



November Housing Newsletter

Welcome to the November newsletter. As the days slow down and the crisp air settles, we are focusing on condensation prevention in your home. We are offering to help you apply for pension credit. Hear about how we are tackling tenancy fraud. See how we are performing with our complaints and how you can be involved in shaping our services by getting involved in one of the consumer standard groups. Check out our digital sessions to help improve your digital skills.

For up-to-date housing news follow our [Tenant Partnership Facebook page](#)

Pension Credit

Pension Credit

Don't miss out on the winter fuel payment!

Recent changes to the Winter Fuel Payment mean that only those receiving

Pension Credit or certain other benefits will be eligible for the winter fuel payment this year.

We want to make sure that all our tenants who may be entitled to apply for Pension Credit apply for the allowance to qualify for the Winter Fuel Payment. This year an application for Pension Credit must be made by **21 December 2024**.

You may be eligible for Pension Credit if your weekly income is less than £218.50, if you live alone, or £332.95 as part of a couple (or slightly higher if you are receiving any disability benefits such as Attendance Allowance).

To find out if you can claim Pension Credit you can check online at [Pension Credit calculator - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) or telephone the Pension Credit helpline for free on **0800 99 1234**

Pension Credit is not paid automatically and must be claimed.

We're also running a number of coffee mornings where our friendly staff will be on hand to help you apply. Find out more on our [website](#):

If you are not eligible for Pension Credit but are struggling financially with your energy bills, we may still be able to help you in other ways.

Join us for a FREE cuppa and a bite to eat at one of our Community Hubs (details below) or get in touch with our Tenancy Sustainment Team on 01962 848 060 or by email the [Tenancy Sustainment team](#).

Upcoming Community Hubs:

- **Unit 12**, Winnall, Thursday 21 November 10.30am - 12.30pm
 - **Coffee#1**, Alresford, Friday 29 November 10am - 12pm
 - **Wickham Community Centre**, Monday 2 December 2.30pm - 4.30pm
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November 17–23, 2024

Tenancy Fraud

In conjunction with National Fraud Week, we're working hard to tackle council housing fraud. Tenancy fraud takes occupied council homes away from those who really need them – and we need your help to spot signs of fraud.

Fraud includes sub-letting, abandonment, making false Right-to-Buy claims, lying on housing applications and living in a property after someone has died, if you have not notified the council.

If you have noticed:

- No sign of your neighbours for a long time
- Property no longer being used as someone's main home
- Neighbour's children taking over a property
- New occupants with no explanation

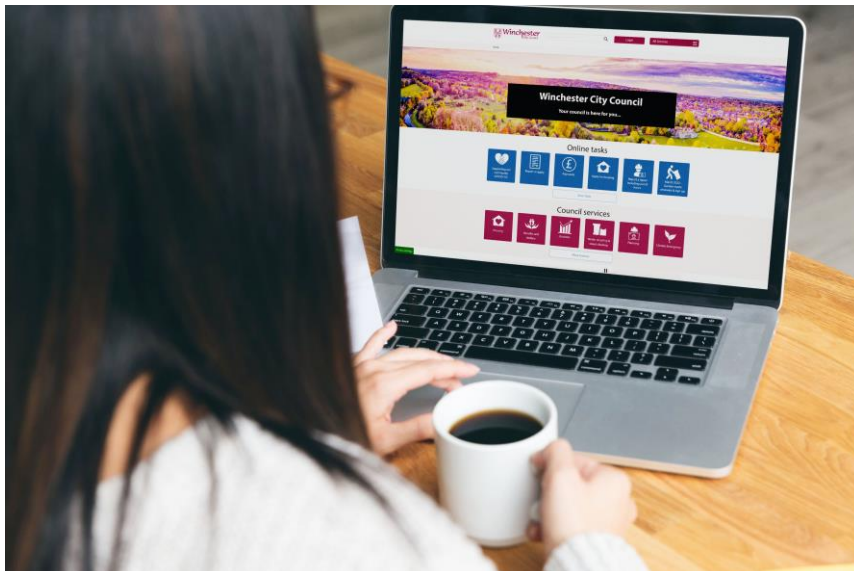
Then report your concerns to us [online](#) , leave a message for the team on **01962 848 392** or [email](#) the tenancy fraud team

We take all reports seriously and in confidence.

