

NOVEMBER 2024

YOUR WREKIN

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE'S LIVES



Simple ways to keep your home healthy over winter

Win your weekly shop with Housing Perks

Tips for a thrifty Christmas



Scan this QR code with your smartphone camera to translate or listen to the newsletter on our website, using our ReachDeck tool.



The Wrekin
Housing Group

Wayne's Wrekin word



Welcome to the winter edition of Your Wrekin.

In October, we agreed to merge with Housing Plus Group. This means we would be a larger merged organisation and we will have more opportunity to improve services, but don't worry - your rights as a customer will stay the same and your home won't be affected.

There will be no changes to existing tenancy or lease agreements as a result of the merger. You will continue to access our services in the same way and deal with the same teams as you do now. We will not lose our local focus, and we'll continue to maintain strong connections with our communities across Telford & Wrekin, Shropshire and Staffordshire. For more information about the merger, and a list of frequently asked questions, please visit our [website](#) or scan this QR code using your smartphone camera.

Temperatures are falling, so in this edition you'll find some advice on

looking after your home and yourself in the cold weather, plus information on how to get help if you're worried about money.

You can now pay less for what you already buy online and in store with Housing Perks. The free app will help you to save money on the essentials such as groceries, fuel, clothing, DIY and family days out. Over 1,000 Wrekin tenants are making huge savings with Housing Perks, all you need to do is download the app from the Apple App Store or Google Play. Go to page 6 for more details.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter - if you do, or if you think something could be improved, then just let us know, your feedback is always welcome, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Wayne Gethings

Group Chief Executive



Scan this QR code for Merger updates



Kevin Morgan Customer Committee Chair

Hello, I'm Kevin, Chair of Wrekin's Customer Committee. Your voice is as important as ever and continues to influence everything we do at Wrekin.

Thank you to everyone who came and spoke to the Customer Voice team at our summer drop-in events. Your feedback on the merger and other areas important to you was invaluable. There are still plenty of ways for you to have your say:

Visit wrekin.com/voices to find out how.



Last year, we asked for your input on the **Wrekin calendar**. We always consider how we spend money to ensure value for our customers, along with the environmental impact of printing and posting calendars. The number of customers requesting the calendar has significantly declined in recent years. For these reasons, we've decided not to produce one this year.

Thank you to everyone who submitted photos and artwork for the calendar in recent years - your contributions brought smiles to many faces!

Access to Wrekin policies

It is important to us that customers are able to access our policies should they need or wish to do so. Policies set out our approach to things like repairs and maintenance, allocations and lettings and complaints. Our policies also have input from both customers and staff.

You can view our customer facing policies on our [website](#) or by scanning the QR Code below using your smartphone camera. Alternatively, you can request a paper copy of any policy by calling **01952 217100**.



Wrekin policies

Money Matters



Here to help

During 2023/24 our Money Matters team dealt with more than 3,000 referrals for support and advice, and helped customers secure more than **£5.5 million** in additional income.

Our energy advice service received 561 referrals and helped customers secure **£349,000** in charitable grants and financial support to help them heat their homes.

Meanwhile Wrekin Debt Advice received 240 referrals, and helped customers clear **£759,000** of debt.

One of them was Kerry Gassama from Woodside, who had fallen into debt after taking time off work while recovering from cancer.

If you are worried about money – whether that's debt, benefits, budgeting or anything else – get in touch with the Money Matters team.

Call **01952 217234**

Or email money.matters@wrekin.com

Too afraid to answer the door or the phone, Kerry became isolated and her mental health suffered – until she took the brave step of asking for help.

Debt advisor Sam Siviter from our Money Matters team helped Kerry secure a Debt Relief Order, clearing her debt and freeing her from the constant fear of bailiffs.

Kerry said: "If Sam hadn't helped me like she did, I don't think I would be here now. It had got me so down I thought, 'what's the point?'. She saved me, she really did."

Managed Migration to Universal Credit

The process of moving people from 'legacy benefits' to Universal Credit is now well underway.

It affects those receiving Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credits, Child Tax Credits, Income Support, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance and Income-based Employment Support Allowance.

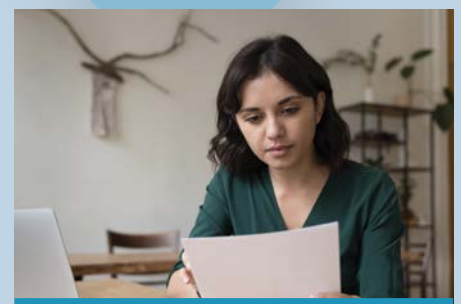
If you claim any of these benefits and have received a 'Migration Notice', you must make a claim for Universal Credit by the

deadline on the letter. If you don't, your benefits could stop.

