

grapevine

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2024

what's inside



New look Quarterly Site Meetings

Sheltered and Extra
Care Housing Sites

Compliments, concerns & complaints

Delivering the best
possible service



Residents First Group update

Get involved in
shaping our services

Brunelcare in Bloom

Brunelcare in
Bloom is back!



Improving communications across Brunelcare

Photo Credit: Linden Close

brunelcare.org.uk



brunelcare 

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welcome

to Grapevine



I hope you have had a healthy and happy start to 2024. My name is James Craig, and I joined Brunelcare last year as the charity's new Head of Communications.

It has been a busy first couple of months in the job, and one of the highlights has been getting out and about, and meeting lots of you at site meetings - I look forward to attending many more this year.

One of my main priorities this year is looking at how Brunelcare communicates, shares information and engages with our residents. I know it's an area where some of you have felt frustrated, so there is already plenty of work underway to try and improve the situation.

In December, our Residents First Group held a meeting focussed on communications - with some really useful discussions. In the

spring, informed by the feedback we have received from you, we will be introducing changes to our Quarterly Site Meetings, which you can read more about on page 4.

There will be lots more to come in 2024, with important updates on work to improve the energy efficiency of our sheltered housing sites and make your homes fit for the future, as well as service charges and energy costs.

Brunelcare is coming to the end of our current Strategic Plan and this year will be launching our new Strategy taking us to 2030. We can't do this on our own, and will need all your help! Over the next few months, we will be coming out to QSMs and the Residents First group to ask you about your priorities and how you think we should be improving services and investments in your homes. Please look out for invitations or send us your views via hello@brunelcare.org.uk.

Finally, I want to thank everyone who has taken part in this year's Customer Satisfaction Survey. The feedback is really important as it helps us make improvements and better support you. We will share the results with you later this year.

Best wishes,
James.

Have your say

We would love to include news and stories from our customers in publications such as Grapevine.

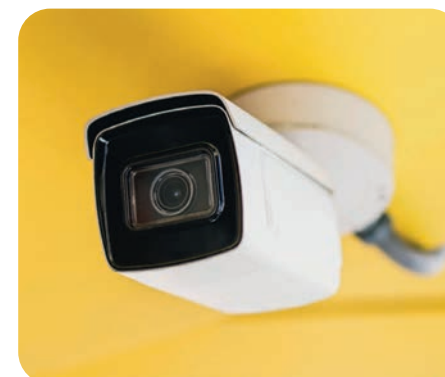
If you have a story or would like to share news from your community with other customers, please get in

Have you got a story to tell?

touch with us. Use our 'Share your story' form on our website.

Go to our 'Share your story' page to complete the form at: brunelcare.org.uk/share-your-story

You said, we did



Your feedback is vital to help improve our services, maintain your homes and support you better

Here are some recent examples of issues raised by residents at Quarterly Site Meetings and how we have responded to them...

You said we did

YOU SAID:

The residents at St Michael's Close advised us that they were unsure how to work their new heaters and told us that the large instruction manual they were given was not user-friendly.

WE DID:

Our Asset Manager, Elly Weale, together with Chris Verrinder from Dimplex, attended a coffee morning with the residents in January to chat with them about their concerns and help them understand how to use the new storage heaters.

YOU SAID:

The residents at Spinney Croft requested that additional signage be placed at the entrance to the site to reinforce the speed limit whilst driving on site.

WE DID:

New signage was placed on the front gates of the site on 21 November 2023.

YOU SAID:

Improvements needed to be made in relation to site cleaning.

WE DID:

We ended the previous cleaning contract in January 2024 and are trialling a new contractor called 'Supreme Cleaning'. Hopefully, the trial will be successful, and we will be able to allocate the contract more permanently.



YOU SAID:

The residents at Garden Close requested that CCTV be installed following a recent break-in at the site.

WE DID:

Following consultation with all residents, the CCTV was installed and has been active since 22 January 2024.

YOU SAID:

The residents at Willow Bank requested that additional signage be installed around the site's entrance, following concerns that delivery drivers couldn't easily see the current signs.

WE DID:

The marketing team designed two new signs, which local company Rockwell Signs installed on 9 January 2024.



Correction from the Summer 2023 edition of Grapevine.

We received some feedback from a resident at the Chestnut Close Quarterly Site Meeting at the end of September 2023 that there was an error in the Summer edition of Grapevine.

Regarding the Repairs Service customer satisfaction percentage, page 4 of the summer 2023 edition stated 90% and page 18 stated 92%.

The correct figure is 90%.

Many thanks for bringing this to our attention.

Quarterly Site Meetings

Quarterly Site Meetings at our Sheltered and Extra Care Housing Sites

These meetings provide an important opportunity for you to give us feedback about your home, communal areas, and our services and allow Brunelcare to hear first-hand from residents about their experiences. We can also use the meetings to communicate any important updates or changes at the charity.

