



Winter 2021/22

# Family Housing Association Newsletter

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## Welcome to our Winter Newsletter

Welcome to the latest edition of the Family Housing Association Newsletter. I hope this finds you safe and well. During the course of the year, we have managed to continue delivering high quality housing services in often difficult circumstances, with the support of tenants and contractors, despite the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. The latest Omicron variant has shown just how quickly things can change and we will continue to follow Government guidance to keep our Residents, Contractors, Board Members and Staff safe.

To keep in touch with the latest information on Family Housing Association services, please keep an eye on our website at [www.familyha.org](http://www.familyha.org) or follow us on social media.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our residents an enjoyable festive season and a happy and healthy 2022.

Neil Moffatt, Chief Executive

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# Changes to FHA Staff

Family Housing Association is saying goodbye to two members of our staff team due to retirement. Collette Byrne has worked for Family Housing for 20 years as an Administrative Officer. She was responsible for managing our annual gas servicing programme, electrical testing programme, invoice processing, scheme inspections and providing varied administrative support. Dawn Keenan has worked for Family Housing Association for 12 years as a Housing Assistant overseeing void works and lettings, rent account postings and monitoring. Collette and Dawn will be sadly missed by everyone at Family Housing Association. We thank them for all their hard work and wish them all the very best for their retirement.

The retirement of 2 of our staff has presented an opportunity to restructure our Staff Team to prepare us for the future. Lisa Milns has joined Family Housing Association as our Finance Director. Lisa will perform much of our accounting functions in house, in addition to the day to day management of The Association's finances. Lisa brings over 24 years of experience in accountancy. She has a significant experience in the finances of Charitable and Not for Profit Organisations and is looking forward to settling into her new role to ensure that Family Housing Association remains financially strong.



Pam Fewtrell has been promoted from Housing Assistant to Housing Administration Officer and she will manage the annual gas servicing programme and electrical testing programme as well as providing a wide range of administrative support.

Toni Rooney has been appointed as Housing Officer to oversee voids and lettings, monitor rent accounts and deal with anti-social behaviour. Toni has worked in Social Housing for 16 years and is looking forward to providing a great service to our tenants. We warmly welcome Lisa and Toni to the team and congratulate Pam on her promotion and believe that they will help us deliver excellent levels of service to our tenants.



# Energy Saving Tips

Fuel poverty is a very real problem at the moment. At Family Housing Association we believe no one should have to choose between heating their home or feeding their family. With energy prices rising and the weather getting colder, we thought it would be useful to share with you some energy saving tips so you can still heat your home whilst keeping costs as low as possible.

**Draught proof your home** – draughty windows and doors will cause your home to lose heat rapidly. If you are worried that the cold is coming in as a result of damaged seals around windows and doors, then please contact us and we can arrange for them to be repaired. You should remember that trickle vents in windows and wall vents in chimneys are there to prevent damp so whilst you may be tempted to cover these up, we advise against this.

**Lower your thermostat** – Research has shown that turning your thermostat down by just 1°C could save you as much as £80 per year. Most radiators also have individual thermostats. Remember to always ensure there is some ventilation to avoid damp.

**Check if you're eligible for the Warm Home Discount** - The Warm Home Discount is a government-led scheme that gives a helping hand to those who need it most. If you meet the criteria, you could get £140 credit on your electricity bill.

**Using rugs and carpets** - Insulating your floors using rugs and carpets can save you between £30 and £70 per year.

**Close your curtains and keep doors closed** - Studies have shown that closing your curtains or pulling down blinds at dusk can reduce heat loss by 13-17%.

**Low energy lighting** – A modern LED bulb uses 80-90% less energy than a traditional lightbulb, which helps to lower your carbon emissions and electricity bills.

# Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2022

During 2021 we planned to carry out a Tenancy Satisfaction Survey. This has been delayed until 2022 so that we can take part in a joint survey with other local small Housing Associations. The survey will be carried out by an independent customer research company called TLF. By working together with other Associations we will be able to compare results and share the cost.

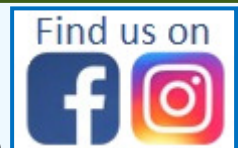
The main difference with the TLF survey is that it is done by telephone rather than a written postal survey. You will be contacted by TLF and asked to give 10 minutes of your time to complete the Survey. Please be assured, the only purpose of the telephone call is to get your feedback on the services that we provide. They will not try to sell you anything and your personal details are not shared.

Understanding what our tenants think about the services we provide is very important to us. The survey results tell us what we are doing well and where we need to improve. The results are shared with the Board of Family Housing Association and will be made available to all tenants via the website. The results can influence the aims, objectives and strategy of Family Housing Association going forward.

