

Christmas Newsletter 2022

Welcome to our latest newsletter. We hope you find it useful and informative.

We welcome feedback on any of the content as well as any suggestions for future content.

Office Update

Christmas Office Closure

The office
will close on

**Friday 23rd December 2022
from 5pm and will re-open on
Tuesday 3rd January 2022 at 9.00am.**

Office Opening hours

Following a consultation with tenants and the Customer Panel in September, we have extended our opening hours and the office is now open:

Monday and Tuesday 9.00am to 5.00pm

We have received limited feedback on this matter and welcome any further feedback.

Staff are mainly based at the office with some remote home working.

All staff are contactable on the main office number 01900 602906 and services can be accessed via the tenants portal or by emailing:
Enquiries@westfieldha.org.uk

Earlier this year we completed work to improve our reception area. The entrance to the Housing Office is now located to the left of the large glass doors, signposted "Housing Office Entrance". The office is fully accessible.

Emergency Repairs

During the festive closure we will be operating an emergency only repairs service.

If you have an **EMERGENCY REPAIR**, please ring our Out of Hours Service provider Orbis on **0151 343 2762** – please only ring this number if you have a genuine emergency and we ask that you do not ring contractors directly.

For **GAS EMERGENCIES** ring **SURE GAS** on **0800 031 6578**.

For general, non emergency repairs, you can email us on

repairs@westfieldha.org.uk

You can also log into your tenants portal or leave a voice mail on our office number 01900 602906. To register on your tenants portal please go to our Website www.westfieldha.org.uk and register as a tenant on the login/register tab at the top of the home page. All you need to access this service is your tenancy reference number. This can be found on your rent statement or obtained by calling the office 01900 602906 (option 3).

Please note that reported non emergency repairs will be actioned on our return to the offices on 3rd January 2023.

A Christmas Message from Henry Barker, Board Chair

Welcome to our Christmas newsletter. Over the past year we have faced many changes and challenges particularly the cost of living crisis which is having a dramatic impact on many people. Helping people through this period is a priority for us. If you are struggling with your energy costs or with the cost of living more generally I would urge you to speak to us. We will do our utmost to ensure that the necessary support and assistance is provided.

We still have ambitious plans to build new homes but this is becoming more challenging because of the increases in building costs. We will only continue to develop as long as we can be sure that doing so will not have any negative impact on services and investment in existing homes. Increasing costs and labour market conditions are also a challenge to Footsteps Nursery. The Nursery provides so much to our community and we want to ensure it continues and grows, providing a brilliant child care and learning environment.

We have recently welcomed Mark Barrow as a new Board member. Mark has long experience working in the housing association sector and will be a valuable addition. We continue to look for new board members, particularly tenant members and others with experience of our local communities. If you might be interested in joining the board then I would be very pleased to talk to you.

The work with the Customer Panel gathers speed. The Panel is a big part of building tenant involvement and making sure that we understand and act on your views. If you are interested in joining the Panel, or being involved in another way, please talk to us.

We have some interesting but challenging times ahead. I am confident that with our excellent staff team we can all work together to meet those challenges and ensure a successful 2023.

I would like to wish you all a merry Christmas and hope the New Year will be good for us all.

Thank you.

Cost of living and welfare

We know that this continues to be a very difficult time for everyone. If you are in need of any help or advice then please contact us as there are various ways we can support you. For example this year we have recently referred 37 families to the Taste of Christmas food hamper scheme, accessed the discretionary housing payment scheme to help with rent payments and helped tenants access the cost of living support fund.

There is a lot of information on the councils webpage which you may find useful, that can be found at www.cumbria.gov.uk/costofliving

Allerdale Citizens Advice continue to offer a range of services to provide you with support such as financial advice. They can be contacted on 01900 604735.

North Lakes Foodbank are also still operating across a variety of sites throughout our area. If you would like to enquire about a foodbank voucher then please contact us on 01900 602906 so that we can discuss this with you and make the referral. **We will be resuming check in calls with tenants in the new year, where we think that some tenants could be experiencing problems.**

Rent payments

Christmas time is another difficult time for everyone with lots of extra expense.

