

Warwickshire  
**Rural**  
*Life*

The residents' newsletter for  
**Warwickshire Rural Housing Association**  
**SUMMER 2018**  
[www.warwickshirerha.org.uk](http://www.warwickshirerha.org.uk)



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Remember to like us on Facebook and see all our latest news.

*Here to stay!*

**Dorothy and Robert Heeks are so happy with their brand new home in Long Compton that they were delighted to be joined by WRHA Board members, colleagues and partners at a special event during Rural Housing Week.**

The couple recently moved into a two-bedroom bungalow on our newest development at Weston Court after deciding the time had come to downsize. And now they're looking forward to living out their retirement in Long Compton.

Find out more at [www.warwickshirerha.org.uk](http://www.warwickshirerha.org.uk)

**BANK HOLIDAY CLOSING**

Please note that the office will be closed on August Bank Holiday Monday and Tuesday (27th and 28th August).



## UNIVERSAL CREDIT U-TURN

The Government has changed its mind! Now, all 18 to 21 years olds will be entitled to claim support towards their housing costs within Universal Credit. You don't have to meet certain requirements any more. And anyone starting to claim UC receives support from day one of their claim, which is great news.

### FREE SCHOOL MEALS

There are new regulations regarding free school meals. A household must now have an annual net income of no more than £7,400 to be eligible. Children already receiving free school meals may be protected if certain social security benefits are claimed.

### BEDROOM TAX

#### WHAT IS A BEDROOM?

It's been decided that before applying the bedroom tax, a local authority must assess whether a bedroom can actually physically fit in the number of children expected to sleep in it as a bedroom.

### PIP APPEALS

A new pilot service has been launched for submitting personal independence payment (PIP) appeals online. It's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week in certain areas and online appeals will reach the DWP quicker than a postal appeal. For more information, visit [www.gov.uk/government/news/submit-your-personal-independent-payment-appeal-online](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/submit-your-personal-independent-payment-appeal-online)

## TACKLING HOMELESSNESS

**Local authorities will be required to help all eligible applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, under the new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which came into force in April.**

The Act says that a local authority must take reasonable steps to help a person keep their current accommodation if they are threatened with homelessness. And if a person is already homeless, it has to help them secure accommodation for six months and draw up a plan.

## TV LICENCE FEE INCREASE

Enjoy watching TV? Don't forget that the cost of the TV licence fee increased to £150.50 (colour fee) and £50.50 (black and white) in April. The over 75s still get their TV licence free. If you pay for your licence on an instalment scheme, such as a monthly direct debit or weekly cash payment, you won't have to pay the increased fee until your licence comes up for renewal.

## CARER'S ALLOWANCE

Since April, anyone claiming carer's allowance is allowed to earn up to £120 per week, an increase of £4 per week.

## FIND A JOB

Universal Jobmatch, which lets people search and apply for full or part-time jobs, has been renamed 'Find a Job'. The free government recruitment service will continue to connect jobseekers with thousands of employers across the UK.

## BETTER BATHROOMS

We've invested £198,000 in fitting new bathrooms in 44 properties recently. What a difference!

We've also changed the specification to give residents more choice. You can now choose from six different wall tile designs and four floor tiles, and all new bathrooms include an electric shower.



## HOW TO...

### Keep your paths nice

Here's the latest guide in our 'How to...' feature to help you keep your property looking great and running well.

During the Summer months, weeds can get out of control on paths and drives. Here's how to keep them at bay.

1. Cut grass back to a neat edge using a weeding knife or lawn-edging tool so grass and weeds don't spread across a path.
2. Tackle weeds quickly before they have chance to release seeds.
3. Get a sharp knife and push it as deeply as possible into the gaps in the path to hook out weeds, roots and soil.
4. Use a stiff broom to collect the moss, weeds and soil.
5. If you have a gravel drive, push a hoe back and forth to remove weeds.
6. Apply weedkiller. If you need to dilute it, use a separate watering can just for chemicals, not for watering.

## GET COVERED

We want you to be safe and secure, so we insure the structure of your home against fire, storms and floods.

