

TENANT MATTERS


MHA
Monmouthshire Housing
Tai Sir Fynwy

Winter 2019




MAKING A
DIFFERENCE
AWARDS 2019

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

JONATHAN'S WELCOME

MAKING A DIFFERENCE AWARDS

MEET OUT CUSTOMER SERVICE ADVISORS

FIRE SAFETY IN YOUR HOME

CALDICOT SUMMER OF FUN

AND MUCH MORE

Tenant Matters

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If you would like this Newsletter in a different format (e.g. large print or electronically) or in Welsh please contact **Harrison Andrews** on **01495 767177** or email **harrison.andrews@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk**

☎ **0345 677 2277**

@ **customerservices@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk**

🌐 **www.monmouthshirehousing.co.uk**

📘 **[facebook.com/Monmouthshire.Housing](https://www.facebook.com/Monmouthshire.Housing)**

🐦 **twitter.com/mon_housing**



Scan the QR code to access the MHA website.



Welcome from our new Head of Neighbourhoods

"I'm absolutely thrilled to have started as the new Head of Neighbourhoods at MHA; I've been impressed by the achievements and high standards of service delivered by MHA year on year, which was part of what attracted me to the role.

In terms of my background, I've worked in community safety and housing management for over 10 years throughout Cardiff, Newport and the valleys of Rhondda Cynon Taff and Merthyr; delivering and improving services in order to meet the needs of local communities.

My role includes leading the Rent Management, Neighbourhoods and Community Safety teams, who carry out amazing work and for many, are the face of MHA. I'm already enjoying working with the teams and residents to build on this success and am eager to see that the great work MHA does to support its residents is recognised. A great recent example of this is our Neighbourhoods and Tenancy Coaching teams being shortlisted for the Housing Champions Award at the CIH Welsh Housing Awards 2019.

There are lots of challenges ahead, but I'll be starting with a review of our Income Collection service which is crucial to ensuring the best outcomes for our residents and MHA in light of welfare reform changes and Universal Credit. This will run alongside the delivery of our WHQS (Welsh Housing Quality Standard) environmental works program, which represents significant investment in ensuring that the areas surrounding our properties are attractive and safe.

Your opinions and views are essential to ensuring what MHA does continues to be a success, so please speak to our staff, watch this space and our website for opportunities to get involved!"

Jonathan Tumelty

Head of Neighbourhoods



Be a **star payer** this Christmas

There is no doubt Christmas is an expensive time, with buying Christmas presents, sending cards and having that show stopping Christmas tree.

Don't forget to put **paying rent** at the top of your Christmas to do list!

If you're on Universal Credit, the best way to check when you should get your payment is by logging on to your journal and checking the payment screen. Your payment date will then go back to normal in January.

If you're struggling to pay your rent, talk to us. MHA is a rent first organisation and we will be able to support you. Call your Income Officer on **01495 761 016**.

Helping you this

Christmas

Rent free weeks - How do I qualify?

As a tenant of MHA, you will get two rent free weeks this December! This means that on the 16th and 23rd December you will not be charged rent. If you have a clear rent account with a week's credit, this means you may not have to pay anything towards your account*.

If your rent account is not one week in credit or if you have a debt on your account, you will still be expected to pay. It is best to contact your income officer to discuss how much you're expected to pay during this time. This is especially important if you have a high debt or a court order.

*If you pay MONTHLY, you will still be expected to pay your monthly amount in full. This is because of the way we calculate your monthly amount. It means that you get 12 equal payments at a lower amount than if you didn't get the free weeks.

If you do still want to make a payment towards your account, this is a great opportunity to get your account in to credit which may help if you face any issues paying in the future.

When will I get my universal credit over the bank holidays

Normal Payment Date	New Payment Date
21st/22nd Dec	20th Dec
25th Dec	24th Dec
26th Dec	24th Dec
28th/29th Dec	27th Dec
1st Jan	30th Dec

Don't forget, if you're on Universal Credit, the best way to check when you should get your payment is by logging on to your journal and checking the payment screen. Your payment date will then go back to normal in January.



Tenant Matters

Ways to pay your rent

Direct Debit

- If you would like to pay your rent by Direct Debit please contact us on **01495 745770** or **01495 761109** to set up over the phone
- A Direct Debit can be set up for any day of the month and for any frequency including weekly, fortnightly, monthly, four weekly and quarterly. Please advise us when you call your preferred choice

Standing Order

- You can set up a standing order with your bank or building society to pay an amount on a day or date you decide using Account Number 40601837 and Sort Code 20-01-43.
- Standing Orders are made between you and your bank or building society and cannot be varied by MHA.
- Payments are credited to your account within 2 working days.
- Please note – ensure you give your tenancy reference or property address when making payments – otherwise we will not be able to credit the payment to your account

Internet Banking

- Payments are made via MHA's website – **www.monmouthshirehousing.co.uk**
- Payments are credited to your account within 2 working days
- If you use internet banking via your bank or building society's website or mobile phone app, you can set up MHA as a payee for your rent using Account Number 40601837 and Sort Code 20-01-43
- Please note - ensure you give your tenancy reference or property address when making payments - otherwise we will not be able to credit the payment to your account

Telephone

- You can make a payment over the phone using a debit or credit card by calling us free on **0800 085 3557** - Select option 1 for the 24 hour automated payment line or; select option 2 if you wish to speak to an advisor (between the hours of 8:30am-5:00pm Monday-Thursday, or 8:30am-4:30pm Friday)
- Payments are credited to your account on the next working day
- If you select 1, you will need to have already registered you AllPay reference number

Allpay

- Firstly, you need to register your AllPay reference Number (the number that appears on your AllPay card) on the AllPay website: **www.allpayments.net**. You will need your email address to do this. You need to do this for the service below:
- The AllPay Payment App
- Pay by text
- 24 hour telephone payment line
- AllPay website
- Payment Card (see below)
- For further information call **0345 677 2277** or visit our website **www.monmouthshirehousing.co.uk/allpay**

Allpay Payment Card

- An AllPay payment card can be used at any post office or outlet displaying the 'PayPoint Logo'
- Payments are credited to your account in 3 – 4 working days from the date paid
- All receipts must be kept as proof of payment
- Please call **01495 745770** to order a AllPay Payment Card
- For further information call **0345 677 2277** or visit our website **www.monmouthshirehousing.co.uk/allpay**

Cash or Cheque

- Cash can be paid into any branch of Barclays Bank using Account Number 40601837 and Sort Code 20-01-43
- All receipts must be kept as proof of payment
- Please make cheques payable to Monmouthshire Housing Association Ltd and post to: Monmouthshire Housing Association, Nant-Y-Pia House, Mamhilad Technology Park, Mamhilad, Monmouthshire, NP4 0JJ
- Payments may take up to 5 working days to be credited to your account

Is this Christmas time a struggle?

