

REACH

SPRING
2022

MAGAZINE



Halton
Housing



Making every
tenancy a

SUCCESS

Read one customer's moving story on page 18

PLUS - SUSTAINABILITY • COST OF LIVING CRISIS • COMMUNITY FUNDING AVAILABLE

REACH

MAGAZINE

Features



4 Living through a cost of living crisis



9 Queen's Platinum Jubilee



12 Supporting plans to transform Runcorn town centre

Contact us



Live Chat



www.haltonhousing.co.uk

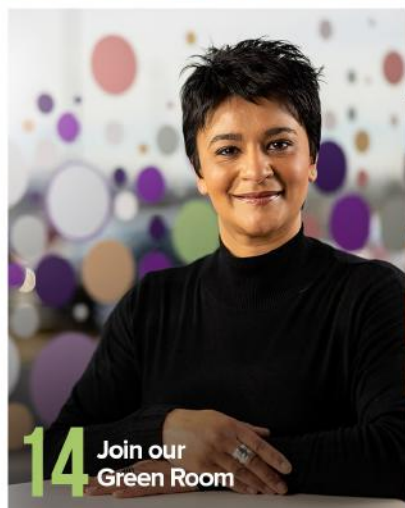


talktous@haltonhousing.co.uk



0303 333 0101

All information correct at the time of going to print in March 2022. If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact communications@haltonhousing.co.uk



14 Join our Green Room

Hello and welcome to the Spring 2022 edition of Reach magazine!



Features



Firstly, I wanted to let you know that I will be retiring from my role as Group Chief Executive at Halton Housing in the Autumn of 2022.

It has been an immense privilege to lead Halton Housing over the last three years, and to meet so many of our customers who give up their time to volunteer in their communities. The pandemic has dominated my time at Halton Housing, and I am very proud of the way in which our communities have come together to support each other during this time. I have worked with so many committed and hard-working people over the last three years to improve our neighbourhoods and services, and support the most vulnerable when they have needed help. I have been proud to be part of Halton Housing and I know that the next Chief Executive will continue with our mission to improve people's lives.

I can't quite believe we are three months into 2022 already. This year we have welcomed the lifting of some restrictions put in place to protect us from the impact of Covid. It's good to see that we can start providing our full range of services to you, as well as meet more of you out and about.

Back in February we proudly celebrated National Apprenticeship Week highlighting the fantastic work of our apprentices. We aim to have 15 apprentices by 31st March 2023, and we are well on our way to achieving this target. Our aim is to work towards a commitment of 5% of the workforce being apprentices.

This year will see us begin to roll out our approach towards reducing the impact we have on the environment. We can all play a part and we're proud to be stepping up in this area with several initiatives and plans for our homes and how we operate. You can find a more detailed update on page 14.

Another hot topic at the moment is the increase in our day to day living costs. Some of our customers will be hit hard by the financial squeeze this creates. On page 4, Amber, our Senior Welfare Benefit and Money Advice Officer gives some useful hints and tips to help you cope with the increased cost of living.

Stay safe and well.

Best wishes,

Liz Haworth

Chief Executive



Living through a cost of living crisis

Amber, our Senior Welfare Benefit and Money Advice Officer has some useful hints and tips to help you navigate the increasing costs we are all feeling.



April marks the beginning of the new financial year. This usually means the cost of household bills are reviewed.

But this year feels different. Lots of media outlets are referring to a cost-of-living crisis looking at the energy price hike, rising NI (National Insurance) contributions and increases in household goods leading to higher costs for the majority of us.

Benefit rate increases and minimum wage rises are all positive but when the food shop, rent and other costs are all increasing greater than your income, your budget can become stretched or break.

A good place to start considering how you will manage the increasing cost is to have a spring clean of your budget.



What can I do to cover the increased costs?

Are you getting all the income you can?

Check your tax code – if you have been working from home for most of 2021, you may be entitled to a tax refund (and if you have never claimed this you may be able to claim for previous years too).

Complete a benefit check, with more than **£15 billion** worth of benefits unclaimed each year by those who should be receiving this extra help, it is worth checking, including help with children's childcare, travel, or school meals alongside 'in-work' benefits you could be missing out on.

Check where your money goes

Review or write yourself a budget, weekly or monthly – choose the best option to suit you and use your latest bank statements to see where your money is going and be realistic. It's your budget and if you underestimate the costs, it can make your budget fail and you find yourself short of funds.

