



Issue Thirty Five | March 2024



Lighthouse

sussex

Combatting Homelessness, Creating Opportunities, Promoting Change

Be Benefit Wise
Housing and Property Services Report
Call out to Tenant Superheros
Repairs Survey Report
Easter Wordsearch
and much more!



Dear Tenant

After the gloomy winter we can finally enjoy the spring blossom around us. It is truly heartwarming to see how nature comes back to life. It's time for spring cleaning and for warming up those green fingers as we announce this year's BHT Sussex in Bloom Competition.

Also, in this issue we invite you to read about recent changes in benefits system thoroughly prepared by Traci Brooks. Traci is also explaining her role as Income Recovery Officer and invites you to contact her if you have any questions in her field of expertise.

We are on a lookout for Super Tenants who would like to become BHT Sussex Governors, Green Inspectors and Lighthouse magazine creators. To learn more, let us know which role interests you most.

There is a very comprehensive update on Housing and Property Service from Housing Services Manager - Paul Fagan, and a Repairs Survey Summary composed by Martin Cohen. Special thanks to Martin for his dedication to finalising the report process.

As always, Joe entertains you with his puzzle and Mary provides a handful of environmental tips.

We hope you will enjoy the issue.

With best wishes,

Anna Kuzan
Involvement Officer



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01323 340018

www.bht.org.uk/services/housing-services

Please welcome the new
Housing Officer
Shirley Bridle

My name is Shirl and I am the new Housing Officer. I have been working for BHT Sussex since last June as the Housing Services Administrator. I love working for BHT Sussex and with our tenants, so the role of Housing Officer seemed like a fantastic opportunity. I was very fortunate to be offered the position. I am really looking forward to getting into the role and continuing my career in housing.

At home I have a very busy life with 5 Children, a dog, a cat and a passion for sport, so there is never a dull moment.



Please welcome the new
Board Member
Lee Davies

I'm truly thrilled to have recently been appointment to the Board of Trustees at BHT Sussex. I have lived in Brighton and Hove for over 20 years with my family, and am a practicing architect at HNW Architects, with 14 years serving as a director and approaching three decades of professional and practical experience of working within the housing and property field.

I have specialised in social housing, leading a variety of residential projects for affordable housing providers and local councils. I'm passionate about making a positive difference to the quality of people's lives, firmly believing that safe and stable housing is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of a thriving society. Brighton Housing Trust Sussex's approach to providing housing, support services, and advocacy aligns strongly with my personal and professional values.

I'm looking forward to working alongside this incredible team and contributing to the amazing work of BHT Sussex.

Be Benefit Wise

The following benefits are ending and are being replaced by Universal Credit:

- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

This starts in February 2024 for people receiving working and child tax credits and rolls out to other benefits by the end of 2024.

Look out for a letter from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) called a **Universal Credit Migration Notice** explaining what you **MUST** do, and by when.

You won't be moved automatically, so it's important to follow the instructions in the letter, as your other benefits will stop.

Your migration notice letter will give you a date by when you **MUST** make a Universal Credit claim. The deadline is three months from the date you received your migration letter.

If you make a claim before the deadline, then you will get what is called "transitional protection". This means that if you'd get less on Universal Credit than your old benefits, you'll get an extra amount to make up the difference. The DWP will reduce the extra amount over time - so you'll eventually just get what you normally would on Universal Credit.

Transitional protection also means you might be able to get Universal Credit when you wouldn't usually be entitled to it.

Self-employed people, students and people with savings over £16,000 getting tax credits will be exempt from some Universal Credit rules for 12 months or when their course ends.

If you live with a partner, you will both have to make separate claims for Universal Credit and link them together.

You may still need to make a claim for Universal Credit if your circumstances change before you receive your migration letter. You will not receive transition protection in this circumstance.

Some people may find they are better off claiming Universal Credit.

IMPORTANT:

Once you have claimed Universal Credit your housing benefit will stop, and you will receive housing costs towards your rent included in your Universal Credit which you **MUST** pay to BHT Sussex for your rent to prevent rent arrears. Universal Credit also Pays calendar monthly so the amount paid will change from weekly or four weekly payments to calendar monthly payments.