Christmas time can be a difficult time for many people for many different reasons. There is lots of amazing support out there so please let us help you!

I'm waiting for my first UC payment

Have you recently made a claim for Universal Credit? Are you concerned about how you will pay your basic bills until you get your first payment? At MHA we have lots of resources to be able to help you. Please call the Income team or Money Wise team who will be able to offer specific Universal Credit support.

I've got debt this Christmas

Money Wise and debt advice services help MHA tenants maximise their income and reduce personal debt. The services are free and confidential and can help you reduce your outgoings, so you have more money in your pocket. The Money Wise team have helped MHA tenants by advising on how to best manage benefits, bills and debts. Call **0345 677 2277** if you think they could help you. Alternatively call National Debtline: **0808 808 4000** or Stepchange Debt Charity: **0800 138 1111**.

I can't cope this Christmas

Don't struggle alone. The charities below are there to help you all year round and offer a range of support.

Samaritans: **116 123** (Free, 24 hours a day)

Age UK Advice Line: A national free phone service for older people: **0800 055 6112** (Free to call 8:00am - 7:00pm every day)

I will be alone this Christmas

If you will be alone this Christmas and are interested in different events that will be going on in the community, please speak to the Engagement team. They will be able to help link you up with different activities or lunches that may be happening.

If you know of any events that are going on such as Christmas lunches then please let us know! You can contact the team on **01495 761157**.

I want to plan for next Christmas

The Credit Union have a Christmas Saver Account which is a popular way to save for the festive season. You can choose whether to save a regular amount or just a few pounds whenever you can. You can withdraw the money any time between November 1st and 31st December. Pop in to your local Credit Union centre to start saving for next year! If you are an MHA tenant you get £10 credited to the Christmas account when it is opened.

If you're struggling to pay your rent, talk to us. MHA is a rent first organisation and we will be able to support you. Call us on **01495 761 016**.



REDUCING LONELINESS

Owls & Acorns is an intergenerational scheme set up by therapists working in Monmouthshire's intergenerational team. The scheme brings older people from the community and children from the local schools together for an hour and a half on a weekly basis to spend time together. The group aims to reduce loneliness and isolation in our rural communities and to contribute to improving the wellbeing of all of those who attend.

Earlier this year the scheme applied for MHA Pitch for Your Project funding and were successful in obtaining future funding for the scheme. The funding has meant that they have been able to continue to deliver the scheme to residents in Raglan and Usk and that they have been able to recruit two further schools in Monmouth.

The long term plan is to continue to expand with a primary goal of being able to deliver intergenerational opportunities in central Monmouthshire and eventually the whole of the county.

"We are hugely grateful for the monies from MHA; this has benefitted the group and speeded up our expansion plans meaning that we are able to engage and deliver the scheme to a wider audience across Monmouthshire."

Bronwen lives with family; health reasons have meant that her ability and confidence in going

out has become less and less in recent months. Through involvement with the integrated team she was approached about coming to the group. We arranged for Bronwen to be registered with the car scheme so that she can attend independent of her family, which is important to her. Bronwen is in her third term of Owls and Acorns, which she thoroughly enjoys, but it was in her first term that she made a special connection.

Bronwen was paired with one of the Year 6 boys for two consecutive weeks; when the cohort of children changed the young boy asked if he could have her phone number – this was facilitated by the team and with parental consent they then began communicating outside of the group. Initially Bronwen was overwhelmed by the fact that an 11 year old boy would have enjoyed her company to the extent that he wanted to maintain their friendship. Their phone calls continue to this day (and she still can't believe it!)



Cwrt Severn Garden Party

At the end of August on one of the hottest days of the year, the tenants of Cwrt Severn in Caldicot had a garden party to celebrate their new garden of raised beds, seating and lovely new paths.

With the support of the Caldicot Friends of MHA and MHA staff, a lovely afternoon was had with invited guests, family and friends. It was great that the friends of the library and some local brownies could join in the fun and games. It was lovely to see the older generation teaching the children to play croquet, their laughter was infectious.

A beautiful spread with some home-baked cakes was served on vintage china and table cloths kindly loaned by Mr and Mrs Strong. Cwrt Severn tenants that couldn't make it to the party weren't forgotten as we took some treats to them and many said that they loved the atmosphere of the party, thanks also to Nick Russell who provided fabulous entertainment.

Thanks to Ray Francis for our fantastic photos – check out Ray's achievements in this copy of Tenant Matters





HomeSwapper

The easy way to mutually exchange!

Is 'bedroom tax' affecting you, causing financial difficulties? Look on HomeSwapper to swap to a smaller home to avoid the unwanted 'bedroom tax'.

There are 500,000 homes already registered across the UK. Check out some of the current MHA tenants looking to swap with you and register your interest to mutually exchange your tenancy now at www.homeswapper.co.uk



**Grove Avenue,
Llanfoist /
Abergavenny**

Property: 2 Bed
Apartment
Tenancy type: Assured
Rent per wk: £97.60



**Blethyn Close,
Shirenewton/
Chepstow**

Property: 3 Bed House
Tenancy type: Assured
Rent per wk: £102.05



**Railway View
Caldicot**

Property: 2 Bed House
Tenancy type: Assured
Short Hold
Rent per wk: £95.14



**Rother Avenue
Abergavenny**

Property: 1 Bed
Apartment
Tenancy type: Secured
Rent per wk: £91.75



**Oakley Way,
Caldicot**

Property: 2 Bed
Apartment
Tenancy type: Assured
Rent per wk: £104.00



**Poorscript Lane,
Grosmont**

Property: 3 Bed House
Tenancy type:
Enhanced Assured
Rent pr wk: £110.51



**Western Avenue,
Bulwark/
Chepstow**

Property: 2 Bed House
Tenancy type: Assured
Rent per wk: £96.00



Bersondy, Raglan

Property: 2 Bed House
Tenancy type: Assured
Rent per wk: £104.64

The above property details were correct at time of print.

Downsize into your DREAM HOME

Downsizing from your family home can seem like a daunting task; where would all the furniture go? Where would the grandkids stay? But it doesn't need to be and there are some fantastic benefits as well as knowing a brand new family will be able to enjoy your former home where you raised your family including;

- Priority Homesearch banding for those giving up under-occupied family homes
- Reduced living costs and bills
- Reduced energy consumption
- Easier to maintain
- Moving to a property that will suit your needs as you age
- New neighbours and a new community – with the same landlord and services available

We recently worked with the Welsh School of Architecture to build four one bedroom courtyard bungalows in Abergavenny at Cwrt y Fynnon.

With priority given to those downsizing from under-occupied family homes, these bungalows were designed to offer a generous living and outside space with a secure, private, low maintenance courtyard garden.

Each bungalow has been built to be sustainable and energy efficient with a Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) – the official Government approved system for assessing the energy rating for a new home – rating of over 100.

These bungalows proved popular with potential downsizers at our open days with many shocked at how light and spacious the bungalows were.