Based on feedback we have received from the Residents First Group, as well as residents across site meetings, we have decided to try out a new approach to Quarterly Site Meetings.

Raising Individual Matters

Residents told us they wanted the opportunity to raise personal concerns before the site meetings. In response, we will be piloting a 'Site Surgery' one hour before the wider Quarterly Site Meeting. This will be started at the next round of QSMs scheduled to take place between March and May 2024.

The site surgeries will allow residents to speak directly to either the Director of Housing or the Tenancy Service Manager about tenancy matters, neighbourhood issues, and more!

If you feel your matter is more urgent and you would like to speak to someone before your next scheduled QSM, please contact the Customer Services Team on 0117 914 4257.

Attendance at Quarterly Site Meetings

We want to see as many of you as possible at site meetings - so please let us know how we might boost attendance. On some occasions, we've had a low or even no turnout at QSMs, so do promote your next meeting, and we would encourage you to bring a neighbour with you in the future.

To improve communication between QSMs, we are also looking at:

Communal Notice Boards

A common response from residents was that they wanted regular, relevant and up-to-date information pinned to the communal notice boards at sites.

Understanding Communal Services

Residents were also keen to understand better how they can have more of a say in communal services such as window cleaning, landscaping and ground maintenance.

Electronic Notice Boards

At our Willow Bank site, we have installed a virtual notice board in the main entrance as a pilot test project. The electronic notice board has scrolling messages and allows Brunelcare to send information to residents, including any urgent matters such as a burst water pipe or emergency maintenance works. If the pilot succeeds, we will look to expand it to other sheltered housing sites.

Brunelcare in Bloom 2024

We are pleased to announce that Brunelcare in Bloom is back for 2024.

Following feedback from some of our residents that their gardens are at their best at different times of the year, we will be holding two competitions: one in the spring and a second in the summer.

There will be two categories in each of the competitions:

- ✓ Best containers and baskets
- ✓ Best edible garden

The competition lets you showcase your beautiful gardens and is open to all Brunelcare residents - including Sheltered Housing, Extra Care Housing, Retirement Living and Care Homes.

We will soon place posters with all the competition information on your site notice boards. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact **Caroline Gerrard**, Customer Engagement Coordinator, at caroline.gerrard@brunelcare.org.uk.



Compliments, Concerns and Complaints

Brunelcare is committed to delivering the best possible service to all of its residents and customers.

We recognise that sometimes things can go wrong, and when this happens, we would like to hear from you. Your feedback is important to us and allows valuable opportunities to develop and improve our services across our teams and the charity.

You can find our annual and quarterly Complaints Performance Reports here...



Scan me

www.brunelcare.org.uk/about-us/our-performance/complaints-performance-reports/

To improve communication, the following steps have been taken:

- ✓ The Residents First Group has been established (see page 18)
- ✓ Regular Quarterly Site Meetings (QSMs) continue (see adjoining page)
- ✓ A new Head of Communications has been appointed
- ✓ A new poster and leaflets explaining how to give us feedback are being shared at all sites
- ✓ A CX Customer Relations Management (CRM) system is being implemented (see page 10)
- ✓ A pilot virtual noticeboard is being trialled at our Willow Bank site (see adjoining page)

You can

Provide feedback: This can include a compliment for something we have done well, a general comment or

observation, or a concern which could be dealt with within 48 hours.

Make a complaint: When you are unhappy with the service provided by Brunelcare, this may take longer than 48 hours to resolve and would require investigation.

In the following ways:

In-person Through the service supporting you or at any one of our offices.

Via our website:

Email
feedback@brunelcare.org.uk (feedback)
complaints@brunelcare.org.uk (complaints)

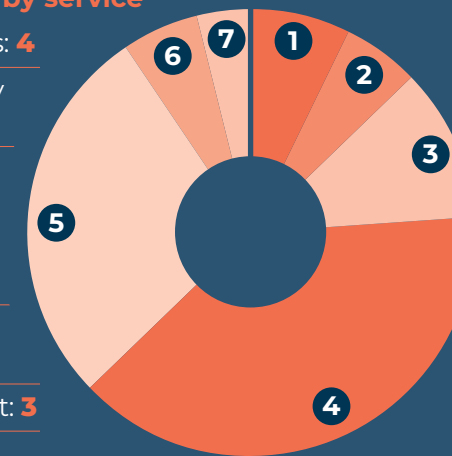
Telephone
 0117 914 4214 (office hours, Monday to Friday)

Post
 Feedback and Complaints, Brunelcare Head Office, Saffron Gardens, Prospect Place, Bristol BS5 9FF

Between 1st April 2023 and 31st December 2023, we received a total of 54 complaints across the whole charity. Complaints were raised in the following areas:

