

THE BRIGHTER BUZZ

The Brighter Buzz is a newsletter, circulated to all tenants and customers on a quarterly basis to keep you up to date with news, events and opportunities across the organisation.

LET'S SHOUT ABOUT...

FURLONG COURT AND #LOVESOT

In September 2023, communities across the city pulled together for a "Love Your City" fortnight as a part of Stoke-on-Trent City Council's #lovesot campaign. This initiative aimed to tackle illegal dumping and help to keep our city clean.

Residents and staff at Furlong Court played their part in this community effort, and have been hard at work sprucing up the front of the building. This area was a hot spot for littering from passers-by...however a hot spot no longer!

A huge well done to all of those involved, the project was a real team effort to de-weed, litter pick and lay the wood chip to create a sustainable and tidy exterior.



SAFE SPACES GET TOGETHER

Remember the last of the Summer Sun in September?

Safe Spaces certainly made the most of it as they held a weekend get-together with customers who enjoyed various activities including stone painting, making lavender bags, baking, gardening, bingo, and quizzes! Support Worker, Lisa said "The weekend was enjoyed by all as we had a BBQ on Saturday with hotdogs and burgers, and on Sunday, we enjoyed afternoon tea with sandwiches and fresh scones. We were so fortunate to have lovely sunny weather for both days!"

For more information on Safe Spaces, please call: 01782 811 815



OH WE DO LIKE TO BE BESIDE THE SEASIDE!

The Clubhouse Network recently teamed up with The Tenancy Sustainment Service to arrange a trip to Blackpool.

It's wonderful to see two of our services collaborating to support customers, 38 customers to be exact!

By all accounts, everyone had a fantastic day, made new friends, and it seems like the weather held out long enough to enjoy some delicious fish and chips by the seaside.

For more information on The Clubhouse Network, call 01782 406 020 or 01782 272 799

For more information on The Tenancy Sustainment Service, call: 01782 406 000

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT ORCHID WOMEN'S SERVICES?

The team at Orchid Women's Services has been busy with their Arts and Crafts Group! Every Thursday from 12 pm - 2 pm, the group hosts different crafting workshops, including designing tote bags, making trinket boxes, upcycling household items, and collaging, decorating hanging hearts and pebbles.

The sessions are held in a relaxed space so that customers can meet new friends whilst escaping any worries, concerns, or stresses.

Orchid Women's Services have also teamed up with Stoke Community Drug and Alcohol Service (CDAS) to run a weekly Wellbeing Group.

This group runs every Tuesday from 12:30 pm - 2:30 pm, and provides customers with the opportunity to take part in mindfulness activities and pamper sessions, whilst facilitating a relaxed environment for key workers to engage with customers and offer advice on substance use.

For more information on Orchid Women's Services, please call: 01782 286 862.



A GROUP EFFORT FOR REMEMBRANCE DAY

Art Support Worker, Chris, has been working across the entire Clubhouse Network, 90 Hope Street Hostel, and Furlong Court to craft a "Poppy drape" out of recycled book paper.

The draping display is being showcased in The Observatory Clubhouse and is a result of the collaborative work of over 60 customers, residents, and staff.

Thank you to everyone involved, what a wonderful tribute to the many thousands of Armed Forces personnel as we continue to remember those we've lost.



WHAT'S NEW AT BRIGHTER FUTURES?

EXTRA FUNDING

Having identified the needs of the homeless community, Brighter Futures has been working with Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Newcastle-under-Lyme Council to increase support to rough sleepers.

As a result of this collaboration, we are pleased to share that we have been awarded over £900,000 of funding to expand our homeless offer.

INTRODUCING THE NIGHT SHELTER

This funding has been used to launch a Night Shelter at Hillcrest, providing 8 emergency bed spaces to rough sleepers every night from November 2023 until March 2024. The Night Shelter also includes the provision of a hot meal and breakfast from our very own Catering Network!



REPURPOSING EMPTY PROPERTIES

In addition to The Night Shelter, we have converted an empty property into a two-bed supported accommodation for rough sleepers who will be provided with daily support.