If you are under-occupying or thinking of downsizing, there are bungalows regularly available via Monmouthshire Homesearch. To downsize into the home of your dreams make sure you are registered with Monmouthshire Homesearch to start bidding.

To register with Homesearch visit **www.monmouthshirehomesearch.co.uk/choice** or call **0345 900 2956**.





Sandra Flanagan, shortlisted for Outstanding Contribution to MHA Award



Growing Space, Winner of Best Group, Project or Initiative Award



Volunteers from Mardy Neighbours Working Together Group

This year, we were back with a bang at the 2019 Making a Difference Awards. The awards showcase the amazing work that goes on in our communities by volunteers who give their time so generously and expect nothing in return.

Now in its 9th year, the annual Making a Difference Awards were held at the beautiful 14th-century manor home in Chepstow, St. Pierre Marriott Hotel & Country Club.

Many of the stories that were shared at the awards were truly inspirational and showcased real determination and dedication, with some stories even bringing a tear to many guests' eyes.

Nominated by Dads Can Cymru Development Worker Lee Davies, Jason Marshall won Inspirational Young Person. At 22 years old, he is a fantastic dad with a real drive to do the best by his family. After moving to Monmouthshire, he was left feeling isolated and in need of support. Following

this, Jason began volunteering in his local shop which helped to improve his confidence.

Jason has also volunteered on a number of occasions with Dads Can Cymru. He has helped with the landscaping of a children's play area in a school and has assisted with the building of a mud kitchen for a local school in his community.

Jason has now gone from volunteering to entering employment into the retail sector. He was delighted to pick up the award, adding, "I am pleased to win this award and I could not have done it without the support of Lee and Dads Can Cymru".



Jason Marshall, Winner of the Inspirational Young Person Award



Abergavenny Pride, shortlisted for the Best Group, Project or Initiative Award



Gilwern Roots, shortlisted for the Best Group, Project or Initiative award

The other winners were:

Neighbour from Heaven

Jenny King

Community Champion

Claire Wheeler

Outstanding achievement in Self-development

Theresa Thomas

Most inspirational Journey

Ray Francis

Best group, project or initiative

Growing Space

Outstanding contribution to MHA

Friends of MHA

Volunteer of the Year

Michael Elliott

Sylvia Meredith was one of the many tenants that left the awards feeling inspired, "I feel very happy, full of self-pride and confidence after the awards. All the staff and contestants were inspiring and thought provoking".

MHA Director of Housing and Communities, Michele Morgan, who hosted the evening, added, "It was a privilege to host such a wonderful event. The Making a Difference Awards are the perfect way to reward our tenants for helping make our communities a place where people aspire to live and work".

"We are already looking forward to celebrating our 10 year anniversary of the Making a Difference awards next year!"



GOOD AS GOLD

Your chance to win £50*

As some of you may know, we currently run a Good as Gold scheme that rewards tenants that are up to date on their rent. The scheme is our way of saying thank you for helping MHA to have some of the lowest levels of rent arrears in the country. Every penny of the rent you pay is returned in services and improvements for you!

The draw takes place every three months on the first Monday of that month and costs absolutely nothing to participate. As an MHA tenant, you are automatically entered into the draw as long as your rent has been paid on time over this period. This applies to those who pay fully or partially themselves and for those who receive Housing Benefit.

There are five winners each round and each are contacted by telephone and in writing within three working days of the draw taking place. One of the winners will be randomly chosen to receive the prize money personally from a member of staff of MHA at a time and place mutually agreed. MHA may wish to publicise the winner through its tenant newsletter or other publications, although the winner is free to refuse and no pictures will be published without permission.

We'd like to offer our congratulations to Mr Whitehead and Mrs Howells who were just two of the four Good as Gold winners from our July draw. Whilst the December draw has already taken place, you're still in with a chance of being entered in to our April 2020 draw, good luck all!

No alternatives to money will be offered, the prize will be awarded by cheque. If the winner has no account a member of our staff will assist in opening one so that the prize money can be accessed. The cheque can only be made payable in the name of the tenant as the prize winner.

If you do not wish to participate in this scheme, please contact Harrison Andrews on **01495 767179** or email **harrison.andrews@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk**

*Terms and conditions apply



Have You Got Green Fingers?

Are you looking for a volunteer placement that will help make a real difference to yourself and residents in your local community?

Green Shoots is a small, friendly project in Monmouth. We are a group of volunteers who are helping to look after a garden for adults with additional needs. No previous experience is necessary and there are plenty of opportunities to learn new skills and gain hands-on experience in horticulture and health and social care. We offer a safe and supportive environment with support from a qualified and experienced gardener.

If you are interested, please contact Rachel Embury on **07940 150075** for further details.

Your Personal ALARM SERVICE

MHA's independent living schemes for the over 60's are all equipped with a 24 hour personal alarm which is a quick and simple way of getting help at the press of a button if you have an accident or emergency in your home.

Pulling the alarm or pressing your mobile pendant necklace will connect you quickly to a trained team of advisors who will be there to answer your call 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. This service is there to give you the freedom to live your life independently knowing that you can get help when you need it.

Here are the top three things to remember if you are an alarm user:

- 1.** Always activate your pull cord alarm or pendant if:
 - You fall
 - You are ill
 - You are worried about something in and around your home
- 2.** You should test your alarm at least once every month by pulling the pull cord or pressing your pendant. Let the advisor know it is an alarm test. You will never be criticised for testing your alarm.
- 3.** Please let MHA know if there is a change in your:
 - Mobility
 - Health
 - Next of Kin details

For any queries about your alarms service or equipment you can contact Sandra Hancock at MHA on **01495 745758**.

Getting to know your... Customer Service

We know first impressions are important, but lasting impressions are everything to us. We are a friendly team who will do everything we can to help, working with you to find the best solution. We are available to help you log repairs for your home, pay your rent or enquire about your account. We will help you access the information or support you need to enjoy your tenancy with MHA to its fullest. You can now reach the team by phone, email, Facebook or our website, where you can chat with the team instantly, perfect for those busy days. With a recent change in management what better time to introduce ourselves and help you get to know the face behind the voice.

Ways to contact us:

- Via our website forms and Live Chat at **www.monmouthshirehousing.co.uk**
- By email at **customerservices@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk**
- By Facebook message
- By phone on **0345 677 2277**



Victoria

Customer Service Manager
Positive, Empowering,
Committed

Favourite part of the job:

Making sure our customers can access us in a way that suits them when they need us most and supporting the team so they can be the best they can.



Claire

Customer Service Assistant
Happy, Organised, Patient

Favourite part of the job:

MHA's sunny, funny customers who make me smile.

Service Team



Jo

Customer Service Assistant
Methodical, Conscientious, Caring

Favourite part of the job:

I love the interaction with customers, building a rapport with them and the job satisfaction I get from resolving their issue as best as I can.