If you want the housing costs part of your Universal Credit paid directly to BHT Sussex, please contact us so we can arrange this with Universal Credit.

If you would like more information about moving to Universal Credit, more information about claiming Universal Credit or a benefit calculation to find out how much you will get under Universal Credit contact Traci Brooks Income Recovery Officer on 07834979019 or email traci.brooks@bht.org.uk

Housing and Property Services Report

Voids	Q3 23/24
Number	19
Average relet times in days	26.6
Year to Date Void Loss as a % of rent roll	0.62

Housing and Property Services has undergone a considerable period of change with several new members of staff joining us during the last period. This includes two new Housing Officers, Housing Services Administrator, Maintenance Administrator and Involvement Project Administrator. Unfortunately Katherine Masters the Director of Housing and Property Services left BHT Sussex in December 2023.

Effective arrears management	Q3 23/24
Current Arrears as a % of Annual Rent Debit	4.60%
Former Tenant Arrears as a % of Annual Rent Debit	1.50%
Total Arrears as a % of Annual Rent Debit	4.60%

Despite the above changes, the team were able to rise to the challenge presented by the fire at Richard Allen Court in Brighton which took place in October 2023. All twelve tenants were impacted by the fire in some way and needed to be placed in alternative accommodation. Six were able to return within two weeks. However, the remaining tenants require longer term alternative accommodation whilst repair works are carried out to their properties. Repair work is now well underway. This is expected to take until at least December 2024 to complete.

Repairs Satisfaction (collected from tenant/client)	Q3 23/24
Overall rating (Very good/good/satisfactory)	92%

With the challenging financial climate continuing, tenant wellbeing remains high on our agenda. Our Tenancy Sustainment Officer has been incredibly busy providing support to new and existing tenants. Assisting them in obtaining grants for white goods, carpet and help towards their utility bills.

Gas Safety	Q3 23/24
Inspections due	38
Inspections completed within target date	38
Inspections Overdue	0
Performance for the previous 12 months	100%

Compliance remains a key area of responsibility, and I am pleased to report that we are 100% compliant on gas safety inspections.

Income Recovery continues to be managed very effectively. Rent arrears currently stand at 4.6%. This has remained fairly stable. The main area of focus of the team continues to be on working with a small number of our tenants to resolve high level arrears owed.

We recognise the importance of quickly turning around our properties and to a high standard. Our lettings performance continues to improve. From Quarter three onwards the team were set a more stringent target and have met this challenge head on. In Quarter three we delivered an average void period of 26 days, down 33 days from earlier in the year.



We are looking for Superhero Tenants across BHT Sussex to become members of our Governing Body.

Areas of service that the Governors could look into include and are not limited to: anti-social behaviour, communal areas, maintenance and repairs.

We are also looking for Green Inspectors who will monitor and report on landscapers work.

As always, we are keen to hear from you if you would like to contribute to the Lighthouse newsletter. We want it to be a publication for tenants and by tenants.

For more info dial 07500 972 509 to speak to Anna.

Alternatively, email: anna.kuzan@bht.org.uk



Repairs Survey Results

The 2024 BHT Sussex Repairs Report is to be published in March of this year. It follows an initial survey into repairs comprising 34 tenant-respondents, who provided revealing data. Although a majority of tenants were satisfied with the repairs process, a significant minority were not.

Therefore, the BHT Sussex Tenant Scrutiny Panel decided to commission a full report into the totality of the repairs process as experienced by tenants. Its remit was to implement proposed improvements as soon as was practically possible.

The report consists of seven detailed telephone interviews with tenants who felt strongly about the repairs experience. In the course of these interviews a general complaint emerged that tenants were unable to get through to office staff. As a consequence of this, BHT Sussex have increased personnel. In addition, there was a perception that repairs were made on an ad hoc basis rather than being prioritised according to tenants needs and wishes. This perception is currently under review.

All in all, the report is worth reading in full as it provides a balanced overview of tenants satisfaction and concerns regarding a subject that is essential to tenants' quality of life.