We will be in touch in the New Year with details of the survey. Tenants will have the option to remain anonymous and all completed replies will be entered into a Prize Draw. We will be grateful if you will take part and share your views with us.

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## Find us on Social Media



Family Housing Association is on Facebook where you can keep up to date with news, information, opportunities and details of any events. We have also recently set up an Instagram account. Follow us to keep up to date with the latest information about our services.

# Smart Energy

A Smart Meter can help you save money on your gas and electricity bills. They include an in-home display that allows you to see what energy you are using and what you are spending in real time. It helps you to identify how much energy you are using so you can make informed decisions about running your home, and the costs of running your heating and various appliances.

## What is a smart meter?

Smart meters are upgraded gas and electricity meters. They can be installed at no extra cost to replace the traditional meters. Unlike traditional meters, a smart meter sends your gas and electricity readings directly to your energy supplier so you don't have to. Smart meters make sure your bills are accurate, and not based on estimated readings. Seeing how much you're spending on the in-home display allows you to keep track of your finances.



## How do smart meters work?

Smart meters are designed to measure how much gas and electricity you use and securely shares this directly with your energy supplier at least once a month and your portable in-home display in near real time. You won't have to take any meter readings manually – your smart meter will send automatic readings to your energy supplier via the secure smart data network which is solely for smart meters.

## How to get a smart meter

Your energy supplier will be able to provide further information on smart meters, including the accessible in-home display. Check your gas or electricity bill for your supplier's contact details.

# Why The Wirral Is So Popular

House prices nationally, but particularly in Wirral are booming. Over the last year, the average sale price of property in Wirral rose by £25,000 – putting the area seventh among the North West's 43 local authorities for annual growth. The Wirral has proved to be extremely popular with buyers and its obvious why:

- ♦ **Close to the seaside.** There was an article in a national newspaper recently describing someone travelling 4 hours from Birmingham to go to the beach for the day. We are very lucky to have New Brighton, West Kirby and Hoylake on our door step so we can build sand castles, sunbathe and paddle in the water on a summers day.



- ♦ **Natural Beauty.** Country Parks such as Thurston, Arrowe Park, Eastham, Birkenhead and River Park offer plenty of outdoor spaces to get active and enjoy nature.



- ♦ **Gateway to Wales.** Bordering on Wales, the Wirral is a good base to explore North Wales of a weekend. Whether you like hill walking, castles, river rafting, camping or a country pub, Wales has it all.



- ♦ **Cities close by.** Wirral is nicely situated between Liverpool and Chester offering an array of shops, restaurants, bars, museums, job and education opportunities nearby.



- ♦ **Good transport links.** There are lots of bus and train links throughout Wirral. The M53 and the Mersey tunnels provide a good start to your journey wherever you're going. You might even want to catch the famous Ferry across the Mersey.





- ◆ **Wirral Weather.** People often describe Wirral as having its own microclimate. This is because we are sheltered by the Welsh hills and surrounded by water. Wirral often has a sun spot whilst surrounding areas are grey and miserable.



- ◆ **Fascinating History.** The model village of Port Sunlight, Birkenhead Priory, Hadlow Road railway station, Bidston Hill, Fort Perch Rock and Park Gate are just some of the historical locations to capture your interest.



- ◆ **Fantastic Views.** On one side of the peninsula, we get to see the world-famous views of Liverpool waterfront. On the other side we get to see the Welsh hills including the recognisable Moel Famau hillfort.



- ◆ **Great places to eat and drink.** There are a number of restaurants, pubs and cafes across Wirral to enjoy. The likes of Heswall, New Brighton, Hoylake, West Kirby and Oxton are busy with revellers at weekends. But there are plenty of quiet places to enjoy a quiet refreshment or meal away from the hustle and bustle.



- ◆ **One of the best Zoo's in the UK** is just down the road in Chester. Easily accessible by car or bus, it attracts 1.8 million visitors annually. You may have even seen some of the variety of animals on the channel 4 show 'The Secret Life of the Zoo'.



# Birkenhead Priory



Birkenhead Priory on Priory Street is the oldest standing building in Merseyside. The priory is a grade 1 listed building, built on an 850-year-old site. Founded in circa 1150, the monks of this Benedictine Monastery looked after travellers for nearly 400 years and supervised the first regulated 'Ferry cross the Mersey' up to the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1538.

The Chapter House is the oldest part of the priory with its foundations dating back to the middle of the 12th Century. It is still a working Church of England chapel and hosts regular church services as well as weddings, baptisms and funerals.

