

Christmas Newsletter 2024

Welcome to the latest edition of our Newsletter. We hope you find it useful and informative.
If you have any suggestions for future Newsletters please

Paying your rent

The last day for paying your rent over the phone in 2024 is Monday 23rd December. Direct Debits and standing orders will be taken as usual. However, if your Direct Debit is due on 25th or 26th December it will be taken on 27th December. If your Direct Debit is due on 1st January 2025 it will be taken on 2nd January 2025. Rent payments can still be made via the tenant portal during the festive period.

It is important that you ensure there is sufficient funds in your account to cover your Direct Debit so that you do not fall into rent arrears.

To discuss any issues you may be experiencing with your rent please contact us on 01900 602906.

January 2025 rubbish collection

We will be carrying out our annual rubbish collection on the Westfield estate on 6th and 7th January 2025. Please leave anything for collection out at the front or inside the front wall/fence.

If you have a real Christmas tree, chop it up and put it in your garden waste bin as these will not be collected.

Remember this collection is not for items that you usually put in your own wheelie bin.

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

Office update

Our office opening hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 1pm.

The office is fully functional, and staff can be contacted between 9.00am & 5.00pm Monday to Friday in the following ways.

- By telephone: 01900 602906
- Via the tenant portal
- The general enquires email: enquiries@westfieldha.org.uk
- For any out of hours emergencies (after 5pm and before 9am Monday to Friday and all day Saturday and Sunday) Call **0151 343 2762**
- The office will close for Christmas on Monday 23rd December 2024 at 5pm and Re-open on Thursday 2nd January 2025 at 9am.

Repairs Service

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

If you have an **Emergency Repair**, including a **Gas Emergency** please ring our Out of Hours Service provider Orbis on **0151 343 2762**.

Please think carefully before using this service as you may be charged for non-urgent repairs.

We ask that you do not ring contractors or staff directly.

For general, non-emergency repairs, you can email us on repairs@westfieldha.org.uk

You can also log repairs via your tenant portal or leave a voice mail on our office number **01900 602906**.

Please note, emails and messages will not be responded to until the office re-opens on 2nd January 2025.

Access to your property

As part of our repairs and maintenance service we have a legal responsibility to carry out regular checks and services to ensure that your home is safe, these include:

Gas Service & Solid fuel appliances. Safety checks are carried out every 12 months.

Smoke and CO alarms. These are tested annually and will be carried out during your gas safety check.

Electrical safety. We are working on a 5 year rolling programme to ensure every one of our homes has a legal updated EICR certificate in place.

Asbestos checks. We maintain an asbestos register and check asbestos risks, as necessary.

In order for us to carry out these legal requirements you must allow us access to your home.

In the last 3 months, our gas servicing contractor, AFM, have reported a total of 105 failed appointments for gas servicing as follows:

- July – 42 failed appointments
- August – 36 failed appointments
- September – 27 failed appointments

This equates to a minimum of 105 hours wasted Engineer time, in addition to the financial loss (as our contractors still require payment!)

All failed visits need re-booked and this can have a knock-on effect and cause a disruption to responsive maintenance and call out services.

During July, August and September, we have also:

- Recharged tenants a total of £593.40
- Issued 10 x Notices Seeking Possession, warnings/ Solicitor letters
- Served 2 x Notices Seeking Possession/commenced legal action

Gas Servicing is extremely important, not only does it keep the appliances in good order, but more importantly it keeps our tenants and their families/visitors safe.

Please ensure you allow access for Gas servicing – you will receive a letter with a date and AM / PM appointment.

If for some reason you cannot make the appointment, you MUST contact AFM Gas Services on 01900 871396 to re arrange.

Making every contact count approach

Many landlords are increasingly contacting their residents using digital methods, including online self-serve portals. Social tenants should not go more than a year without some form of contact with their landlord, or at least their contractors.

This approach provides a range of natural opportunities for landlords to check in with their tenants. This does not need to be in-depth or intrusive, it can be as simple as asking “and is everything else ok in your home?”. By making the most of these existing touchpoints, landlords can develop an effective and efficient way of gathering information.

To implement this approach WHA has developed a new contact sheet. You may notice that during contact with us you are asked a few extra questions. This enables us to keep our systems updated with household/health changes or see where we need to signpost to specialist agencies who can help with any identified support needs.