If you make your Universal Credit claim after receiving the notice, and before the deadline, the amount you get from UC will not be less than what you currently receive.

If you need help, you can call the number on your Migration Notice or contact our Money Matters team.

Call **01952 217234** or email money.matters@wrekin.com



UC Universal Credit

Damp and condensation

We are committed to making sure homes are free from hazardous levels of damp and condensation, and to identify and deal with cases promptly and effectively.

As temperatures drop, it's important to look out for signs of condensation and understand what steps you can take to prevent moisture building up in your home over the winter months.

What are the indicators of condensation?

- Water droplets on cold surfaces
- Black spot mould
- Wet rot – on skirting boards
- A musty smell
- Spoiled paintwork or plaster

Causes

- Too much moisture in the air, often created by steam from cooking and washing
- Not enough ventilation
- Extremes of temperature (for example, a kitchen being very warm and a bedroom very cold)
- Drying clothes inside the home, especially over radiators

How do Wrekin treat damp and mould?

Where appropriate, our dedicated team will come in and clean any affected surfaces, before shielding them with an anti-mould agent to help prevent them from returning.

In addition to this, we'll investigate the root cause of the problem, and carry out any repairs needed to tackle this.

Report it

If you experience a build-up of condensation in your home, spot any signs of mould growth or notice anything that needs repairing, contact us:

Call **01952 217217**

Or email enquiries@wrekin.com

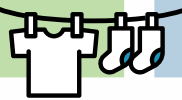
Simple ways to reduce moisture building up in your home...

Avoid drying clothes on radiators.

Dry clothes outside where possible or on a clothes airer in a cool room.

Make sure tumble dryers are vented correctly.

Keep lids on pans when cooking.



Whilst cooking or bathing, close doors to other rooms.

Use extractors in kitchens and bathrooms, if you have one.

Open windows if it's not damp outside.

Consider using disposable dehumidifier pots.



They don't cost a lot and can remove a surprising amount of water from the air.

Wipe down tiles to remove surface water.

Avoid placing furniture against an outside wall.

Wipe down windows if water droplets appear.



To watch some helpful videos about condensation, please visit our [website](#) and search for 'condensation', or scan this QR code using your smartphone camera.



Wrekin customer urges others to take out **home contents insurance**

A Wrekin customer who lost everything in a house fire has shared her story in the hope of encouraging other people to take out home contents insurance.

Kirsty Brummell had just lit the candles on her daughter's seventh birthday cake, when the lighter she had used sparked a catastrophic fire in their bungalow.

She said: "We lost everything that day, all my daughter's birthday presents, all our clothes, everything. My heart just stopped. It was the worst thing that I'd ever felt."

Kirsty and her daughter returned to their home after six months of repairs, and had to rebuild their lives – a process made all the more difficult by the fact they did not have home contents insurance.

Kirsty said: "I knew that it was available to me but I just put it off. I didn't think that I needed it, I didn't think this would happen to me. But it can happen to anyone."

Wrekin customers can access an exclusive Home Contents Insurance scheme to cover belongings against accidental damage, fire, theft and flooding. Cover can be paid in monthly instalments, at very competitive rates.

For more information, please visit our [website](#) and search 'insurance', or scan this QR code using your smartphone camera.

Alternatively, contact the Money Matters team by calling **01952 217234** or email money.matters@wrekin.com



Fire damage in Kirsty's home

“ I didn't think this would happen to me. But it can happen to anyone. ”



Home contents insurance

Fire safety

There are lots of things you can do to reduce the risk of a fire happening in your home and it's important to know what to do if a fire does happen.

✓ Test your smoke alarm regularly

A working fire alarm could save your life.

✓ Know your escape route

How would you get out if a fire happened?

✓ Do not block or store things on escape routes

People need to be able to leave as quickly as possible.

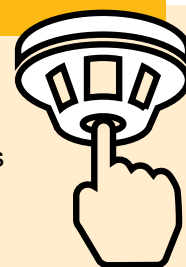
✓ Keep fire doors closed and check they are working

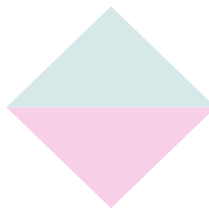
Help stop the spread of fire.

✓ Allow us access

For essential electrical and gas safety checks, and maintenance services.

Please report any fire safety issues immediately by calling **01952 217217**.





Scan this QR code with your smartphone camera to download the app



Download the Housing Perks app from the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#)

Win your weekly shop while saving with Housing Perks

Wrekin tenants have access to discounts at their favourite shops with the Housing Perks app. With discounts on over 100 brands and stores, Housing Perks helps you budget your money and save on the cost of everyday essentials.