It is very important that rent payments are made as normal over the Christmas period. If you are having problems making your rent payments please contact us on 01900 602906 (option 2) to discuss the situation. We should be able to work with you to make a plan to ensure that you do not fall into debt and can enjoy your Christmas.



Variation to tenancy agreement

In September 2022 we sent all tenants who pay a service charge a letter setting out our proposals to vary the service charge provisions in your tenancy agreement.

This gave you the necessary information and opportunity to feedback on the proposal. We also included a Questions and Answers sheet to help explain the proposed change.

Following this consultation we considered the responses received (most agreed the variation) and made a final decision to continue with the proposed variation.



The last day you will be able to call the office to pay your rent before the Christmas closure is 23rd December. During the holidays you can still pay your rent on your Tenants portal. If you would like to register on the tenants portal all you need is your tenancy reference number. Please ring the office if you need to know your number 01900 602906.

What the proposals mean for you

There will be no material change to the legal status of your tenancy and the terms of your tenancy will remain the same, except for clause 4(iv). This clause, subject to your agreement, will be varied to make it clear that we are charging you a fixed service charge and do not need to comply with the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 for the purposes of adjusting or determining the service charge.

Foodbank locations

Maryport - St Mary's Church, Netherhall Corner, CA15 6LL - Tues/Thurs 12pm - 2pm and Fri 4pm - 6pm

Cockermouth - Lorton Street Methodist Church, CA13 9RH - Tues/Wed/Thurs 10am- 12pm

Workington - Bridge Centre, Central Square, CA14 3BG - Mon/Wed /Fri 12pm - 2pm

Wigton - Cornerstone Methodist Church, 50 High Street, CA7 9PG - Tues/Fri 10am- 12pm

Please give us a call if you need help with accessing food bank vouchers.

01900 602906

We have sent out A Deed of Variation form and asked that you sign and return the form ASAP. We have received several phone calls from tenants asking what the changes mean to them and we have received around 35% of the signed deeds back so far.

Please can we remind you of the importance of getting theses signed forms back to us at your earliest convenience in the envelope provided.

For those we don't get back in the time scale required we will be doing a door knocking exercise to collect the forms in the new year. Please let us know if you are struggling to get the form back to us and we will arrange to collect from you.

Gas & Electric servicing

Currently all gas servicing's are up to date and have been so in recent months.

We would like to take this

opportunity to

thank everyone for working with us and allowing access to our contractors so that servicing's can be completed as necessary.

Your safety is of the upmost importance to us. It is very important that we continue to carry out the annual checks and servicing of gas heating systems on time and can gain access to your home to do this.

Electrical safety checks and fire safety checks in communal areas are continuing as normal.

As per gas servicing's please allow access for these checks in order that systems can be confirmed as safe.



Future Planned Maintenance

As you may be aware, we instructed Opinion Research Services (ORS) to carry out Stock Condition Surveys on all of our properties in 2021 and 2022. These surveys will give us a much clearer picture of the condition of our homes and the necessary future investment. Once all of the data is received, we will start to create a new planned maintenance programme to address the most immediate problems and ensure all homes are maintained to a high standard. Details of the programme for next year will be provided in early 2023.

If you were unavailable for a survey to be completed, a member of our Maintenance Team can come and visit - please contact the office to arrange an appointment on 01900 602906 or email repairs@westfieldha.org.uk

Cyclical Decoration 2022/23

108 properties were identified for this years external decoration programme. As with the Planned Maintenance Programme above, we will publish our future Cyclical Decoration programme early in 2023.



Planned Maintenance Programme 2022/23

We identified the following replacements for our 2022/23 planned programme which will be completed by 31st March 2023 - tenants in homes where replacements are being made have been informed and works are in progress. We will confirm the windows/doors and fence works with tenants by early December:-

13 x Kitchen Replacements

15 x Bathrooms Replacements

5 x Heating System Replacements

32 x Properties for Window & Door Replacements

55 x Front Fence Replacements/Repairs

Join our customer panel and help us shape the services we provide.

Improving the energy efficiency of your home



With the current cost of living crisis, making your home warmer and less costly to heat is a priority. We are currently developing plans for improving the energy efficiency of all our homes and will provide more details in the new year.

