

REACH

SPRING
2021

MAGAZINE



Halton
Housing



Widnes
Development
Transformation

See
Page 13

COMPLETE



PLUS - IMPROVED DIGITAL SERVICES • 3 SISTERS AT NAUGHTON FIELDS • DESTINATION DITTON

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REACH

MAGAZINE

Welcome to the first edition of Reach magazine for 2021!

It looks likely to be another tough year as we continue to fight the coronavirus pandemic, but I want you to know we've not lost sight of our vision of improving people's lives.

With ongoing coronavirus restrictions in place again as I write this, I want to start by saying thank you. Thank you for bearing with us as we adjust to working under the new guidelines and thank you for continuing to pay your rent through what I know have been challenging times for many families. I know that 2020 was not easy, but we're here as always to support you. And just like before, your safety is our top priority.

As we progress through 2021, there appears to be some green shoots of hope and optimism. Spring is nearly here, and great progress is being made on the vaccination programme.

I also want to thank customers for their patience and understanding during January as we moved to an emergency only repairs following the sharp increase in coronavirus cases we witnessed in Halton. We are working hard to transition back to providing customers with a full range of services as soon as we can whilst prioritising the safety of colleagues and customers.

When we visit you in your home to complete a repair or essential safety check such as gas, you can help us to keep everyone safe. We have procedures in place to minimise risk and they'll be followed rigorously, but we do ask you to play your part by following our instructions when we are working in your home.

If you do find yourself worried about work, money or anything to do with keeping a roof over your head, please talk to us first. Asking your landlord for help might not seem like the obvious thing to do, but as a responsible landlord there's lots of support and advice we can provide. We have helped many customers to claim benefits they are entitled to, or to reduce their outgoings, and we are here to help you if you need us.

In February, we were proud to receive accreditation as a Living Wage Employer. As one of the largest employers in Halton it's vitally important that we offer a fair salary and recognise the hard work of all colleagues, many of whom live in the borough.

Improvements in our digital services for customers have also been recognised. We have recently been judged the number one digital housing provider in the UK. Take a look at page 4 and 5 to find out more about improvements we've made to help you manage your tenancy online.

Finally, I know some of you have been directly affected by Covid-19, and have family members who have been very poorly. We are thinking of you at a very difficult time.

Let's keep following the guidance to keep everyone safe.

Best wishes

Liz Haworth

Chief Executive



Contact us



Live Chat



www.haltonhousing.co.uk



talktous@haltonhousing.co.uk



0303 333 0101

All information correct at the time of going to print in March 2021. If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact communications@haltonhousing.co.uk



There's never been a better time to Go digital with us

So why not join the hundreds of customers who are doing everything online

1. MyHaltonHome



MyHaltonHome is the new name for our fully revamped online customer portal, and your one-stop shop for you to manage your tenancy anytime, anywhere, any device.

Much more than just a name change, we've improved the technology for a seamless experience. And, as well as all the easy to use features you're used to such as report a repair, check rent balance and report ASB, we've also introduced some brand-new features to make it even easier to manage your tenancy online:

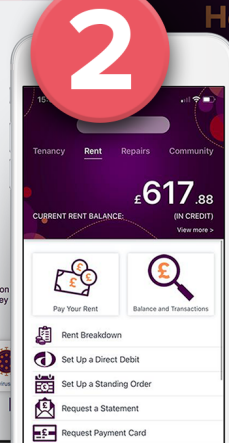
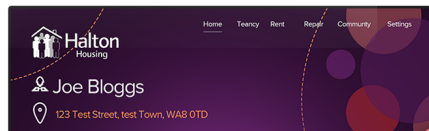
- Book your own appointment
- Choose your time!
- More repair options to choose from
- Self help videos

There's also a new community page and latest news section so you can check out what's happening in your neighbourhood and how you can get involved.

2. So App...ealing!

Have you seen our new, refreshed Halton Housing App? With all the same features as **MyHaltonHome**, manage your tenancy on the go from your phone or other device.

If you've never downloaded our App before, download it from the App store or Google Play store now!



3. Our brand-spanking new website is now live!

Not only has the address changed - to www.haltonhousing.co.uk, but we have worked hard to make the experience for visitors much better. It has a clean design and simple navigation structure, so you can find the information you're looking for really easily. We have involved customers in focus groups to test the early designs to make sure it was appealing and easy to use.

Log on, have a good look around. There's lots of news, help and support and service information, as well as links to MyHaltonHome for managing your tenancy. What are you waiting for! Get online.

www.haltonhousing.co.uk



As part of our ongoing commitment to improving our services to you, we have fully revamped and refreshed our digital platforms to make your life easier.

Anywhere Any time Any device

Halton2Halton

Colleagues getting involved...



