

UNDER ONE ROOF



WINDRUSH DIAMONDS

Large celebratory events for tenants marking the diamond anniversary of Windrush were held at McCalla House in Wolverhampton and Charles Pearson Court in Smethwick.

It is 75 years since the ship Empire Windrush arrived here on 22 June 1948. It carried the first passengers from the Caribbean answering the call to fill labour shortages and rebuild Britain after World War Two.

Those pioneers, and others who arrived until the early 1970s, are known as the Windrush Generation. Nehemiah Housing was later born out of a need to provide suitable homes for this community. We're privileged to have several still as our tenants.

John Baker (above), 84, came from Jamaica in 1960. "England provided better job opportunities," he explains. "But the winters were dreadful. I missed the sunshine and the fresh food we grew."

Una McKayle remembers how, "In school in Jamaica the teacher showed us a book about England with photos of fires in the bedroom to keep warm. We used to laugh and say no, that can't be true! We came though, as there were jobs and the Queen had visited to say we were welcome."

Elizabeth Smith (top right), 93, arrived in 1956. She recalls being in lodgings in London sharing cooking and washing facilities. "The smog was also a shock; we had to use torchlight to find our way home. I worked in a car factory and one year I won a Hillman Imp in a raffle. I was able to sell the car and move myself and my children to Birmingham. Now with great-great grandchildren, I say whatever you want out of life, go for it."

Read more on these stories, and from other inspiring Windrush Generation tenants, on our website at www.nehemiah.co.uk

REFLECTIONS

Our chief executive Llewellyn Graham, who himself arrived from Jamaica aged 15 in 1976, says: "Windrush Day and the 75th anniversary is a chance to deepen our understanding and celebrate the enriching contribution of the Windrush Generation in the Midlands.

"It's also an opportunity to reflect on the resilience they have shown to the difficulties many faced in setting up home here, and to obstacles since."



ELECTRIC SHOCK

Half of all accidental house fires in the UK are caused by electricity, either from faults or misuse of fixed installations or from domestic appliances.

Sadly, safety was not on the mind of the reckless tenant we caught trying to steal electricity by tampering with and bypassing his electric meter. This is illegal and dangerous, as it can cause fatal electric shocks, start fires and even explosions.

We're required to carry out electrical testing before a change of tenancy. A good landlord will also carry out regular inspections, which we do every five years.

Like our gas servicing, these electrical safety checks are free of charge. They inspect fixed installations like sockets, light switches and wiring to make sure they are still in a safe condition.

Our electrical contractors contact you when an inspection is due. Please keep the appointment, or promptly rearrange it if you know you won't be in.

The safety of appliances you bring into your home – like electric cookers and phone chargers – are your responsibility. If you've any doubts, get it tested or replaced.



RATE US



A short telephone survey is checking your satisfaction with our services, in line with the new national Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

The survey asks how satisfied you are with aspects of our service such as keeping you informed about things that matter to you and the time taken to complete your most recent repair.

We are using independent market researchers at MEL Research to gather the feedback, which we use to target improvements.

We follow up any immediate concerns with you. The overall findings are reported in our tenants' annual report and on our website.

Tenants surveyed in July, and at two other points in the year, are selected at random. If you get a call from our researchers, please do take part.

WALK THIS WAY

When housing officer Pauline Burke made a recent 'walkabout' estate visit, she knew which door she was going to knock on first.

"The tenant had asked me to call in and see her at the start, as she was going out," explains Pauline. "I'm always happy to do this. Walkabout visits are a chance for you to show or talk about any neighbourhood or tenancy issue. If the timings aren't suitable, just arrange another time for us to visit you. And please don't overlook a repair or other concern – tell us promptly before it becomes a bigger problem."

We don't bring up rent matters with you on walkabouts. But if you want to discuss money issues, we can make an appointment to talk it through.

We'd love to see you at our next walkabout visit.

We write to you a week before and put dates on our website and Facebook page. We also drop a note in to say we've called.



MINDFUL HEALTH

Tenants shared their tips for self-care in managing anxiety at a webinar we held during Mental Health Awareness Week.

One tenant explained how she had dealt with the anxiety of inheriting debt by getting free money advice. "It helped me look after own wellbeing too. I was encouraged to put a little bit of money away to treat myself, which I use at the hairdressers."