In the last newsletter we reported that in partnership with other housing associations in Cumbria and Eden District Council we were working on an application for grant funding from the governments Social Housing De-carbonisation Fund. This fund has been set up to support housing associations to make energy efficiency improvements to some of their least efficient homes.

This application has now been made and we have applied for works to 46 homes. The proposed works are different at different properties, but the main measures planned include a mix of loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, internal wall insulation, replacement windows and external doors and upgrades to heating controls. The cost of these works is estimated at £895,000. Grant funding of nearly £440,000 has been requested towards these costs.

The result of the application should be known in February. If successful works should start on the first homes in June 2023, with works completed to all homes by November 2024. The works should significantly reduce fuel bills (an average estimated saving per home, based on current prices, of £380 per year), reducing heat loss and making homes warmer and more comfortable.

In the next few weeks we will be contacting the tenants of the 46 homes in the application to discuss the planned works. We will also be holding an open event to give more information about the project and the benefits it will bring, and to give the opportunity for further discussion. We will also provide further information on our wider energy efficiency plans.

If you require any more information on this project, or on energy efficiency improvements more generally, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Damp and mould

There has been a lot of coverage in the media recently regarding damp and mould issues in rented homes and the failure of landlords to tackle the problem. There has been a particularly harrowing case of a young child's death linked to living in a damp home and other cases of tenants living in unacceptable conditions.

We are very aware of our responsibilities in this area and for ensuring that our homes are decent, high-quality and free from damp. We are just completing a condition survey of all homes which will provide much better and up to date information on property condition, including any damp issues. At this point we are not aware of any extensive problems, but we should be able to confirm this as an accurate picture once the survey has been completed. Any issues that do come to light will be dealt with as a priority.

Over the next few weeks, we will be agreeing what else we need to do in order to ensure that we are aware of any issues and that the responses we make to any problems are appropriate and effective.

If you do have any problems with damp and/or mould or any other serious repair issue in your home, then please report this to us. If you have reported a matter previously, but still have an issue or have been unhappy with the response made then please contact our Operations Manager, Debbie Fox, to discuss this. Debbie's contact number is 01900 602906.



Understanding your needs

Earlier this year we commissioned a company called Acuity to carry out a customer profiling exercise for us. This survey was to update the information we hold for you and to seek your views on your home, neighbourhood and services we provide. The information will help us to deliver the services you require.

Acuity surveyed nearly 300 households. However, that was only 47% of our overall tenants. As a result we will be trying to capture the information from our remaining tenants ourselves. In the New Year we will be telephoning tenants who have not completed the survey. If we cannot get in touch by telephone we will be doing a door knocking exercise.

We want you to feel comfortable talking to us and want to reassure you that all information shared with us is confidential.

Westfield estate walkabout

Unfortunately due to the weather our latest estate walkabout was cancelled twice. We eventually did the walkabout nearly a month late on the 14th November 2022. Following the walkabout we issued 13 untidy garden letters, reported a loose kerb on the corner of Richmond Road/Everest Mount and arranged for the cinder path to be cleared of rubbish.

We posted 8 certificates to tenants who had a well kept garden and those tenants were entered into a prize draw to win a £50 B&Q voucher.

We would like to take this opportunity to praise everyone entered into the prize draw and would congratulate;

Mrs **Irene Cartner** on winning the vouchers!!

Clean up event

In September we worked in partnership with Allerdale Borough Council and other agencies for the 2nd year running to take part in the Keep Britain Tidy's National Big Spring Clean, helping to tackle the blight of fly tipping and littering in the area.

The event was once again very successful. We managed to dispose of 6 large skips full of bulky items and household rubbish that tenants were unable to remove themselves.

Throughout the day we undertook a small survey, asking 21 tenants and resident how satisfied they were with the grounds maintenance on the estate giving us a score of 1-5, 1 being poor and 5 being excellent. Out of the 21 people we asked the average score was 4, indicating that the grounds maintenance has greatly improved lately.

We also asked how satisfied people were with the neighbourhood as a place to live. Out of the 21 people asked the average score was 5 indicating a high level of satisfaction.

We received feedback from some people saying they didn't know anything about the event. We promoted via our Facebook page, website and text messages. We will now post flyers through peoples doors and also develop a calendar of events at the beginning of the year notifying tenants and residents of what we have planned through out the year.



