

HULL

HOUSING NEWS



Developed for tenants, by tenants, working
in partnership with Hull City Council

Summer 2023 In this issue

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Community hubs

We are always looking for opportunities to make it as easy as possible for residents to engage with the council. We believe that having a presence at the heart of our neighbourhoods will help achieve that.

To test the water, we have been running a pilot project of community hubs on Elmbridge Parade and Spring Bank.

They have proved to be very popular, and we are opening more pilot hubs across the city, as opportunities and locations become available.

The hubs operate on a drop-in basis. They offer an opportunity to engage not only with Hull City Council but a whole range of agencies that can offer advice. For example, the Elmbridge Parade hub gave advice on energy costs, managing debt, general health enquires and, earlier this year, offered the chance for you to swap



old clothes for new (to you) thereby recycling to help the environment and helping you save on the cost of buying new. Customer Service Advisors and representatives from other organisations will be based at the site, offering advice and support with matters including access to digital services. We will announce the opening dates as soon as we can.

The hubs are not the place to book a housing repair, pay your rent or check your rent account. We need you to do this via myHousing which will be launched shortly to take over from My Housing Online.

If you have already visited one of the hubs, let us know about your experience by emailing tenant.resident@hullcc.gov.uk

Summer hols!

With the schools' summer break upon us, you'll be pleased to know that Healthy Holidays is back this summer, with a packed programme of activities for primary and secondary age children and young people, including a full SEND programme. All activities are free, open to all and include a free food offer. This issue of Hull Housing News went to print before the programme was finalised.

Nearer the time, visit: www.healthyholidayshull.org for full details, including booking information where needed. Happy hols everyone!



Hull City Council Housing is on Facebook. 'Like' our page and discover more information

Four Million Homes



Are you interested in learning more about your rights as a tenant and how you can have an active role in how your homes and housing services are managed?

If so, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' (DLUHC's) new "Know Your Rights" programme may be of interest.

All residents living in social or private rented accommodation in the UK are being offered the chance to learn more about their rights as tenants and understand how they can have a bigger say in how their homes and services are run. Training will be online via webinars, and in some cities there will be face-to-face group information exchanges too.

Sessions will run over the next two years, and delivered in TV's "Watchdog" and "Rip Off Britain" style, with tips about tenants' rights and how to access the Housing Ombudsman service. It's all free and you can opt in or out of whichever sessions interest you. Topics are wide ranging, from advice on addressing damp and mould in the home to anti-social behaviour. To find out more, go to www.fourmillionhomes.org. If you are interested in getting involved, let the Tenant Participation Team know at tenant.resident@hullcc.gov.uk

DLUHC is committed to driving up standards in the four million social housing homes nationwide and empowering tenants to hold their landlords to account, and "Know Your Rights" is part of its wider Four Million Homes campaign. This initiative links to recent legislation about the need to update and improve rented homes and making sure that the tenants' voices are heard.

Keep unwanted visitors out

We all want the peace of mind that we can relax and enjoy our homes, free from the threat of theft or intruders.

If you are worried about your safety and security at home, you can always contact Humberside Police and ask for a Crime Prevention Officer to check out your property. Your Neighbourhood Policing team will be able to advise on this.

Most burglars are opportunistic thieves. They seek out any opening to your home that they can take advantage of, particularly



doors and windows which are left open or unlocked or are easy to force. Also, anything of value that they might spot through a window will often spur them on.

With a bit of smart thinking there are ways with which we can deter potential burglars. This issue of Hull Housing News, we've included a number of tips which will help you protect your home and possessions.

Security – top tips

1. Make your mark

Mark your valuables to deter burglars and show that your possessions are marked by putting stickers in your windows. Use a special marker with solution that is only visible under Ultraviolet (UV) light. Mark things with the postcode for your house or flat number, e.g. HU1 1QE (10). These help the police to identify stolen goods making them harder for thieves to sell. Don't forget to mark your bike, if you have one.

2. Neighbourhood Watch

Get involved with your local Neighbourhood Watch and join like-minded residents who keep an eye on their patch to deter potential criminals. Sometimes, you can get lower household insurance premiums if you are a member of a Neighbourhood Watch Group.

3. Sheds and garages

Make sure you have a secure lock on your shed or garage. You might be interested in getting a lock with an alarm in weatherproof casing, which sounds when cut or forced. Sheds and garages often contain valuable items, as well as tools, steps and ladders, which a burglar can use to help gain entry to your property.

4. Bogus callers

Bogus callers will try and trick their way into your home. Don't let anyone in unless you are sure that they're genuine. A genuine caller will have ID that they won't mind showing you. You don't need to open the door; you can always ask them to come back another time when you have

someone you can trust with you, or take the ID they may have and phone the office number on the card to check. If they claim to represent Hull City Council, you can telephone the call centre on 01482 300 300. If they claim to be from KWL or one of the council's other contractors, you will have received a letter or text from them informing you of the date and time they will be visiting. If you're worried about a doorstep caller, dial 999 and ask for the police.

