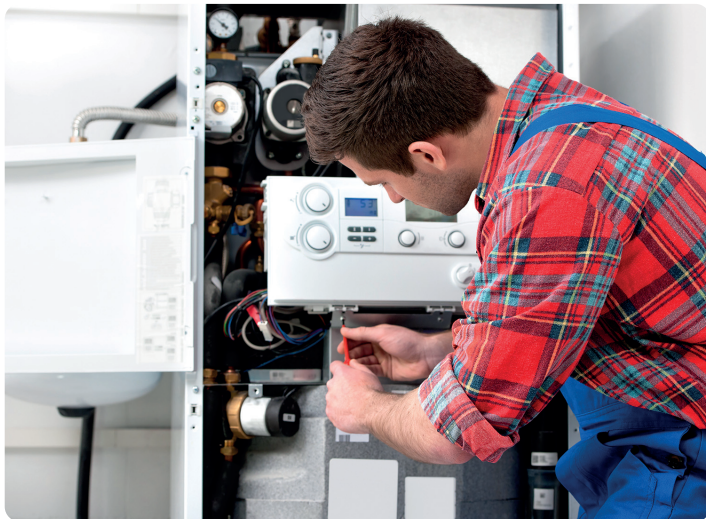
Disrepair Claims take a lot of time and money.

In 2021/22 out of twenty-two claims received twelve were resolved, this cost the service nearly £35,000. These claims also prevented 135 other repairs.



In most cases, the claim slows the repairs process down. We believe that some of these solicitors do not have a tenants best financial or health interests at heart and will often advise tenants to refuse access for repairs. In many cases, tenants may be liable to pay court costs even if on a no-win no-fee basis.

If you have any outstanding repairs then in the first instance it is essential you call **01543 462621** to report these to the **Housing Maintenance service**, who will raise the repair and get you booked in. Repairs can be resolved much quicker this way.



If you are dissatisfied with any housing repairs service you have received there are several options available to you, both formal and informal. Our complaint procedure allows tenants to raise concerns and requests that the service 'make it right'. Tenants can

log complaints by phone, in writing, by email or through the website www.cannockchase.gov.uk/council/about-council/customer-feedback-help-us-get-it-right

More information is available at:
www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/residents/housing/housing-complaints-and-compliments

The Housing Annual Report was issued in January this year.



Annual Report

for Tenants

2020/21



The report can be viewed on our website:
www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/residents/housing/housing-services-annual-report



Help for Households

If you need any help or advice our website has information to help during this difficult time.

www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/costofliving



There is a wealth of information and advice on our website, however, we know not everyone is able to access the internet.

If you don't have access to the internet, please call **01543 462621** and we would be happy to help.

Cannock Chase Council Civic Centre, Beecroft Road, Cannock, Staffordshire WS11 1BG

tel **01543 462621** | www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk | email customerservices@cannockchasedc.gov.uk

Search for 'Cannock Chase Life'

@CannockChaseDC

www.youtube.com/CannockChaseDC