Community Heroes

Recognising those that go the extra mile
Green-fingered team nets results

A green-fingered army of Wellingborough Homes staff spent a day transforming the communal garden area at one of our sheltered housing schemes.

Eight Supported Living Officers joined forces to get to work on the grounds at Barringers Court this summer.

One of the team, Michelle Darnell, said: “We mowed the grass, weeded, planted flowers and shrubs and generally tidied up the garden – then had a picnic lunch halfway through the work. It was a busy day but very rewarding. “It also acted as a team-building exercise and residents at Barringers Court were very impressed with what we achieved.”

Local children enjoyed a trip to the seaside over the summer holidays thanks to Wellingborough Homes.

A group of pupils at Ruskin Junior School had a day out at the seaside town of Hunstanton in Norfolk in July.

Yvonne Willis, Area Team Leader for Queensway, said: “The children had a fantastic time and we were delighted to be able to help them have a fun day out.”

Sun, sea and sand

We have just unveiled our autumn programme of courses for tenants – so take a look and give one of them a try!

IT for the Terrified

We are running two of these courses for people with little or no IT skills. They will run for five weeks. Free transport is available.

- From Monday, 16th September, from 9.30am to 11.30am, at Thompson Court.
- From Wednesday, September 18th, from 12.30pm to 2.30pm, at Azuka, Midland Road.

Basic Sign Language

A 10-week course teaching the basics of British sign language, which you can then build on with our ‘Expanding your Sign Language’ course.

- From Thursday, 19th September, from 10am to 12 noon, at Charles Robinson Court, Gillett Road.

First Click IT

A five-week course for people with basic IT skills or the next step after ‘IT for the Terrified’.

- From Monday, 16th September, from 12.30pm to 2.30pm, at Thompson Court.

Tenant Craft Courses

Various ongoing craft workshops, run by and for tenants, take place at Thompson Court, including regular ‘Knit and Natter’ sessions.

If you are interested in any of these courses, please contact Amy or Mo on 01933 234450 or email amy.hackett@whomes.org (transport is provided).

IT for Work and Learning

A 10-week course teaching you how to use PowerPoint, Publisher and spreadsheets.

- From Friday, 20th September, from 9.30am to 11.30am, at the St John Ambulance Centre, Earls Barton.

BOOST your skills...

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Inside this Issue

Add us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/wellingboroughhomes
Follow us on Twitter: @whomes_hr
Arts and crafts workshops entertained youngsters during summer activity events run by Wellingborough Homes’ Community Involvement Team.

Lots of children joined in the fun, modelling robots out of bits of rubbish, making masks and creating colourful bird gliders.

Activities took place at the new play area in Wordsworth Road, Finedon Wesleyan Chapel, Hemmingwell Centre, Hindu Leisure Centre, Burns Road Green, Ruskin Junior School, Kiln Way Green and Wollaston Library.

A total of over 200 children and parents took part in the popular activity sessions, which were free and open to all ages.

Community Involvement Officer Di Bradbury said: “The activities went well and were enjoyed by lots of children and their families. “They were an opportunity to engage with local residents and work in partnership with other agencies, such as Sure Start, to offer something to entertain young people over the summer holidays.”

Summer fun for youngsters

Hands-on role for tenants

Community Heroes take centre stage

Unsung heroes of our communities were recognised at an awards ceremony hosted by Wellingborough Homes.

Fifteen individuals and two groups were presented with Community Hero Awards at this year’s event.

The annual awards reward tenants who go the extra mile to help their neighbours or improve their community.

Keith Pentlow MBE received the Lifetime Achievement Award for his varied work over many years within the community.

Keith was a St John Ambulance volunteer for 75 years and has been involved with various community organisations, council consultation groups and NHS advisory panels.

He said: “It is nice to get this award because it shows that Wellingborough Homes appreciates what we do.

“I enjoy being involved and making a difference. You also get to meet lots of people and have a good old chat about things that matter.”

Sylvia Erskin, Jacque White and Alison Joseph all received awards for their voluntary work with Wellingborough African Caribbean Association’s supplementary school, which helps educate African Caribbean youngsters about history and achievements relating to their own culture.

Sylvia said: “I have been involved with the school for over 20 years. We are all volunteers who just feel we want to use our skills to put something back into the community.”

Geraldine Guy, Mrs Dhall, Leslie Cooper and Laura Anderson also received awards for their work in the community, while Trish Harding and Jean Ison won awards for their volunteering and Fred Smith and Mr and Mrs Walker won Good Neighbour awards.

Partner Agency awards went to Jackie from Wellingborough Women’s Aid, and Helen Doel, the Neighbourhood Learning Curriculum Coordinator for the Wellingborough area.

