

My Homes Plus

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Homes Plus

Issue 5

Improving our services



Since our last issue we have been busy asking you, our tenants, how satisfied you are with our services. We have asked about our response to anti-social behaviour (ASB), complaints handling and more.

We have been working with a leading housing research company, Acuity, who contacted over 1000 of our customers at random and asked them to complete a perception survey. They conducted a telephone survey consisting of 16 questions, which asked how satisfied you are with our repairs service, our response to anti-social behaviour and the way we handle complaints.

Your feedback enables us to measure how well we are doing at providing good quality homes and services. If you took part, we would like to thank you for helping us to scrutinise our performance and for giving us your views about where we can improve.

We are so pleased that 75% of our tenants said they are satisfied with the landlord services we deliver. Many of you also said that your neighbourhood is a great place to live, that you feel safe in your home and that you are happy we treat you fairly and with respect.

Where you told us there are areas for improvement, we are working hard to do better.

You can see all the results from the survey in our **Tenant Satisfaction Measures** spotlight on pages 7 – 9 and just some of the ways we have

already improved our services on page 10.

We have also provided information about the volume of complaints and ASB reports we receive, as well as the number of safety checks we have completed.

We're sharing this edition with you following **Pride Month 2024**. Pride Month, which takes place in June, is an important date in the calendar of anyone who identifies as LGBTQ+, as well as for their friends and family.

I'm pleased to announce that we have signed up to the HouseProud Pledge to show our commitment to LGBTQ+ equality and support.

I am incredibly proud that Housing Plus Group is a safe space for our LGBTQ+ colleagues, customers, partners and stakeholders. We are an organisation that celebrates diversity and strives to create a workforce and service where everyone feels free to be who they are. I will be championing our work to meet the commitments of our pledge.

I hope this newsletter, which is packed with other news and information, is helpful to you. If you have any feedback, please let us know using the contact details on the back page.

Les Clarke

Executive director of housing and care

Your views matter



We welcome your feedback to help us improve our services.

Sometimes things can go wrong and our services can fall short of your expectations. If this happens, we want to hear from you.

Our new customer advocacy team will work with you to put right what has gone wrong, wherever possible. They will also make sure all necessary learning takes place and services are improved as a result of your complaint.

Our new complaints and feedback policy sets out what you can expect from us when you make a complaint or provide feedback on our services. It follows the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code. Find out more at www.homesplus.co.uk/make-a-complaint

"Advocacy means getting support from another person to help you express your views and wishes, and help you stand up for your rights. Someone who helps you in this way is called your advocate."

Source: Mind



Choir raise the roof at retirement living scheme

Residents living in one of our retirement living schemes have put on their first ever performance as a choir.

The choir was formed in March by Retirement living officer Zoe Brown and choir mistress Lorraine, bringing together residents at the scheme in Stafford.

The eight choristers performed in front of other residents and colleagues, from across Housing Plus Group, and are in the process of planning more events in the coming months following its success.

Lorraine, choir mistress, said: "Some of the residents were looking for something to do and Zoe mentioned that we could form a choir, so we decided to get a group together and we've been singing every Tuesday since.

"It has great benefits to your mental health, getting people laughing and just enjoying themselves for a couple of hours.

"We really get into it and enjoy it. I love it because I've always sung and, in the future, we'd like to go out and put on performances elsewhere."



Paula moved into the scheme in April and joined the choir to help her get to know other residents.

She said: "I love singing, I've always been in choirs since I was a kid.

"I moved here in April and I've joined in on lots of activities and I thought the choir was another way of getting to know people.

"It seems like a really nice place to live."

Retirement living officer Zoe helped to set up the choir.

She said: "They were nervous to perform today but they've worked really hard and they

did amazingly. It made me so proud.

"We're now going to go around and perform at the other schemes."

Les Clarke, Executive director of housing and care, attended the performance and even joined in for a couple of songs. Les added: "Music has so many benefits for our wellbeing and it has been so lovely to see the residents enjoying singing for us all today.

"I'd like to thank Zoe for the work she has put into starting the choir and I look forward to seeing more of their performances in the future."

Could you be our next volunteer?

