



Monmouthshire Housing
Tai Sir Fynwy



Inside:

Money tips

Wellbeing advice

Christmas tips

Plus much more!





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If you would like this Newsletter in a different format (e.g. large print, electronically, etc.) or in Welsh please contact Hannah Thompson:

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Dear all,

Normally at this time of year I get to write a message full of optimism and good cheer and we move on as if nothing has changed in our lives. I don't think anyone particularly feels like that this year.

Christmas this year will be different, the virus has not gone away, yet it could well be one of the best ones ever and definitely one that we will not forget. As we gather those we love around us, or facetime them, ring them or write to them, let's make sure that we tell them we love them and how much they mean to us. British generosity is all around us

every day, everywhere. Let this be the year of generosity, of spirit, of checking in on those who matter, on making sure our communities are great places to live where we can rely on one another and know we are not alone. A community filled with light, laughter and generosity.

So, let's get the lights out on the porch, put up the tree and decorations, turn on the heating, open up your address book, contact everyone you know, help those who need it – maybe just with a small gentle hello, a nice cup of tea over the fence, a smile and a wave on the street, maybe a donation to a

foodbank or a charity. Things that are free are the most powerful and rich.

Our staff will be out and about all over Christmas although our offices will be closed. But we will of course be open for emergency repairs to make sure you stay comfortable, warm and safe.

On behalf of all the staff and Board of MHA I want to wish all of our amazing tenants a wonderful, peaceful, carefree, healthy and loving Christmas.

John Keegan
Chief Executive, MHA

“Tenant talk”

It is good to share, especially the good news! We have some wonderful tenants and we would like to celebrate you...



A Halloween Hero!

We would like to say a big thank you to Catherine Mayo of Caldicot for bringing the community together for a spooktacular Halloween hunt around her town. With over 200 streets joining in the fun both Cath and her son Jay's hard work meant that although trick or treating was on hold this year, the local children didn't miss out. Bringing both families and local businesses together they were also able to donate sweets to children spending their Halloween in hospital. Thank you Cath!

Ruby Celebrations in Chepstow

We would like to say a massive congratulations to tenants Mr and Mrs Lunn on celebrating 40 years married and still best friends, all the best from the MHA team.

Cooking up a storm this Christmas



We first met Rachel from Cake House 21 when she started her business 2 years ago, fast forward many cakes later Rachel is getting ready for a busy festive period. Supported by the Work and Skills Wise team to establish her business from her home, MHA tenant Rachel's business has gone from strength to strength.

With a little help from her very own elf, her daughter, they have just launched their Christmas treat boxes, a hug in a box that you can get delivered locally or collect from Rachel. Christmas may look different for many this year but there will be cake!

@cakehouse21

www.cakehouse21.co.uk

Pitch Perfect

After another very successful year for Pitch for your Project we have our winners! Congratulations to everyone involved and we cannot wait to see what the New Year brings for you all. Here's a quick round up of who won a share of a total of £13,557.

Dance Blast

Dance for everyone, Dance Blast wanted equipment to enable their classes to be accessible for everyone, be that from home or with specialist equipment in their studios.

Garden City

This community, volunteer project needed funds to be able to add the final touches to a beautiful sensory garden that is enjoyed by the whole community.

Aber Cluster of Schools

Project Camp Out! 1,875 pupils can now experience an unforgettable adventure camping out safely in their school environment. Sing-a-longs to star gazing for all children to enjoy.

Kymin View Primary School

To promote and encourage active travel within their school, Kymin View were looking for funding to help support a new bike and scooter rack for all the children to use.

Pembroke School

Funding towards an outside play space where the community and school can come together in safe and fun environment.

Safe Space

To continue to be able to provide the community with a safe space to feel supported.

Thornwell Transition

Funding to establish and develop a Youth Group to help young people aged between 9-11 with the transition to senior school.

Usk Food Kitchen

A fridge so that Usk Food Kitchen can continue to support and feed local people in need fresh and nutritious meals.

To find out more about any of our Pitch winners please visit @CommunityBuzz Facebook page.





Here to support you

...through 2020 and beyond

This year Christmas will be a struggle for many; especially those impacted by Covid 19. We want all of our tenants to be happy, healthy and to feel secure in their home. We have a wide range of support to help you with this.

Rent is an important bill and it can be stressful if you are worried about making ends meet. If you are struggling to pay any of your bills, especially your rent, contact us. We are here to listen and support you. Our experienced Income and Moneywise teams are ready to help.