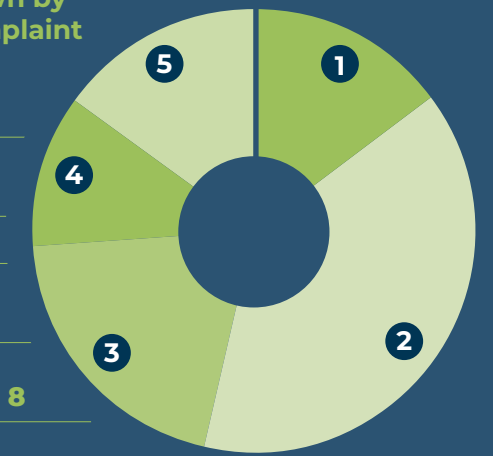
Broken down by service

- 1 Care homes: 4
- 2 Community Services: 3
- 3 Extra Care Housing: 6
- 4 Housing (north): 21
- 5 Housing (south): 15
- 6 Reablement: 3
- 7 HWYNI: 2



Broken down by area of complaint

- 1 Quality of care: 8
- 2 Quality of service: 21
- 3 Finance: 11
- 4 Communications: 6
- 5 Staff behaviour: 8



Although communication was not the primary issue raised within the complaint, poor communication was a contributing factor in a number of complaints.



Energy Bill Discount Scheme

The increase in energy prices over the last two years has been a big challenge for us all. Last year, Brunelcare applied for the higher rate of the Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS) related to heat networks on behalf of our residents. We found out in late 2023 that our application was successful.

backdated to 1 April 2023 and will apply until 31 March 2024 - and includes your communal and personal fuel costs.

We have processed the first round of credits, which covers all the revised electricity bills we have received from EDF (our energy supplier) from April to November 2023. The amounts residents receive will vary depending on what credits Brunelcare has had from our energy supplier and your level of arrears.

A second round of credits will be processed after the end of this financial year, including any outstanding revised bills.

This discount is now being passed on directly to our customers as a one-off credit on your rent account. It is



If you have any queries regarding how this discount will be passed on to you, please contact the Customer Services Team on

**T: 0117 914 4257
E: hello@brunelcare.org.uk**

New *Fixed* Energy Contracts

Looking to the future, we also have some news to share on our next Fixed Energy Contracts, which Brunelcare purchases on behalf of our residents.

Our current contracts continue until the end of September this year. But we have now secured two new separate contracts for our electricity and gas supply covering the period from October 2024 to March 2026.

We have taken the advice of our energy broker to purchase these contracts now and the new contracts

offer significantly cheaper prices compared to our current rate. The electricity prices are over 40% cheaper than our current prices, and the gas is over 30% cheaper.

We are not fixing solely due to the price, however, since we cannot be sure what the price will be in the future. We are fixing to give tenants and ourselves stable future prices, which means that we can all plan our energy costs for the next two financial years and remove the risk of big price hikes over the period due to world events.

We appreciate how difficult the increase in energy costs has been for residents, and we hope these measures will offer some reassurance going forward.

Electricity

40% cheaper

Gas

30% cheaper

than our current prices

Care Contract

Our care contracts within Extra Care Housing are reviewed and procured every three to five years. For our Extra Care Housing sites, this was delayed due to the pandemic.

Bristol City Council took this opportunity to look at all contracts across Adult Social Care and has asked organisations to bid to be part of the new Single Framework. This change will allow all care and support to be on the same terms and conditions and also allow the Council to look at how much it is paying its providers.

At the time of writing this article, Brunelcare is awaiting the outcome of the Care Contract. Additional information and updates will be shared with you shortly.

What does this mean to people receiving care in Extra Care Housing?

If Brunelcare isn't successful with the care contract, it means that any future care and support packages will not be with a Brunelcare employee.

This means you will see very little change within your ECH site. However, other care providers may visit our sites to deliver care.

We hope we are successful in our bid.



Catering project

Since the Summer of 2023, Brunelcare has been reviewing the catering services provided at our three Extra Care Housing Sites: ABC Centre, located in Hengrove; Colliers Gardens, located in Downend; and Waverley Gardens, located in Bishopsworth.

Thank you to everyone who completed a survey or attended a meeting to discuss the future of these services.

We are currently looking at options that will enable us to

keep the restaurants open and will be consulting with residents on these and related costs over the coming weeks.

We will be bringing you more updates when we have them. Stay tuned!



Equity, Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion update (EEDI)

In 2022, Brunelcare set out to develop a strategy to drive equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion (EEDI).

The EEDI strategy is for all colleagues, customers, tenants and residents across the charity and ensures Brunelcare is an inclusive place to live and work.



Our EEDI vision is simple, we will:

- Be a **fair and inclusive employer**, landlord and care provider.
- **Put our residents' needs first** and understand that their needs are varied and different.
- To meet those needs, we will truly **listen to residents' feedback** and consider how our work impacts them.
- Create a working environment that is inclusive and **free from discrimination or harassment**.
- **Embed good EEDI practice across the organisation**, recognising the importance of ensuring development and action(s) are cross-cutting.