“Making a Contribution” awards went to Wellingborough Homes’ Tenant Advisory Panel and the new Youth Group - Community Stars.

Members of our Tenant Advisory Panel (TAP) are playing an important role in gathering our customers’ views and feeding them into improving services.

They helped us conduct a telephone survey of our tenants which resulted in 500 responses. People were asked a number of questions about what they thought the priority issues were in their area, what they wanted to see improved and what they thought of various services such as grounds maintenance, caretaking and our work on anti-social behaviour.

TAP is now looking at the results of the survey to draw up a report which will go to the Wellingborough Homes Board.

We would like to thank everyone who took part in the survey. Your comments will help us provide better services to all our tenants.
Building work has started on our latest development of affordable homes in Wellingborough.

The £2.5 million scheme will create a complex of 26 flats for social rent in Gold Street, next to our Knights Court supported living housing scheme. Homes are being built on the site of the former Dun Cow pub, which had lain empty and become dilapidated in recent years. We are working with property developers Westleigh Developments on the scheme.

The contractor moved on to the site at the end of July to demolish the derelict building and work has since started on the foundations of the new homes. As work began, a special ceremony was held to present the Dun Cow pub sign to Wellingborough Museum to add to its collection of old local signs.

Due to be completed next summer, the new housing development will comprise a mix of six two-bedroom flats and 14 one-bedroom flats, plus six more spacious one-bedroom flats which will each have a study room.

The development is part of our ongoing commitment to building more affordable homes in the borough.

Chief Executive Dave Willis said: “We are pleased to have started work on this important development, which will contribute to our pledge to build 115 new homes for the people of Wellingborough over the coming year. “The scheme is a constructive use of a disused site and will help address the shortage of affordable homes in the borough.”

“By building more one-bedroom flats within this development, it also gives us the opportunity to help people who are looking to downsize because of the introduction of the under-occupancy charge,” he added.

Wellingborough Homes has already invested £16 million in five schemes to provide 112 affordable homes across the borough – Kingfisher Close, Bronte Court, Blake Court, Ladywell Park and Knights Court.
Meet the teams...

A handy guide for Wellingborough Homes tenants to who’s who in our neighbourhood teams.

- **Queensway** – including Isham, Little Harrowden, Orlingbury, Sywell, Hardwick and Mears Ashby
  - Yvonne Willis, Area Team Leader – 01933 231354
  - Lindsey Smith, Tenancy Support Officer 01933 234474
  - Marie Hickman, Tenancy Support Officer 01933 231369
  - Lisa Marie Francois, Administration Officer 01933 231370

- **Kingsway** – including Earls Barton, Ecton and Wilby
  - Caroline Berwick, Area Team Leader 01933 231351
  - Angie Thomson, Tenancy Support Officer 01933 234461
  - Katherine Goodwin, Tenancy Support Officer – 01933 231362
  - Michelle O’Mahoney, Administration Officer 01933 231363

- **Hemmingwell** – including Wollaston, Great Doddington, Grendon and Bozeat
  - Sarah Huseyn, Area Team Leader 01933 231359
  - Kayleigh Mehew, Tenancy Support Officer 01933 231376
  - Megan Bradley, Tenancy Support Officer 01933 231356
  - Candice Dean, Administration Officer 01933 234483

- **Town centre** – including Finedon, Irchester and Little Irchester
  - Lucy Lynn, Area Team Leader – 01933 231358
  - Bev Odell, Tenancy Support Officer – 01933 231351

- **Garages**
  - Agnes Wawrzkiewicz, Tenancy Support Officer 01933 231383
  - Tressa Carrington, Administration Officer 01933 231323

What do you think?

You will have received a copy of our annual report to tenants, along with this edition of Well Informed.

We are keen to find out what you, our tenants, think of the report so we welcome your feedback.

Please fill in the feedback form included, so we can take on board your views and use them to help us design and put together next year’s annual report.

A Day in the Life of...

A Supported Living Officer

Wellingborough Homes’ team of Supported Living Officers comprise five full-timers, four part-timers and two bank staff to fill in when needed.

They look after tenants in our sheltered housing schemes, making regular welfare checks on them, running activities for residents there and dealing with out-of-hours emergencies flagged up by the ‘Lifeline’ personal alarm system.

They support plans, including assistance as required.

Help to get on the property ladder

‘Help to Buy’ is a government-backed initiative to help working people buy a home in England.

It includes shared ownership schemes and the new Help to Buy loan which lends buyers up to 20% of the property price for a deposit.

You can get more details at [www.helptobuy.org.uk](http://www.helptobuy.org.uk) or contact our local agent at [www.emhomebuy.org.uk](http://www.emhomebuy.org.uk)
Support Wellingborough
A preventative approach to delivering support

A growing number of local organisations have joined forces to deliver the Support Wellingborough service.