This summary has been kindly written by Martin Cohen, who is a member of BHT Sussex Governing Body. We welcome everyone who would like to join us in conversation about matters important to tenants.

Environmental Corner



Dry laundry in fresh air for a healthier home

If you have outdoor space – a balcony or a garden - drying laundry outside saves money on heat and reduces the risk of mould in your home, and you get fresh smelling clothes. It doesn't have to be a hot sunny day for clothes to dry outdoors, for example on a dry breezy day laundry can dry outside in winter. If you have a Smart Phone, you can download the free Laundry Timer weather app. This estimates how long your laundry will take to dry based on the weather where you are, helping you plan the best times / days to hang your clothes out to dry on an airer or line. The app takes into account temperature, energy from the sun, humidity, wind speed and cloud cover. If you don't have outdoor space, dry laundry in a room where you can keep a window open to prevent humidity that can lead to condensation and mould building up indoors, and ideally faces the sun. Find the Laundry Timer app here: <https://www.laundrytimer.com/>

Feed birds and butterflies

Soon green shoots will start to show as plants poke their heads out after winter. Birds will be busy building nests ready to bring up this year's brood. A bird feeder can attract birds and help them when food is hard to find. Another way to attract and feed birds is to grow plants that produce or attract the food they like to eat. Plants that produce winter berries like holly, hawthorn, ivy and cotoneaster are good and hedges and shrubs provide safe places for them. As well as seeds and nuts, many birds, like blue tits and robins, feed their young with insects and caterpillars – so if you have plants that attract insects in the spring, it will provide them with more food. Birds also love caterpillars – and those they don't eat become butterflies and moths. Having a selection of flowering plants and grasses should bring in the bugs that birds love to eat, pollen for bees and nectar for butterflies. And you don't necessarily have to buy plants – letting dandelions and daisies grow and leaving areas of grass uncut will bring in more birds and butterflies.



Get walking or wheeling

A great way to save on travel costs and improve your fitness is to walk or cycle for journeys where it is practical. With more daylight and warmer weather coming it's a great time to leave the car at home, get off the bus a stop earlier or get on two wheels on a bike. If you're in reach of Brighton – [Brighton Bike hub](#) is a community cycle workshop that can help you get an old bike safely back on the road, and has low priced reconditioned bikes for anyone who wants to start cycling. (Remember, electric bikes or scooters cannot be stored inside BHT Sussex properties due to fire risk). To help you track your fitness – there are plenty of free apps available so you can measure your walks. [11 free walking apps - Heart Matters magazine - BHF](#)

Eat seasonal food and save

Eating fresh food that is in season reduces the emissions of pollution from heating needed to grow food – like tomatoes in winter, and transport for it to reach us. For example, winter tomatoes and berries like strawberries are grown in greenhouses outside the UK, and have to be flown here to arrive fresh. So in winter tinned tomatoes are a better, and often cheaper, option to use in your meals – like making easy [soups](#) and stews. Oranges, apples and bananas are better to eat in winter as they keep longer so arrive by ship – [which produces less pollution – rather than flying](#).

Community Days

The time is approaching for our community days to be held at a selection of our properties throughout Sussex. The dates and locations can be found in the table below. At our community days we encourage tenants to come and talk to our staff team about any issues they are having with their tenancy.

There will be a bulky waste disposal company in attendance to help dispose of any larger items of waste that our tenants have. We will also have cleaning, repairs/maintenance and landscaping contractors present, who will be able to carry out any minor jobs that need completing.

The community days promise to be a great opportunity for staff and tenants to get to know each other and provide a space for resolving any issues.

Location:	When:
Golf Drive	Tuesday 16 April
Marine Parade	Tuesday 14 May
Cashman Lodge	Wednesday 19 June
Albany Road	Wednesday 17 July
Blake Court	Tuesday 20 August
Cambridge Road (Cavendish House)	Wednesday 4 September

EASTER WORDSEARCH

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

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| Easter Egg | Equinox |
| Hot Cross Bun | Hyacinth |
| Rabbit | Lambs |
| Daffodil | Walking |
| Spring | Butterfly |
| Daylight | Salad |
| Blossom | Sunshine |
| Gardening | T-shirt |
| Apples | Pollen Count |
| April Showers | Cut Grass |

Traci Brooks, an Income Recovery Officer at BHT Sussex, explains her role

I have worked for BHT Sussex since 2016. I started as a Welfare Benefit Adviser in Advice Services and moved to Housing Services in 2022 as an Income Recovery Officer. I currently do a dual role working in Housing services for 30 hours a week and in Advice Services as a Macmillan Welfare Benefit Adviser for 15 hours a week.