5. Did you know that through Lifeline,

the emergency push button alarm system the council offers to elderly and vulnerable people, you can get a specific "bogus caller" device. This is a button attached to the wall near your door which, when pressed, a call handler can listen to your conversation with whoever is outside your door, without he or she knowing it's happening. This provides a record of what's said, should you need to take it further.

6. Packaging outside your home

Don't advertise recent, major purchases by leaving the packaging outside your home. Keep it indoors until you can take it to a recycling centre or dispose of in your bin.

7. Thefts from doorsteps

As more and more purchases are made online, theft of deliveries left on doorsteps have increased. There are things you can do to reduce the risk of them being stolen such as ensuring someone is at home for the delivery or arranging for a trustworthy neighbour to take your parcel. Lockers in busy locations such as near shops and supermarkets are popular for frequent deliveries and more expensive items.



Are you thinking about moving home?

Demand for social housing is higher than ever. The cost of living and housing crisis mean that more and more people are looking for a council home. There aren't so many homes available either because more people are staying put.

Mutual exchange

Unfortunately, only a small number of those applying to Hull's housing list are offered a council property and most are not, because there aren't

enough homes to go round. Even people with a high priority are still not guaranteed to be made an offer. However, for secure council tenants there is another option - a mutual exchange. This is where two or more council tenants swap their homes with each other. You can also swap with tenants of other registered social landlords such as housing associations and councils in other areas.

To find someone to swap homes with you can register for free at www.houseexchange.org.uk. Currently more than 600 Hull City Council tenants are registered and looking for an exchange. House Exchange also has national coverage, if you are looking to move out of the city. If you need help to register with House Exchange, this is available at

our Customer Service Centres or you could use computers in libraries, or ask a friend or relative to help.

If you choose to use other methods instead of House Exchange, please be careful about how much personal information you share and always make sure you have someone with you when viewing someone's home or having someone come to view yours.

Whether you opt to apply to swap homes through Homesearch or House Exchange, there are a number of rules to check out first and these are posted on the council's website www.hull.gov.uk/housing/find-home where you will also find other useful information.

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Move to a smaller home.

If you're an empty nester or just find you've more bedrooms than you need, you might find that our long established downsizing scheme is the answer to moving to a new home.

Our larger houses for families are the ones in shortest supply as we do not have as many of them in our stock. To help make it easier for people who are under-occupying houses with four or more bedrooms move to a smaller home, we have introduced a new enhanced scheme.

We are offering a generous cash incentive as well as a practical help package which can be tailored to people's individual preferences. The options include:

- arranging and paying for removals
- disconnection and reconnection of white goods
- providing boxes and help with packing
- reconnection of broadband
- arranging for carpets to be professionally lifted and stored ready to be re-fitted at the new home, or fitting new carpets at the new home

- setting up a TV aerial in the new home
- taking down fitted blinds and re-fitting in the new home
- a two-week, rent-free period whilst you move into the new property.

We will be more flexible around the property type and size you can downsize to if it means we get the larger one back for a larger family that desperately needs it. This is dependent on a good supply of the property type you want (we will not award you a move to a two bedroom bungalow, because we do not have many of them).

A dedicated team is on hand to help you every step of the way. You don't even need a housing application – we will sort it! Don't forget that while anyone can apply to downsize, the new enhanced downsizing offer only applies to people in houses of four or more bedrooms.

Smaller homes can save you money

Downsizing isn't just for people living in homes with four or more bedrooms. Family three-bedroom, and even two-bedroom homes, are always sought after. Although there isn't the enhanced package we are offering to those in four or more

bedrooms, by moving to a smaller home your financial outgoings will reduce, because you'll pay less rent and your energy bills will be cheaper. Also, you won't be liable for the "bedroom tax", which can affect the amount you receive in housing benefit and Universal Credit payments, if your home is classed as under-occupied. If you are interested in downsizing through our established downsizing scheme, please contact your Tenancy Officer. If accepted, you would be awarded a high priority for a smaller property which meets your needs.

There are other ways you can benefit by moving to a smaller home. There's less cleaning and they are easier to manage. Downsizing could also involve moving to a home that's all on one level so there are no stairs to negotiate.



Are you missing out?

With no end in sight to the current cost of living crisis, it is sad that many benefits continue to be underclaimed. This means that many people are missing out. Claiming all the benefits to which you may be entitled could make a big difference. You can use the council's "Entitled to" tool to see how this may apply to you.

Universal Credit is available to people of working age if they are on a low income, out of work or can't work to help with their living costs www.gov.uk/universal-credit

Pension Credit gives you extra money to help with your living costs if you're over State Pension age and on a low income. Pension Credit can also help with housing costs such as ground rent or service charges: www.pensioncredit.gov.uk

Sometimes people look into claiming certain benefits but decide not to because they would only receive a few pence each week. However claiming those few pence might really be worth it because receiving that benefit means you automatically qualify for other support too. For example, even if you only receive a few pence weekly of Pension Credit, you become entitled to free dental treatment, TV licence, warm homes discount, Council Tax discount, etc. The value of these bonuses is typically over £3,300 a year. Check out Pension Credit: www.pensioncredit.gov.uk



You may also find that you are eligible for a disability benefit, another benefit which can lead to premiums and extra elements being added.