WHY REPORT IT?

- We want our homes to be occupied by those who truly need them

- There is a shortage in affordable housing
- Over 1 million families in the country are waiting for social housing. Do you know one of them?
- Estimates suggest over 148,000 homes in England are being fraudulently used
- Each home linked to tenancy fraud costs the taxpayer £42,000
- Tenancy fraud is a crime. Convictions can result in a fine or imprisonment



Essential Digital Skills Session

We're launching a new project to support district residents to improve their digital skills with WorkAdvisor Ltd.

Digital exclusion is a big problem, with 22% of UK adults lacking digital skills that are essential for everyday life. Our Essential Digital Skills development programme aims to tackle that exclusion by helping residents of all ages and circumstances learn critical skills and build confidence with digital technology.

The programme launched on Monday (7 October) - to find out more, register for a one-to-one or group workshop, or refer a friend or relative, [visit our website](#)

In addition to these sessions, we also run digital drop-in sessions where you can get free one-on-one IT support. Here are the details for the next few sessions

- [King Harold Court](#), Winchester Tuesday 12 November 10am - 12pm
- [Makins Court](#) Alresford, Friday 6 December 10am - 12pm



Tenant Satisfaction Survey

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete our recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

We received over 895 surveys and the results will be published in our newsletter and on the Tenant Satisfaction Survey webpage by the end of March next year.

The council will use the results to target service improvements, and we will share updates on this work as it progresses working alongside our new consumer standard groups.

Tenants will be able to see how Winchester City Council performing as a landlord.

The prize winners will be selected at the end of November



Complaint Performance

You can now see our [quarter 2 \(Q2\) complaints performance](#) and [annual complaints report and improvement plan for 2022/23](#) over on our website.

We're pleased to be able to say that we've been responding to complaints more quickly this quarter, and we've also been able to solve more issues at an earlier stage.

We've have started to roll out complaints' awareness to our front-line staff to help ensure our complaints process better serves residents.

As a reminder, the easiest way to raise a formal complaint is to fill in our [online form](#):

If you need help with a complaint about your landlord or want to bring a complaint to the Housing Ombudsman to consider for investigation, residents or representatives should use the complaint form to submit their case to the service. The contact details for the Housing Ombudsman are:

- [Online complaint form](#):
- Phone: 0300 111 3000
- [Email](#):
- Postal address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool

L33 7WQ

For more information about complaints and to view how we are performing visit the [website](#).



Get Involved in the Upcoming Consumer Standards Groups

Do you want to have a say in how we deliver your housing services? We're launching new Consumer Standards Groups (CSGs) to give our tenants, leaseholders and shared owners greater opportunity to shape the decisions that directly impact your home and community!

The Consumer Standards Groups provide a platform for you to voice your opinions and work with us to improve services. We want to see more of our tenants taking part in these important conversations so whether you're passionate about tenancy issues, the safety and quality of your home, or your local community, we have a group that needs your input.

The next round of meetings is approaching, and we encourage anyone who is interested to attend and see how they can get involved:

- **CSG: Transparency, Influence and Accountability** - *Date: 2nd*

December 2024 - *Time: 6 pm – 8 pm*

- **CSG: Tenancy** - *Date: 5th December 2024 - Time: 6 pm – 8 pm*
- **CSG: Neighbourhood and Community** - *Date: 11th December 2024 - Time: 6 pm – 8 pm*
- **CSG: Safety and Quality** - *Date: 12th December 2024 Time: 6 pm – 8 pm*

All the meetings will be held at [Lawn House](#)

Parking is available in [Middle Brook Street car park](#)

You don't need prior experience—just a willingness to contribute and share your thoughts on what's important to you as a tenant/ leaseholder/ shared owner. We welcome people from all walks of life and would love to hear from underrepresented groups, including ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, disabled people, and others who may feel their voice has not been heard in the past.