Energy usage

With the 'energy crisis' limiting cheaper energy deals for many, you could still save money by improving your energy efficiency – better for the planet and your wallet! Close windows, use your heating controls to manage usage and switch lights and TVs off rather than leaving on standby can all save you **£££s**.

The government recently announced a raft of measures to help with the energy increase expected in April, including council tax discounts and energy bill discounts. The Warm Home Discount is also expanding to help more people, so keep an eye on our social media and we will update when these changes are announced.

Check your water usage

If your water bill is high look for savings. Water meters can save money and even be capped at a maximum price in certain circumstances. United Utilities also have a range of hardship support for those who are struggling to pay their bills.

You could save on your council tax if you're eligible

Council Tax can be reduced by 25% if you are the only adult in the property (or if other adults are students) and more saving is possible if your income is low, or you have an adapted property. You can apply online via the local authority website.



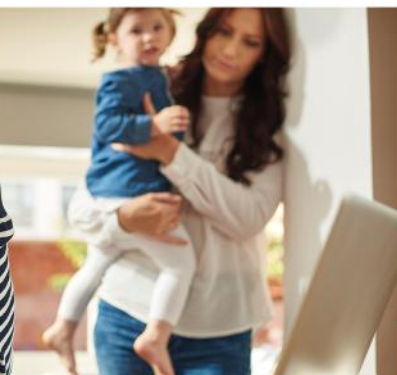
Have you shopped about for cheaper phone, TV and broadband deals?

Mobile phone; internet and TV packages can quickly spiral out of control, but help can be available to reduce the cost if you are struggling to maintain the bill. The costs of a handset will remain, but your tariff / package may be reduced if you are experiencing hardship, you will need to call your provider and ask if they can help. If you're out of contract, it's worth shopping around for a better deal.

Insurance deals are still to be had

Some good insurance deals are still out there for car and house insurance so check whether you can get a better deal before you renew each year by using a comparison website.

Our Welfare Benefit and Money Advice Team are available to answer questions and provide practical advice and guidance to help you through – call us **0151 510 5024** or email welfare@haltonhousing.co.uk or via the Halton Housing App.



Are you being smart with your home security?



With the use of smart doorbells and home CCTV systems increasing in popularity, how can you be sure that what may seem like an easy way to provide extra peace of mind and security for your home doesn't land you on the wrong side of the law.

There are many domestic CCTV systems and smart doorbells on the market. If you're thinking of using one, you need to make sure you do so in a way that respects other people's privacy.

Whilst using a smart doorbell will protect your own privacy, property and belongings, a number of recent legal battles have proven that it could be at the cost of your neighbour's privacy.

The scope of many smart doorbells allows recordings of video and audio footage from five, to 25 feet outward from where it is fixed. Motion detection zones can be un-intrusive to neighbouring properties if set to the right distance, but a careless set-up could leave you in breach of your neighbour's rights.

If your CCTV/doorbell captures images beyond your property boundary, such as your neighbours' property or public streets and footpaths, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA18) will apply to you, and you'll need to ensure your use of CCTV/doorbell complies with these laws.

To find out more, view our help and support article on www.haltonhousing.co.uk/homesecurity



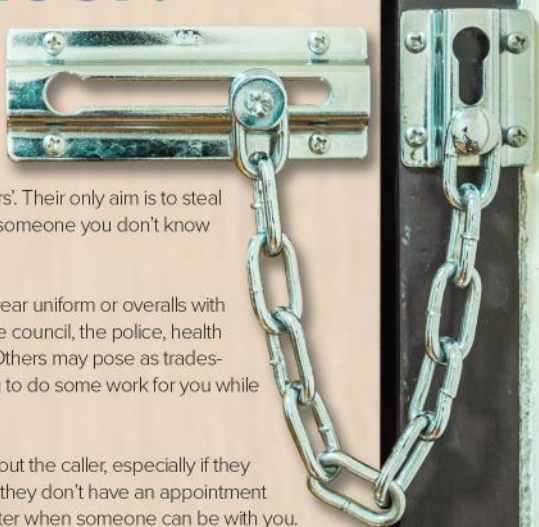
Can you be sure who's **knockin'** at your door?

If there's an unexpected caller to your home, it's wise to be vigilant. Most callers are genuine, but sometimes people turn up unannounced intending to trick their way into your home.

They are known as 'distraction burglars' or 'bogus callers'. Their only aim is to steal money or valuables, you should always be wary when someone you don't know comes to the doorstep.