Rhiannon

Customer Service Assistant
Bubbly, Fun, Local Bingo Caller

Favourite part of the job:

I love working with the other CSA's as we work really well as a team. They're like my second family.



Kayleigh

Customer Service Assistant
Conscientious, Calm, Gentle

Favourite part of the job:

I really enjoy speaking with our tenants and doing my best to deliver an excellent service for them.



Pat

Customer Service Assistant
Fair, Consistent, Messy

Favourite part of the job:

I love the fact that every call is different and brings variety to my day.



Karen

Customer Service Assistant
Honest, Conscientious, Humorous

Favourite part of the job:

I enjoy working as part of a close knit team.



Karren

Customer Service Assistant
Bubbly, Loud, Caring

Favourite part of the job:

I love my team mates and the difference we make.



Left to right: Adults are Sarah Griffiths, Kelly Leslie, Meghan Davies, Natasha Lucas, & Fiona Johnson.

Charlotte Coultas (Adult)
and Summer Coultas (Child)





No stopping the Mardy Neighbours Working Together Group

In the Summer 2019 edition of the newsletter, you met the Mardy Community Group 'Neighbours Working Together'. Set up in 2018, the group of volunteers are continuing to grow from strength to strength, arranging a variety of events for the community of Mardy, Abergavenny over the last 6 months.

Meeting on a monthly basis, the group discuss what is important to the community and arrange activities and events based on feedback from consultations with the wider community. The group are passionate about providing opportunities that bring everyone together whilst helping those who may be experiencing hardship.

In April 2019, the community suggested, during a community consultation, if a day trip could be arranged as a way of bringing the community together. Neighbours Working Together gained funding for the trip by working with MHA's Community Benefits Scheme and on Tuesday 13th August 2019 58 adults and children enjoyed a beautiful sunny day on Barry Island beach. The

families enjoyed building sand castles, family picnics and ice cream of course!

The group have been working hard collecting donations of clothes for their Keep Warm campaign. On Friday 27th September 2019 the group held their first Keep Warm event at the Acorn Centre, Abergavenny where free clothes were available for individuals or families to take away. Lots of families came along, enjoyed a cuppa and biscuit and enjoyed browsing around the stalls and took home numerous items of warm winter wear.

Need help with King Henry VIII School uniform? There are some jumpers, trousers and blazers available.

To get involved, donate or if you would like further information about accessing the Keep Warm campaign contact Alison on 07519 281832.

Why join Neighbours Working Together?

Members of the Neighbours Working Together Group have said that by getting involved they have gained confidence, made new friends and enjoyed getting involved with the wider community. The group are continuing to gain experience and are widening their skill set by taking part. Access lots of informal training, the group have completed Understanding Social Housing, Basic Food Hygiene and Autistic Awareness to name a few.

What's next?

Coming to Mardy soon is crochet / health and wellbeing sessions and healthy cooking classes. Dates and venues are to be confirmed. All MHA tenants are welcome to attend and take part in these whether you are a member of the group or not.

If you would like further information about the group or activities, or want to get involved, please contact Carol Smith on **07422 077124**.

Would you like some help shopping online this Christmas?

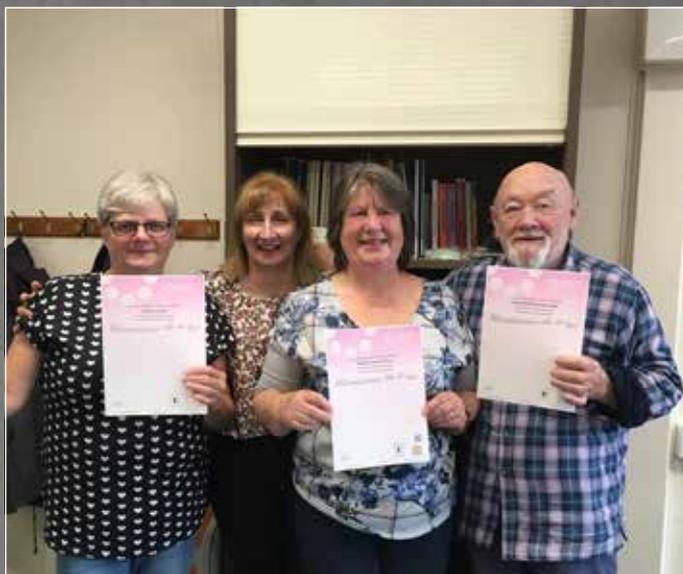
'Coffee and Computers' are free weekly sessions that run in Abergavenny, where you can learn valuable computer skills in an informal and relaxed way.

There are so many benefits to shopping online, it's convenient, quick, you find better prices, you have more variety, and there are no Christmas crowds and no sales pressure. The Shopping Online sessions show you how to shop safely, giving you peace of mind that your personal details are safe.

Facilitated by Adult Education, come along to the Adult Education Centre on Old Hereford Road at 10am every Thursday (during term time), grab a coffee, pull up a chair and learn computer skills at a pace that suits you.

For beginners you can complete Introduction to Computers and Digital Awareness.

If you would like further information please contact Carol Smith on **07422 077124** or email **carol.smith@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk**



Christine Lambert, Cheryl (Tutor), Kathleen Viveash and Stanley Jones





Victor leading the African drumming session

MHA POP UP EVENT IN THE MARDY

On Saturday 7th September 2019, MHA 'Popped Up' in the Acorn Centre, and Deri View School, Abergavenny to talk to the community about how easy our customers find accessing our services and how well do they think we are doing – but in a very fun way.

Around 40 families attended the fun session, which had plenty of activities to keep the children happy including a bouncy castle, giant board games, face painting, a duck race and a Mad Science Workshop where children experienced crazy chemistry. The children also had a great time sitting in the big fire engine tender which South Wales Fire Service kindly brought along.

The event was a great way of engaging the wider community and tenants were able to meet our new Business Evolution Lead Cheryl Tracy. This was the first tenant consultation event that has taken place as part of MHA's Business Evolution project and lots more are planned to take place across Monmouthshire over the next year.

Kath Deakin MHA Head of Sustainable Communities said; "What a great turn out and to see so many families out on this beautiful day."

Quotes from some of our participants:

"Hi there just want to say BIG THANKS for today's event at Deri View School. We had so much fun and delicious pizza. my boy was very happy. Great job!"

"Hi MHA, I just wanted to let you know we had a wonderful time at the event today. Well done we all thoroughly enjoyed. The children had their faces painted and enjoyed the slime party. The pancake making was also great. When we got home they wanted to make pancakes again."

"This sort of event brings the community together and is very educational for our children. I think the seniors enjoyed it also. The tea, cake and pizzas were delicious and when we went home we were presented with a pot plant for our garden, what a nice touch, well done MHA and the main thing was we didn't have to spend any money, it was all on MHA."

"It's great that you do this, keep up the good work and thank you for a fab time to everyone who worked hard for the community."