The webinar's theme was managing your mental health during the cost-of-living crisis, with the topics suggested by tenants. It was led by Catalyst 4 Change, a local community-based mental health support organisation.

Experiences and knowledge were frankly discussed, and sources of support shared. Thank you to everyone who took part. We hope to run similar sessions again.



MEET A TENANT

Diane Skipper moved to Henry Court in Dudley last year after a difficult period in her life.

I needed to switch myself back on.

I'd become withdrawn after my beloved partner of 21 years died suddenly. Our house was in his name and the mortgage company didn't recognise me. I was in limbo for two years before having to leave.

The homelessness prevention team told me about here.

Soon after my assessment I got the keys to my flat. I sobbed with joy when I found out I could bring my cats Tigger and Nia with me.

Supportive people have encouraged me.

My two brothers have been brilliant. I greatly admire Shinette from Impact Training at Dudley Caribbean and Friends Association. She's an inspirational person who's helped me take up befriending and gain eight training certificates, including in first aid.

I like mingling with people. Before retirement, I worked in care and rehabilitation. When our coffee mornings started up again at Henry Court after the pandemic, I optimistically put out nine chairs - and we had to fetch more!



Local community members join our activities.

We always start with some exercise and have refreshments. We act on suggestions and put on things like guest speakers, health MOT checks and bingo. We're planning some trips out.

I feel safe and comfortable here.

The people and surroundings are inviting. Lorraine, the scheme manager, is very approachable. As the first place of my own, I was worried about affording it, but she helped me claim my benefit entitlements. If you have social activity ideas, she'll support you. Give new things a go! You've nothing to lose by trying.

BETTER SAFE

Tenants have helped us review and update our safeguarding policy for adults and children. This covers what safeguarding is and the actions we take to protect your right to live in safety.

Our frontline staff are trained to spot the risks of harm, abuse or neglect. Working with other agencies, we aim to give support and stop it happening.

Over 40 tenants have been supported this year, including arranging a suitable care package for someone at risk of self-neglect. Other cases include support to tackle financial and physical abuse.

If you're worried about a friend or neighbour, you can tell us in confidence so we can investigate and offer the help they need. There may be times when you need support yourself.

Speak to your housing officer or scheme manager. Or get in touch with our housing service manager and safeguarding lead, Pamela Farquharson.

YOU SAID, WE DID

Here are some examples of what we've done recently thanks to your feedback. Specifically, they relate to Tenant Satisfaction Measures for safe and well-maintained homes and maintaining communal areas.



- Improved the cleaning of communal areas by contractors working at Powell House in Wolverhampton.
- Secured grant funding to upgrade the storage heaters at 12 homes on Sphinx Drive, Coventry. We'll also be applying for funding for further homes.
- Created a 'who's who' guide about staff at a housing scheme so that names and duties are clearer for tenants. This will be done elsewhere too.
- Started a booklet of useful information for new tenants moving into retirement living flats, to also be available to existing tenants.
- Put together a bedtime safety and energy-efficiency checklist – such as switch off the TV and lock windows – for Henry Court in Dudley. It'll be used at other schemes too.

Please don't delay in telling us your concerns! Report any issues at the time they happen so we have a chance to put things right. We have a straightforward complaints process to deal with your complaints and learn from them.

MONEY TALK



Worried about debt? Struggling to pay your rent?

Please ask us for support. We can arrange for you to get free and impartial money advice from helpful advisors. Personal details of what you discuss are not shared with us. It's only the outcome that matters.

For example, a Nehemiah tenant told us how she asked her housing officer for help after a relationship breakdown left her unable to afford the rent.

We put her in touch with a money advisor at Birmingham Settlement who quickly helped her successfully apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) to stop further rent arrears building. They also helped her deal with other debts.

DHP only lasts for three months but, with the help she's received, she can renew it to continue for longer. She now feels a sense of relief at taking charge of her finances.

CASH SLICE



A lot of cake was eaten in our office recently! But it was all for a good cause, as money raised from the staff cake bake went to Gilgal, a local charity supporting women and children escaping domestic violence.



Please let our customer engagement officer Marcia Cunnison know if you have any comments about this newsletter or would like to help us plan the next issue.

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