A virtual walk to Halton Australia for charity...

Earlier this year we launched 'Halton2Halton', part of the Big Team Challenge, which saw Halton Housing colleagues take on the virtual walking challenge of a lifetime – from Halton UK, to Halton in New South Wales, Australia!

Our journey took us through the snowy peaks of the Alps, the rugged plains and mountains of South Eastern Europe and then to Turkey, where East meets West. Travelling our last leg of the journey through the sunnier climate of Asia to our final destination Australia.

Covering a total distance of 23,869.1 km, over 200 colleagues walked, cycled and ran to collectively hit

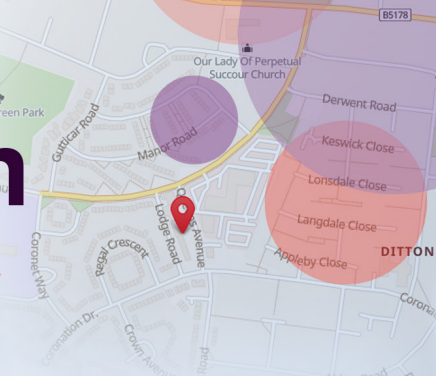
the target knowing that when we reached Australia we would make a donation of £5000 to a local charity.

As well as the donation, the virtual walk provided a fun and engaging way for colleagues to stay active, connected and motivated at a time when their mental health and well-being has become increasingly important.

Karen Lopez, Organisational Development Officer who set up the challenge said "This collective challenge was aimed at getting active and putting our daily exercise to good use by working towards a common goal that we could all celebrate together when we got there! It was really motivating – we even got families and pets joining in too to really create a sense of fun and involvement"

Destination Ditton





Join us on the journey



Introducing our new neighbourhood project, 'Destination Ditton'.

We're committed to improving people's lives and are working with our customers to create neighbourhoods to be proud of. We aim to create lasting improvements, bringing communities together, and create opportunities for customers in all of our neighbourhoods over the coming years, and we are pleased to share our first programme in Ditton, Widnes.

By working with our customers and residents of Ditton, we have identified four key themes:

-  **Green and open spaces**
-  **Supporting employment**
-  **Education and training**
-  **Health and wellbeing**

Involving customers and stakeholders

We have been engaging and listening to customers and business's views on what the community like or would change in Ditton, through 'Zoom to Us' sessions, phone surveys and email surveys and we have used the information you have provided to us to develop projects.

Working with our partners

To maximise the benefit to Ditton, we are working in partnership with Ormiston Chadwick Academy, Power in Partnership, Department for Work and Pensions, Job Centre Plus and Riverside College, to name just a few!

Projects

Projects underway so far include:

- Supporting high school children with online learning by providing 50 laptops. We're also providing school uniforms for customers who are in financial hardship.
- We have partnered with several volunteering groups to help tackle food poverty and are supporting the launch of a mobile community supermarket, which will provide low-cost quality food to all areas of Widnes and Runcorn.
- We are providing interview experience to young learners at Power in Partnership, in support of their 'work ready' programme.
- DJ lessons and bicycle repairs and maintenance.

It's early days but we would like to thank customers for their contribution so far. Watch this space as we hope to see a lot of positive things happen in Ditton in 2021 and we will be sharing updates throughout our journey in our next edition of Reach and on our website.



Working “Together with Tenants”



We've signed up to the National Housing Federation's "Together with Tenants" charter.

As your landlord, we work hard to create a positive relationship with all our customers. We are not here just to provide safe, decent and affordable homes – we want to engage with you to make sure that we are providing services and neighbourhoods that meet your expectations.

We know there are times when we do not get it right and this new "Together with Tenants" initiative requires us to demonstrate how we are working with you to provide services. We are committed to listening to you and to ensuring that our service reflects your views and needs.

By adopting the Together with Tenants charter, we are making six commitments:

Relationships – To treat all customers with respect in all interactions and for relationships between you and us to be based on openness, honesty and transparency.

Communication – To send you clear, accessible and timely information on the issues that matter to you, including important information about your home and local community, how we are working to address problems, how we are run and information about performance on key issues.

Voice and influence – To seek and value your views and use this information to inform decisions. You all should feel listened to on the issues that matter to you and speak without fear.

Accountability – To allow you to collectively work in partnership to independently scrutinize and hold us to account for the decisions that affect the quality of homes and services.

Quality – To ensure homes are good quality, well maintained, safe and well managed.

When things go wrong – To provide you with simple and accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints and seeking redress. And for you to receive timely advice and support when things go wrong.

We are working hard to ensure that we achieve these commitments.

"We are pleased to support the Together with Tenants Charter. It complements our existing work around neighbourhoods and seeking to understand the customer experience in more detail and it is an approach that has been shared to all our colleagues."