We are looking for befrienders, gardeners, readers, dog walkers, bingo callers, photographers, quiz masters and more!

All you need is enthusiasm and a desire to help. You can choose how much time you offer, and we'll provide the training and support.

Our amazing volunteers are already making a positive difference to our communities throughout Staffordshire and Shropshire. If you would like to join them, we would love to hear from you.

Get in touch by emailing Engagement&Volunteering@Care-Plus.org.uk

#BEMOREINVOLVED



Drop-in and see us

Whether you need help to get into work, support to get online or advice to get your finances back on track, we're here to help at our Homes Plus Community Hubs in Shrewsbury and Stafford.

To find out more about the help and support available to you and opening times, visit www.homesplus.co.uk/drop-in-and-see-us

How to find us



Castlefields Community Hub

69 New Park Street, Shrewsbury, SY1 2LE



Meole Community Hub

25 Maesbrook Road,
Shrewsbury, SY3 9NL



Burton Square Community Hub

Burton Square,
Stafford, ST17 9LT



Are you looking to gain new skills which could help you get into work?

We've partnered with the Virtual College and The Safer Food Group to offer free online courses to Homes Plus customers, that could help boost your job prospects.

These include:

- Microsoft Office packages
- Food hygiene
- First aid
- Safeguarding

Interested?

Talk to us in one of our Community Hubs in Shrewsbury or Stafford or contact us by emailing ema.shropshire@homesplus.co.uk or ema.staffordshire@homesplus.co.uk



Paying your rent

Paying your rent by Direct Debit is convenient and the easiest way to ensure that you pay your rent on time.

If you prefer to make payments over the phone, you can do this 24/7. Simply call **0800 048 8955** and select 'pay your rent' to be directed to our quick and easy automated payment service.

To find out how to set up a Direct Debit or for more information about paying your rent, visit www.homesplus.co.uk/paying-my-rent

Making our website more accessible to you

Did you know that our website offers 24/7 accessibility support?

Access speech, reading and translation assistance at any time, from any page of www.homesplus.co.uk

Globally, 1 in 7 people live with a disability. For many, this means they experience barriers when they're online.

By adding the ReachDeck toolbar, we're giving **you** the choice to experience our website in whatever way is best for you. You can choose to have the information read aloud, enlarge the text, simplify our pages, and more.

Plus, you can read the information on our website in almost 100 languages, including Polish, Spanish and Ukrainian!

Look out for this button



SPEAK



Get started by visiting www.homesplus.co.uk



The Homes Plus My Community Fund

Boost to community hub at local primary school

We awarded funding to the Community Hub at Castlechurch Primary School, in Stafford, where volunteers run free toddler groups, craft clubs and cuppa clubs.

The Castlechurch Community Hub is the brainchild of teacher Mrs Cranwell who, despite teaching for 28 years, says she has never seen times so hard.

It's fantastic to be able to support such a valuable service!



My Community Fund helps more people enjoy the outdoors

A grant from the Homes Plus My Community Fund is helping more people improve their health and wellbeing by spending time outdoors.

We are supporting Shropshire-based Kitsquad to recycle donated clothes and equipment for people who might not otherwise benefit from access to the countryside.

Samantha Allcott, our Director of housing, explained: "We're delighted to be able to step in and help an organisation that is making such a positive difference to people's lives."



Homes Plus continues support for Staffordshire's Best Kept Village competition

Homes Plus is one of the sponsors for this year's much-loved Best Kept Village competition, run by The Community Foundation for Staffordshire.

As well as highlighting how communities work together to make where they live desirable, and a place they are proud to call home, the competition emphasises how much voluntary work is undertaken to keep Staffordshire beautiful.

Good luck to all the beautiful villages taking part!



To read these stories in full and for all the latest news and updates visit www.homesplus.co.uk/news and follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/MyHomesPlus



David's first aid skills save choking baby

Homes Plus plasterer David Rossiter has been hailed a hero, after jumping into action to administer emergency first aid to a poorly baby boy.

David was working in one of our homes in Staffordshire when he heard someone banging on the front door and found a distraught mother from a neighbouring property, desperately looking for help for her infant.