Our tenants have saved over £7,000 with Housing Perks since we launched it last year – from groceries and clothing, to home furnishings, DIY and even family days out. Wherever you shop, you can make a saving.

Housing Perks is free, quick and easy to sign up for - **all you need is your tenancy reference number, which you can find printed on the back of the address sheet for this newsletter.**

- Press 'Sign up', enter your details and follow the on-screen instructions.
- You will be asked for your 'Organisation ID/ Housing association name', type **Wrekin**, select **The Wrekin Housing Group** from the list, and click continue.
- Enter your **Tenancy Reference Number**.
- Now you're all signed up!



Win back the cost of your weekly shop!

From 25 November until the New Year, we're running a competition with Housing Perks where you can win back the cost of your weekly shop - up to the value of £100!

There are eight prizes to be won. All you need to do is use the app like you normally would. You will get a notification on the app if you're a winner and we'll be in touch! Winners will have their photos posted on our social media channels the following week.

WIN £100
worth of shopping

For more information about the Housing Perks app:

Visit wrekin.com/housingperks
Or email getinvolved@wrekin.com



If you aren't sure how to use the app or don't have access to the internet, please contact your Housing Executive so we can provide you with help or get you online.



David discovers the digital world at 88

“I'm flabbergasted, this is fantastic! I wish I had done this years ago!”

At 88 years old, David had never used a computer or accessed the internet. That all changed when he joined one of our get online sessions. With some support, David explored Google Street View to look up his childhood home and even made a Skype video call to his daughter in Scotland.

Eager to continue learning, David was gifted a laptop through our social value device scheme. We're proud to offer free data and devices to our customers who cannot access the internet. With our help, David is also able to attend a six-week digital skills course at Wellington Library, run by Telford & Wrekin Council.

I'm dreaming of a thrifty Christmas – some budget friendly tips from our Thrifty Mum

I don't know about you but at Christmas time I find it really easy to overspend. Even when I set myself a strict budget, I get tempted by the Black Friday offers and sales on the run up to the period.

Here are a few tips that I keep in mind, which really help me not to go overboard at Christmas.

And remember, no loved ones would want you to go into debt for them over the festive period. And don't forget to please get in touch with our Money Matters team if you have any concerns about finances.



Buy second hand

You can get some amazing deals on Facebook market place, Vinted and eBay. Charity shops and car boot sales have some really unique items for a bargain that you wouldn't find on the high street. Anything from gifts for children like toys and equipment, to clothes, books and collectables; you can get beautiful presents for a fraction of the price. Plus, it's great for the environment.

Homemade is often best

A thoughtful homemade gift can go a long way. Some homemade treats from the kitchen, a crafted decoration or painted picture can really show someone you care.

Use the five gift rule

Something they need, something to read, something to wear, something they want, something to do. Keeping these categories in mind will help save you money, and prevent you from over-buying.

Club in with friends or family to do a secret Santa

This is great for work colleagues or large families. Stick to a budget and buy for one rather than everyone.

There are many benefits to being online, from managing your money through banking apps and applying for work or benefits to booking GP and blood test appointments. Importantly, you can make great savings comparing the cost of insurance and buying everyday items online.

If you are struggling to get online and would benefit from a device or sim card, please get in touch with your Housing Executive or the Money Matters team.



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- 1 Something they need
 - 2 Something to read
 - 3 Something to wear
 - 4 Something they want
 - 5 Something to do

Call 01952 217234 or email money.matters@wrekin.com

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE'S LIVES

Over the past 12 months, we've continued to support customers, communities and the local economy during the cost-of-living crisis.

Here are just some of our highlights.



We invested over

£88m

to make both our new and existing homes more energy efficient



We secured

£5.5m

in extra income for tenants via our Money Matters team



We provided

255

tenants with digital support



We gifted

1,378

staff volunteer hours to help good causes



Boxing club gets a makeover

Len Woodhall Community Boxing Club near Madeley, Telford was given a makeover with the help of our staff. They volunteered their time to paint and fix the roof at the local boxing club – helping transform the space for its members.



Helping local schools

As part of the Hands-on Help scheme, we are able to offer materials and labour to not-for-profit organisations. Donnington Wood Infant School received new slabs to their outdoor area, helping make it more accessible for staff, parents and children.



Creating spaces for communities to enjoy

We teamed up with one of our contractors to transform the garden at Telford Central Mosque. The space is now being enjoyed by community members and volunteers for a wide range of uses, including a gardening club and wellbeing activities.

MyWrekin App is the easy way to manage your tenancy

Make payments, book repairs, request money advice from our Money Matters team, access your 30% discount for Wrekin Revive, and follow the progress of any ASB cases you've reported.



Download from the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#)