As an Income Recovery Officer, it is my role to manage the rent accounts and work with tenants if they have problems paying their rent. It has been very hard for some tenants over the last few years to keep their rent accounts up to date as they have been affected by COVID and then the Cost-of-Living crisis, but BHT Sussex wants to keep as many tenants in their homes as possible so I will work with tenants to help them maintain their tenancies and pay off their arrears over a period of time.



Due to my welfare benefit experience, I am also able to assist tenants with benefit checks and benefit queries.

I am also able to signpost tenants to other grants, schemes, and funding which they may be able to access to increase their income.

If you have any questions about your rent or benefits, please contact me on 07834 979019.

It is with a heavy heart that we are saying goodbye to Charlie Green who has recently stepped down from his role as Chairman of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

Charlie has been volunteering for BHT Sussex for nearly five years. His expertise has been instrumental in many aspects of our work and not limited to Tenant Scrutiny meetings. Charlie worked with staff recruitment panels and alongside board members on numerous tasks like staff award nominations.

As an Involvement Officer I found Charlie's support indispensable and will miss his advice and input.

Charlie, thank you very much for everything you have done for our organisation. We truly wish you all the best. If you ever change your mind our doors are always open for you.

MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU!



BHT Sussex in Bloom

Your green fingers could win you a £30 B&Q voucher
Or a £10 B&Q voucher for runners up

There are three categories in the competition:

- Best communal garden
- Most environmentally friendly garden
- Best individual garden / indoor plants

The closing date for entries is *05 July*.

Judges will be visiting the entrants on *12 July* to pick our winners

To join the competition contact Anna:
anna.kuzan@bht.org.uk 07500 972509
Or speak to your Housing Officer.

If you would like some **free** seeds to get you started contact Anna (contact details above)

Sponsored by Southern Land Services



Update from Charlie Higgins, Manager of Choir With No Name

27th January - our first gig of 2024 at Jubilee Library, it went down a storm. The public found our performance to be wholesome, heartwarming and engaging.

The Choir With No Name Presents...



28.03.2024

Annual Blowout!

At Wagner Hall, Brighton

Tickets on Sale Now!

Our choir are fantastic at breaking the ice, dancing and getting people energised, so by the end of our set, everybody was up on their feet! The Library organisers said we were a perfect finish to the community festival.

From mid-February, we had a series of 4 x workshops at the St Thomas Fund rehabilitation centre in Brighton. We are reaching out to people recovering from addiction and recruiting them as new members for our choir.

Annual blowout gig! This will be held on 28th March at Wagner Hall in Brighton and it is going to be a 'floor fillers' night. (Tickets can be bought [here](#)). Exclusively classic hit songs to get the crowd moving! With guest act SHINE ON.

Want to join the choir?

How to join; Come along and sing with us! Every Monday 6pm at All Saints Church. All are welcome 😊



Bailey's Hot Cross Bun and Butter Pudding

Ingredients

6 x Hot Cross Buns (Try different flavours, however for this recipe I would recommend choc chip ones).

600ml Double Cream

8 Egg Yolks

175g Caster Sugar

75g Butter for spreading

100g Choc Chips/Drops

Brown Sugar to sprinkle on top.

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 180°C/gas mark 4.
2. Heat the cream in a pan until boiling.
3. Whisk the egg yolks and sugar together, then pour the heated cream, whisking continuously, setting aside once everything is mixed.
4. Cut buns in half, butter and place in baking tray. Place buns butter side up in a few layers, sprinkling choc chips/drops all over.
5. Pour over the warm custard, pressing down the buns gently to help let them soak in the custard.
6. Leave to stand for 20mins or more before cooking.
7. Place in large roasting tin, filled 3/4 with hot water and bake in the oven for 20-25 mins until the custard is set.
8. Sprinkle brown sugar over the top and caramelize using a grill or blow torch.