Pauline Jones,
Director of Neighbourhoods



New Customer Service Standards Launched

Our Promise to you

When it comes to customer service, getting the basics right each and every time is really important to us. In addition to the customer surveys we regularly carry out, we have developed several measures to monitor our performance.

We promise to:



Make it easy
We'll make it easy for you to contact us however you choose.



Get it right first time
We'll work hard to get things right first time and if we can't we'll keep customers updated every step of the way.



Listen to you
We'll keep detailed records of what you have told us and act on it.

We want you to trust us to deliver

We have come up with a number of measures based on your feedback so we can report to you how we are doing. We're not measuring for measuring sake, these are in place to keep us focussed and committed to delivering a good customer experience. We will share how we are doing against these measures on our website and in our annual report.

Find out more about our measures at www.haltonhousing.co.uk

15 years of Halton Housing

5th December 2020 marked **15 years** since Halton Housing, (Halton Housing Trust as we were known then) was established.

Back in **2005** some **6,300** homes were transferred over to us from Halton Borough Council, and since then we've completed over **£100m** in improvement works to our homes and have built or acquired **1,300** new homes as part of our ambitious growth plans – an amazing achievement for a relatively small housing association.

An organisation which is not afraid to try new things, over the past decade we have earned a strong reputation as an innovator and we were a pioneer for engaging with customers digitally.

As a major employer within the borough, we have established strong partnership working with the Council, local colleges, and support and welfare agencies in supporting our customers.

Providing more than just quality, affordable homes and employment, it is estimated that we have given over **£454k** to not-for-profit businesses in the borough since 2005 through our social responsibility work.

Commenting on their 15th Anniversary milestone, Group Chief Executive Liz Haworth said:

"Our 15th anniversary which fell at the end of a really challenging year provided us with a fantastic opportunity to reflect on everything we've achieved and makes us excited about what the next fifteen years may bring. We must thank our customers, colleagues, current and former Board members, our partners and stakeholders for their contribution in helping us deliver our services. Here's to the next 15 years of doing what we do best – improving people's lives."

Born in 2005 following the transfer of some 6,300 homes from Halton Borough Council, Halton Housing Trust as we were known back then, has improved the lives of thousands of people along the way.

Involved customer Louise receiving special 15th anniversary cupcakes



Someone who remembers all about what Halton Housing was like 15 years ago is one of our customers Louise.

Louise answered our call out to customers back in December when we asked you to share some pictures or stories you may have of Halton Housing over the years.

Having been a happy customer of Halton Housing since the beginning, Louise was eager to share with us the original stock transfer documents (and a VHS video!) she received back in 2005. If you look closely, you might be able to spot Louise and her family who were stars of our promotional material at the time, taking the front cover spot on the VHS video.

Louise said: "Happy 15th Anniversary Halton Housing! It was a wonderful moment when we were offered the tenancy and hope many more customers enjoy the same great experience we have had."

Passionate about helping to improve the services we provide, Louise is now Chair of our Customer Forum and she's keen for as many customers as possible to get involved. To find out more about ways to get involved and have your voice heard, read more on page 20.

A day in the life of an Apprentice Introducing Ben

We have a proud track record at Halton Housing of supporting young people into employment and one of the ways we do this is by recruiting apprentices. Last September, we were delighted to welcome five new apprentices to our organisation. A longer-term ambition is to achieve our target of joining the 5% Club where members aspire to achieve 5% of their workforce in earn and learn positions, including apprentices.



As an apprentice no one expects you to be the finished article but if you work hard and have the right attitude then you will succeed. We shine a spotlight on Ben, our Open Door Properties Business Admin Apprentice from Whiston. He talks to us and shares his experiences and insights to his current role and offers some advice to anyone thinking about choosing an apprenticeship to kick-start their career.

Why would you recommend apprenticeships to others?

"I believe it is important to experience work at an early stage in life to ensure I can gain as much knowledge as possible. Halton Housing are doing their very best to train me into the best administrator I can be by helping with my college commitments and by giving me workplace experience. I would recommend this route into the workplace for anybody as it provides you with the best of both worlds."

Day in the life of ...Ben Business Admin Apprentice (OSUK)

Ben's role mostly involves spending his day working with the sales team focusing on Shared Ownership property sales. Here's a taste of what he does daily:



"Working remotely, I start between 8 and 8:30am. I start the day by replying to emails and enquiries about our Open Door properties. Also, I keep on top of most document storage for the shared ownership tenures.

By about 11am I have usually finished these tasks and we have Teams catch ups meetings that I take part in with the rest of the team.