Brunelcare colleagues and residents have contributed to the draft EEDI strategy with help from internal staff groups such as The Brunelcare Equality Forum and the Colleague Voice Committee.

Sandra Meadows MBE, an external consultant, has been supporting the development of the strategy.

We look forward to launching our new EEDI strategy in Spring 2024.

Antisocial, behaviour

At Brunelcare, we have a zero-tolerance approach towards antisocial behaviour (ASB), and we are committed to ensuring that our communities are safe, secure, and peaceful places to live.

If you are experiencing any form of antisocial behaviour that's affecting your well-being, community and home life, please let us know. We will deal with your concerns sensitively and work with you to address the issue.

Antisocial behaviour is described as:

behaviour by a person which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to persons. The conduct is capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person about their home or residential communities [MET Police].

Examples of antisocial behaviour include:

- Excessive and frequent noise, such as volume from a TV, radio or musical instrument
- Nuisance from vehicles in the parking area
- Fly tipping
- Criminal behaviour
- Acts of violence or threatening/abusive behaviour
- Domestic Abuse and Hate Crimes
- Plus more.

Further information can be found in Brunelcare's Antisocial Behaviour policy



Scan me

or visit the link below

<https://www.brunelcare.org.uk/about-us/help-and-guidance/housing-guidance/antisocial-behaviour/>

Residents can also report incidents directly to the police if they feel in immediate risk or danger of physical harm. It is important to keep a record of events, noting the day, date, time and behaviour. Keeping a diary can help us understand the frequency of negative behaviour or if a pattern emerges.

Antisocial Behaviour in Numbers:

Between 1 April 2023 and 31 December 2023:

- 1 91 antisocial behaviour cases were opened (47 South & 44 North).
- 2 An average of 10 cases were reported each month.
- 3 74 of the 91 cases were successfully resolved (42 South & 32 North).
- 4 16 cases were cancelled due to duplicate cases or opened in error and were not antisocial behaviour offences.
- 5 532.5 hours (76.07 days/15.21 weeks) of officer and manager time was spent dealing with antisocial behaviour cases.
- 6 The top five antisocial behaviour issues were neighbour disputes, noise nuisance, alcohol/substance misuse, fly-tipping and parking.

It is vital that together we continue to challenge antisocial behaviour in our homes and that Brunelcare continues to support its residents so we can live in safe, secure and peaceful communities together.

Join our Board of Trustees

We have a fantastic opportunity for a new trustee to join the Board at Brunelcare, to help drive our vital mission of providing person-centred care, housing and support for later life.

We are looking to create an 'unlike-minded board' which represents the diversity of the communities of which we are a part. It is a crucial time for the organisation, as we look to the future by developing a new strategic plan and advancing a portfolio of development work.

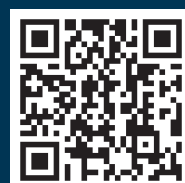
We are seeking to recruit a trustee with specific experience and expertise in the health and social care sector. The successful applicant will have a skill set that is blended, balancing a strategic outlook with a passion for providing the best possible care and support for older people.

With board and committee meetings, your time commitment will equate to around 8 hours per month. Trustees receive an honorarium of £3,500.

Find out more and apply by using the link below or scan the QR code with your phone.

<https://www.brunelcare.org.uk/trustee-opportunity/>

Trustees receive an honorarium of **£3,500**
T&C's Apply



Scan me

The closing date for applications is **5pm on 25 March 2024**

CX / Resident portal update

Civica x (Cx), our new Housing Management System, has been put in place for our Housing and Extra Care Housing colleagues to use. The new system allows Brunelcare to collate and hold all customer and asset information centrally.

Phase 2 officially launched on the 22nd of January, allowing colleagues to report Repairs & Maintenance concerns using the new Cx system.

What does the Phase 2 launch mean?

- We will be scheduling repairs by our maintenance team using the diaries in Civica Cx and sending jobs through to

them via the Civica Cx mobile app and scheduling tool

- We will be able to monitor the status of jobs so we can see when our repairs team are on route, working in residents' homes, and when jobs are complete
- We will be managing new Voids through Civica Cx, too.

The Customer Portal

We are working hard to launch the customer portal, which will allow us to improve communication with residents, as we can use it to send out text messages, emails and letters.

It also allows residents to view their rent account and repair history. This module will be the last part of the new housing management system, which has been delayed slightly due to the complexity of introducing

the Repairs and Maintenance Module that was live from the end of January 2024.

It may be several months before the portal is ready to launch, and we would like to involve residents in how this module will look and work.

A reminder of what we already use in Cx

Brunelcare currently uses Cx for:

- Housing management and rents
- Property allocations
- Reports of antisocial behaviour and repairs
- Compliance (fire and water risk assessments)
- Energy
- Tasks and case management

If you have any questions about Cx, please email us at hello@brunelcare.org.uk

SOLAR PANELS PROJECT

At Brunelcare, we are eager to implement changes to become a more environmentally sustainable organisation and help reduce residents' energy bills.