LGBTQ+ Spotlight

Brought to you by Trevor - the Lighthouse contributor since Summer 2023

Best I launch into this on the most positive note I can muster on this, less than perfect spring day. Yes indeed, Spring has finally arrived, after what seems to have been the longest, most tedious, January and February in years, well in at least four, given that extra bonus 29th day. The coldest, wettest and windiest days are behind us, and we have such a lot to look forward to within the LGBTQ+ community in East Sussex, the inevitable warmer weather just makes it that more tantalizing.

To start off BIAF, (Brighton International Animation Festival) presents Trans representation in animation and comics on Friday 5 April at 1pm at the Queery, George St Kempton. Tickets are free but you need to book.

Into the Heart kicks off in Eastbourne 10 May - 12 May at Gayles Retreat, Friston. It is a beautiful tranquil and rejuvenating event. Targeted at gay, bi and queer men it will be a chance to experience Vajrasati, Yin & Hatha flow yoga, Shiatsu, Trauma Release, Meditation and Nature Connection Practises. Starting on the 20 April, then 18 May, 15 June, 20 Jul and 17 Aug at Charles St Tap, Brighton. Three tiered ticket types are available to suit every budget. Presented by a collection of iconic drag artists. Bougie performers guarantee sickening lip sync and fierce outfits.

Sunday 23 April, 7.30pm, Queer film night: a monthly film night at the Electric Palace Cinema, Hastings, exploring LGBTQ+ themes and stories on film.

Every Monday Mindout, Hastings, LGBTQ+ mental health charity, peer support group for over 18's looking for connection and support concerning their well-being. Please call 01293 234839 or email info@mindout.org.uk

Brighton's most bonkers weekly pub quiz is back with your host - Ex-Girlfriend, every Monday at 8pm, upstairs at Revenge bar, book a table through booking@revenge.co.uk or just turn up, fantastic deals on drinks and cash prizes up for grabs.

Queer AF Comedy at the Brunswick pub, 20 of March (8 forthcoming dates) 1-3 Holland Rd, Hove. 7.30pm

Queer. Black. In white spaces, 21 March 6pm. Afrori books, downstairs at the BRIGHTHELM centre. Acclaimed author Michael Donkor and debut author, Jason Okundaye share the stage to talk about their books and experiences.

We are really spoilt in East Sussex with the variety of events and groups, clubs at our fingertips, not to exclude the very community within which we live. I personally, was born in Zimbabwe, where it is still against the law to be gay, and the trans community is still left in the dark. We really should not take for granted the lengths our forefathers have gone to for us to be living in a society which, not only accepts but celebrates the LGBTQ+ community.

If there is anyone out there struggling with identification, isolation, depression, navigating transition or domestic abuse, Switchboard Helpline connects you to LGBTQ+ Support Helpline : 01273 204050 available Mon, Wed, Thurs 7-9pm. 01273 234009 at other times.

Contact Us

Head Office and General Enquiries

144 London Road Brighton
BN1 4PH
01273 645400
info@bht.org.uk

Rents and Repairs

01323 340018
rents@bht.org.uk
repairs@bht.org.uk

MyTenancy

www.mytenancy.co.uk
Report a repair or check your
rent statement online

Housing Officers

Brighton Housing Officer:
Daisy Fellowes
01273 645454
07826 874849

Hastings, Eastbourne &
Saltdean:

Shirley Bridle
07824 306591

Involvement Officer

Anna Kuzan
01273 645443
07500 972509

Out of Hours Emergency Repairs

Redman Howard
07493 223016

Gas emergencies

Robert Heath Heating
0333 014 1000

Issues with fire alarms and detectors

Eastbourne Alarms
01323 729420

Our mission: Combating homelessness; Creating opportunities; Promoting change.

Our values: Empowering People; Inspiring Change; Collaboration; Delivering Excellence; Being Accountable.

Wordsearch Solution

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