"It all happened so quickly; I didn't have time to panic. The woman handed her baby to me and told me that he had swallowed something. I could see that he was in a very bad way, so I put him in the choke position and carried out emergency first aid. While I did that, I asked the baby's mother to call for an ambulance," he explained.

David's quick actions meant that by the time the paramedics arrived, the choke hazard was safely removed.

After a couple of days in hospital the baby was released, to continue his recovery at home. His relieved mother has been in touch to thank David, telling him that he saved the life of her child.

Read more at www.homesplus.co.uk/first-aid-skills-save-choking-baby



Could YOU become part of our Customer Partnership Panel or Virtual Customer Panel?

These customers work in partnership with us to help improve our services.

You can choose the involvement that suits you best, whether that's attending meetings in person and online as a member of our Customer Partnership Panel (CPP) or responding to online questionnaires and surveys through our Virtual Customer Panel (VCP).

As an involved customer, you could question and challenge us about how we deliver services, have your say on important policies and customer communication, and work with us to improve the experience of all our tenants.

If you would like to help us to make a positive difference, we'd love to hear from you!

Get in touch by emailing customerinvolvement@housingplusgroup.co.uk



**Customer
Partnership Panel**



**Virtual
Customer Panel**

#BEMOREINVOLVED



How we are doing?

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)



Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) were introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing to enable tenants to scrutinise our performance and give us insight about where we can improve.

A random sample of customers are contacted directly by Acuity, our contractor, to complete a perception survey.

This feedback enables us to measure how well we are doing at providing good quality homes

and services. We will share the results regularly to show you how we're performing.

The perception surveys cover:

- Overall satisfaction
- Keeping properties in good repair
- Maintaining building safety
- Respectful and helpful engagement
- Effective handling of complaints
- Responsible neighbourhood management

Find out more at www.homesplus.co.uk/TSM-23-24

Overall satisfaction

We were particularly pleased to see that so many of you say that your neighbourhood is a great place to live and that you feel safe in your home. Where you told us that there were areas for improvement, we are working hard to do better.



Overall satisfaction

75%

Keeping properties in good repair

You should have a home that you can be proud of. Homes will be kept safe and in good condition. If any repairs need to be completed, these will be carried out to a decent standard and within the agreed timeframe.



Satisfaction with repairs

77%



Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair

75%



Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard

0.52%



Non-emergency responsive repairs completed within target timescale

75.32%



Emergency responsive repairs completed within target timescale

93.82%



Satisfaction that the home is well maintained

73%

How we are doing? Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

Maintaining building safety

We want you to feel safe in your home so we make sure that all the necessary safety checks are completed.



Satisfaction that the home is safe

83%



Gas safety checks

99.99%



Fire safety checks

100%



Asbestos safety checks

100%



Legionella risk assessments

100%



Lift safety checks

95.24%

Respectful and helpful engagement

We will make sure that all information is easily available and that we are respectful and act on your feedback.



Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them

60%



Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them

76%



Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect

77%

You said

We are doing

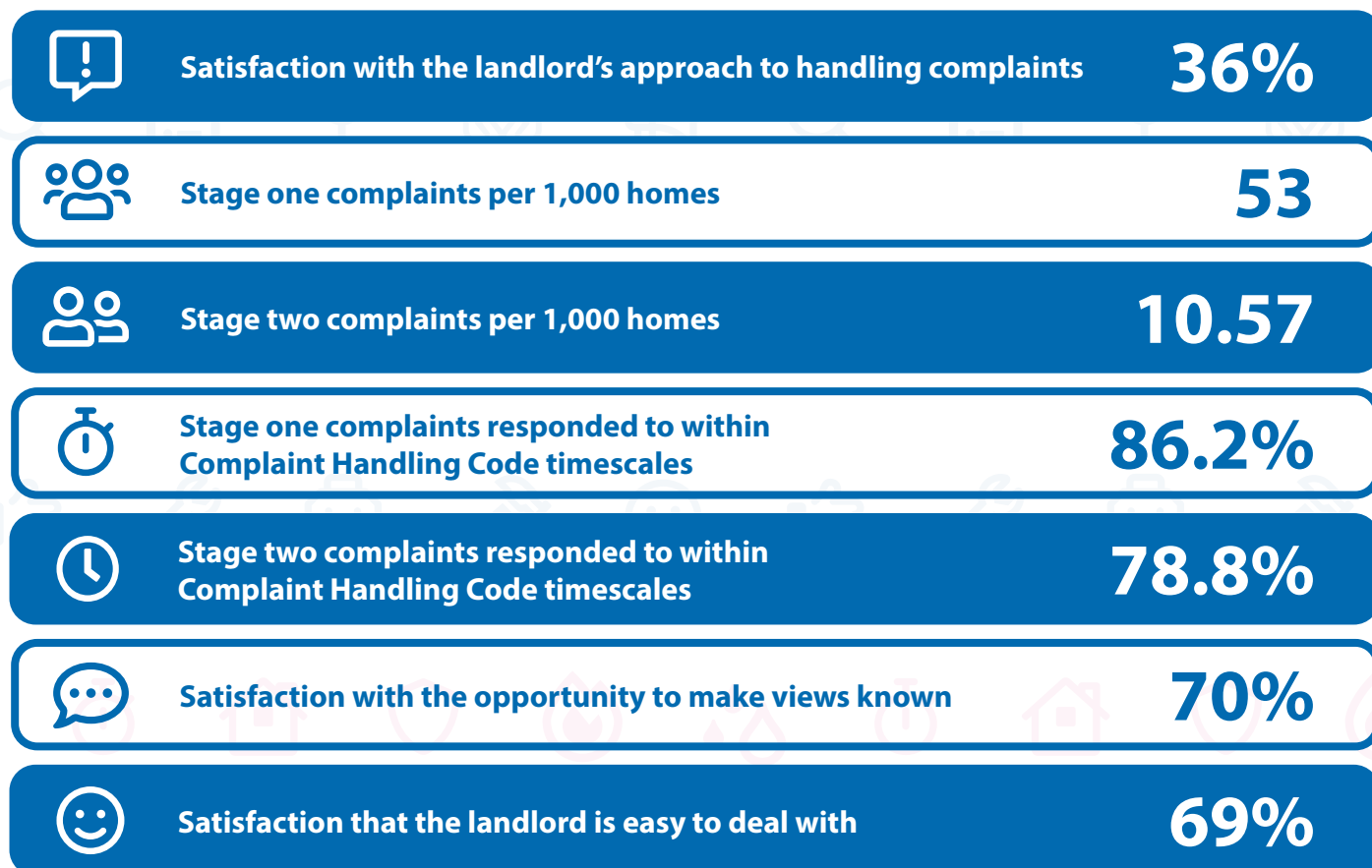
See the latest progress on projects at

www.homesplus.co.uk/you-said-we-are-doing

How we are doing? Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

Effective handling of complaints

We know that sometimes things go wrong and when this happens, we want to hear from you. We will learn from your feedback and improve our services.



Responsible neighbourhood management

We work in partnership with you, local agencies and partners to provide safe environments and promote good communication and relationships in our communities. We will listen and act on concerns raised by you about your neighbourhood.



You said, we did

You said

We could improve the way we communicate with you about delays to repairs.

We have updated the messaging on our phone line and website to be more transparent about the issues we are experiencing.

We did

You said

You wanted to help shape our policies and have more input.

All our policies are reviewed by our Customer Partnership Panel (CPP) to make sure that their feedback has been considered and put in place, where possible, before being shared with all our customers.

We did

You said

We could improve how we communicate with you about repair and damp and mould appointments.

We will no longer change appointments without notifying you and will let you know any changes or updates about your repair as soon as possible. We have also introduced calling cards to let you know when external works have been completed and reviewed our procedure for when we are unable to access a property to complete a repair.

We did

You said

We could make improvements to how we manage complaints.

We investigated the types of complaints that received the highest dissatisfaction in our Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) 2023-24 and have made sure that we are making improvements in these areas.

We did

You said

We need to improve how we manage damp and mould in our homes.

We have reviewed our damp and mould process and have put in place new timescales for responding and attending to reports of damp and mould.