In the afternoon I visit our developments in Widnes and Runcorn and meet a whole different range of contractors. Meeting different people on these developments daily improves the experience I acquire.

In the afternoon, when I get home, I reply to emails sent in the morning and usually try to do an hour or two of college work before planning my own calendar for the next day. I look to finish work between 4-5pm but this changes regularly".

Feeling inspired? Find out more about careers on our website: www.haltonhousing.co.uk/careers

What a year for our Development and Growth team!

In the month that we celebrated our 15th anniversary, there was cause for further celebrations as we hit another big milestone in our history. The final handover completed on our development on Warrington Road/Tan house Lane, marked the end of a 6-year transformation of the area.

Transformation of the area around Warrington Road and Tan House Lane began in Summer 2014 with the first phase of its development programme; the build of 21 mid-terraced and semi-detached houses, and 18 apartments on Page Lane.

Since then our Development and Growth team has delivered over 300 additional new build homes as part of the overall £29-million project, including apartments, bungalows, semi-detached and terraced properties with all financial circumstances catered for, as well as a children's play area for our younger customers to enjoy. Hopefully you'll agree, it has completely transformed what was previously a derelict section of land into a thriving and bustling community.

The incredible regeneration programme delivered by the team also included the build of Waterfront Point, our Head Office which, brought together our 330 colleagues from our offices at Daresbury Point and Foundry Lane.

We're so proud of what has been achieved during the 6 years and thank you to all our customers for their contribution to the area and continuing to make it such a great place to live.

Check out these before and after pics!



"I'm so proud of the team for what they have delivered. Our mission is all about improving people's lives, and I am proud that this development does just that. I'm sure the impact of the regeneration will still be evident in years to come as further generations enjoy what has become an exceptional community in the heart of Widnes."

Paul Mullane
Director of Development
& Growth

Tannery Fields

Another fantastic scheme to recently complete was our hugely popular Tannery Fields development. Located on Picow Farm Road, Runcorn, Tannery Fields delivered 71 new homes with two, three and four-bedroom homes and bungalows available through a mix of affordable rent, outright sale, shared ownership and rent to buy. The site previously owned by Halton Borough Council was disused for a number of years before our growth and development team transformed the area to provide much needed affordable housing for the local population.



Hazlehurst

Hazlehurst will be our third independent living scheme following the development of our hugely successful Barkla Fields and Naughton Fields schemes in Widnes. The specialist apartments, located on Actons Wood Lane, will feature a range of contemporary facilities including a bistro and multi-function room, available to residents of Sandymoor and the wider community. The scheme is to be named "Hazlehurst" after local businessman Thomas Hazlehurst who founded soap and alkali manufacturing company, Hazlehurst & Sons in 1816.



Over
55's

Development name: Hazlehurst
Location: Sandymoor, Runcorn
No. of homes: 100
Type of homes: 1 and 2 bedroom apartments
Tenure: 56 AR, 44 SO

Orchard Meadows

We've recently exchanged contracts with Barratt and David Wilson Homes to deliver Orchard Meadows. The development of 2 and 3-bedroom homes will be delivered over a four-year period with the first handovers due later this year. The new scheme will see 111 of the homes available through Halton Housing and its commercial subsidiary Open Door on an affordable rent and shared ownership basis. The remaining 259 homes will be available for market sale through David Wilson Homes and Barratt Homes.



Development name: Orchard Meadows
Location: Appleton, Warrington
No. of homes: 111
Type of homes: 2 and 3-bedroom homes
Tenure: 55 AR, 56 SO



Development name: Okell Street
Location: Runcorn
No. of homes: 9
Type of homes: 3-bedroom terraced properties
Tenure: 9 AR

Okell Street

Halton Housing's 'Okell Street' development situated in Runcorn, will bring nine three-bed homes available on an affordable rent basis. The new homes will come with the benefit of a range of features.

The ground floor layouts comprise a kitchen, WC, open plan dining / lounge and storage. Off road parking is promoted with the inclusion of the residents' car park which includes electric charging points. All homes are provided with private amenity space to the front and rear.

Hazel Brook

Hazel Brook is our first development in Cheshire East and third outside of Halton and will consist of 20 homes for shared ownership and 11 homes for affordable rent. Located on Pool Lane, the 2 and 3-bedroom homes are in an idyllic countryside location close to the villages of Haslington and Wheelock, yet within easy access to motorway networks. Each home will be designed for today's modern living, with open plan kitchen and dining spaces with built-in appliances, generous bedrooms and private rear gardens.