MORE BED SPACES

The funding has also been used to offer 31 additional bed spaces for rough sleepers who are currently unable to find or sustain long-term accommodation.

NEW TEAM OF CASEWORKS

We have recruited a new team of specialist caseworkers who will work more closely with rough sleeping customers and help them to achieve their goals.

YOU SAID, WE DID!

We are always trying to improve our services and achieve the highest standards possible for our customers. We take your feedback and suggestions very seriously and always work to resolve issues and concerns in the best possible way. In our efforts to be transparent and honest, we would like to share what we've done to improve our services in response to the Customer Satisfaction Surveys and Engagement Panels.

REPAIRS

You said: "Customers would like more clarity as to when a repair will be completed"

We did: We allocate repairs with target completion periods, dependent on 4 categories:

- emergency repairs - 1 working day
- urgent repairs - 5 working days
- routine repairs - 10 working days
- planned maintenance

We did: We have changed the repair procedure so that we will notify residents of repairs via the telephone or letter. We will provide residents with a date and approximate time of the repair (morning or afternoon).

We did: If you weren't in during the repair, we have introduced completion cards to explain exactly what we have done and if we need to visit your property again.



COMPLAINT HANDLING

You said: "Customers were dissatisfied with our approach to handling complaints"

We did: We revisited and updated our Feedback Policy.

We did: We created an information guide explaining "How to complain" which is visible and accessible to Support Workers and in Brighter Futures properties. The guide also contains contact information for the Housing Ombudsman.

We did: We have also introduced an easy-read version of this guide.



ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

You said: "Customers would like more information about Antisocial Behaviour"

We did: We updated our ASB Procedure and took it to Customer Scrutineers.

We did: We produced an accessible booklet containing information and guidance around ASB.

We did: We attend regular Community Partnership meetings to understand how we can better support our communities with ASB.

We did: We have rolled out training for specialist staff involved in case investigation, and will continue to promote awareness within the company.

HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVICE

FIRE SAFETY IN THE KITCHEN

- Take extra care if you need to leave the kitchen whilst cooking, take pans off the heat, or turn them down to avoid risk.
- Keep tea towels and clothes away from the cooker and hob.
- Double check the cooker is off when you've finished cooking.
- Spark devices are safer than matches or lighters to light gas cookers because they don't have a naked flame.
- If a pan catches fire: don't take risks, turn off the heat if it's safe to do so. Do not throw water over it and do not tackle it yourself.
- Keep the oven, hob and grill clean and in good working order - a build-up of fat and grease can ignite a fire



TAKING CARE WITH ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

- Keep electrical items clean, in good working order, and away from water.
- Ensure electrical appliances have a European or British safety mark.
- An extension lead or adaptor will have a limit to how many amps it can take, so be careful not to overload them.
- Check for signs of dangerous/loose wiring such as scorch marks, hot plugs and sockets, fuses that blow circuit-breakers that trip for no obvious reasons, or flickering lights.
- Unplug appliances when you're not using them or when you go to bed.
- Check and replace any old cables and leads, especially if they are hidden from view or underneath carpets and mats

FIRE SAFETY AT CHRISTMAS

- Decorations can burn easily so don't attach them to lights or heaters.
- Never place candles near your Christmas tree or materials that can catch light easily.
- Check your Christmas tree lights carry this **British Safety Standard sign**



CONTROLLING MOISTURE

- Open window trickle vents
- Avoid blocking airbricks or air vents
- Cover pans when cooking
- Use extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms
- Close internal doors when you cook or shower
- Allow a small gap between furniture and external walls
- Dry clothes outside or use a ventilated tumble dryer
- Open windows when possible (particularly in the mornings and after baths or showers)
- Wipe down windows



TREATING MOULD

- Don't brush or vacuum mould as this may increase the risk of respiratory problem
- Wipe down affected area with fungicidal wash (following manufacturer's instructions)

HOW DID WE DO IN 2022/23?