Congratulations!

Christmas events 2022



Residents trip to Edinburgh and feed back from the day.

We took a bus load of tenants and residents to Edinburgh Christmas Markets in November and what an amazing day we had.

We used the trip to get feedback on our service. Here are just some of the comments we received when we asked what do we do well and what we could do better.

“you do a great job, if its not broken don't fix it “

“trip was well organised, cheap & great value for money”

“community inclusion is good”

“been a brilliant day thank you”

“you organise good social events giving people opportunity to get to know others, but could have been communicated better”

We were asked if we could start posting newsletters out again as not all people can access social media. People felt they were missing out on information when not having a paper newsletter through the door. As a result we decided to post this edition out with a survey asking for peoples preferences moving forward. Please be sure to fill your survey form in and let us know how you would prefer to receive yours. We will communicate information about our future events via a new calendar of events. We will send this to tenants and residents at the start of the year.

Christmas Jumper Day

We had our 1st Christmas event in the Minto Centre since lockdown on 8th December 2022.

Home made mince pies and cake, prize bingo, raffle and Christmas carols.

This was a huge success and the residents group would like to thank everyone for attending.

Children's Christmas Party

We have arranged a children's Christmas party on 15th December 2022.

This is the first party for a long time. We hope all the children have a brilliant time and enjoy their visit from Santa.

We would like to thank Morrisons for their donation towards the selection boxes to be given to



Our performance April 2022 to September 2022

We set out in our Customer Offer a commitment to publish performance data every 6 months. Below is performance information relating to rent arrears, anti-social behaviour and repairs satisfaction for the period April 22 to September 22. For further performance information visit our website.

	Target 2021-22	Actual Performance 2021-22	Target 2022/23	Actual Performance 2022/23 (Apr to Sept)
Current rent arrears as a % of the annual rent debit	3.5%	3.25%	3.5%	4.15%
Former tenant arrears as a % of the annual rent debit	1.5%	0.78%	1%	0.93%
% of tenants satisfied with the anti-social behaviour service	95%	93%	95%	100%
% of reported incidents responded to within 2 days	98%	100%	98%	100%
% of cases resolved	90%	92.16%	90%	80%
% tenants satisfied with the repairs service	98%	91%	97%	96%

Rent arrears are higher at the end of September. We continue to monitor these closely and understand that the cost of living will be having an impact on many. We encourage anyone who is struggling to make payments to contact us.

We aim to deal with ASB quickly and effectively. There was one case of anti social behaviour which was closed as unresolved. This was because a request for noise monitoring equipment could not be met. We are considering how we can address this.

Although we have not met our target for tenants satisfied with the repairs service, this has increased and is better than last years performance.

The colouring on the 'Actual Performance' columns in the table indicates as follows:

Green: Performance is meeting or better than our target for this year.

Red: Performance is not meeting the target.

We hope that the information is clear and useful. If you have any comments or would like to see information on other services please contact us.

Customer Panel

The Customer Panel met on Monday 5th December, its third meeting this year. There are 7 tenants/residents on the Panel who meet quarterly to discuss current issues and topics that matter to them and the wider community.

Some of the topics discussed at this meeting were: -

- Annual Rent Review and the governments recently announced cap of 7% as the maximum amount that rents can increase by next April (under the normal formula for annual rent reviews the maximum permissible increase would have been 11.1%).
- Performance including rent arrears, repairs, anti-social behaviour and tenant satisfaction

Continued

- Service Standards
- Energy efficiency works/de-carbonisation of our properties
- Cost of Living Crisis

Westfields board has recently been discussing the annual rent review and the level of increase to apply. (a cap of 7% has been set by the government on next years increase). Views were sought from the Panel on this. A final decision will be made in early January and will consider comments and views received. If you have a view or wish to discuss this matter, please contact us.

Actions going forward: -

- The Panel will work with us to develop revised Services Standards . These will set out our commitment on the level of service you can expect to receive.
- The Panel will develop a training plan to assist tenants to become involved.
- The Panel will work with staff on the best way to involve tenants with energy efficiency improvements/decarbonisation work for 2023/24.

As you can see the group are involved in decision making and can feed into key activities which effect how we work. Above all, they hold us to account.