Bogus callers often use 'props' like an identity card or wear uniform or overalls with a company logo and may claim to be working for us, the council, the police, health organisations or gas, water and electricity companies. Others may pose as trades-people such as gardeners or window cleaners, offering to do some work for you while they're in the area.

Even if they seem legitimate, if you have any doubts about the caller, especially if they came unannounced, always ask for identification and if they don't have an appointment do not let them into your home. Tell them to call back later when someone can be with you. You can also tell them to contact you by letter to arrange a more convenient time.



There are some simple steps you can take to stay safe at home: **Lock, Stop, Chain and Check!**

LOCK

Keep front and back doors locked, even when at home. Bogus callers often work in pairs. One of them will try to keep you talking at the front door while the other tries to get in through the back door or window.

CHAIN

If you decide to open the door, put the chain or bar on first and keep it on while you talk to the visitor on the doorstep. However, when the door is shut and locked, you should leave the bar or chain off in case you need to get in or out in an emergency.

STOP

Before you answer, stop and ask whether you are expecting anyone. Check that you have locked any back doors and removed the key. Look through a spyhole or window to see who it is. Don't let any caller pressure you into making a quick decision - if you are unsure, do not open the door.

CHECK

Check their details before you let them into your home. A genuine caller will not mind if you leave them on the doorstep and close the door while you confirm their identity, even if it is raining.



Funding now available for local Community groups and projects.

Did you know that every year Halton Housing allocates hundreds of pounds worth of funding, materials and resources to help local projects and initiatives across the borough, through our Helping Hands initiative?

We know that now more than ever, there will be groups and community projects that could really benefit from the skills and resources available through Helping Hands. That's why we've just made even more funds available so we can help support what's important to our community at a time when it's most needed.

So, what are you waiting for?
It's really easy to apply, simply email helping.hands@haltonhousing.co.uk for an application form and we'll take it from there. To find out more information about Helping Hands, and the application criteria, visit www.haltonhousing.co.uk/helping-hands



Does your community group need a **HelpingHand?**



We're open!

Serving breakfasts, lunch, snacks and hot and cold drinks in a relaxed, friendly environment.



Barkla Fields
Ashley Green
Widnes, WA8 8GJ



Naughton Fields
Liverpool Road
Widnes, WA8 7HL

Open Monday - Friday from 10:00am - 3:00pm.

Both are wheelchair accessible with accessible toilets on site.



★ **FREE HOT DRINK WHEN YOU SPEND OVER £3 WITH THIS VOUCHER** ★



Queen's Platinum Jubilee



The Platinum Jubilee is the 70th anniversary of the accession of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on 6th February 1952. (The accession was when Elizabeth became Queen, her coronation was actually in June 1953). It is the first time a British monarch has reached this milestone.

The May Bank Holiday weekend will be moved to Thursday 2nd June and an additional Bank Holiday on Friday 3rd June will see a four-day weekend to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee.

We are keen to know all about any plans our customers have to mark this historic occasion. Are you part of a community group organising a celebration, fun day or even a street party? Please get in touch to let us know.

We are also looking for customers' stories and/or pictures related to anything about the Queen's reign. Did you see the Queen's recent visit when she was joined by the Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle, arriving on the Royal Train at Runcorn Station, proceeding to Spike Island, Widnes for the official opening of the Mersey Gateway bridge? Perhaps you were there when the Queen visited Runcorn 50 years ago for the opening of Runcorn Shopping City?

You can email any pictures, stories or plans to the communications team:

communications@haltonhousing.co.uk

Did you know?



The Runcorn - Widnes Bridge which opened in 1961 was renamed the Silver Jubilee Bridge in 1977 (this marked 25 years of the Queen's reign).

The UEFA Champions League anthem is based on George Frideric Handel's composition:

Zadok the Priest which has been played at every British Coronation since 1727.



Estate Walkabouts

Organised by our Neighbourhoods Team, walkabouts give us the opportunity to speak to you, to discuss a wide range of issues either within your home, or in your neighbourhood such as repairs to grounds and communal areas, or incidents of fly-tipping.

If prior to a walkabout, you have a problem that you would like to discuss, email our team at involved@haltonhousing.co.uk. Thank you to everyone who has joined us in recent months. Even when the weather has been bitter cold, we have still seen great support. As we move into warmer weather, our walkabouts become more frequent – why not join us?