Brunelcare is working with Bristol Energy Cooperative (BEC) to install solar panels at Robinson House and Deerhurst Care Homes, Waverley Gardens (Extra Care Housing) and Colliers Gardens

(Extra Care Housing) during 2024. BEC is a registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, which develops renewable energy and energy efficiency projects with and for the benefit of the community.

We estimate that installing solar panels on these sites will save approximately 137 tonnes of CO2 in the first year alone, which is a huge step towards ensuring that all our properties have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of 'C' or higher by 2030.

The use of solar panels will also help reduce the energy bills for those residents living in the two Extra Care Housing (ECH) sites. Once operational, it is estimated that we can save approximately £31,000 per year across these two ECH sites.

If successful, we will be looking to install more solar panels and/or other renewable energy projects at other sites to help lower bills and create more environmentally sustainable housing and services.

WE CAN SAVE APPROXIMATELY £31,000 PER YEAR



Financial Support Fund

£250 to £500

AVAILABLE TO BRUNELCARE RESIDENTS

The Financial Support Fund is there to support our residents in times of financial hardship.

What is the Financial Support Fund?

The Financial Support Fund has been created to support you, our residents, in times of financial hardship. With the cost of living increasing, we want to ensure help is available to you where no other easily accessible funding is.

What will it cover?

Financial Support Fund grants will cover the following:

- ✓ White goods, furniture and floor coverings
- ✓ Shopping vouchers for food (where access to a food bank is not possible)
- ✓ Home adaptations to support independent living

Other essential items, equipment or services to support basic living needs

What the fund doesn't cover

- ✗ Payment of debts
- ✗ Payment of rent or care fees
- ✗ Cash payments directly to customers

Who can apply?

The fund is available to all Brunelcare residents who are willing to undertake a basic income assessment. An annual cap per person of £500 and an individual grant cap of £250 will be available.

How to apply

All applications must be made through a Brunelcare colleague, such as a Health and Wellbeing Officer, Support Worker, Tenancy Officer, Registered Manager or Deputy Manager, or other members of the Housing Team.

To apply for the fund, you must complete an application form, which will include an eligibility check and income assessment. If you meet the eligibility criteria, your application will be submitted by the Brunelcare colleague for consideration.

What happens next?

Applications will be reviewed by an Allocations Panel as soon as possible after they have been received.

If an application cannot be supported, a clear explanation of the reasons why will be provided, and we will help you explore other options.

If you are interested in making an application, please speak to either a member of the Health and Wellbeing Team or a member of the Housing Team for further information and support to make your application.

MEET THE TEAM

There have been some changes to our Housing Team, and we wanted to introduce any new colleagues to residents.

Welcome everyone



Natalie Trott
Housing Team Manager (North)



Bill Keywood
Tenancy Officer (North)



Debra Holvey
Income Officer (North)



Tracy Parker
Lettings and Allocations Officer (North)



Karen Hislop
Housing Advisor (North)



Emma Palmer-Givan
Housing Team Manager (South)



Tyrell Hartley-Welsh
Tenancy Officer (South)



Rex Taylor-Baron
Income Officer (South) Temp



Charley Butcher-Wood
Lettings and Allocations Officer (South)



Housing Advisor South



Suzanne Webb
Senior Customer Service Officer



Nancy Aldridge
Customer Service Officer



Phillipa Andrews
Temporary Customer Service Officer



Femi Robinson
Support Services Manager



Janice Clements
Housing Support Service Coordinator



Daniel Mansie
Health and Wellbeing Officer



Neethd Morton
Health and Wellbeing Officer



Nikki Kurylo
Health and Wellbeing Officer



David Bull
Tenancy Services Manager



Hannah Browne
Extra Care Housing Officer

KEY

- Housing Team
- Customer Services Team
- Help When You Need It Team



HOUSING UPDATES JOB PROFILES

About Our Housing Teams!

Based on feedback from residents, we wanted to give you more details on the roles in our Housing Team - and who does what...

Housing Team

Tenancy Services Manager:

Heads up the entire Housing Team (North and South) and Customer Services Team.

Extra Care Housing Officer:

Responsible for dealing with all Housing issues (tenancy, income and allocations) at all three of our Extra Care Housing sites.

Housing Team Managers (1 North and 1 South):

They are responsible for managing the housing teams in each geographical area.

Income Officers: help with:

- 1 Rent/service charge issues or queries
- 2 Housing Benefits or Universal Credit claims
- 3 Queries about setting up direct debits
- 4 Arranging payment plans
- 5 Recovering any tenancy-related debts

Tenancy Officers:

help with all tenancy-related matters, including tenancy agreement queries, dealing with anti-social behaviour and/or neighbour disputes, any breach of the tenancy agreement, end of tenancy matters, deeds of assignment and succession.

Lettings and Allocations Officers:

Responsible for advertising and letting empty or available properties. They are also responsible for mutual exchanges, internal transfers, and addressing any queries relating to moves within or outside of Brunelcare.