Development name: Hazel Brook
Location: Winterley, Sandbach
No. of homes: 31
Type of homes: 2 and 3-bedroom
Tenure: 11 AR, 20 SO



Development name: Three Sails Point
Location: Widnes
No. of homes: 69
Type of homes: 2, 3 and 4 bedroom homes and 2 bed bungalows
Tenure: AR, SO

Three Sails Point

Following the huge success of the regeneration of Warrington Road, and to meet increasing housing demand in the area we are working in partnership with Magenta Living to deliver Three Sails Point on Carter House Way, Widnes. The combined development will provide 158 stunning new homes including a mix of affordable rent, shared ownership and outright sale. All homes are designed for today's modern living. Homes for shared ownership and outright sale will be marketed by Open Door properties on behalf of Halton Housing and Magenta Living.

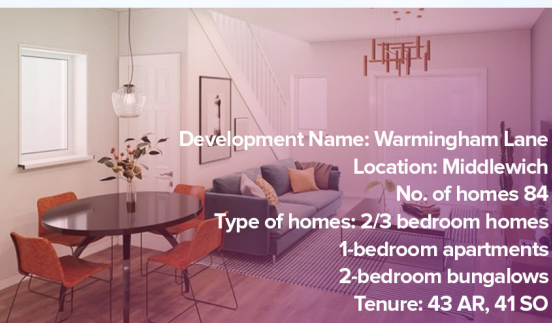
How do I apply to live in a Halton Housing home?

Key:
SO – Shared ownership
AR – Affordable Rent

Our website is regularly updated with details of when new-build properties will become available. Homes available for affordable rent are made available through our choice-based lettings system. Depending upon the location of the property, you would need to apply through either:

- **Property Pool Plus** - Merseyside's Choice Based Lettings provider
- **Cheshire HomeChoice** - Cheshire East's Choice Based Lettings provider
- **West Cheshire Homes** - Cheshire West's Choice Based Lettings provider

For more information about applying to live in one of our homes, visit www.haltonhousing.co.uk
For more information about how to apply for a home for outright sale or shared ownership, read on to page 16.



Development Name: Warmingham Lane
Location: Middlewich
No. of homes: 84
Type of homes: 2/3 bedroom homes
1-bedroom apartments
2-bedroom bungalows
Tenure: 43 AR, 41 SO

Warmingham Lane

We are excited to have secured our third scheme in Cheshire East. This new development in Middlewich will be another fantastic addition for us and will create more affordable homes for the local community. Each home features open-plan living, modern kitchen-diner and ample sized bedrooms. Homes have their own private parking and front and rear gardens. First handovers are due in August '21.



open door

If you've driven or walked past our Tannery Fields development in Runcorn, or Bower Brook Gardens development in Widnes, or perhaps visited us at our Waterfront Point Office you may have seen the name 'Open Door' displayed on our signage and possibly wondered who they are.

With more developments in **2021**, as featured on pages **13** and **14**, you'll be seeing more of Open Door so let's tell you a bit more about them.

Open Door is the trading name of Open Solutions (OSUK) Ltd which is the commercial arm of Halton Housing. Any homes that are acquired or built by our Growth and Development team which are then made available for private rent, outright sale, shared ownership and rent to buy are sold through Open Door.

Any profits made through Open Door are then reinvested back into Halton Housing and into the delivery of affordable homes and services for our customers.

It means we can keep investing in existing homes and building more homes to meet the local housing demand.

To find out more about Open Door, visit:
www.opendoor-properties.co.uk

You can also follow the team on social media.

 @opendoorpropertiesUK
 OD_Properties
 od_properties

Or, if you're interested in finding out more about a property through Open Door, contact Angela or Stacey in the Sales team on **0333 00 44 777**.

Stacey Jones
Sales Negotiator



Angela Lund
Sales Negotiator

3 Sisters are calling Naughton Fields home!

Three sisters are now calling Naughton Fields independent living scheme in Widnes home after Clare, joined her sisters Ann and Pat who have lived happily at the scheme for several years.

After her children had all left home, former registered nurse Clare, 62, who regularly visited her two sisters, knew she wanted to call Naughton Fields home.

"I was never away from the place really as I was always visiting my sisters. I joined in most of the activities, trips and days out, so I knew most of the other residents anyway. When the opportunity to buy an apartment became available, my husband and I knew it was ideal for us".

"We sold our 4-bedroom house in Ditton which became too big for us and moved into Naughton Fields in January. Our children were a little apprehensive at first, but they soon came around to our way of thinking. My husband and I are both still active and it's just the ideal place for us – it's maintenance-free, we can come and go as we please and I'm close to my two sisters!"

With all three sisters now living at Naughton Fields, they plan to spend even more time together.

"I really enjoy now only having to go upstairs or along the corridor to meet Pat and Ann. Our two brothers now only have to travel to one place to visit all three of their sisters! I'm looking forward to what the future holds living at Naughton Fields!"