Widnes

📍 Town Centre

31st March
Starting Dean Close
car park
9:50am

📍 Upton (b)

14th April
Starting Grizedale
9:50am

Fairfield

📍 28th April
Starting
Greenway Road &
Fairfield Road
9:50am

📍 Montgomery Estate

26th May
Starting
Cunningham
Road/Montgomery
Road
9:50am

📍 Upton (a)

9th June
Starting Arley
Drive/Deepdale
4:30pm

📍 Lugsdale (a)

23rd June
Starting
Cambridge Street
9:50am

📍 Ditton (b)

21st July
Starting Thirlmere
Way and
Coronation Drive
9:50am

Runcorn

📍 Russell Road Area

12th May
Starting Russell Road
Shops
4:30pm

📍 Halton Lodge

7th July
Starting Halton Lodge,
shops car park
4:30pm

Grange Estate (a)

📍 4th August
Starting Grangeway
Shops
9:50am

Cut out
& Keep



Could you fill a seat on our Customer Forum?

Written by Louise Nulty, Customer Forum Chair



Customer Forum has continued to meet online over the last two years. I'm Louise Nulty, Chair and Lisa Cogley is Vice Chair replacing Linda McKeivitt who is still an active member of the group.

As we return to in person meetings, with the option to join online, we hope to bring back our much-missed members to the group and encourage new members to join us.

Customer Forum have a pre-meeting catch up with Georgina Crank, Social Impact and Engagement Officer, to make sure the agenda is balanced. We consider Halton Housing Policy reviews, Helping Hands funding applications, updates from Tenants and Residents groups and an open section where urgent customer issues can be discussed with the Halton Housing team.

Customer Forum are currently working with Halton Housing to develop a web-based notice board, where customers who can't attend can leave messages to be raised in the bi-monthly meetings.

We aim to be more active at Halton Housing community events and have started to visit successful projects who have been granted Helping Hands funding.

Customer Forum are looking at the environmental impact and energy efficiency of our homes, and we are supporting the Scrutiny Panel to explore Anti-Social Behaviour.

We are residents who want to be active and make a difference by having a voice and a place at the table. If you would like to join the forum or to find out more, please contact involved@haltonhousing.co.uk

Some of the best ideas come from our customers

Whether it's suggesting improvements to our repairs service, to joining our walkabouts or helping make sure our policies and procedures are easy for customers to understand, over the years our customers have helped shaped what we do and how we do it.

And we're now looking for people like you to get involved and we're giving away a total of over £500 in Asda vouchers during April, May and June for customers who register their interest in our involvement opportunities and go on to join a virtual or in person group.*

So if you've got some time to spare, get in touch now and you could get your hands on your share of £500!

Just email involved@haltonhousing.co.uk with 'Get Involved' in the subject title and our Customer Engagement Officer Georgina Crank will be in touch to get you started.

*For customers joining either our scrutiny panel, customer forum or repairs forum, dedicating at least 4 hours over the 4 months. Final voucher value to be confirmed on joining the group.





There's so much more to love about Runcorn



Image provided by Halton Borough Council

In 2021, the Government revealed that Runcorn would benefit from a **£23.6m** investment to transform the town centre.

Runcorn was one of **101 towns** to receive the funds under its Town Deals programme after proposals were submitted by Halton Borough Council.

Part of the investment plan will see us transform an area of brownfield land to provide much needed affordable homes in the area as one of seven key projects to be delivered under the ambitious plans.

Other projects include:

- An extension to The Brindley theatre
- The Unlock Runcorn canal project
- A creative and digital skills centre
- A health and education hub
- An all-new Runcorn Station Quarter
- Improvements to high street connectivity.

We're so proud to be part of this transformation programme and with all these fantastic improvements underway, there'll soon be so much more to love about Runcorn!



Halton
Housing



thebrindley
theatre



Get to know your Neighbourhood Officer



Since launching our neighbourhoods teams last year, there are a few new faces.

We now have 8 Neighbourhood Officers, each with a specific patch in the borough. Our officers understand their areas and realise that every street and every household have different needs, but they need your communication to be able to support you.

The team supports us in building healthy, strong relationships in our communities. We want to reassure you that we are there when you need us and will always strive to get it right first time.

They offer a broad range of services, going above and beyond the role of conventional housing officer by providing one point of contact for you and your family on things like tenancy management and sustainability, signposting and referring to support services, supporting estate walkabouts and much more.