Housing Advisors:

Generally, the Housing Advisor is your first point of contact. They can help with monitoring the quality of contractors, ensuring your details are up to date, completing site health and safety checks, arranging laundry slots and booking guest rooms or communal rooms.

Customer Services Team:

Helps residents with any queries they may have and will signpost you to the correct person or service. They can arrange rent payments, log complaints, concerns, and compliments, and arrange and attend all the Quarterly Site Meetings.



Help When You Need It Team (HWYNI)

Support Services Manager:

manages the HWYNI contract and oversees the HWYNI Support teams (both Health and Wellbeing and Community). The Support Services Manager is also responsible for the Volunteering and Befriending Service for our housing residents, community clients, and Brunelcare's Financial Support Fund.

Housing Support Service Coordinator:

coordinates and manages the Health and Wellbeing Team and all incoming referrals and enquiries. They're also responsible for completing all assessments for support. The service coordinator is also qualified to carry out low-level Aids and Adaptations assessments.

Health and Wellbeing Officers:

provide support to residents to help them sustain their tenancy, manage physical health and wellbeing, and mental health and wellbeing. They can also help residents access available benefits, manage their debts, find paid work, and assess their eligibility for the Financial Support Fund.

Help When *You* Need It Community (HWYNI)

HWYNI is a confidential, free and friendly service funded by Bristol City Council to help people over the age of 55 who live within the Bristol boundaries and are in need of support (including mental health and substance misuse issues).

You can find out if you meet the criteria and what support is offered by visiting the link below or opening your camera on your phone and scanning the QR code.



Scan me

or visit the link below

www.brunelcare.org.uk/care-support/help-when-you-need-it/help-when-you-need-it-community/

Alternatively, you can contact the Help When You Need It Community Team, 9am - 5pm, Monday - Friday on:

T: 0117 428 1274
E: hwynireferrals@brunelcare.org.uk



This service is available to people who require support to:

- Maintain accommodation/tenancy or secure accommodation
- Self-manage physical health and wellbeing
- Manage mental health and wellbeing
- Maximise income, reduce debts or find paid work
- Prevent loneliness and isolation
- Stay safe



Volunteering and Befriending Service



Brunelcare's Volunteering and Befriending service is available to all of our Sheltered Housing residents, Extra Care Housing residents and community clients.

Who we are

Our dedicated Volunteers and Befrienders are a team of passionate people who are here to provide regular one-to-one support and friendship to brighten your day.

Volunteering and befriending can be done over the phone, in person or a combination of both, all depending on what suits you best.

How can we help?

We can:

- Visit you in your home for a friendly chat
- Arrange a meet-up for a lovely chat and a cuppa
- Arrange for a great outdoor walk
- Volunteer to help with shopping
- Help with your gardening
- Help with connecting to the digital world with your mobile phone, internet and laptop

If you would benefit from having support from a volunteer or a befriender, please get in touch with us today!

How do I request to have a Volunteer?

To apply, complete the *Request for Volunteer / Befriender form*.

Once your application has been received, you will then be placed on our waiting list to be matched with a suitable volunteer / befriender.

How do I become a Volunteer?

Whether you can spare an hour or a few days, volunteers make a positive difference in the day-to-day lives of the people we support. In return, you'll be provided with all the support and guidance you need to have the best possible volunteer experience.

From the opportunity to develop new skills and experiences to boost your CV to the chance to meet new people, you can benefit from volunteering with Brunelcare in many ways.

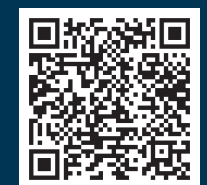
To apply, complete our Volunteer Application form. We will contact you once your application has been received to arrange an introduction. Please get in touch to start your application today.



How to apply

If you have access to the internet, you can complete our application forms online.

REQUEST A VOLUNTEER:



Scan me

APPLY TO BE A VOLUNTEER:



Scan me

Alternatively, you can speak with a member of either the Health & Wellbeing Team or the Housing Team, who will be able to support you in submitting an application. Or, you can speak with a member of the Customer Services Team, who would be happy to complete the form for you on your behalf.

How to contact us

Email: sheltcommvolunteering@brunelcare.org.uk

Telephone: 0117 914 4257

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

Brunelcare is progressing with the Wave 2 project to retrofit a number of our homes to improve their energy performance.

We successfully applied to the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, which is available to support the installation of energy

performance measures in social homes in England. Retrofitting measures include improvements to heating, ventilation, insulation and windows, and will ensure that each home's energy performance rating is raised to at least a 'C' when the work is complete.

Working with a software developer, Ambue, the design phase has now been completed.

In March, we are excited to start the process of finding a lead contractor to carry out the works.

The first phase of the project will take place on our sheltered housing sites at Maple Close and Chestnut Close. We will continue to fully engage with residents on those sites to make them aware of all key developments.