Our independent living schemes Naughton Fields, along with Barkla Fields in Widnes and our new Hazlehurst scheme opening in 2022 in Runcorn enables people over the age of 55 to enjoy a healthier, active, and more independent lifestyle in a community.



Sisters Clare, Ann and Pat.

Photograph taken in August 2020.



Tackling Food Poverty in our communities

Over the past 12 months we have been working with our partners including Halton Borough Council and local charities to help tackle food poverty in the borough.

The need for practical action to end food insecurity and tackle food poverty has never been greater. Food poverty is driven primarily by lack of income, low pay, insecure work, and inadequate social security provision which means that people can often be unable to put food on the table. Many people, including our customers have turned to food banks for help.

We have been supporting local foodbanks and community groups to help tackle this ongoing issue.

£8,000 donation to Halton's food banks

Recognising the increasing strain being placed on them because of the coronavirus pandemic, last year we donated **£8,000** to food banks in Halton with the money being split equally between Widnes and Runcom.

The donation was part of Halton Housing's backing of the national housing sector's food bank campaign, 'More than homes'.

The initiative sees the National Housing Federation, Chartered Institute of Housing, the Northern Housing

Consortium and the UK's Housing Sector come together to donate money to support the Trussell Trust as they respond to this increase in demand due to coronavirus.

Supporting school meals over the holidays

We proudly donated **£1,500** to several volunteer groups in the borough working in response to support local children following the Government not extending the free school meal scheme over the holidays last October.

Our donation equated to over **2,500** meals for children in the borough.

Throughout half-term, they provided more than **1,000** packed lunches daily for children, distributed from 14 different locations across Widnes and Runcom.

"It's been difficult over the past 12 months for everyone, with some families having been hit harder than others. At Halton Housing, we are all about improving people's lives and we hope our donations will go some way to support the borough's children and families. Local volunteering groups and food banks are doing an incredible job and their services are more crucial now than ever before."

Cheryl McCabe,
Halton Housing's Social
Impact Officer



Customer Forum welcomes new Chair & Vice-Chair

Last month we welcomed Louise Nulty as the new Chair and Linda McKeivitt as the new Vice-Chair of our Customer Forum.

Long-time Halton Housing customer Louise is excited to bring her community knowledge and positive experience as a customer to the forum role.

A familiar face in the community, Linda is keen to get her teeth into the role and encourage more customers to have their say.

We're looking forward to working closely with Louise and Linda and the rest of our Customer Forum to

ensure customers are at the heart of everything we do, and their voice is heard in our decision making.

We would also like to take this opportunity to say thank you to our former Chair, Ann MacFarlane and Vice-Chair Margaret Walsh for their hard work and dedication to the forum over the years. Both will continue to remain members of the forum.

We're always on the lookout for new members for our Customer Forum.

If you're interested in joining, please get in touch with our Customer Engagement Team by emailing involved@haltonhousing.co.uk.



More ways to Get involved and have your say!

You can get involved and connect with us in more ways than ever before!

Zoom to Us sessions

Following the success of our 'Zoom to Us' sessions pilot earlier this year, we're delighted to be launching a full series of these online events using Zoom. Thanks to everyone who has zoomed to us so far!

Area specific sessions

Why not join us on a Zoom to Us session specific to your area! Area specific sessions will take place the day before each estate walkabout, usually on Wednesdays. Check our website for dates and times.

Zoom to Us: Money Matters Q&A Sessions

Have you ever wondered how you claim disability benefits? Do you get confused over whether you can claim extra help when working on a low income?

Join us on one of our Zoom to Us: Money Matters Q&A sessions where our Welfare Benefit & Money Advice Team will be available to help you with answers to any money, benefit or welfare-related questions you might have.

Zoom to Us: Money Matters Q&A sessions dates

28th April 1pm – 2pm
25th May 1pm – 2pm
16th June 1pm – 2pm
27th July 1pm – 2pm
25th August 1pm – 2pm
22nd September 1pm – 2pm
27th October 1pm – 2pm

Find registration details for all our Zoom to Us sessions in the events section of our website.

New Repairs Forum launched

Repairs is one area of our work that gets lots of customers talking! So, why not share your opinions and suggestions at our newly formed Repairs Forum?

Working alongside members of our Homes Team, the forum has been set up to allow customers to directly share their thoughts, opinions and ideas on our repairs and maintenance service so we can make it the best it can be.

The forum meets around 4-5 times per year, each lasting around an hour. Meetings are currently held online due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In return for your time, you will receive a **£5 Love2Shop voucher** for each meeting you attend. In addition, being a member of the forum offers a great opportunity to build skills for your CV. For customers who engage with us on a regular basis for 12 months, we will look at funding for you to study a professional qualification.