This year's rent free weeks are on the 21st and 28th December, but how you pay your rent makes a difference...

- If you pay monthly, including if you're on Universal Credit (UC), you must still make a full payment in December. We calculate your monthly amount so that it already includes this reduction. This means you are already benefiting and you pay the same amount each month.

- If you have made an arrangement to pay more to clear a debt, you should continue to pay this through the rent free weeks. This is a great opportunity to reduce your debt and give you a head start into 2021.
- If you pay by Direct Debit you should receive a notification that we have amended your direct debit to either not take any money or to take a reduced amount.
- If you pay weekly or fortnightly and your account is in credit, we don't expect any payments from you during these weeks.
- If you are unsure how much you should pay or when you should pay, speak to your income officer.

UC Payments & Christmas ...

- Your payment date will change if it falls on a bank holiday or weekend (25th, 26th, 27th, 28th December 2020 or 1st January 2021). The best way to check when you'll 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.
- You should get your normal monthly UC Housing Costs amount. The rent free weeks are already included in the amount you receive each month so that you get 12 equal payments. This means you need to make a full month's payment in December.

Contact us today on
0345 677 2277 to find out
how we can support you.



Give yourself a gift this Christmas

Christmas can put pressure on people to live up to certain expectations...

- Stress to get everything done
- Financial worry
- Loss of a loved one
- Being unable to be with family/friends
- Illness
- Unrealistic expectations of yourself, others and the 'perfect Christmas'

It can be a prime time to become overwhelmed with it all. It can all get too much.

Remember there is no such thing as a perfect Christmas, don't expect the unobtainable, plan ahead and budget so there are no last minute surprises. Take time for yourself, walk, run, even skip! Get moving and if you need to talk there are people ready to listen.

This Christmas take time to reflect on a year like no other, cherish the people around you and breathe in some of the wonderful Monmouthshire air.

www.mindmonmouthshire.org.uk
www.samaritans.org



Making sure *everyone* has a *Christmas dinner* this year...

For many it has been a tough year, if you need a little extra support over the festive period there is help available.

With Christmas around the corner, Food Banks experience their busiest period.

Food Banks are always looking for volunteers. As well as massively helping your community, this is a good way to build confidence, meet new people and is something you can put on your CV. If you would like to work as a volunteer, get in touch with your local Food Bank.

Caldicot Food Bank

(In partnership with Raven House Trust and Churches Together)

T: 07925 285994

E: caldicotfoodbank@yahoo.co.uk

Chepstow Food Bank

c/o The Bridge Church, Unit 1a Critchcraft Buildings, Bulwark Industrial Estate, Chepstow, NP16 5QZ

T: 07931 911869

E: info@chepstow.foodbank.org.uk

Abergavenny Food Bank

c/o Abergavenny Baptist Church, Frogmore Street, Abergavenny, NP7 5AH

T: 07340 795328

E: info@abergavenny.foodbank.org.uk

Monmouth Baptist Church

3 Monk Street, Monmouth, NP25 3LR

T: 07960 579062

E: info@monmouthdistrict.foodbank.org.uk

New year, new board

Message from **Andy Jones** - Group Chair

We said goodbye to some fantastic Board members recently. A big thank you to **Zena Beirne, Colin Marsh, Cllr Ann Webb, Ken Bucknall** and **Tony Crowhurst** for their invaluable support and playing a vital part in our successes to date.

I am pleased to announce that joining myself and the remaining colleagues we have a number of new members who will help steer MHA Group through the challenges ahead, continuing to deliver great services to you.

But first, a little more information about myself and a few of our new board members:



Andy Jones

What expertise do you bring to the MHA board?

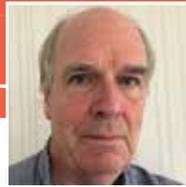
Financial Management.

What is your background in?

I have 43 years' experience in banking, the last 18 involved in funding in the Social Housing sector.

Do you have a favourite Christmas tradition?

Decorating the tree with decorations we have collected on our travels. Brings back memories every Christmas.



Alan Soper

What expertise do you bring to the MHA board?

Property and Audit.

What is your background in?

I have an BSc in Mathematics and have held a plethora of senior positions across the transport, waste, facilities management and property management sectors.

What's your favourite Christmas Song?

All Christmas carols - they are a constant presence in a changing world, and a memory of childhood. I do sing in one or two choirs and Christmas is a great time for singing.



John Miller

What expertise do you bring to the MHA board?

ICT and Business Transformation.

Why did you want to be part of our board?