Do you know how to make a complaint?

Everyone deserves a safe and secure home.

If you have an issue with your home or WHA as a landlord there are ways to make things right.

You can complain to us in whichever way is easiest for you; electronically by filling out our complaints <https://www.westfieldha.org.uk/page/make-a-complaint>, via email, by telephone, in person, in writing, by text or via your tenant portal.

If you are not happy with our response you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service at any stage.

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Phone: 0300 111 3000. Phonelines are open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

The Housing Ombudsman Service strongly encourage customers contact them via email or their online complaint form.

Safeguarding children

Everyone has a responsibility to protect others from harm.

Some children can be at risk of neglect, emotional harm, physical abuse and sexual abuse in any environment, including with close family members as well as strangers.

If you are concerned that a child or young person is at risk of immediate harm you should contact the police urgently on 999.

If you are a member of the public with a concern about a child, please contact the Cumberland Safeguarding Hub on 0333 240 1727.

Safeguarding adults

If you are being abused or neglected it is important to tell someone. If you suspect that someone else is being abused or neglected it is important that you do not ignore it, you must report it.

If you think that person is in immediate danger you can seek advice by contacting the Police on 999. If you feel there is no immediate danger, please use the 101 number.

To report an adult safeguarding concern you can:

- Complete an online enquiry form at www.cumberlandcouncil.gov.uk
- Contact adult social care on 0300 373 3732
- Adult social care out of hours telephone 01228 526690

If you need further advice please contact us on 01900 602906.

Winter fuel allowance

Are you losing your winter fuel allowance this year? Will you have to make a decision about heating or eating? Are you going to struggle to pay your energy bills due to losing the Winter fuel allowance?

We have been contacting our tenants who are likely to have lost their winter fuel allowance this year to assess the impact this will have and how you will manage your heating throughout the colder months.

If we have not been in touch with you yet, and you would like to speak to us in confidence regarding any concerns you have about the impact this will have, then please call us on 01900 602906 and ask for Andrea as we may be able to offer help or advice.

Household support fund

The Government announced on 2 September 2024 that a further extension to the household support fund will run from September 2024 until March 2025. The Household Support Fund is available to households who are in financial crisis and have substantial energy debts.

You may be able to get help with essential costs from 'the Household Support Fund'. This could help if you're struggling to afford things like:

- Energy and water bills
- Food
- Essential items

To check if you are eligible visit the Cumberland Councils website <https://www.cumberland.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/health-and-wellbeing/cost-living-and-welfare-support/household-support-fund>

If you would like to know more about any of the above services, please contact us on 01900 602906.



Annual clean up event 2024

In August this year we held our annual clean up event and once again it was a very successful day.

We cleared 6.86 tonnes of waste, which includes the small electrical items we collected.

This is nearly a tonne more than last year.

Feedback we received from tenants:

- Very good day, keeps estate clean and good community spirit
- Always good community spirit
- Very useful especially for the elderly who cannot manage to get rid
- Very useful to prevent fly tipping
- Good community event
- Estate could do with more rubbish bins
- Parking on the estate is poor

It was well attended, and numbers appeared to be more than previous years.



Parking update

Over the last couple of years, we have had lots of feedback from tenants saying that parking is limited on the estate.

We wanted to remind people that as part of the bungalow development on Crown Close, we created 13 extra spaces for public use in addition to the ones allocated for the tenants on Crown Close.

We are also in the process of looking at creating an additional 28 parking bays on an old derelict garage site on the estate. If this goes ahead, we will have created 41 parking spaces on the estate. We will keep you informed about any updates in future newsletters and on our Facebook page.

Dog muck in open spaces

As a result of receiving complaints about the increase in dog muck in open spaces, we have ordered some signs to display around the estate. We will be displaying these signs in identified problematic areas. The signs are a polite reminder from WHA to ask that everyone keeps their dogs on a lead and picks up any dog muck as their dogs do it. We have free dog bags available in the office and there are plenty bins around the estate to dispose of dog muck



Walk abouts 2024

Our Housing Officers Susan and Julie carried out our latest walkabout on the estate on 6th November 2024.

We were very happy with the overall presentation of the estate and want to thank everyone for their efforts in keeping their gardens and open areas in a good condition.