PROPERTY SERVICES



120
emergency repairs
reported

88.33%
completed within 1
working day

552
reactive repairs
reported

86.23%
completed within 5
working days

546
routine repairs
notified

76.56%
completed within 10
working days

TENANCY SUSTAINMENT SERVICE

200 customers supported

40 tenants supported to find
voluntary work

29 tenants moved on

27 new tenants



ROUGH SLEEPERS TEAM

752 individuals supported

9190 hours of support

85% of individuals supported
engaging with wider services



LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICE

31 customers supported in Brighter
Futures Properties

27 properties

35 customers receive regular
floating support (not in Brighter
Futures properties)



ORCHID WOMEN'S SERVICES

483 drop-in sessions providing food, showers, laundry

100 individuals supported

67 street outreach sessions

88 community outreach sessions

61 supported into drug and alcohol services

54 sexual health appointments

33 safeguarding referrals and follow ups

139 periods of homelessness

STAFFORDSHIRE MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINE



11243 calls



15577 texts



3602 Instant Message Service



706 Emails



36953 total successful contacts

SAFE SPACES

455 referrals

127 new customers

311 returning customers

180 reduced self harm

220 1-1 support sessions

212 distraction activities



THE CLUBHOUSE NETWORK

315 referrals

101 new customers

214 returning customers

10410 total member contacts

92 working members or volunteers



CHRISTMAS OPENING TIMES

We would like to reassure our customers that we will continue to support you throughout the holiday season.

Rough Sleepers Team operates every day of the year, including festive holidays.

Housing Services will be open as usual (9:00 am - 5:00 pm, Monday to Friday) but will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Furlong Court is staffed every day of the year, including festive holidays.

90 Hope Street / Hillcrest / New Hope are staffed every day of the year, including festive holidays.

Orchid Women's Services will be open as usual (9:00 am - 1:30 pm, Monday to Friday) but will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, and New Year's Day.

Hanley Connect will be open as usual (10:00 am - 2:00 pm, Monday to Friday) but will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

The Clubhouse Network will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, and New Year's Day. The Observatory Clubhouse will be open from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm on Sunday 31st December.

Safe Spaces will be operating throughout the festive period however on a pre-allocated referral basis.

Learning Disability Service Support Workers will liaise with customers when they are available over the festive period.

Tenancy Sustainment Support Workers will liaise with customers when they are available over the festive period.

If you would prefer to receive email communications, please subscribe online:
www.brighter-futures.org.uk/newspage

Staffordshire Mental Health Helpline will continue to operate their usual opening hours throughout the festive period.

7:00 pm until 2:00 am on weekdays and 2:00 pm until 2:00 am on weekends.

REPORTING REPAIRS OVER CHRISTMAS

Bank Holidays and Weekends

Customers can call through to the Out of Duty Team (01782 406 000) who can raise an emergency repair. If necessary, this will be forwarded to a contractor.

27th - 29th December

Please be aware, Property Services will only attend Emergency Repairs from 27th December - 29th December.

A FESTIVE MESSAGE

We would like to extend our warmest wishes to all of our tenants and customers for a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

GET IN TOUCH

General Enquiries and Repairs:

01782 406 000

info@brighter-futures.org.uk

Rough Sleeper Team / Hanley Connect:

0800 970 2304

(Calls are FREE from mobiles, landlines, and payphones. Lines are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year)

Staffordshire Mental Health Helpline:

0808 800 2234

(Calls are FREE from mobiles and landlines. Lines are open 7:00 pm until 2:00 am on weekdays, 2:00 pm until 2:00 am on weekends)

Volunteering and Customer Engagement

Sue Edwards: 07467 822077

FOLLOW US



www.brighter-futures.org.uk

01782 406 000

Brighter Futures Housing Association Limited is registered with the Regulator of Social Housing (H4315); and is a Registered Society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 (21244R) and is affiliated to The National Housing Federation.

Brighter Futures Housing Association Limited's registered office is at 5 Whittle Court, Town Road, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST1 2QE