St Mary's, the first parish church of Birkenhead (1821), survives now as only a tower and spire, having been demolished in the 1970's.

In modern day, the priory is home to its own museum and offers a wide range of educational opportunities for the local community in particular local schools. The site is steeped in history, we would encourage anyone who has not yet had the opportunity to go and visit to do so.



Energy Projects Plus are a charitable organisation that can help you reduce your energy bills by making sure you get the best deal from energy suppliers. They give advice on how to make your home more energy efficient and have good knowledge of Government grants / fuel vouchers that may be available. You can contact them direct on 0151 637 3670 or we can make a referral on your behalf.



# Reducing Your Carbon Footprint

The planet is heating up and countries across the world are trying to work together to limit global warming in order to avoid climate disaster. FHA want to take the opportunity to provide our tenants with some useful tips on how you can play your part in reducing your carbon footprint. Your carbon footprint is measured by your lifestyle and regular activities that result in greenhouse gas emissions.

**Eat more plant foods and less animal foods** - meat and dairy accounts for 14.5% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. Eating fewer animal products, especially red meat, and shopping for locally sourced food can make a difference.

**Try other modes of transport** - if possible, opt to walk, cycle or use public transport instead of driving.

**Reduce, reuse, and recycle to waste less** - One way of reducing emissions from products at home is to reduce the amount you consume. You should also try to re-use wherever possible and recycle when you no longer need something.


**Rethink your fashion choices** - By reducing the amount of clothing that you buy, only buying second-hand, or purchasing from eco-friendly companies, you can help to reduce your impact on the environment.

**Choose energy-efficient appliances** - If you are looking to replace an appliance, choosing a model with a high energy efficiency rating that meets your needs and budget will minimise your home's carbon emissions

**Travel less or travel wisely** - Flying makes up a substantial amount of our carbon footprint; taking trips that don't require a plane journey can significantly reduce your overall impact.

**Turn down the temperature at home** - make sure you're only using heating when necessary. To do this effectively, make use of the timer or programmer on your boiler, room thermostats and thermostatic radiator valves.

# Tips for feeding Robin, not Roland

- If throwing out household scraps such as bread etc., just put out enough at a time that the birds can clear up, so as not to leave any crumbs behind for the rodents. Throwing out half a loaf will certainly leave too much bread uneaten and attract rats.
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- Taking bird food in at night and sweeping up any spilt food, is probably the most important point of all, as rats will come out in the cover of darkness and feed more confidently.
  - Do not locate bird tables or feeder stands too close to hedges, fences or overhanging shrubbery, as this will allow easy access to the food by rats, as they are extremely good climbers.
  - When using bird feeders, try to use some kind of catching tray to stop any spillage getting onto the ground below, as this is one of the most common causes of rat infestations.
  - If spillage is unavoidable, then try to locate the feeders above a surface that can be easily swept, such as concrete, and this should ideally be done on a daily basis.
  - Do not hang fat balls around in bushes and on fences because rats can get at them very easily.
  - Do not hang feeders or fat balls from the house i.e. from the gutter brackets, as this is an open invitation to rats or mice to enter the roof of your property.
  - Remember, rats will eat anything put out for the birds without exception, and they will do it at any time of the day.
  - Rats need to drink daily therefore removing a water source will make a habitat less appealing.
  - Make sure you keep your garden or yard tidy and free from rubbish so not to provide somewhere for rats to live.

# Keeping your Water Safe

When water in your home is not used regularly, there is a danger of bacteria growing which can cause illness. To make sure your water installation remains safe, follow these simple steps:

- Regularly clean and disinfect your shower head.
- Regularly clean and disinfect your taps.
- Make sure your hot water is set at 60 degrees.
- If you have been away, run all your taps for a few minutes to flush out the pipes with fresh water.

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**Wirral Mind** are offering a 'Check in & Chat Service' for people who feel isolated, lonely, anxious and afraid due to being unable to access services.



They can provide practical and emotional support to anyone whether its to find out where to get essential supplies or just to speak to a friendly voice at the end of the phone. Contact them direct on 0151 512 2200 or Family Housing Association can make a referral on your behalf.

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## Can you afford to lose everything in your home?

Family Housing Association insures the building but you are responsible for insuring your homes contents. Please get in touch if you would like us to arrange for someone to contact you who specialises in contents insurance for social housing tenants. For more information visit [thistlemyhome.co.uk](http://thistlemyhome.co.uk)



# Home Energy Efficiency Improvements

Family Housing Association has set aside £170,000 a year to improve the energy efficiency of our homes. Our target is for all our homes to have an Energy Performance Certificate rating of Band C or better.