1. Laura Davies - Grange Estate, Runcorn

2. Leanne Devlin - Hale/Halebank/Montgomery Estate/Widnes Town Centre/Lugsdale, Widnes

3. Hayley Chantler - Boston Estate/Old Town, Runcorn

4. Clare Hyland - Weston/Halton

Village/Frodsham/Nantwich/Old Town, Runcorn

5. Hannah Ireland - Halton View/Fairfield/Farnworth, Widnes

6. David Nedugodan - Kingsway/Moor Lane Stewards Avenue, Widnes

7. Wendy Magee - Ditton, Widnes

Emma Bennett - Upton, Widnes (Not pictured)

SUSTAINABILITY

Climate change (or global warming) is one of the biggest challenges we are all facing at a local, national, and global level. All the choices we make and the lifestyles we live, have a big impact on our planet.

Climate change is caused by the release of 'greenhouse gases' into the atmosphere. The greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide (CO₂) which is released whenever we burn fossil fuels. The message from scientists is loud and clear; we need to take every action we can to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions right now, to save the planet.

To do this, we need to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide we produce – a term called 'decarbonisation'. As a landlord, for us that means looking at our homes and making sure they are as energy efficient as possible and that we work towards the government's target in 2050 where all our homes need to be carbon neutral.

This means all our homes having an alternative energy source to gas. We have estimated it will cost us £120million to retrofit all our homes.

We also need to support customers, and our staff too, to understand the impact we have as individuals, and the 'carbon footprint' of our own activity and behaviour. Knowing how lifestyle choices around the food we eat, how we travel, the amount of waste we produce and the energy we use can help us make choices to reduce our carbon footprint.

The good news is that decarbonising homes is not only an essential part of tackling climate change, but it should also save customers money and help to combat fuel poverty.

As a housing association, we have a lot of work to do in this area to achieve some really ambitious targets. We want to involve customers in this journey to becoming more sustainable.

Our main areas of activity will include:

- 'Retrofit' work programmes to our homes – this simply means improving the fabric of some homes which could be more energy efficient.
- Ensuring all new homes we build meet sustainability standards.
- Work towards the 'Net Zero' targets of 2050, so that all our homes will have an alternative energy source than coal.
- Maximising the green spaces and biodiversity work in our neighbourhoods.
- Listen and engage with customers, providing regular hints and tips about how we can all do our bit, both within the home and daily/lifestyle activities.
- Work with schools and partners to engage as many people as possible in our sustainability work through sharing ideas and working on joint projects.



Using Less Energy to Save Money!

Here are some top tips for reducing the amount of energy you use around the home, which is also great for the planet. Small steps can have a big impact.

1. Get 'Smart' - Know where your energy use is coming from. A smart meter shows how much energy you use in real time and how much it is costing you. You can use this information to make changes and decide where you can cut back. Tip: Don't leave your appliances on standby – this uses energy. Switch them off at the plug.



2. Only run your washing machine and dishwasher when they're full. Use an eco-setting on the appliances if they have one, and try one less wash a week?

3. When the weather gets warmer, dry your washing outside, rather than using a tumble dryer or radiators.

4. Avoid filling the kettle unnecessarily, and only boil as much water as you need.



5. Wash at 30C or 20C where possible - unless you're washing really soiled clothes. If you have a tumble dryer, clean its filters to keep it efficient.



6. Replace your light bulbs to energy-saving (LED) one. These last longer than traditional ones and will also use considerably less energy.

7. Block draughts - Stopping heat from escaping through unwanted gaps around doors and windows can save you money. Use draught excluders, and think about small holes like letterboxes and keyholes too.

Our Green Room needs YOU

Please get involved!

We want to hear your views on climate change and reducing our carbon footprint and what this means to you, whether it's challenges in your home, or around your lifestyle. We're hosting a green room and we'd like to hear from **YOU**. These will be held on the following days and times.



4th May – 5:30pm (Online)
9th May – 12:00pm (Waterfront Point)

Please get involved and sign up to a group now! Please call **0303 333 0101** or visit www.haltonhousing.co.uk/sustainability to book on to one of the sessions.



'What's going on with...?' Blog

Sometimes, all the jargon around climate change and net zero can be really confusing and offputting. Georgina Patel (Halton Housing's Sustainability Lead) has written a number of blogs on a range of topics that are easy to understand. Why not have a read on the sustainability page of our website.



Useful Links:

Find out your individual carbon footprint via a calculator at www.footprint.wwf.org.uk. Read more hints and tips around travel, shopping, food and more, on the sustainability page of our website.

Keep Warm; Eat well and reduce your energy use

Apply for
a Free
Slow
Cooker

We're helping customers **Keep Warm Eat Well**, by offering a number of free slow cookers, shopping vouchers and cooking on a budget guides to help you eat well whilst keeping energy costs (associated with cooking) lower for those who are facing the tough choice of paying for heating or feeding themselves.