Five more partners have joined the consortium – Alzheimer’s Society, Bridge Substance Misuse Programme, Family Support Link, Northampton Care & Repair and Northamptonshire Credit Union.

They will work with Wellingborough Homes and other existing partner agencies to provide a range of support services to vulnerable people across the borough.

Support Wellingborough is a group of housing, care and support organisations which share their skills and experience to help people with varying needs to prevent their problems getting worse.

If you need help, contact Support Wellingborough on 01933 234452. For more information, visit www.supportwellingborough.org.

Focus on....

Opposite we profile two of the organisations involved in Support Wellingborough – Home-Start Wellingborough & District and Wellingborough Family Hostels.

We will feature more organisations involved in Support Wellingborough in future editions of Well Informed.

Home-Start Wellingborough & District
Home-Start offers support and friendship to families with young children through its 50-strong team of volunteers.

A volunteer carries out weekly visits, providing at least two hours of practical and emotional support to each family.

This may cover parenting skills, child behavioural problems, health and well-being issues, household management, budgeting or disability.

The scheme helps families with at least one child under the age of five, but addresses the needs and issues of the whole family.

Supported families may be disadvantaged in some way, be experiencing various difficulties or be struggling to cope with multiple births, illness or disability.

As well as this one-to-one support, Home-Start runs a programme of children’s activities for its clients during the summer holidays.

During the last year:
• 42 volunteers gave over 2,300 hours of home visiting support
• 55 families received regular Home-Start support
• 144 children were supported by the scheme.

Find out more at www.homestartwellinborough.co.uk or call 01933 272749.

Wellingborough Family Hostels
Wellingborough Family Hostels (WFH) provides supported housing for homeless teenage mothers and vulnerable young women.

As well as providing a roof over their heads, WFH gives daily support to meet the specific needs of its clients.

This includes helping them cope with the demands and responsibilities of their situation, developing their parenting skills while learning about managing friends and family, running a home and keeping on top of their finances.

WFH’s ‘life skills’ programme covers subjects ranging from managing a tenancy to being a good neighbour, health and safety in the home to coping with stress.

Clients also get support to improve their job prospects with training and employment opportunities. Most go on to take up college courses or apprenticeships.

WFH also runs a parenting life skills programme, open to young mothers who do not live in its supported housing, to help them deal with what to expect before and after the birth of their baby.

Set up in 2002, WFH was launched to help address the issues arising from Wellingborough’s high teenage pregnancy rates.

Women are referred by Wellingborough Housing Options department or Support Wellingborough.

For more information, call 01933 430038.

Keep Warm, Save Money

With cooler weather on the horizon, tenants can get some useful advice on keeping warm and saving money this autumn and winter.

The Community Law Service is running another energy saving workshop at the FISH Shop after the success of a similar event earlier this year.

Energy advisors will be on hand at the shop, in Cambridge Street, on Friday, September 20th, from 10am to 2pm.

You can get advice on managing energy bills and existing debts, saving energy, making sure you are claiming all the benefits you are entitled to, getting grants and dealing with urgent heating problems.

Jackie Attfield, from the Community Law Service, said: “If you are worried about how you are going to afford to keep your utilities running, avoid building up big debts or even the threat of being cut off, then please drop in during the workshop.”

Call the Community Law Service on 01604 623708, visit energyadvice@communitylawservice.org.uk, call the FISH shop on 01933 278248 or drop by for more information.

Are you prepared?

Remember – to make sure your heating is working properly and safely ready for the autumn, you need to allow us access to your home to service the system.

If you have been given an appointment for your annual gas boiler service, please make sure you are around to let us in or contact us to arrange a more convenient time.
Staff at Wellingborough Homes dressed down for the day to raise hundreds of pounds to help local dogs in need of rescuing.

Members of our teams wear casual clothes to work each Friday and give a donation of between 20p and £1 for the privilege.

Money raised over the last quarter then goes to a local charity voted for by our tenants and staff.

Our latest ‘Dress Down Fridays’ fundraising drive has brought in over £400 for dog re-homing charity Welli-Dog (Wellingborough Dog Welfare).

Tenancy Support Officer Angie Thomson nominated the charity after adopting a dog from them last year.

She said: “At Welli-Dogs, they clearly love and care for their animals and go to tremendous lengths to ensure the dogs’ welfare comes first – but all of this comes at a cost and, unfortunately, they are always stretched to capacity.

“Raising money for them is a great help to the charity and also helps to raise their profile within the community.”

Wellingborough and District Foodbank has already helped hundreds of people since its launch on May 1.