We did

You said

You wanted us to be more transparent and you wanted to have more influence.

A customer is now a member of our board, attending board meetings as a customer co-optee and providing a link between the CPP and the board.

We did

You said

You want us to reduce the wait times on our phones.

We undertook a recruitment campaign to increase the number of customer service colleagues and fill vacant positions. Our customer services team continues to recruit when a position becomes available and try to reduce the impact on wait times. This will remain under review.

We did

You said

You wanted to have more of a say in how we manage complaints.

We have created the Customer Engagement Committee. This committee is made up of involved tenants and reviews our complaints performance as well as our learning from these complaints, our TSM results and our performance quarterly. All findings are reported to the board through the customer co-optee.

We did



Prison sentence sends warning over meter tampering



A tenant has been jailed after breaching an injunction obtained by Homes Plus.

He was handed the injunction after bypassing the electricity meter in his home, endangering the lives of others living in the block of flats, and causing anti-social behaviour.

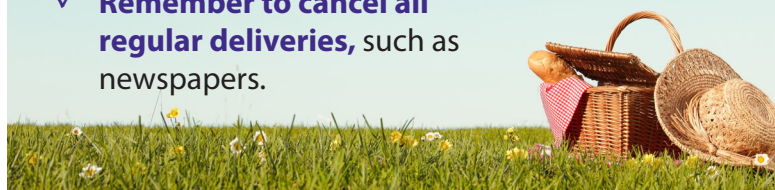
If you think a meter has been tampered with, please report it.

- 👉 Call our customer services team on **0800 048 8955**
- 👉 Report it anonymously to Stay Energy Safe by completing a form on their website or by calling them on **0800 023 2777**
- 👉 In case of an emergency call the National Gas Emergency Line on **0800 111 999**

To read more about the consequences of meter tampering, visit www.homesplus.co.uk/news

Summer security tips

- ✓ **If you are spending time in the garden at the back of your home**, ensure windows at the front of the property are closed. You may not hear someone coming through an open window or door at the front.
- ✓ **Keep keys, money, and bags away from the letterbox or cat flap** as thieves can hook valuables through small spaces.
- ✓ **If you are out in the evening or overnight**, shut your curtains and use a timer to automatically turn lights on at night.
- ✓ **As you may be spending more time in your shed**, don't leave it open or unlocked, keep valuables out of sight.
- ✓ **If you are going away on holiday**, try not to advertise this on social media until you return home. You could be advertising an empty home to a burglar.
- ✓ **Leave radios or lights in your house on a timer** to make the property appear occupied.
- ✓ **Get a trusted neighbour to keep an eye on your property** or join a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.
- ✓ **Ask your neighbour** to collect any deliveries for you.
- ✓ **Remember to cancel all regular deliveries**, such as newspapers.



Meet Chatticus, our chatbot

Chatticus can:

- ✓ Give instant answers 24/7, 365 days a year.
- 🌐 Answer your question in seven different languages.
- 💻 Put your query through to a member of our team, during office hours, if it can't find the answer to your question.



To get started, simply click the icon in the bottom right corner of any page of our website - www.homesplus.co.uk



Do you have an email address?

By signing-up to receive updates from Homes Plus by email, you will be helping us to protect the environment, reduce our carbon footprint and make cost savings. These savings can be used to make improvements to existing properties and build even more new, energy efficient homes.

You will receive monthly customer e-bulletins full of interesting updates, digital copies of your My Homes Plus customer newsletter and other important news about our services. To get involved please call our customer services team on **0800 048 8955** and let them know your email address.

Soon, we'll be making even more improvements to our systems.

As some of our services may be unavailable whilst we make these upgrades, look out for further updates on our website – www.homesplus.co.uk/system-upgrades

Just so you know, our phone lines and Chatticus, the Homes Plus chatbot, will not be affected by the changes and you will still be able to chat to us online or by calling **0800 048 8955** (24/7).

How to make a complaint

We know that sometimes things go wrong or the service you receive falls short of your expectations. When this happens, we want to hear from you so that we can put it right and improve our services to prevent similar problems from happening again.