We are still on the lookout for tenants to join our Customer Panel. If you care about tenants having a voice, can work as part of a team and want to challenge housing delivery's performance, we'd love to hear from you.

In this first phase of works which will run for 43 weeks, 19 bungalows will be built across five sites on the estate. Before the end of this phase a second phase of work is due to start on a further 9 homes, although the number of homes may need to be reduced because of planning requirements.

Key stages of the development are as follows:

- 9th January: Start of demolition of garages on sites where these are present. This work should be completed within 4 weeks.
- 16th January: Construction of new bungalows (18 two bedroom, 1 one bedroom) to start on the former garage site on Fell View Walk. Works on the other sites should all be in progress by June 2023.
- Mid November 2023: completion of phase 1 works (19 bungalows).

Before works start the contractor, Thomas Armstrong's, will be creating a compound on land at the corner of Richmond Road and Windsor Road. During the period of the contract this land will not be accessible to the public, including for car parking.

We will be starting to allocate the new bungalows in early March 2023. If you would like to be considered for the first new homes to be built, please make an application (the housing application form is available on our website or can be obtained from our office) by the end of February. Applications will not close after this date, but later applications may mean that you cannot be considered for the first properties being built.

If you have already made an application for a bungalow or level access home, then you will not need to make another application. If you would like to discuss an application, please contact us. For more information about the new homes, please contact us.

New homes coming soon

As previously reported, we have been working on a scheme to build up to 28 bungalows on the Westfield estate. We are now at an advanced stage with these plans and building work is scheduled to start on the first site (Fell View Walk) on the 16th January 2023.

Christmas jumper colouring competition

The winners were chosen during our Christmas jumper day by tenants who attended. Entries were judged in two age groups

Up to 5 years & 5 years up to 10 years

The winners were

Roman Twentyman

Lucy Crelling

Callum Twambley

Dotty Nesbitt

We would like to take the opportunity to say thank you for taking part and congratulations everyone

Merry Christmas

Become a shareholder

Shareholding Membership of Westfield Housing Association is open to all our tenants and anyone who has an interest in our work and charitable objectives.

All applicants need to be a minimum of 16 years of age. Our full Shareholding Membership Policy forms part of our Governance Arrangements Framework which can be [found here](#).

As a Member of WHA you can get involved and help shape the future of WHA by:

- Electing the right people to serve on WHA's Board, who will effectively govern the Association;
- Voting at Annual General Meetings and any Special General Meetings; Applying to be a Board or Sub-Committee Member based on your skills and experience.

In accordance with normal procedures for non-profit making organisations, there is a nominal fee of £1.00.



January 2023 rubbish collection

The Association will be carrying out its usual rubbish collection on the Westfield estate on 5th and 6th January 2023. Please leave anything for collection out at the front or inside the front wall.

If you have a real Christmas tree, chop it up and put it in your garden waste bin. Remember this collection is not for items that you usually put in your own wheelie bin.

Please do not leave white goods, plaster board, gypsum plaster, waste or any large bulky waste furniture as these will not be collected. To dispose of these goods please ring Allerdale Borough Council on 0303 123 1702 for further details.

If you have struggled to read this newsletter and would prefer bigger print please contact Julie on (01900) 602906



Newsletter consultation December 2022

In our Christmas 2020 Newsletter we consulted all tenants about the delivery of future Newsletters. We asked if you preferred the newsletter posted to you or you were happy with accessing it on our website.

Out of 610 tenants that received a paper copy of that newsletter we received 5 responses asking for a paper copy.

Since then, we have had lots of feedback from tenants saying they don't know what's happening around the estate anymore, they miss receiving the newsletter through their door and that lots of our tenants don't have access to our website or social media.

We aim to provide the services that our tenants and residents are happy with and appreciated your feedback enabling us to improve what we do.

We have therefore decided to have this Christmas Newsletter printed and send out to you, but we do require you to let us know what your thoughts are moving forward.

Please tear this page out use the pre-paid envelope provided to send this consultation paper back to us ASAP.

I am fine with accessing future newsletters on the website

www.westfieldha.org.uk

YES ☐ NO ☐

I would like future newsletters in a paper copy

posted through my door

YES ☐ NO ☐

I require special communication measures e.g. large print

Please let us know what they are?