The foodbank – based at the Daylight Centre in the High Street – provides emergency food parcels for people struggling to make ends meet.

Centre manager Paula Mason said: “We are extremely busy – the foodbank gave out 99 parcels in July alone and is handing out about 10 extra parcels each month.

“We are running low on basics like longlife milk, cereals, noodle snacks, tins of potatoes and sugar, so we are appealing for people to donate so we can continue to run this much-needed service.”

To get help from the foodbank, you have to be referred by GPs, charities, support services or advice agencies.

The service now has collection bins across the borough for people to fill with donated tinned or packeted food.

Bins are located in Wellingborough Homes’ Thompson Court and Sheep Street offices, Delos Resource Centre in Poplar Street, United Reformed Church in the High Street, CRI in Oxford Street, Yorkshire Bank in the High Street, Highfields Children’s Centre, Croylands Children’s Centre and Action for Children at Penrith Children’s Centre.

• The foodbank is currently looking for a volunteer driver to pick up occasional deliveries. To apply, you need to fill in an application form and give two referees. Petrol allowance will be given. If you are interested, contact Paula on 01933 446492 or email foodbank@daylight.cf.org
Vulnerable people honed their DIY skills at a free summer school organised by Support Wellingborough and Wellingborough Homes.

A group of local residents gathered for the informative workshop run by our repairs and maintenance contractor G Purchase Construction. They learned about basic DIY techniques during the day-long session at G Purchase Construction’s depot on Finedon Road Industrial Estate.

It is now hoped to expand the idea to develop a programme of courses teaching useful skills to help people improve their lives.

The planned Life Skills classes – held at various venues across the borough – will cover topics including budgeting, cooking healthy food on a budget, first aid, IT, meditation and relaxation.

Irene Carter, Customer Services and Outreach Manager at Wellingborough Homes, said: “This is the first time we’ve run classes such as these and the idea is to involve vulnerable people in the community who will really benefit from them.

“These activities aim to offer not only a valuable learning opportunity but also some fun for everyone taking part.”

Emma Ireland, Tenant Liaison Officer at G Purchase Construction, said: “The DIY workshop went well – the tenants got really involved and found it very useful.

“We covered subjects such as painting and decorating, what to do when a fuse goes, different types of water stop taps and how to change striplight bulbs.”

We have been working closely with tenants to help them cope with the impact of the government’s welfare reforms.

Since January, we have helped 19 households downsize to a smaller home to avoid the charge for under-occupancy.

Dale Thompson, Head of Neighbourhood Services, said: “We appreciate that the under-occupancy charge is affecting a number of our tenants and, where possible, we are trying to help people move to more appropriate accommodation.

“In the meantime, we are giving advice and assistance in coping with the housing benefit cut they face.”

Anyone concerned about how welfare reforms are affecting them should contact Wellingborough Homes on 01933 234450 or the FISH Shop on 01933 278248.

Nicholas Whittemore is one tenant Wellingborough Homes has helped to downsize to combat the under-occupancy charge.

Mr Whittemore and his 15-year-old daughter Stacey have moved from a three-bedroom house in Queerway to a newly refurbished two-bedroom flat at Knights Court.

He said: “I couldn’t afford to cover the under-occupancy charge and, because of my diabetes, I was starting to have difficulties getting up and down the stairs at our old home.

“I talked to Wellingborough Homes and they got us sorted out with a new place quite quickly.

“Now we are in a ground-floor flat with a wet room, which is much easier for me. I feel more relaxed and don’t have to worry so much about getting around at home.

“The move all went pretty smoothly, we’ve settled in well and I’m pleased with our new home.”

Earlier this year, the Borough Council of Wellingborough tightened up its criteria for people who could apply for housing, following national legislation.

Now, the council cannot accept applicants without a housing need, with large amounts of rent arrears, those who have committed anti-social behaviour or people without a local connection.

Due to the changes, people now have to re-apply to be on the housing list so, if you have had a letter from the council about this, please make sure you re-register.

Find out more by going to www.keyways.org.uk, the website for Wellingborough’s choice-based lettings scheme.

It is important to make sure you are on the Wellingborough housing register if you, a member of your family, or a friend are looking to transfer.
A former housing chief and honorary freeman of the borough has joined the Wellingborough Homes board.

Councillor John Bailey, who represents the Finedon ward on the Borough Council of Wellingborough, was Chairman of the council’s housing committee from 1970 to 1997. He has served 46 years on the borough council and was a county councillor for 43 years until standing down this year.

Councillor Bailey was made an honorary freeman of Wellingborough earlier this year. He said: “I am very conscious of the importance of social housing and look forward to working with Wellingborough Homes to help address the need for such housing in the borough.”