I really wanted to work with a socially responsible and ethical organisation, one that looks after their staff and their tenants.

Do you have a favourite Christmas tradition?

I love to cook so will do the sausage rolls and vegetarian version for my youngest daughter on Christmas Eve.



Cael Sendell-Price

What expertise do you bring to the MHA board?

Procurement.

Why did you want to be part of our board?

I grew up on a council estate in Cardiff and wanted to give something back. MHA has a great culture that wants to help people.

Do you have a favourite Christmas song?

Last Christmas by Wham!



Hannah Vickers

What expertise do you bring to the MHA board?

Construction.

What is your background in?

I am a professionally qualified civil engineer with a background in policy and strategy advice focused on infrastructure, major projects and the built environment.

Do you have a favourite Christmas tradition?

Eating! We cook a big buffet on Christmas eve which then just goes on and on all the way to boxing day.



For more information visit our website www.monmouthshirehousing.co.uk/about us or for Capsel www.capsel.co.uk

@Monmouthshire.Housing

@MonHousing



Looking ahead to an *exciting* 2021

It's fair to say that 2020 has been a year that we will not forget – there has been virtual cooking and Zoom yoga, rainbows painted in windows, VE day distanced parties, pumpkin spotting and clapping for our NHS on a Thursday. Our communities have come together. Many of you will have met new neighbours, reconnected with old neighbours and kept in touch with friends and family through computer screens.

As we approach a new year and a fresh start we are committed to continuing our work within your communities and have some exciting things planned for 2021, we are ready, are you?

Let's get social

With the future of face to face get togethers still up in the air, we will continue to keep you up to date with everything that is happening within Monmouthshire Housing through our many Social Media channels.

Keeping in touch

2021 will also be the year where we will be producing a new and improved magazine to keep all our tenants informed, from top money tips, support in getting back to work and real life stories from both staff and tenants. There may even be a competition or two!

Gardening Competition

Get your gardening gloves on as the MHA Garden Showcase will be back next year for all you budding Alan Titchmarsh's or Charlie Dimmock's!

Community Voice Committee

Would you like your voice to be heard, would you like to help us to shape the future of MHA? January will signal the start of our recruitment for talented and talkative tenants to help us come together and build a bright future for MHA.

Virtual lounges

Our brand new Virtual Lounges facilitator will be working with tenants in our Sheltered Schemes trying to recreate the community lounge online. They will be promoting digital engagement and hopefully helping older people gain more confidence in modern technology, helping to bring our communities together despite the challenges.

#yourvoice

Something that will continue into next year is our commitment to the best customer service possible, using our Voicescape facility. Your feedback is invaluable and helps us to shape our services, and we are shaping up rather well lately...

Repairs service (20 landlords)

The UK average response ratio across our service users is **37%** and MHA have achieved **42%**

The UK average Satisfaction score is **90%** and MHA is **92%**

Contact centres

The UK average response ratio is **25%** and MHA is **34%**

The UK average Satisfaction score is **91%** and yours is **95%**

Let's get social

Our community isn't only bricks and mortar, we have many online communities too...

You can find us on:



For MHA news and events
@**MonmouthshireHousing**

Be part of our Community
@**CommunityBuzz**



MonHousing



Monmouthshire Housing



@**Mon_Housing**



If you need help getting set up online don't forget we can help with that too, please call **0345 677 2277**

Christmas Puzzle

**UNSCRAMBLE
OUR CHRISTMAS
FOR THE CHANCE
TO WIN £50!**

A few of our Christmas traditions have been scrambled up, can you unscramble the words to get our Christmas back in order?

ETRE	RPENTSE
INMECIE	DRHUOPL
ATASN	ASHTNSICOL
ITSTEOMLE	ANITYVIT
LOLHY	CGSTNOKIS
UGLOLE	HISLEG
RCAKECR	UNDPIDG

For the chance to win a £50 shopping voucher to kick start your New Year please send completed sheets into our busy elves by January 10th 2021 to **hannah.thompson@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk** or via post: Hannah Thompson, Monmouthshire Housing Association, Nant Y Pia House, Mamhilad Technology Park, Mamhilad, Monmouthshire NP4 0JJ

Name: Contact details:

MERRY
CHRISTMAS
and
HAPPY NEW
year



Call: 0345 677 2277 **E:** customerservices@monmouthshirehousing.co.uk

www.monmouthshirehousing.co.uk




MHA
Monmouthshire Housing
Tai Sir Fynwy

#withyou