Healthy Start

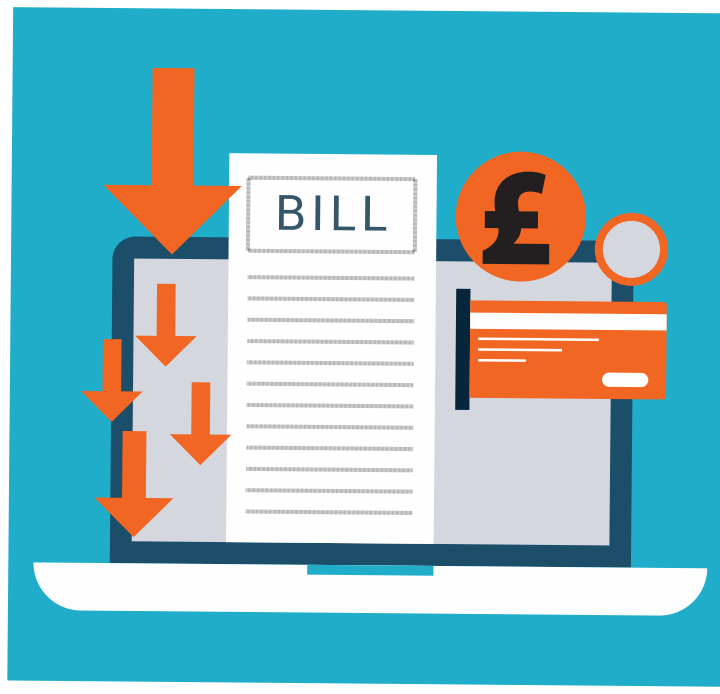
Currently, one benefit which is being underclaimed in Hull is the Healthy Start voucher scheme. This is specifically for people with children under four and those at least ten weeks pregnant can apply. Even some non-British citizens are eligible. Successful applicants receive a pre-payment card (recently replacing paper vouchers) to buy milk, fruit and vegetables. A family with a baby and a toddler could be getting £12.75 worth of healthy foods each week for free. Find out more at: www.healthystart@nhs.uk

Cheaper online connections

Some people are put off applying for benefits because most government services require you to apply online, and for some affording the cost of the internet is a challenge.

There has been a lot in the news recently about the underclaiming of “social tariffs”, such as KCOM Flexi and EE basics. These are cheaper deals offered by internet service providers offer to qualifying households - usually those receiving benefits.

Have a look at what your current and other local providers offer. Also, there are lots of places in the city to get on the internet for free, including local libraries. Find a full list on My Hull Maps on the council’s website, on the My Maps tab.



Do you want to say goodbye to smoking?

Smokefree Hull offers behavioural support through face to face, telephone, or video appointments and there are a range of stop smoking treatments available to help you quit.

Whether you want to stop smoking for your health, for your family, to save money, or something else, you’re three times more likely to succeed if you get support from the service.



With SmokeFree Hull, you get:

- expert one-to-one support to find the best way to stop smoking for you
- stop smoking aids like nicotine patches, gum, mouth sprays and e-cigarettes to help you quit
- someone to encourage and cheer you on throughout the programme

Referrals

If you would like to make a referral or talk to a SmokeFree Advisor, please e-mail or call the service. Alternatively, you call the online referral form on the Smokefree Hull website.

Email:

hullstopsmoking.info@cgl.org.uk

Phone:

01482 977 617

Website:

www.changegrowlive.org/smoke-free-hull/contact

Check out SmokeFree Hull’s social media sites.

Voice of Tenants



Happy and glorious.

King, crowns and cake, as well as lots of flag waving, in Hull to mark the coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla. Tenants at

Bayswater Court, Muswell Court, Whitelees Court, Cherry Hinton Court and Beecroft Court enjoyed coronation parties.



Save time, go online

Our **website** is now easier and faster to use at **hull.gov.uk**

24/7 access – Access services whenever is convenient for you

- responsive website, browse on pc, tablet or mobile without any change in the experience

- smart Chatbot – designed to answer frequently asked questions and find the information for you

- live chat – Monday to Friday 9am – 4.30pm

- secure and trusted (gov.uk) website – browse with the knowledge that your personal data is protected

- enhanced accessibility tools – including screen reader, translation for over 100 languages, reading aids and more

Tenants Forum Meetings

Date	Time	Guest Speaker / Agenda
17 July	1 – 3pm	Street and Cleansing Waste Operations Manager
17 Aug	10am – 12pm	To be confirmed
19 Sept	10am – 12pm	Annual General Meeting

All Tenants' Forum meetings take place in The Guildhall, HU1 2AA. If you would like to attend, please let a member of the Tenants Participation Team know by emailing tenant.resident@hullcc.gov.uk or phone (01482) 612 010.

This document can be made available in other formats (large print, audio, digital copy) and different languages. Email tenant.resident@hullcc.gov.uk



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