You can make a complaint by contacting us in the following ways:

- Complete our online form at www.housingplusgroup.co.uk/complaints-form
- Call us on **0800 048 8955**
- Email feedback@housingplusgroup.co.uk
- Send us a private message at www.facebook.com/MyHomesPlus
- Speak to us on live chat
- You can find more information about our complaints policy by visiting www.homesplus.co.uk/feedback

We are registered with the Housing Ombudsman and are committed to complying with their Complaint Handling Code.

Please be aware that you can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any stage of your complaint for further advice and assistance:

- Tel: **0300 111 3000**
- Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Leave a compliment

Our compliments form is a great way of letting us know if we've done something well or if you feel a staff member has gone the extra mile.

The easiest and quickest way to send us a compliment is to complete our online form, which you can find at www.housingplusgroup.co.uk/compliments

**PETROS AND IAN
PUT ME AT EASE
IMMEDIATELY**

Homes Plus customer



Carbon monoxide alarms



Carbon monoxide is a dangerous gas. You can't see it or smell it, but an alarm can detect it.

As your landlord, we will check these alarms on an annual basis, normally as part of other routine works such as gas safety checks or electrical safety inspections. But regular testing by you is the most important and efficient way to make sure these alarms are working correctly.

You must not prevent your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms from operating in their intended manner.

Please do not tamper with, damage or remove them, or cover them up.

Find out more at www.homesplus.co.uk/HUKYS

Fire safety in communal areas

A fire in a communal area can spread between homes. It could make it more difficult for the emergency services to reach you and might prevent you from leaving the building in an emergency.



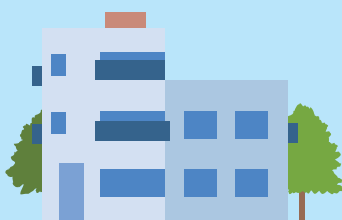
Communal areas are places in your building that other people share, like landings, entrance lobbies, corridors, meter cupboards, lifts, open walkways and balconies.

If you live in a building that includes any of these spaces, you must ensure that you don't keep or store anything that could:

- Stop you escaping quickly
- Prevent emergency services reaching you or your neighbours
- Give off toxic smoke or gas when burning
- Explode in high temperatures
- Cause fire to spread more quickly

We carry out regular safety inspections in apartment blocks and as part of that work, we remove objects left in communal areas. To find out more please visit our website –

www.homesplus.co.uk/my-home/communal-areas



LOCAL HERO

**DO YOU KNOW
A GREAT
NEIGHBOUR WHO
HELPS OTHERS
AND IS MAKING
A POSITIVE
DIFFERENCE IN
YOUR LOCAL
COMMUNITY?**

We love hearing great news about how our customers are stepping-up to make a positive difference and want to showcase their stories.

We read all your great comments and surprise some of your nominees with chocolates and a 'thank you' from Homes Plus!

If someone in your neighbourhood is making a positive difference, please use our online form to tell us about your own Local Hero at www.homesplus.co.uk/local-hero

Damp and mould

See it - report it!

To report damp or mould in your home call us on **0800 048 8955**, send us a private message on Facebook or complete our online form www.homesplus.co.uk/damp-and-mould

We'll arrange an inspection to identify the cause of any issues that you are experiencing and work together to make sure these are resolved as quickly as possible.

Have you seen our Top Tips to help you cut condensation?

Useful information as well as advice about what to do when you spot signs of damp and mould, is in one easy-to-find area of our website.

Take a look at www.homesplus.co.uk/damp-and-mould



Reporting a non-emergency repair

Repairs are an important part of looking after your home. Sometimes repairs are necessary because of general wear and tear, or because things go wrong and need a little extra attention.

You can report non-emergency routine repairs by:



Calling our customer service team on **0800 048 8955**



Completing our online form at www.homesplus.co.uk/request-a-repair



Sending Homes Plus a private message on Facebook at www.facebook.com/MyHomesPlus

If you need to report an emergency repair, you can call our customer service team on **0800 048 8955, 24/7.**

Plus, don't forget to check our website and follow our Facebook page for help and advice.