FIRE SAFETY IN YOUR HOME

A fire can start in any room of the home and the effects can be devastating. Taking simple steps can help prevent these fires occurring.

Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms can save your life in the event of a fire. It is important to test your smoke alarm every month to make sure it is still working. Only take the battery out when you need to replace it.

Kitchen Fires

Most accidental fires start in the kitchen so it's important to take care when cooking...

- Try not to leave cooking unattended on the hob or grill
- Take care not to lean over a hot hob and always keep tea towels and cloths away from the cooker and hob
- Try to keep the oven, hob and cooker clean. Built up fat and grease can ignite and cause a fire
- Use spark devices to light gas cookers, they are much safer than matches or lighters
- Double check the cooker and hob are turned off when you've finished cooking
- Check toasters are clean and not placed under kitchen cabinets or close to anything that can catch fire
- Never put anything metal in the microwave

Electrical Fires

Electrical fires are common, but can be avoided. Make sure you:

- Keep electrical appliances clean and in good working order
- Empty fluff regularly from tumble dryers.
- Hair straighteners get extremely hot. Always switch them off and leave them to cool on a heatproof surface
- Keep to one plug per socket. High powered appliances such as washing machines should have a single socket to themselves.
- Don't overload plug sockets, adaptors, or extension leads
- Watch out for loose wiring, scorch marks and hot plugs and sockets
- Always use the charger that came with your phone, tablet, e-cigarette or mobile device or a genuine replacement
- Keep electric heaters clear from curtains and furniture and never use them to dry clothes



Fires Caused by Smoking

Fires caused by smoking result in more deaths than any other type of fire. To prevent these types of fires:

- Never smoke in bed
- Don't smoke in an armchair or sofa if you think you might fall asleep. Take extra care when you're tired, taking prescription drugs or if you've been drinking alcohol
- Don't leave lit cigarettes unattended
- Use proper ashtrays which can't tip over
- Stub cigarettes out properly and dispose of them carefully. Empty ashtrays carefully making sure that any smoking materials are out, cold and preferably wet before throwing them in a bin. Never use a waste paper basket.
- E-cigarettes can cause fires too. Never use a damaged e-cigarette, avoid leaving them charging overnight and only use the battery and charger that it came with

Candles and Naked Flames

- Make sure any candles, incense and oil burners are put out when you leave the room and especially before bed
- These items should always be held in heat resistant holders and placed on a stable surface

- Keep naked flames away from materials that may catch fire such as curtains, furniture and clothes
- Keep candles and other naked flames out of reach of children and pets

Plan an Escape Route

In the event of a fire in the home, it is good to have a planned escape route. The best route is your normal way in and out of the house...

- Where possible, plan a second route just in case the first route is blocked
- Keep escape routes clear of anything that may slow you down or block your escape
- If you or anyone else in the home has mobility issues, ensure mobility aids and methods of calling for help are close to hand in case they are needed to assist with an escape
- In shared accommodation, where mobility scooters or prams are left in common areas or corridors, make sure that it is not blocking the means of escape for other residents should there be a fire

For more tips on staying fire safe in your home, visit www.gov.uk/government/publications/make-your-home-safe-from-fire

COMBATING CONDENSATION

As the cold weather approaches, condensation and the mould it causes may soon start to appear around your home.

Condensation occurs when there is an increase in humidity in your home, causing moisture to be suspended in the air. When it comes into contact with a cold surface like glass, external walls or the corners of ceilings and walls, it reaches dew point and turns back into water droplets. Mould will start to appear as a cloud of black dots in this area.

In a move to make our homes more energy efficient, ventilation can be reduced, particularly in older properties. However, even in the newest of homes condensation can appear. We've put together some tips and tricks for keeping mould at bay.

What can I do to prevent mould forming?

- Make sure you ventilate your home. Keep doors closed when bathing, showering or cooking and ventilate the rooms (mechanically or naturally).
- Close doors when showering and cooking and use lids on saucepans.
- Help reduce condensation that has built up overnight by cross ventilating your home during the day. Open a small window downstairs and a small window on the opposite side of the house upstairs and open the doors to allow fresh air to circulate through the house. Wipe down windows and sills in the morning if moisture has accumulated.
- Help air to circulate by keeping a small gap between larger items of furniture (wardrobes, cupboards, and sofas e.t.c.) and the walls or floors.
- Don't dry washing on radiators as the moisture will be suspended in the air creating more humidity. If you have to, keep the door shut to the room and the windows open.
- Ensure that tumble dryers are condensing so that the water is captured in a container which can be emptied out into a drain or bottled and used when using a steam iron. If the dryer is not condensing ensure that it is connected to an external vent so moisture is not released into the property.
- Make sure that trickle vents on your windows are left open so that fresh air can enter the property.
- Try to ensure that you maintain a constant temperature in your home (between 18 and 22 degrees). This will keep condensation to a minimum and be more cost effective than switching your heating on and off throughout the day.

WELLBEING CAMPAIGN

What can I do if I find mould around my home?

- Don't use bleach or washing up liquid. Mould will actually increase if you use these products as mould loves to grow on the residue.
- To remove mould you can use a fungicidal treatment or spray that has been approved by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and ensure that you follow the instructions for its safe use. You can buy this type of spray in most supermarkets and DIY stores.

Remember, if the damp patches have a 'tide mark', salt deposits, correspond with an external defect or are in areas not associated with cold spots (such as internal walls), then the dampness could be caused by a defect. If this is the case you should report the defect to us as soon as it is noticed.

If you want more information contact the Customer Service team on **0345 677 2277** or visit **reducemouldy.co.uk/campaign-to-reduce-mould** this website will share a video we can add to our website for info. Was wondering if we share the link in the magazine and add it to our website we might be able to use the graphics above?



Wellbeing for Single Parents

Single Parents Wellbeing (SPW) is for single parents by single parents with a focus on wellbeing. SPW is a compassionate, proactive and empowering approach to being a single parent. We offer outdoor meet ups, events and wellbeing workshops.

Come and join our ever expanding community.

You can find out more and join our closed Facebook group which you can access from **www.singleparentswellbeing.com**

Follow us @**[singleparentswellbeing](https://twitter.com/singleparentswellbeing)**



Welsh Tenant of the Year

Back in July, Emlyn Lunn a tenant volunteer from Chepstow won the Welsh Tenant of the Year Award at TPAS Cymru's Participation Awards held in the Park Hotel, Cardiff.

Emlyn has been volunteering with MHA for the past six years, originally as a member of the former Tenants' Forum and then as a member of the Service Testing Team and he is currently vice chair of the Scrutiny Panel. Emlyn is passionate about ensuring that MHA delivers the best possible services to its tenants and leaseholders and his nomination was backed by both fellow tenants and staff alike. MHA's Chief Executive John Keegan said; "Everybody at MHA is extremely proud of Emlyn winning this prestigious award, he is a deserved winner and his keen eye and intellect certainly makes sure that we always utilise our resources efficiently and effectively providing the best possible services to our customers." Emlyn also wanted to acknowledge his fellow tenants and his wife; "Without them, winning this award would not have been possible." Well done Emlyn and keep up the good work!