You will need to be a current customer/tenant of Halton Housing to join. Please note individual repairs issues are not discussed at meetings.

New Complaints and Communication Group launched

We recently launched a new Complaints and Communications Group made up of colleagues from across the organisation as well as customers to look at our handling of complaints we receive and how we can use learnings from them to improve the services we provide.

In July 2020, the Housing Ombudsman published a new 'Complaint Handling Code' providing a framework for high-quality complaint handling. Changes went live from January 2021.

The Government's recent social housing white paper focusses heavily on improving complaints procedures.

We are working hard to ensure all complaints are dealt with quickly and fairly, using learning outcomes and opportunities to change services from them.

Since 2019, the number of complaints we have received has decreased by 54%.



If you're interested in learning more and getting involved, please get in touch with our Customer Engagement Team by emailing involved@haltonhousing.co.uk.





Garage sites

We have demolished a number of unused garage sites. The demolitions have enhanced the local areas, environment and will help reduce anti-social behaviour. We are currently working to identify further sites and will keep customers informed throughout the process

Roofs

Over the past 12 months a number of our homes have benefitted from new roofs. This has included 90+ roofline (soffits, fascia's and gutters) and over 100 new roofs in total.

To date we've completed full new roofs at Quarry Close, and full estate at McClellan Place and Carey Street. The new roofs should last long into the future.



Investment in our homes

We're committed to providing you with a safe and well-maintained home and how we can improve the look and feel of our neighbourhoods, helping create places to be proud of. Over the past 12 months our Assets and Investment Team have been working hard on a number of projects.



Fire doors

Fire doors play an important role in keeping both you, your home and the emergency escape routes safe by limiting the spread of fire, heat and smoke in a fire.

We've installed over 950 new fire doors to date which offer up to 60-minute fire resistance.

And remember; it's good practice to keep all of the doors in your home closed at night when you're asleep even if they're not fire doors as they will still delay any heat, smoke and fire from spreading through a home. This simple action will provide vital extra time if you need to evacuate in a fire.



New bin stores

Several of our flatted blocks have had new bin stores installed. All flatted blocks are subject to a fire risk assessment, on some blocks it was identified that the location of the wheely bins were a fire hazard. Following consultations with our customers and neighbours, the new stores are now in place which are saving space and reducing risk from fire.

Dog fouling solution

What a poop-tastic idea!

We listen and work with our customers and community groups to find solutions to local problems enabling and supporting them to achieve their aims. Emma Bennett our Neighbourhood Officer in Upton, Widnes received reports of dog fouling on one of her estates.

Using her initiative, Emma consulted with customers in the area and came up with the idea of Halton Housing providing 'poop bag dispensers', on the understanding that this would be a one-off provision, with the onus being on the customers to re-fill the dispenser once used.

Emma cleverly made the dispensers herself from recycled plastic bottles and positioned them around the grassed areas. Since these were put in place, this initiative has been successful, with no further reports of dog fouling and our customers are keeping to their end of the bargain by re-filling the dispensers. Very well done to Emma for thinking outside of the box to resolve this issue for our customers!

Dog fouling fines

Did you know anyone who fails to clear up after their dog can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice of up to **£100**. If the case goes to court this could cost the owner or person in charge of the pet up to **£1,000**. According to law, being unaware a dog has fouled or not having a suitable bag is not a reasonable excuse. Dog owners are reminded that any bin will do for their pet's mess. While some councils do provide dedicated dog fouling bins, any public bin can take the waste and there is no excuse to leave it. There are few exceptions to the dog fouling laws which states that registered blind people are not required to clean up after their guide dogs. So whenever you're out and about with your 4-legged friend be sure to pick up that poop!

Emma Bennett - Neighbourhood Officer



Get Summer garden-ready

Spring can be a lovely time of year; the weather becomes warmer (if we're lucky!) and the lighter nights bring with them longer days and opportunities for us to spend a bit more time in our gardens, allotments or tending to garden boxes and patio flowers.

However large or small your outdoor space, now's the time to start thinking about prepping your garden or planters to have everything looking great in Summer.

If you're not sure how to get started, take a look at the tips from Kieron Dunne, our Environmental Services Team Leader.