What we identified	What we've done
Some remnants of fireworks. Rubbish in open areas, cinder path and the substation on cinder path.	We asked our caretaker to collect and dispose of any rubbish and sent a request to Electricity Northwest to clean the substation.
3 street signs were identified as damaged or missing.	These have been reported previously to Cumberland Council and we will continue to chase them up.
7 gardens were identified as needing attention.	Following our Untidy Garden Policy, letters have been sent to these tenants.
Need for extra bins were identified. (Feedback from clean-up day also highlighted this issue).	Extra bins have been now ordered.

Age UK services

Winter warmth grants

If you are on a low income, over 60 and think you may qualify for a winter warmth grant, you can contact Age UK on 01228 536673. They will go through your eligibility and complete the application with you. They will require evidence of low income and let you know if you are eligible.

Home energy checks

These are free to over 60s, free equipment can be installed to support the home be more energy efficient. For a free home energy check contact Age UK on 01228 536673.

Advice & support

This service is for over 50s and Age UK will carry out; full benefit checks, form completion, blue badge applications etc. They have a drop-in session at Workington library on the first Monday of the month between 11am and 2pm or can be contacted on 01228 536673 to make an appointment. Please note, predominantly support is provided via the telephone.

Handyperson

Age UK provide a handyperson service, for people over the age of 50. There is a charge for this service and hourly rates start at £25 with a minimum of a 1-hour booking. Some of the services offered include.

- Minor repairs
- Pressure washing
- Key safe fitting
- Grab rail fitting
- Carpet cleaning
- Moving furniture
- Small gardening tasks

Call 01228 536673 for more information.



If you have difficulty reading our newsletter and would like this information in a different format please contact Julie on 01900 602906

Footsteps Nursery News Update

We have had some lovely moments to celebrate this year. We had our Graduation Ceremony and slideshow with the parents, an emotional day was had by all.

We have just completed our Annual Review with Smile 4 Life which we were awarded a gold standard, which we are proud and passionate about. We have had our annual Environmental Health check with Cumberland Council & maintained our 5 star rating - well done to our Nursery cook.

We have just had our OFSTED inspection and are over the moon to be graded as "Good". This has now gone live and we have shared it via Family news feed.

Thank you to all parents for your kind words and support on that day.

On behalf of the Footsteps team we would like to thank the parents for their patience and support over the last few months due to changes in the nursery.

Nursery will close for Christmas on Friday 20th December 2024 and reopen on Friday 3rd January 2025.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Footsteps



Events

Every year we create a calendar of events with input from our Customer Panel and Residents' Group. Trips and events are subsidised from our Neighbourhood Investment Fund for tenants and residents to enjoy.

This year our tenants have enjoyed trips to Blackpool and York Christmas Markets. Still to come are;

- * Annual Christmas jumper bingo day on Thursday 12th December 2024 in the Minto Centre at 1.00pm.
- * Annual Children's Christmas party at St Marys Church on Tuesday 17th December 2024 at 6.00pm.

If you would like to know more or come along to any of our remaining events please get in touch on 01900 602906, places are limited and must be booked in advance. Our new Calander of events for 2025 will be published in the New Year. If you have any suggestions for future events please let us know by emailing enquiries@westfieldha.org.uk.



Up and coming Christmas events at St Mary's Church Westfield

7TH DEC Christmas Fayre with Father Christmas	Held in the Parish Centre 10am—12pm	24TH DEC Midnight Mass	Held in the Church at 11.30am
15TH DEC Christingle	Held in the Church at 3pm	25TH DEC Christmas Day celebrations	Held in the Church at 11.30pm
22ND DEC A Traditional Christmas sing along	Carols & Modern songs to sing along too. Held in the Church at 3pm	Westfield Community Choir Did you know that St Mary's Church also have a Westfield Community Choir every Tuesday at 1.15pm for 2 and a half hours. This is a warm, fun and friendly group that would love new members go along and join them, no experience necessary. Rev. Sharon Murphey says "Come if you can sing and come if you can't, just come along and enjoy some social time, make new friends and enjoy making music together".	
23RD DEC A service of reflection and quiet	For those finding Christmas difficult. Held in the Church at 7pm		
24TH DEC Nativity Service	Held in the Church at 3pm		