The kits will provide a more sustainable option for families to make healthy and nutritious meals on a budget. Slow cookers are simple to use, cost effective to run, and require little preparation time.

To find out more, and to apply for a kit (subject to eligibility) scan the QR code:



If you don't use a smart phone you can contact us on **0151 510 5024**



New Corporate Plan 2022/25

Next month we will be publishing our Corporate Plan for **2022-2025**, outlining our commitment to our customers and the wider borough. Our purpose at Halton Housing is to provide customers with a safe place to call home and opportunities to lead fulfilled lives.



Our Corporate Plan encapsulates where we want our efforts to be – on providing and maintaining quality homes and investing in neighbourhoods to really thrive, with values that underpin this ambition.

The plan has five themes:

-  **Customer**
-  **Homes**
-  **Place**
-  **Development**
-  **Business**

We will be sharing the full plan on our website and social media channels. Scan the QR code to request a hard copy, or email **communications@haltonhousing.co.uk** with your name and address.





Flying the flag for Hazlehurst

Things are looking bright over at our third Independent Living Scheme, Hazlehurst, with the launch of the new development signage and flags.

Named after local businessman Thomas Hazlehurst who founded soap and alkali manufacturing company, Hazlehurst & Sons (1816), the eye-catching brand takes its inspiration from the luxurious soap packaging in production at that time and we hope you love it as much as we do!

The eye-catching brand is certainly fitting of this development which includes 100 one-two bedroom apartments all with modern fixtures and fittings and a finish Thomas Hazlehurst would be proud of.

A modern bistro and multi-function room will also make Hazlehurst an inviting and vibrant place to visit and catch up with family and friends as well as providing contemporary facilities for residents to enjoy.

Apartments are available for Shared Ownership and affordable rent. Anyone interested in purchasing one of these stunning apartments on a Shared Ownership basis can register their interest now with the Open Door Sales team by calling **0333 00 44 777**. Affordable rent apartments will be made available later in the year.

Customer Story

It's Good to talk

Our customer services team are often the first point of contact for our customers, whether it's taking calls about repairs that need sorting, rent queries or maybe questions around the housing waiting list.

So when mum of two Angela* called into Waterfront Point in February and didn't know where to turn, our Customer Service Team sprung into action. Worried that she might no longer be able to keep up rent payments due to a change in personal circumstances, Angela came in needing help and advice.

Angela explained that she had been made redundant from a job that she loved and financially she and her family were already really struggling. Her husband Peter* was self-employed and his business had been severely impacted by Covid, with work and his income at much lower levels than they had been before the pandemic.

Les, Customer Service Advisor was answering calls on reception when Angela walked in.

"I could see that Angela was really upset. She explained that she didn't have an appointment but really needed to speak to someone as she'd just lost her job and didn't know how she'd be able to make ends meet. I took Angela into one of our private meeting rooms where she could have a sit down while I made her a cup of tea. We sat and talked for a good 15-20 minutes and I listened to everything that was on Angela's mind."

"I tried to re-assure Angela that everything would be okay and we'd do everything we could to support her. I called our rents team and put her in direct contact with my colleague Karen, a Debt Recovery Assistant who talked the customer through all her options."



*Names have been changed to protect the identity of the customers



Waterfront Point,
Warrington Rd,
Widnes
WA8 0TD

Reception
opening times:
Monday - Friday
9am - 5pm

Karen went on to add “a large portion of our calls are because of unexpected change in circumstances, whether it be loss/change of employment, family breakdown, loss of benefit etc. If a customer contacts us it is normally the last thing they want to do. We are hear to listen and help first and foremost, each call is always tailored to the customer, we can agree affordable payment, signpost where needed whether it be CAB for debt advice or Welfare benefit and reiterate we are here to work with the customer. Our aim is always to make sure customer has understood the outcome after each call and to reiterate we are hear to help and make every effort so that the tenancy is a success”.

After spending time with both Les and Karen, the customer went home to her family later that day. Re-assured that she had our support. Angela even called several days later to thank both colleagues for their help and understanding and to let us know that she had secured a new job.

Head of Customer Experience, Andy believes that key to great customer service is listening to the customer and treating everyone with respect:

“Whatever your query or problem, our Customer Service team is here to help you. Looking after our customers is so important to my team. It’s about listening and treating everyone as an individual so that we can deliver a personalised service and make a real difference. I am so pleased that with the help of Les and Karen, Angela was able to walk away with her problems solved and with the confidence to secure a new job”.