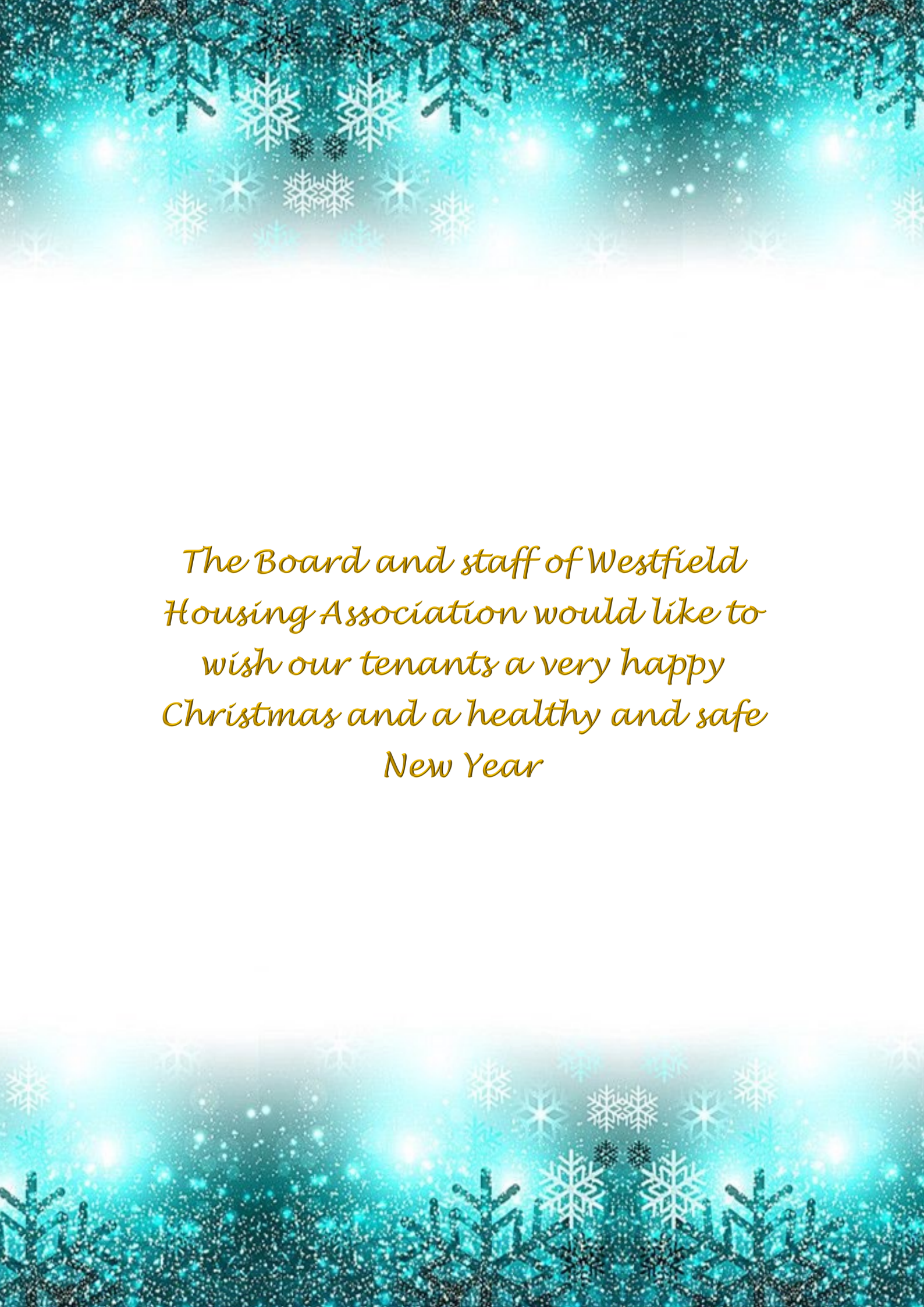
YES ☐ NO ☐

Name

Address

Contact details

Please let us know if you have any feedback on our news letters or suggestions for future contents 01900 602906



*The Board and staff of Westfield
Housing Association would like to
wish our tenants a very happy
Christmas and a healthy and safe
New Year*