To get involved, simply come along to one of the sessions above.

Meet the TACT Board: Your Voice for Tenant Advocacy

The TACT (Tenants and Council Together) Board is a key body that ensures your views are represented at the highest level of decision-making within Winchester City Council.

The TACT Board is made up of four tenant representatives who bring their direct experiences as tenants, and two independent members who are there to contribute impartial advice.

The Board has an important role in overseeing and scrutinising our services to help make sure we're meeting tenants' needs. Its members are also crucial in helping to improve services and share tenants' feedback - and they're also involved in our Consumer Standards Groups too.

See the [TACT web pages](#) for more info on each of the TACT Board members

Feedback from the Repairs Re-Design

We have collated all the feedback from the repairs re-design engagement and consultation events delivered across the district in the summer. View the full feedback [here](#).



Over 400 of our council homes have already benefited from our [Energy Saving Homes](#) programme, designed to make them warmer, more comfortable, whilst reducing heating bills. Our specialist contractors have been busy working with tenants and our retrofit team to install upgrades including renewable energy heating systems and insulation upgrades.

As well as that, we've also been working to install some more involved works for specialist properties such as the Swedish Cottages, which are receiving updates to external cladding and roofing to help make them warmer and more energy efficient.

Engaging with tenants throughout the course of the works has been a

cornerstone of our approach, and our retrofit team have been running regular engagement sessions to hear tenants' feedback, keep them updated and help keep disruption to a minimum.



Damp & Mould

We know it can be concerning as the nights and days get cooler and along come the first signs of condensation, with that to mind, we've updated the website with information to help you keep your home free from condensation and mould. We have also produced some [guidance on condensation](#), and a [handy check list](#) Visit our [website](#) for more information on managing condensation in your home.



Swing Sixties Tea Party

52 residents enjoyed a 60's tea party on the 22 October at Jubilee Hall Bishops Waltham. The residents, who are all over 60, were joined by the Mayor of Winchester Cllr Russell Gordon-Smith and our Cabinet Member for Housing Cllr Chris Westwood.

The tea party was arranged and funded by our tenant champions, with support from our Sheltered Housing Team, and sponsorship from Cardo, SRH Décor and Malwood Builders.

The party also featured a raffle with prizes donated by tenants, Cardo, Stainers, Sheltered Staff and residents, with £191 being raised for The Mayor's Charities!

There were also cream teas, vintage tunes performed by singer Dawn Gracie, and close-run quiz – clinched by Normandy Court after a tense tie breaker! The Memory Box Foundation brought along memorabilia items from the 50/60s.

Next year, the Tea party will be returning to Winchester City to tie in with the VE day 80th Anniversary in May. Plans are already in place



Changes to reception staffing times

From 28 October 2024 our reception will only be open for face-to-face visits from 10am – 3pm.

The council remains open for business from 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am to 4.30pm Friday through telephone and email contact on 01962 840 222 or [email the customer service team](#). This change in face-to-face hours will mean we can better deal with peak time demand at the

beginning and end of the day, most of which is via phone and email contact.

There will be a telephone in the lobby available (8.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30am to 4.30pm Friday) for visitors to contact customer service during hours when reception is closed should you have an appointment outside of these hours.

We're piloting these changes over the next three months - if you have any questions or feedback, please [contact us](#)



Be careful when having a bonfire!

Did you know that wood smoke can be harmful to health? If you've got a bonfire lined up this autumn, help reduce the harms by only burning dry, untreated wood. You can also do your bit to protect nature and be a great neighbour by checking for wildlife and following fire safety advice.

We're working with The Environment Centre (tEC) to raise awareness of the hidden harms of wood smoke - [visit their website](#) to learn more.

If you have any comments on this newsletter or any suggestions on what you

would like to hear about please contact us by [email](#)

Our mailing address is:

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