Our Customer Services Team is headed up by Andy Reeve. Andy manages a team of 10 which is made up of one Customer Contact Manager, Chrissy, a Resolution Coordinator, Amie, Customer Service Advisors Les, Jackie, Hayley, Lynne, Lisa, Darcy, Jacob and Tracey.



Rent increase 2022 – 2023 explained

Why are rents increasing?

Rents are reviewed annually, as specified in your tenancy agreement. The amount we can increase rents by is regulated by the government and linked to the consumer price index (CPI) which tracks the average increase in costs that consumers pay for goods and services.

Current regulations limit rent increases to CPI +1%.

CPI is the Consumer Price Index (published monthly by the Office for National Statistics). The rent regulations require the use of the CPI for September 2021 which was **3.1%**. The additional **1%** means that the rent increase applied to Halton Housing rents in April 2022 is **4.1%**.

From 4th April 2022, rent and services charges will increase by **4.1%** (CPI + **1%**) for all homes let to customers on social rent, affordable rent, intermediate rent, rent to buy, and fair rent tenancies – in accordance with government rent setting policies.

For homes let on a shared ownership basis, rent will increase by **5.4%** (RPI + **1/2%**).

If you pay a service charge, changes to this will be detailed in a formal letter you will have received in February.

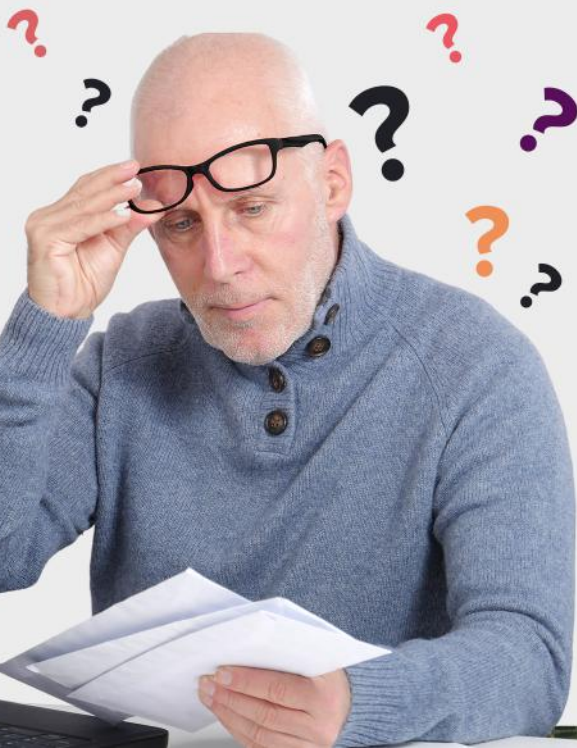
Your rent and service charges pay for the services that we provide to you, such as maintaining your home, improving your neighbourhoods, community investment activities and our Welfare Benefit and Money Advice service.

Service charges for 2022

For the year commencing April 2022, we will be capping service charge increases. This cap will ensure that, even if the cost of delivering the service exceeds it, customers will pay no more than an additional £2.50 per week for services than in 2021.

Here to support you

If you find yourself struggling, our specialist teams are here to support you and agree affordable repayment plans and provide specialist advice on claiming benefits, maximising income, managing debt and money advice. Get in touch with our Welfare Benefit/Money Advice Team on **0151 510 5024** or Debt Recovery Team on **0151 510 5204**.



Have you booked a repair online yet?

Last year we launched our fully refreshed digital platforms, with a brand-new website haltonhousing.co.uk and our app and customer portal **MyHaltonHome** being given a full makeover and added functionality.

As part of our programme to fully revamp and refresh our digital platforms one key area we've improved to make your life easier is booking a repair through 'Active Repairs' which can be done via your online tenancy **MyHaltonHome**.

Thanks to 'Active Repairs' the process for booking a repair online is now even easier.

Key benefits include:

1. Ability to book a repairs appointment at a day and time to suit you.
2. Increased list of repair categories and types of repairs to select from - ensuring the job can be completed right first time.
3. Improved technology for a more seamless experience.
4. A range of self-help videos to complete minor fixes at home.
5. Signposting to other services which might help you.
6. Clearer information about yours and our responsibilities.



It's not just the improved repairs features that you can enjoy - but a range of services to manage your tenancy online from paying your rent, setting up a direct debit, reporting anti-social behaviour, seeing what's going on in your community and much more!