Are you keen to influence & improve the services MHA provides?

The Service Testing Team is a vibrant group of mystery shoppers that test MHA services from the point of view of you, the tenant, helping us to monitor and improve the services we provide.

To date, the team has been busy reviewing the rent payment line, informal complaints process and Homesearch with many more checks in the pipeline.

As a member of the team you will learn a variety of transferable skills, make new friends and hopefully have fun!

But don't just take our word for it, check out the Service Testing Team video on MHA's website to hear from current members about what being part of the team means to them!

The team meets every few months and you can attend to suit you. Transport can be provided or travel expenses reimbursed and there's also a complimentary buffet and refreshments in recognition of your contribution.

The door to MHA is always open so why not join the Service Testing Team? You too can influence, improve and inspire.

To register your interest please contact Lorna lorna.selmer@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk or Marianne marianne.marianne.bowen@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk or call **01495 745776** or **01495 761142** for an informal chat.

Please note that STT members must be current MHA tenants and over 18 years of age.



Garages & Carports

Our garages and carports are available for both tenants and other members of the public to rent. Over the last couple of months we've updated how we manage them. To help us to do this, we've worked with a number of tenants and garage and carport applicants and used their feedback to make changes.

Some examples of where we've made improvements include:

- Increasing the time someone has to respond to an offer to rent a garage or carport from 48 hours to 72 hours.
- We've changed our policy to allow household/domestic items to be stored in garages (that must not be hazardous/dangerous/illegal/a nuisance) without MHA's prior approval and in areas where parking is in low demand. We would still remove this permission, for example, if parking became a premium.
- Supporting community and/or volunteer groups by updating our policy to explain we will consider renting a garage to such groups in areas where parking is in low demand.

If you'd like to know more about the recent improvements we've made please contact **kim.davies@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk** or **01495 767176**.

You can also apply for a garage or carport by completing an application form available at www.monmouthshirehousing.co.uk

Garages cost around £6.00 per week for MHA tenants to rent and £7.50 for others and carports are around £2.00 per week and £2.40 per week respectively.

If you have any more questions about renting a garage or carport please get in touch with us via the contact us button on our website or ring **0345 677 2277**.

Caldicot SUMMER of Fun

During the summer in partnership with Friends of MHA Caldicot Neighbourhood Planning Group, we had lots of fun and informative days. We had Fun and Fitness once a week, including a day at the castle for a community sports day. The adults were more competitive than the children!



“What a lovely day to see everyone playing together. Loved the picnic.”

Breakfast club

We had lots of picnics and weekly breakfast clubs which were well attended. Every child that attended breakfast club was given a choice of a new healthy cereal to try and this worked really well. Lots of children discovered a new love for fruit and strawberries went down a storm.



“I think breakfast was such a great idea, my baby has never eaten so well at breakfast time. It has given us a reason to get up and out on a Monday morning. Thank you for all you do.”

Music to our ears

We had Victor from Promo Cymru at some sessions and he taught tenants how to play African drums. The children and adults all loved making music and we have some budding musicians on our hands... they will be gigging in a venue near you soon.



It's a small world

Friends of MHA organised an event called 'It's a Small World.' Members of the group cooked food from all over the world. We had a huge feast of Indian platters, Chinese buffets, Italian pizzas and Mexican nachos. Tenants also ran their own craft table where they made items from all over the world.



"Excellent event. My kids and I have really enjoyed cooking and trying the different foods. Really enjoyed making Chinese lanterns. It's really great to see the community coming together."

End of Summer party

There was an end of summer party and this was really well attended. We had a visit from the Mad Scientist who did lots of experiments with the children, cake decorating, a pizza van and lots of fun and games. We even had our very own Superhero's in attendance.



If you would like to know what else is going on in the south of the county or have any suggestions of things you would like to see in your area, please contact Clare Evans on **07855 019933** or email **clare.evans@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk**



Rising out of isolation into volunteering with **Rise to Inspire**

“I knew getting a dog would help but I didn’t realise how much.”

Feeling isolated and alone is never a happy experience but for one of our tenants this was an everyday reality.

“I was on a low income and couldn’t work due to illness and just felt worthless. I couldn’t afford to go out and socialise, as a result I did not leave the house for months. Even my food shopping was done online.”

“I just felt like I kept getting knocked back. I always say it felt the same as walking along a road and having a car drive through a puddle and splash you. I just felt like there was no one to support me or who would try and help me. I started working with Monmouthshire Mind, they helped me manage my mental health, as well as enable me to get my finances in order and regain a small part of my freedom.”

“It was after the support from Mind, that I decided to find a reason to leave the house every day. Which was why at the end of last year, I got a puppy called Popeye. Popeye meant that I had to go out every day. Just by walking him I felt less isolated. I met people who stopped to say hello to him and once again I began to interact with the community.”

The dog has been the best thing, he loves going out and it has helped me get out."

"MHA have also been fantastic during this time. Without Tracy and Cath I wouldn't be here. I was in contact with Cath from the Work & Skills Wise team and she saw all the photography I had done and set me up with e-learning courses on photography. Cath put me in touch with Tracy and the Rise to Inspire project and it was Tracy who reminded me of hobbies I had before I got ill and encouraged me to take them up again. I had been doing photography for 10 years, I just have an eye for it, but I just stopped. I'm happy to say I have taken it up again and occasionally get asked if I can do a photoshoot for Monmouthshire Meadows and Natures Neat for their websites. I hope to do more of this in the future."

"Through the Rise to Inspire project I became part of the car share scheme. I used to be a chauffeur and now use these skills at the Bridges Centre where I volunteer to drive people who can't access public transport to things like hospital appointments and to the shop. I do this a couple of times a week and it is just another way that I'm not isolating myself and meeting people whilst helping them. They have great stories and I love to chat to them and find out about their lives."

"It is nice to help people who have no one to help them and who might rely on services such as the Ambulance service or would be trapped in their homes. When I was ill I used the voluntary service so it is good to give back to them and help people and the system out."

This is not the only volunteering Ray has taken up and since working with Tracy and the Rise to Inspire project he regular volunteers as part of the befriending service at Cwrt Severn in Caldicot.

"I'm a regular at Cwrt Severn and spend a lot of time there chatting to people over a few biscuits and a coffee. Not only this but I'm now a lot more involved in my local community having helped out at an older residents Christmas dinner, as well as events such as exhibition weekends at the Roman Settlements and at the Monmouthshire Meadow open day where I show people around and make teas and coffees. I love my local history so chat to people about this and it's great to be a part of. Especially the Monmouthshire Meadow day which saw 90 people attend."

