

UNDER ONE ROOF



NEW CENTENARIAN

There are real pearls in our communities. One such person has just celebrated a special milestone - her 100th birthday.

Pearlena Howe - known to many as Miss Pearl or Sister Howe - was delighted to receive a birthday card from the King. Family and friends also gathered for a surprise party at her Nehemiah retirement housing scheme in Smethwick.

"My wonderful carer Marsha helped me get dressed for the occasion," she remembers. "I went downstairs to the communal lounge and found it was beautifully decorated and everyone was there waiting for me. It made me very happy."

Born on 23 April 1924, Pearlina grew up in Jamaica and came to Britain as a young woman to study nursing. She is part of the Windrush Generation who came from the Caribbean to help fill post-war labour shortages.

While working at a hospital in Surrey, she visited her brother in Birmingham and decided to move. She took a job at the Cadbury's factory and spent many years working there. "I think I had more of a stomach for chocolate than for nursing!" she laughs. "I never married; perhaps because I was what we call in Jamaican 'facety' - which means cheeky!"

Her faith and love of music have guided her throughout life. She worked as a secretary at the Church of God of Prophecy at Aberdeen Street, Birmingham. She also played piano and taught the church's choirs to sing.

"I had a phone call recently from America from a lad who used to be in the choir, telling me how much he'd loved our singing," says Pearlina. "Young people today are so clever. Even if they don't read music, they make up their own very professional songs."

Marsha (pictured top left) visits Pearlina daily. "She is such a tender and beautiful person. It is a blessing to care for her."

SELF-SERVE

Tenants are helping us to put the finishing touches to an improved tenants' portal on our website.

They've helped test and refine the portal's new features such as being able to request repairs and track progress, and set up and amend rent payments.

The new functions aim to give you greater flexibility and control. Look out for more details when the portal goes live this Autumn.

DIY CHECKS

Thinking of making some home improvements? From putting up shelves or new light fittings, to fitting a shower or new patio, you should speak to us first.

We can offer you advice and, in some cases, do the work for you.

There may be risks you are unaware of, such as walls being made of plasterboard or the possibility of asbestos in Artex ceilings.

Plus, for many alterations you are required under your tenancy agreement to have our permission before you start any work. We try to be reasonable in considering requests, but we may apply certain conditions before agreeing your plans.

Keen to be organised? Summer is the perfect time to switch on your boiler or storage heaters to check they are working well. Report any heating faults now, so we can fix them before the cold weather.



MOIST ALERT



Condensation in the home can usually be wiped away. But if mould sets in, we won't let you live with the problem.

Please report damp or mould to us promptly so action can be taken to get rid of it. This might involve repairs or specialist advice.

General condensation starts as moisture in the air from everyday activities like cooking. It turns to liquid on cool surfaces such as windows. But there are ways to reduce it – which could keep your heating bills down too.

Keep your home reasonably warm throughout – with a low background heat.

Ventilate your home – by opening windows for a while each day and using extractor fans.

Reduce moisture in your home – by, for example, drying clothes outside where possible, or using the bathroom with the door closed and window open. Wring out wet wiping cloths into the sink. Cover pans when cooking.



NEW FACES

Two experienced new staff members have joined us as supported housing scheme officers.



Balwinder Phagura has worked in social housing for over 25 years, including supporting vulnerable adults. In his new role he gives 'floating' support across all our schemes as needed. Currently he is based at Father Joe Taaffe House in Birmingham and Nehemiah Court in Walsall. Outside of work Balwinder is active too, playing football and recently completing a 60-mile walking challenge for Cancer Research. His next goal is to climb Ben Nevis.

Marie Craig is based at our two retirement schemes in Wolverhampton. She started as temporary cover and is now permanent. "The tenants at both McCalla House and Shanti Niketan made me feel so welcome, I wanted to stay," says Marie. "I've also had tremendous support from my Nehemiah



colleagues, which especially matters when you're lone working."

For over 20 years Marie was assistant manager at a local residential home and day centre for adults with learning disabilities. In her spare time, she sings with United Churches Gospel Choir and gives vocal training to other singers.

In her new role with us, she has already organised an open day at McCalla House to promote opportunities to live there.

Marie is keen to develop the schemes' community spirit. "For example, tenants have been involved in choosing new blinds from colour swatches I showed them. And this week a lady came with her carer to an exercise class for the first time. It was rewarding to hear she wants to keep coming."

HOME GROWN

Green-fingered residents are reaping what they have sown at Henry Court in Dudley – and sharing it around.