Repairs update

We are sorry if you are **having to wait longer than usual for a repair.** This is due to extremely high demand.

Please bear with us, as we are doing everything we can to resolve this temporary situation.

Emergency repairs are not affected.

Please see www.homesplus.co.uk/repairs-service-status for current wait times.

As your landlord we have important legal duties and obligations.

Most of these responsibilities involve safeguarding you, your home and family. By law, we must carry out safety checks and it's an important condition of your tenancy that you give us access to your home to carry out these vital inspections.

Find out more at www.homesplus.co.uk/HUKYS



PLEASE NOTE: You must not install log burners or solid fuel heaters. There is an increased risk of fire with an appliance that has an open flame.

Find out more at www.homesplus.co.uk/diy-and-home-improvements





DIY, home improvements and alterations

Before making any improvements, alterations or additions to your home, it is essential that you obtain written permission from Homes Plus and any other approvals required, before any work is started.

It's vital to ensure that the work you want to complete is safe to undertake and will not lead to faulty or sub-standard work being carried out, which could put your safety at risk.

To find out more and to request permission to undertake improvements, visit our website at www.homesplus.co.uk/diy-and-home-improvements

Are you insured?

If you can't afford to replace it, you should really think about insuring it!

While it's our responsibility to insure the building in which you live, this insurance does not include your personal belongings.

By taking out contents insurance, that can cost just a few pounds a week, you can relax knowing that they can be replaced.

Find out more at www.homesplus.co.uk/contents-insurance



WE'RE HIRING

Can you bring our values to life and ensure our customers receive outstanding services and support?

With a range of apprenticeships and opportunities to develop your career, it's a great time to join us.



Find out more at www.housingplusgroup.co.uk/careers



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MORE
HPG



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www.homesplus.co.uk

Scan for the latest news, information and advice



www.homesplus.co.uk



As a responsible landlord, the safety of our customers is our priority.

We want to make sure that you know how to get help and advice if you're worried about a possible safeguarding problem in your neighbourhood.

Safeguarding means protecting the rights of an adult or child to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. Abuse and neglect can take place at home or in a public place and can take a lot of different forms, including domestic and sexual abuse, physical, psychological and discriminatory abuse, human trafficking and slavery.

It's often difficult to identify abuse or neglect but if you have any concerns, always Speak Up. You can report a safeguarding concern to your local council:

www.staffordshire.gov.uk -

Tel: 0345 604 2719

www.shropshire.gov.uk -

Tel: 0345 678 9044 (adult) /

0345 678 9021 (under 18s)

www.telford.gov.uk - Tel: 01952 385385



Celebrating the completion of new affordable homes in Shropshire

We're delighted to celebrate the completion of brand-new homes in a Shropshire village.

The new homes for affordable rent and shared ownership, in Baschurch, will now help to meet the high demand for affordable housing in the village.

The 20-home development in **Baschurch**, called Parry Close, is a mixture of one-bedroom apartments, one and two-bedroom bungalows and two and three-bedroom houses. The homes include a range of energy-efficient features including solar panels and electric charging points.

The homes will provide much-needed affordable housing for those with a local connection to the village.

To read more, visit **www.homesplus.co.uk/news**

Useful information

Gas leaks 0800 111 999

(National Gas Emergency Service)

Health and sickness help and advice 111

(NHS Direct)

Police 101 (non-emergency)

Personal concerns, worries and troubles

116 123 (Samaritans)

Councils

Cannock Chase District Council 01543 462621

Shropshire Council 0345 678 9000

South Staffordshire District Council 01902 696000

Stafford Borough Council 01785 619000

Telford & Wrekin Council 01952 380000

Contacting Homes Plus



Visit **www.homesplus.co.uk** to complete an online form



Contact **Chatticus**, the Homes Plus chatbot, by clicking the icon in the bottom right corner of any page of our website



Private message us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/MyHomesPlus



Call **0800 048 8955 (24/7)**

Contact us to request this newsletter in:



Large print



Audio



Other languages

We will be keeping COVID-secure working practices in place. We believe this the safest decision for our customers, staff and communities. Visit **www.homesplus.co.uk/covid-19** to find out more.