IMPROVING YOUR HOMES

During the Quarterly Site Meetings, we have been keeping residents up to date with the plans for investing in our homes to improve energy efficiency and meet Government targets, ensuring all social housing has an energy efficiency rating of at least C by 2030.

We have identified 15 of our sheltered housing sites that require investment and actions to ensure that they are safe, warm and affordable.

These are:

- 1 Spinney Croft
- 2 Eglin Croft

- 3 Lilac Close
- 4 Lea Croft
- 5 Cote Paddock
- 6 Rowan Court
- 7 Garden Close
- 8 St Barnabas Close
- 9 Maple Close
- 10 Chestnut Close
- 11 Longmead Croft
- 12 Cherry Tree Close
- 13 Hanbury Court
- 14 Gulshan House
- 15 Elin Cottages (Shelley Avenue)

We are currently considering how we can best carry out the improvements and will keep all residents up to date at the QSMs and via Grapevine.



INVESTMENT IN OUR HOMES

WE HAVE INVESTED £1.2 MILLION

As we progress through the final quarter of the year, we're busy completing this financial year's planned investment work. To date, we have invested £1.2 million, upgrading the following.

We're currently planning the budget for the next financial year and will continue to ensure that we invest in the right homes at the right time.



FIRE ALARMS on three sites
Whitebeam Court, St Barnabas Close and Sycamore Court



HEATERS on eight sites
Blagdon Close, St Michael's Close, Emmanuel Court, Sycamore Court, Hanbury Court, Lea Croft, Eglin Croft and Lilac Close



KITCHENS across eight sites
Linden Close, Chestnut Close, Cote Paddock Emmanuel Court, Cherry Tree Close, Longmead Croft, Maple Close & Sycamore Court



BATHROOMS across our sheltered housing sites



FIRE COMPARTMENTATION in each of our care homes



FIRE DOORS across all our sites

ANNUAL REVIEW of Rents and Service Charges

Brunelcare reviews the rents and service charges on an annual basis.

For most of our Sheltered Housing residents, the new charges take effect from the first Monday in April, so this year, they will be effective from the 1st of April.

How social rents increase is defined by the Government's Rent Standard. This is currently set at the Consumer Price Index (CPI) + 1%. In September 2023, CPI was 6.7%.

This means that the majority of our rents will increase by 7.7% from April.

Brunelcare will be sending out the rent and service charge notification letters towards the end of February 2024, so you should shortly be in receipt of yours.

This year, we will be arranging site meetings to talk through the service charges and address any questions. Details of the date and time of your site-specific

meeting will be sent out shortly. For those of you who are not able to attend their site meeting, we will share this information with you separately.

We will also be including more information on our website, to help with any queries.

If you have any queries, please contact the Customer Services Team:

Email: customer.service@brunelcare.org.uk

Telephone: **0117 914 4257**

Residents First Group

The Residents First Group continues to meet on a six-weekly basis, helping to ensure that residents are actively involved in shaping the services Brunelcare provides and its future.

Following up on our previous update in the summer edition of Grapevine, the group has met on four more occasions.

SEPTEMBER

In September, the focus was on service charges and value for money. The group reviewed how we communicate service charges to the wider resident group, including the style and tone of the letters sent out and the accompanying documents, such as the service charges statement and glossary of terms.

NOVEMBER

In November, the group members reviewed how Brunelcare is ensuring we are getting value for money from our contracts and services. We looked at ways in which we can consult with residents in the design and selection process when going out to tender.

DECEMBER / JANUARY

In December, the group members focused on communication and culture, and the meeting

was led by the new Head of Communications, James Craig. The group identified many areas in which communication is currently failing but was encouraged as to some of the ways that we are planning to improve the culture and relationship between Brunelcare and residents, including through the new style Quarterly Site Meetings and Site Surgeries, the customer satisfaction survey and by providing you with more information of the teams who support you and what they do. Following on from this, some members of the group were involved in the customer satisfaction survey review. They met with James Craig in January to provide input into the style and tone of the survey and how we communicate this to our residents.

FEBRUARY

In February, the group members reviewed Brunelcare's current strategy, which is due to run out this year. Discussions were held on the existing mission statement, vision and aims, reflecting on how they fit with Brunelcare's current demographic and purpose and how best we can engage with our wider customer group to ensure that we capture an accurate representation of what we want to achieve.

The feedback from this session will be used to inform the draft Strategy, which will

be considered by the Group when it meets in March. Brunelcare's Strategy for 2024-2030 will be taken to the Board of Trustees in June for approval.

We are also looking at ways in which we can continue to share the outcome of the Residents First Meetings, which will include Grapevine, at your Quarterly Site Meetings and on our website.

On Thursday 29th February, Janet from our Residents First Group travelled to London to attend the National Housing Federation's Customer Experience and Resident Engagement Conference alongside our Head of Communications, James Craig.



"It was a great experience to go to an event like this, and meet people working at all levels within the housing sector, and hear how they are focused on every aspect of helping their residents."