"I am now on a positive track and dodge the puddle. I hope to keep volunteering, giving back to the community and meeting interesting people."

Since working with Tracy, Ray has been recognised for his volunteering work by the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO).

Speaking of the progress Ray has made Rise to Inspire Facilitator Tracy Breadmore-Lammas said; "Ray has made excellent steps in reaching his goal of volunteering and helping others. He has built upon his personal experience and has been able to improve his health so that he can now regularly volunteer for several projects. Ray's increased confidence has taken him back to some of his pastimes and his photography skills are producing some great shots. We are all looking forward to Ray sharing his baking skills next."

Rise to Inspire is funded by Comic Relief and is available to people aged 55+ and helps people to beat loneliness and isolation by getting involved with local groups and the wider community from developing hobbies to getting online and improving health and wellbeing.

If you have an interest or hobby that you would like to share with others or would like to find out more about the project please contact Tracy Breadmore-Lammas on **07734 854865**.



FUNDED BY
**COMIC
RELIEF**



FEES & CHARGING

There have been a few enquiries from tenants over time asking about charges made by MHA. So we have put together the information below to help reply to these queries.

In line with the tenancy agreement, MHA is able to charge for repairs caused by neglect, damage or misuse of MHA property. An example might be where a tenant has not kept their home or garden in a satisfactory condition.

We can also charge a fee for work undertaken that is not MHA's responsibility such as replacing a toilet seat or changing a light bulb.

If you complete repair work yourself and it is not up to our standards, we will carry out the work to bring it up to standard and then we will charge for the work undertaken.

In some circumstances where tenants have deliberately wasted MHA's resources a charge is likely to be made. Examples would be where we can't get access for gas servicing and emergency appointments. We fully understand that circumstances may occur out of your control and we would ask that you notify us as soon as possible if you will not be home due to an emergency, but every reasonable attempt must be made to keep the appointment. Another example would be the dumping of rubbish in communal areas, which MHA then has to arrange to have removed. We would also charge when a tenancy ends and items are left in the property that MHA then has to dispose of.

We charge for work as appropriate and recover fees and charges because those funds are channelled back into the delivery of MHA's services to the benefit of all tenants.

Some simple precautions to prevent fees and charges are:

- Keep your home and garden in good condition
- Take care not to lose keys and fobs
- Don't make alterations to your home without discussing and gaining authorisation from MHA first
- Use qualified and reputable trades people when arranging work yourself
- Make sure you're in when we've made an appointment to visit you
- Take extra care when moving furniture around your home
- Don't coop up pets that need exercise in the home
- Don't dispose of items such as wet wipes down the toilet
- For straight-forward maintenance tasks such as replacing a bulb or toilet seat, use online resources, ask at your nearest DIY store or perhaps ask a friend or family member for help

Improving Your Neighbourhood

MHA is dedicated to providing our tenants with an environment that gives a brilliant quality of life in areas where people aspire to live and work. As part of this commitment our Neighbourhood team work closely with tenants to gather views on how communities can be improved - to make them attractive, safe places that tenants are proud to live in.

This year we have carried out work at a number of our properties, which has been influenced by tenants in the area, these include:

- Cwrt Severn
- St David's Road
- Grove Mansions
- Radstock
- Plas Mawr
- The Lawns

Some of the amazing work MHA has carried out in the last 12 months, is shown below:



We are currently working on our largest project to date; 'The Views' in Caldicot. This is a big regeneration project for Denny View, Estuary View, Moorland View & Railway View to transform the shared outdoor spaces.

The Neighbourhood team will be in the following areas in the next 12 months to speak to tenants about your views on how MHA can improve the following places:

- St David's Road
- Old Hereford Road
- The Albion
- Pitman's Court
- Newland Way
- Clare Court



HOMES *for the* FUTURE

To help tackle the housing crisis within the UK, MHA are committed to building at least 100 new homes per year. MHA deliver affordable housing by working with private developers, as well as redeveloping existing MHA sites (obsolete accommodation / garages), converting non-residential sites into residential accommodation, whilst also seeking land for new build developments. All of the new developments are carefully designed to ensure they have a positive impact on the surrounding environment.

Two of MHA's latest developments are funded through Welsh Government's Innovative Housing Programme (IHP). The developments consisted of two separate housing projects designed by Cardiff University Welsh School of Architecture. They were designed to respond to and meet the needs of an older generation of people in Monmouthshire who wanted to 'down-size' from larger properties, and a much younger generation who were looking for their first property and starting out on their property journey.

Two sites, one located in Caldicot and one in Abergavenny, were selected from a number of depleted, brownfield garage sites for the development of four houses on each site. The location was important for both projects as they needed to be in close proximity to local amenities.

Working closely together, MHA and Cardiff University came up with two different single bedroom house types; a terraced mews with patio aimed at people under the age of 35 and an 'interlocking' courtyard bungalow for older people.



The homes have been designed to achieve a high rating of thermal performance and energy efficiency. Each home has been built to be highly sustainable with a Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) in excess of 100. These energy efficient properties will provide lower bills, as well as having a lesser impact on the environment.

Throughout both projects, MHA used local contractors and suppliers where possible to reduce the carbon footprint of these developments. MHA used sustainable products, such as bamboo flooring, to reduce the use of plastic whilst still providing a high quality finish.

MHA are very proud that we used our own workforce to procure and construct the IHP developments. Our Building Services department received specific training from local companies on certain parts of the development, for example the integrated solar PV panels.

Both of these developments have regenerated the run-down garage sites into aspirational affordable housing where people really want to live.



Congratulations to Plas Mawr

Plas Mawr were awarded the silver award in Usk in Bloom for the flowers within the care sector.

Congratulations to all involved!



Your Heating

It's that time of year again and as the temperature drops the heating systems are raised from their slumbers. Most homes turn the heating back on in the autumn and this is when we get a high level of callouts for boiler failure. You can help to prevent this by making sure that we have access for the annual service of your boiler. This is both a legal and safety requirement and we have a duty to service all gas-fired boilers within each 12 month period.

Over 99% of MHA properties with a gas-fired heating system have the service completed within this target, but a small number of tenants make it difficult for the engineers to gain access. We have never had a major incident affecting health and safety and you can help us maintain this important record by allowing access for our engineers to carry out the annual service. This ensures the safety of yourself, your family and your neighbours. Please help us to protect you and keep you warm.

Help us to help you when your gas heating system breaks down...

Before calling us please check the following:

1. The heating system and hot water is switched on.
2. The heating programmer is timed to be on.
3. The room thermostat is set correctly.
4. You have gas and electric supply (credit on your token meter where fitted).
5. The pilot light is lit.

If you have checked the above and the heating or hot water system still does not work, please contact the repairs line. We will endeavour to correct faults promptly.

Repairs Hotline: **0800 980 7751**



MHA are always looking to improve and we want to hear from you!