Improvements can range from minor works such as topping up loft insulation to more significant work such as upgrading central heating boilers and insulating the external walls of older properties.

We are currently carrying out these works when properties are empty but we are considering extending the programme to include properties with tenants in occupation.

If you would be happy to have some energy efficiency improvement work carried out around your home please let us know. Some of the work may be quite disruptive but this short term disruption could give you the benefit of a warmer home and lower fuel bills for many years into the future.

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## Fire Safety



Have you tested your smoke alarms recently? A couple breaths of toxic smoke can render you unconscious in seconds, long before the flames reach you. Test your smoke alarms regularly, as they could save your life.

Take a few minutes to discuss how you would evacuate your home with your family. Having a plan could save valuable seconds in the event of a fire.

# Struggling to Pay Your Rent?

With increasing energy costs, the end of the furlough scheme, and the end of the Universal Credit top up payment, we know the next few months are going to be financially challenging for some of our tenants. If finding the money to pay your rent each week is becoming more difficult, it is important to talk to us about it. Ignoring the problem will often make matters worse and could result in you losing out on benefits that you might be entitled to.

Our website at [www.familyha.org](http://www.familyha.org) contains useful information about Universal Credit and provides links to expert advice from Citizens Advice and from the Government. It also contains a link to make a claim for Universal Credit.



Where our tenants have complicated financial circumstances we can refer them for independent expert advice. The advisors will help them claim all the benefits they are entitled to and can also help them to manage their debts.

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## ASB Out Of Hours Service

Family Housing Association has an out of hours service for reporting Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). If you ring our office (0151 647 5000) outside of office opening hours, you have the option to select option 3 and report ASB.

This will put you through to Magenta Living's Out of Hours Security Team. We have an agreement with them to provide an ASB out of hours response service. This service is provided for your benefit, please don't hesitate to use it.



**Wirral Foodbank** is part of a nationwide network of foodbanks, supported by The Trussell Trust, working to combat poverty and hunger across the UK. They provide nutritionally balanced emergency food and support to local people in crisis.

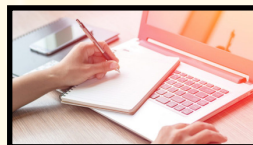


If you need Emergency Food Support contact Citizens Advice Wirral on (Freephone) 08082 787848 or Coronavirus Helpline 0151 666 5050 (select option 1).

They also offer help and support alongside emergency food to help people address the underlying issues behind their crisis.

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**The Skills Toolkit** is an online learning site that gives people access to free, high-quality digital and numeracy courses to help build up their skills, progress in work and boost their job prospects. Please go to:



Visit [theskillstoolkit.campaign.gov.uk](https://theskillstoolkit.campaign.gov.uk) to boost your skills.

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## Wirral InfoBank

**Wirral Infobank** is an online resource to help you find support services near you. It is available to support Wirral residents requiring advice, guidance and additional help during this ongoing and difficult coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis.

Visit [wirralinfobank.co.uk](https://wirralinfobank.co.uk) for more information.



# Welfare / Debt Advice

Family Housing Association works with 'Raise' to support our tenants facing financial hardship. They are an independent charity, providing free, confidential, high-quality advice around welfare benefits, debt, and financial capability issues.



They can help to:

- Ensure you are receiving your full benefit entitlement
- Make applications to claim or review appropriate benefits
- Claim any backdated awards
- Challenge benefit award decisions
- Apply for grants for those most in need

They will work with you to fully understand your situation and help you to complete any claim forms. They can discuss your case with the appropriate government department or Local Authority if you wish them to do so.

Raise offers a comprehensive package of support to its benefit clients such as further support with debt issues, money management or back to work employment support and training.

If you would like Family Housing Association to make a referral to RAISE, please contact us.

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## Get involved with Family Housing Association

We need more tenants to get involved with the running of Family Housing Association so that we deliver the services that you want. There are lots of ways to be involved, including surveys, providing feedback by telephone or by e-mail. You could ask to join our Customer Panel, where you can help update our Policies and monitor our performance. Please get in touch for more information.

# Breakfast Word Search



Sausage  
Bacon  
Toast  
Black Pudding  
Tomatoes  
Hash Brown

Eggs  
Beans  
Mushrooms  
Fried Bread  
Bubble and  
Squeak  
Pancakes

Waffles  
Cereal  
Bagel  
Muffin  
Yoghurt  
Fruit



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Call the office for Out of Hours  
Emergency Repairs /  
Anti social Behaviour