1. Planning – what do you want from your garden for 2021

- Self-sufficient (growing fruit and vegetables)
- Enjoy nature such as bees and butterflies
- A nice entertainment space (to hopefully entertain some guests)

2. Prepare - get building

- Support (frames) for plants
- Bug and bee hotel to attract the wildlife (good information on the RSPB website)
- Build a compost bin to help to reuse the organic waste from the kitchen and garden

3. Tidy up the garden

- Mow the lawn (on a dry day)
- Wash and scrub any paved or hardstanding areas

4. Time saving

- Ready sprouted bulbs can be planted when the ground is thawed out
- Look out for pre sprouted vegetables
- If you're lucky to have a green house or cold frame get a head start by germinating seeds using heat mats

5. Plant

- Summer flowering bulbs
- Seed potatoes
- Onion sets

6. Maintain

- Keep any potential weeds at bay with regular mulching and/or hoeing
- Check tools are clean and sharp and ready for use for the year ahead

7. Move and/or prune (always follow the recommended guidance from the supplier)

- Trees or shrubs (unless ground is still frozen)
- Prune shrubs and perennials (inc. roses, hydrangeas, buddleia)

8. Feed

- Fertilise flower beds
- Vegetable patch
- Roses

Kieron Dunne, Environmental Services Team Leader.



Garden Competition

If you're feeling inspired to get out and start to spruce up your space then you might want to enter our annual garden competition to show off your hard work! Open to all Halton Housing customers, the

competition is your chance to let your garden shine. We'll be sharing details of the competition over the coming weeks so make sure you follow our social media pages, or check the latest news section of **MyHaltonHome** as we'll be posting all competition details soon.



Money Matters

Changes to benefits for mixed-aged couples – are you impacted?

State pension age is the age when a person can start to get the state pension, should they wish to claim it rather than defer the payment. Following a change in the rules, some state pension age households will now need to claim Universal Credit instead of Pension Credit.

From May 2019 the way the benefit system treated mixed age couples changed, impacting couples in which one party had reached their pension age and the other had not.

The change made the benefit system less generous than previous and we worked to contact customers who were likely to be impacted by this change and offered help through the benefit changes which would affect them.

This was a useful exercise with many customers getting the help and support they needed to claim the right level of benefits to support their household.

Now, 12 months later and a whole new group of customers could find themselves impacted by this change so we wanted to explain what changed and what you can do to ensure you are getting the right level of benefits you are entitled to.

The changes mean that benefits awarded to a couple changed from those previously awarded based on the age of eldest member to that awarded to the younger, working age member meaning rather than a claim to Pension Credit some couples now remain on Universal Credit or JSA even after one reached their pensionable age and receives a State Pension.

Get in touch....

Our dedicated Welfare Benefit and Money Advice Team are here to support you and provide specialist advice on claiming benefits, maximising income, managing debt and money advice. You can contact the team on **0151 510 5024**, email welfare@haltonhousing.co.uk or via our app or **MyHaltonHome**.

You can check when you will reach your State Pension Age online for free at www.gov.uk/state-pension-age, or to check what your likely State Pension will be here at www.gov.uk/check-state-pension

- Receiving a State Pension could also qualify you for free bus travel or a Senior Rail Card
- State Pension entitlement could also qualify you for a Winter Fuel Payment
- Receive PIP / AA and over pension age? You could get extra money awarded!
- Check your benefit entitlement after changes in your circumstances as you could get awarded other benefits, check it out online at www.entitledto.co.uk.

"Through our annual tenancy visits our Neighbourhood Team were able to pick up the case of a customer who was making regular rent payments but was struggling and cutting back on other living costs to make ends meet. Our Welfare Team were able to identify unclaimed benefits and ensured disability premiums were included into a Universal Credit award. We were able to claim a backdate of Severe Disability Premium of £2,800 and monthly increases to benefits awarded meaning the couple did not have to struggle anymore."

Amber (Money Advice Team)



FIRE SAFETY IN THE KITCHEN

ALWAYS:

- Keep your oven and grill clean – a build-up of fat and bits of food can start a fire
- Never leave your cooking unattended
- Keep tea towels away from the cooker and hob
- Make sure saucepan handles don't stick out – so they don't get knocked off the stove
- Take care if you're wearing loose clothing, they can easily catch fire
- Double check the cooker is off when you've finished cooking.

If you're using a chip pan, then also remember:

- If the oil starts to smoke it's too hot. Turn off the heat and leave it to cool, otherwise it may catch fire
- Never fill a pan more than one-third full of fat or oil
- Make sure that food is dried thoroughly before putting it in hot oil so that it doesn't spit

And always, always make sure that you have a working smoke alarm!

KEEP IT CLEAN

The kitchen is the single most dangerous place in your home, nearly two thirds of all domestic fires happen because of cooking and over seven thousand people are injured in kitchen fires each year.

But did you know that dirty grills are one of the major causes of kitchen fires caused by a build-up of fat and oil. The fat and oil can easily ignite when heated, so to avoid a fire and to keep your family safe, clean your grill after you have used it.

Remember, never try and tackle a fire yourself. If a fire starts in your home, call 999!

REMEMBER TO REGULARLY TEST YOUR SMOKE ALARM



Go digital with us



There's never been a better time.