Dammy and her husband Mohan enjoy tending the communal garden and greenhouse, together with their neighbours Esmie and Marie.

The active gardeners grow a glorious range of flowers and produce, such as tomatoes, strawberries, and herbs for themselves and others to use in their cooking.

Housing scheme officer Lorraine Martin says: “Gardening really helps physical and mental wellbeing to flourish. It gives the involved residents the satisfaction of creating a lovely space here, and it draws other people outside to enjoy it too.”

Marie agrees, saying, “As well as the actual gardening, I like the social aspect of talking about what we are doing and planning to do. I especially love showing my grandchildren how things grow.”



MEET A TENANT

Sheron Crystal has been a resident of Nehemiah Housing for over 12 years. This summer, she joined our Tenants' Scrutiny Panel, contributing to tenant engagement, community development and wellbeing.



I was raised in the Christian faith. I engaged and associated with other Christian faith churches when attending events, conventions and concerts. It was here I learned about the Church of God of Prophecy's vision to build affordable homes for the communities – a mission that deeply resonated with me.

I'm passionate about the power of what community can provide.

When I became a resident of Nehemiah Housing, I quickly connected with fellow tenants and discovered that many were drawn to the association due to its foundation in the word of God and the name, Nehemiah.

I believe every tenant has unique abilities to offer and, that together, we can make a significant impact and contribution. It is about using everyone's talents and skills to make a difference, drive change and enhance efficiency.

My dedication to community service is evident in my role in establishing a homeless project for a church organisation located in Birmingham, which continues to thrive today. My career has been focused on service-oriented roles, and I currently work as a procurement professional.

THREE REASONS



Moving to one of our retirement housing schemes may be a good option if you – or someone you know – enjoys living independently, but with the reassurance of support.

1 If your home no longer suits your needs

Perhaps it feels too big for you, or reduced mobility makes it tricky to get around. Our housing schemes are designed for older people.

2 If you're feeling lonely

Our schemes have a community feel, with garden and lounge areas to socialise plus opportunities to take part in organised activities.

3 If you no longer feel safe living alone

It can be comforting to know our scheme officer is close at hand. An alarm link gives you access to help at any time.

We have eight schemes across the West Midlands. To find out more and to arrange a visit, call us on 0121 358 0966.

My goal is to continue to be more purposeful in assisting others while enjoying life. In my free time I enjoy swimming and pampering herself, finding balance and rejuvenation to continue to support activities aimed at making a difference.

RESULTS ARE IN

We've published the first-year results of how satisfied you are with our services, measured by the national Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM). These aim to make it easier for you to see how we are performing and compare us to other similar landlords.

The results show we are performing well – yet there are always ways to improve. We are in the 'upper quartile' for each measure, which means our scores are in the top 25% of housing associations.

Some key results are:

- 78%** of you are satisfied with our overall service
- 79%** are satisfied with our repairs service
- 84%** are satisfied that their home is well maintained
- 88%** agree we treat you fairly and with respect

The results are based on the views of Nehemiah tenants, chosen at random by independent researchers. Telephone surveys take place three times a year, with the next in November 2024. Please do take part if you get a call.

We look at the findings throughout the year so we can take regular action to deal with your concerns or dips in service.

These actions include:

- 'toolbox talks' with our repair operatives to give them your feedback and discuss ways to improve
- updating our customer engagement strategy to be more flexible and responsive to what matters to you
- investigating dissatisfaction with communal cleaning on an individual site basis, including visits to check work is being done as specified

Are we doing the right things to keep you satisfied? We held an online feedback session about the TSM results and are eager to get even more of you involved in shaping the improvements you want to see. Look out for a TSM tenants' event this Autumn or get in touch now with Marcia Cunnison (details below).

Visit our website for more on our [TSM results](#).



QUICK ACTION

We follow up on any individual concerns you raise through TSM and other surveys.

But if something is bothering you or needs doing, please don't wait for a survey to tell us.

Service request

If you want a repair, information or another type of service provided, please request it as soon as you know you need it. We can then deal with it promptly at the time it needs doing.

Making a complaint

If you're then dissatisfied with our standard of service or lack of action you've received, you should make a complaint. We have a straightforward way for your complaint to be dealt with. Please ask us for any details you need.

Complaints are an opportunity for us to put things right. Staff discuss complaints every fortnight to pinpoint the lessons learnt and changes needed. Visit our [website](#) for more on our complaints process, performance and plans.