In the summer edition of Grapevine, we shared with you information on how Brunelcare is working to ensure that our homes are land carbon and energy-efficient.

This forms an objective within Brunelcare's 'Asset Management Strategy', but it is also a Government target for social housing providers through their 'Clean Growth Strategy', whereby we have to achieve net zero for all of our homes by 2050.

The main purpose of the Net Zero Group is to help us inform our Sustainability Strategy and,

by listening to the feedback from the group members, this can help Brunelcare shape some of the decisions that we make on behalf of our residents and customers.

To date, the group has met twice, and the meetings have been centred around some of the projects that Brunelcare has been undertaking, including:

- Wave 2 (Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund). Please see page 16 for more information.
- Installation of solar panels. Please see page 10 for more information.

The group members have provided valuable feedback and suggestions on both of these projects, as well as suggestions on how their individual sites can help Brunelcare to become more energy efficient.

The next meeting is at the end of March and will include updates from Elly Weale, our Asset Manager, and Chris Adams, our Energy Project Officer.

To find out more about the Residents First and Net Zero Groups, please get in touch with us at:

**Email: together@brunelcare.org.uk
Call: 07557 568565**

How residents can get involved

How you can get involved

Our Together with Customers Charter details Brunelcare's commitment to putting our residents and customers at the centre of its values, culture and ethos.

We want to maximise the opportunities we give you for consultation, participation and engagement, enabling you to influence and shape the services you use and their delivery.

You may want to review topics like communication, customer service and value for money as part of our Residents First Group. You may have a passion for sustainability and green matters within our Net Zero Group. Or you might like to get involved in writing or contributing to publications you read, such as Grapevine.

We are currently looking at the various groups in place and the ways in which we engage with customers. We understand that not all residents will want to or be able to take part in regular groups, however, we are still keen to ensure your voice is heard.



If you would like to get involved, please get in touch:

Visit our website: www.brunelcare.org.uk

Email: together@brunelcare.org.uk

Call us on: **07557 568565**



FIRE SAFETY

Advice for Tenants

Every year, people are injured in accidental fires in the home but following some simple steps can help keep you safe.

- 1 Test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarm (if fitted) once a week, or at least once a month as a minimum.
- 2 Keep all exits and emergency accesses clear, including communal corridors and corridors in your home.
- 3 Keep door keys somewhere accessible. Ideally, somewhere close to the doors (but keep security in mind).
- 4 Do not store refuse bags, combustible materials, or items of furniture in common areas such as stairways, corridors, or drying rooms. Keeping these areas clear will protect escape routes.
- 5 Never wedge open doors in common areas. Most of these doors are fire-resistant and fitted with self-closing devices.
- 6 Do not tamper with the fire alarm as this may affect the rest of fire detection for the building and put lives at risk.
- 7 If you see any damage to fire alarms, fire doors, or items inappropriately stored in

common areas please report it immediately to the repairs team at Brunelcare or your Housing Officer.

- 8 Make sure that no paraffin, petroleum, bottled gas, or any heater that burns these fuels is used or stored in your property.
- 9 If you smoke, please ensure cigarettes are properly extinguished before putting them in a bin.
- 10 If you light candles, please ensure they are well away from soft furnishings and fully extinguished before leaving the premises or going to bed.

How to reduce the risk of fires from your e-bikes or e-scooters lithium battery

The majority of fires related to e-bikes and e-scooters have happened in homes. These fires often happen when charging batteries. There are several ways you can reduce the risk of fire when charging your e-bike or e-scooter battery in the home.

- Don't charge e-bikes and e-scooters in bedrooms or where escape routes can be blocked – for example, hallways and escape routes.
- Don't leave your battery charging unattended, when you are out or while you are asleep.

- Don't cover chargers or battery packs when charging.
- Don't overload sockets or use inappropriate extension leads.
- Don't charge or store batteries in direct sunlight or in hot locations (above 45°C).
- Don't charge batteries close to combustible materials or hazardous substances.
- Always unplug your charger when you have finished charging.
- If your battery can be removed from your e-bike or e-scooter and charged separately, it should be charged on a hard flat surface where heat can disperse and in an area with good ventilation.

If there is a fire in your premises

We do not recommend you try to put out a fire yourself as this may put you at risk. Raise the alarm, get out, and stay out.

If there is a fire that does not affect your immediate premises

Follow the safety advice for your building issued by Brunelcare. Your building may have a delayed evacuation policy so it's important to know what you should do if there is a fire.

How to Contact Us

Head Office
Brunelcare Saffron Gardens
Prospect Place
Whitehall
Bristol
BS5 9FF

Email: hello@brunelcare.org.uk

www.brunelcare.org.uk



Housing Customer Services Team:

0117 914 4257

Emergency Maintenance Freephone:

(Extra Care Housing & Sheltered Housing)

0800 072 6308

(8:30am - 4:30pm)



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Registered as a charity (201555) and
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