But if your personal belongings, carpets and furniture got damaged, could you afford to replace them? It's important that you take out your own contents insurance so you don't have to pay for any damage.

Did you know the average cost for home contents insurance is around just £11 per month? Don't put it off!

## PRIVACY PROTECTED

We respect your privacy and manage your personal information carefully. New laws regarding data protection came into force in May so please read our new privacy policy on our website. More information about the new laws can be found at [ico.org.uk](http://ico.org.uk) or speak to your Housing Officer.

We will be calling you to make sure we have your correct details.

## Ask us ...

*Joe asked: If you find a wasps nest, who should you speak to?*

**David Krause, Development and Maintenance Manager says:**

You can contact your local council if you have a problem with any pests in your home or garden. Some councils offer free pest control services, but others may charge. You might be able to deal with some pests yourself, such as slugs or ants. Have a look at the products on offer in your local supermarket or garden centre.

**Have you got a question about your home or the services we provide? If so, ask away! We'll be answering one of your questions in every newsletter. Simply email them to [sue.haywood@midlandsrural.org.uk](mailto:sue.haywood@midlandsrural.org.uk)**



## YOU'RE NOT ALONE

A free, confidential helpline is available for people aged over 55, 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Set up by Esther Rantzen, the Silver Line helpline provides information, friendship and advice, and can link callers to local groups and services, as well as befrienders.

Call 0800 4 70 80 90 anytime or visit [www.thesilverline.org.uk](http://www.thesilverline.org.uk)

## PERFECT PETS

If you're thinking of getting a pet, please ask us for permission first.

- Be mindful of your neighbours, especially if you own a larger pet, such as a dog.
- Make sure you clean up after your dog, both in your own garden and when you're out and about.
- Exercise your dog regularly – at least twice a day.
- Try not to leave a dog at home for long periods of time as they may bark or whine and disturb your neighbours.
- If you go away on holiday, make arrangements for your pet to be cared for.
- Check your garden is secure so any pets can't escape.



## WINNER!

Congratulations to the winner of our Spot the difference competition in our last issue. The lucky resident from Fenny Compton won £50 of 'love to shop' vouchers.

## CLEAR OUT!

Is it time your street had a clear up? We have a limited number of opportunities to stage a skip day when you can get rid of any unwanted items – big or small – in a free skip. If you'd like your street considered for a Summer clear out, give Philippa or Naheeda a call on **0300 1234 009**.

## Service standard

We will monitor service failures on a monthly basis and formal complaints on a quarterly basis.

## OWN YOUR HOME

If you're a shared owner and have lived in your home for a while, it could be time to consider 'staircasing'. This means buying more shares of your property so you own a greater proportion of your home and pay less rent.

Try using the free online calculator at [www.shareto-buy.com](http://www.shareto-buy.com) to see whether you can buy more shares, or call us on **0300 1234 009**.

## NEW CONTRACTOR

J. Tomlinson replaced MD Building Services as our new repairs contractor in April. They will carry out all reactive repairs excluding gas, renewables and electrical works. If you have a repair to report, contact the Customer Care Team **0300 1234 009** or email [enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk)



## HOW WE'RE PERFORMING

The service we provide for you is very important to us. This is how we've done during the past financial year:

- Three formal complaints were received. Only one was upheld and £100 compensation was issued, and another was partially upheld.
- Fourteen compliments were received: 7 for repairs, 3 for customer service, 1 for adaptations, 1 for planned maintenance and 2 for housing services.
- 92% of calls were answered within 20 seconds and more calls were resolved at the first point of contact compared with last year.
- Overall repairs satisfaction was 85%.
- Our perception survey showed that 92% of residents think we have friendly and approachable staff and 82% feel we give them the opportunity to make their views known.
- We were pleased that 86% of our residents would recommend WRHA to others.

**Did you know...** Our website had 5,581 new visitors during the last financial year and we reached 19,663 people via Facebook.



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**Tel:** 0300 1234 009

**E-mail:** [enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.warwickshirerha.org.uk](http://www.warwickshirerha.org.uk)