Our App and Customer portal are great if you're always on the go. You can access all our digital platforms whenever it suits you, anywhere, any time on any device.



Our App is free to download from Google Play or the App Store.



'Halton Housing's App is a fantastic resource. It's so easy to use for reporting repairs and you can easily upload photos of the required repair using your device. It gives you options to select days and times when you are available for the repair to be carried out and you then get a text which confirms your repair date and time. It saves time because you don't have to wait on a call and you can use the app 24/7, so you can report the repair any time of the day or night, when its convenient for you. I think this is another brilliant digital resource provided by Halton Housing, and another thing that makes them such a brilliant landlord.'

Lisa, Halton Housing customer

Careers in housing

Working in housing is not just about the bricks and mortar - it's about making a positive difference to people's lives, their communities and their life chances by providing them with a decent home and environment in which to live.

A career in housing is exciting and can provide an incredible variety of options, from housing management to resident involvement and from development to supported housing – to mention just a few. Put simply, if you want to make a positive difference, working in housing is for you!

As one of the largest employers in the borough, we offer a variety of housing jobs and business support roles.

Working within housing can be challenging, front line housing officers support vulnerable people and often deal with complex situations and regularly have to make decisions which impact the lives of customers but can also be incredibly rewarding and can offer a genuine opportunity to really make a difference. Like our colleague David, a Neighbourhood Support Officer (pictured main) you can forge a career involved at the front line dealing with tenants and making a positive difference to their lives.

Paul, our Gas plumbing colleague of 43 years and our longest serving colleague tells us why he believes a career in Housing is still a great choice:

"Housing was quite a different place back in 1979 when I started, and it wasn't an intentional career choice, I didn't choose housing, it chose me! It was all about getting a trade to work on for the future but I've now been with Halton Housing for 43 years and in that time I've really grown with the company and I'm still enjoying what I do all these years later. I'd say for anyone thinking of a career in housing, and in particular with Halton Housing there is now an even better path way not just for the trades but a route into an office based career if they would like to".



As for our newest recruit Nicola, our customer data assistant, we asked what attracted her to the housing sector, and Halton Housing?

"Joining Halton Housing recently has really opened my eyes to the opportunities that a career in housing offers from frontline staff like our plumbers and joiners, to our office based staff, everyone plays their part in helping our customers so if you are a people person and want to make a difference to the lives of others a career in housing is definitely for you."



With so many different roles in housing, your ideal job could be waiting for you right here at Halton Housing. We are committed to recruiting, developing and retaining the very best people – people who love what they do and want to make a real difference to our business and our customers.

All of our live jobs can be found on our careers page haltonhousing.co.uk/careers and on our social media pages, so make sure you follow us on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn so you can be first to know when we're hiring.



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE | Gold



**Apprentices
recognised at
awards during National
Apprenticeship Week**



neer - Surveyor
urhood Officer - Manager
Health & Safety - Night Analyst
er - Customer - Masterer - L
ng - Plumber - Number - L
ing Assistant - Gas E
cations - Electrician - Gas E
ject Manager - Allocations
s Engineer - Scheme Man
eicher - HF
eicher - HF

We currently employ 11 apprentices, with the majority of them living in the borough. We are aiming to have 15 apprentices by 31st March 2023. Our aim for the future is to work towards a commitment of 5% of the workforce being apprentices.

We rounded off an action-packed National Apprenticeship Week in February, with an awards ceremony to celebrate our fabulous crop of apprentices.

The awards were attended by the Leadership Team and were a real celebration of the contribution these bright youngsters have made to Halton Housing. They really are an asset and a credit to our organisation, and we look forward to what they will go on to achieve in their careers.



Apprenticeships



Disrepair.

If you're thinking of making a claim, talk to us first

We're asking all customers to be careful before committing to any agreements with claims management companies or solicitors for making a claim for disrepair.

As your landlord, we're here to help and look after you and your home.

We want to protect you from these companies, many of whom are cold calling customers and let you know the factors and risks you need to consider.

We have a team to deal with issues of disrepair. The work they do avoids costs to ensure we have more to spend on your home and neighbourhoods.

We're here to help

It's really important to us that you're happy with the services we provide for you. We'll do everything we can to support you and look after your home, so that you don't feel like you have to make a claim against us.

If you are unhappy with any part of our repairs service, please get in touch, or better still why not join our Repairs Forum? Simply contact our Customer Engagement Team on **involved@haltonhousing.co.uk** for more details.

For more information:
www.haltonhousing.co.uk/disrepairclaims
or call us on **0303 333 0101**