Bright Ideas is our new Tenant Suggestion Scheme with the name and logo picked by you!

If your suggestion is accepted you'll be rewarded

£50

Submit your suggestion by:

- Filling in one of the suggestion cards tonight
- Filling out a form on our website: **www.monmouthshirehousing.co.uk/comments-form**
- Telling a member of staff
- Calling the Continuous Improvement Team on **01495 745776**

So don't delay – give us your Bright Ideas today!



Key

PI within target

PI close to target

PI at risk

Upward trend
Performance has improved since previous quarter

Downward trend
Performance has declined since previous quarter

No trend
Performance has remained the same since previous quarter



Rent



1.95% Rent owed to MHA by current tenants (Target 2.2%)



Repairs



97.6% Repairs completed Right First Time (Target 96%)



89.59% Tenants satisfied with standard of work of last repair (Target 96%)



96.45% Repairs appointments kept (Target 97%)



100% MHA properties meeting Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) (Target 100%)



Customer Service



77.78% Customers satisfied complaint handling (Target 75%)



94.08% Calls answered as a % of calls received (Target 95.5%)

Overall tenant satisfaction (Only reported once a year as this figure is taken from the Annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey)



Employment Support



20 Work placements & volunteering opportunities created by MHA for MHA tenants



11 MHA tenants assisted into work

***All performance indicators chosen by tenants**

PUZZLES - JUST FOR FUN!

SUDOKU

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1	8	3					9	
4								
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	6			7		9		
7	1	5	3	9				

HARD

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	2		7	5				
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WORD SEARCH

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I	E	W	G	I	M	G	I	N	G	E	R	B	R	E	A	D	L	R	E
R	S	C	U	F	F	S	F	E	I	O	P	H	K	Q	U	U	P	Y	L
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I	G	H	F	M	C	M	S	S	X	N	L	Y	T	L	G	G	O	E	B
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U	X	P	V	Y	R	D	P	Q	W	C	C	A	N	D	Y	C	A	N	E

- DECORATE
- DECEMBER
- CHIMNEY
- CELEBRATE
- SNOWMAN
- SANTA CLAUS
- BELLS
- NUTCRACKER
- TREE
- GIFTS
- GINGERBREAD
- REINDEER
- ORNAMENTS
- NORTH POLE
- CANDY CANE
- HOLIDAY
- CAROLS
- WINTER
- ELVES
- FAMILY
- CHRISTMAS
- LIGHTS
- GREETINGS
- SNOW

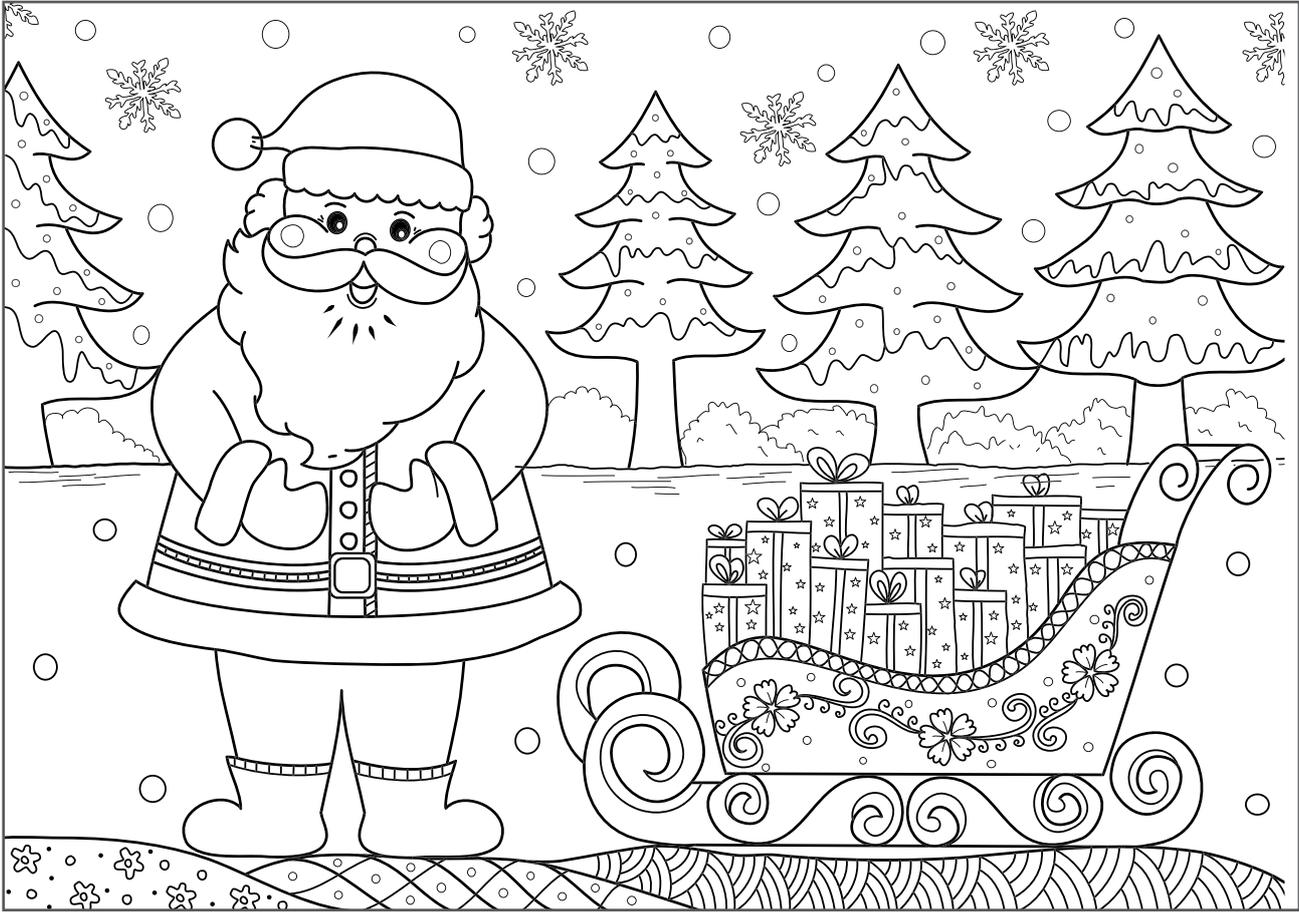
KIDS CORNER



TENANT
MATTERS

COLOURING COMPETITION

DEADLINE 31/01/2020 • PRIZE: £20 HIGH STREET VOUCHER



Name: Age:

Address:

Telephone:

Please return completed colouring to **Clare Evans, Monmouthshire Housing Association, Nant Y Pia House, Mamhilad Technology Park, Mamhilad, Monmouthshire, NP4 0JJ**



Congratulations to **Justin-Jay Wilkins (aged 7) from Abergavenny** who won our Summer edition colouring competition. Justin-Jay wins a £20 high Street voucher.