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## Antisocial behaviour scrutiny group

Improving our services is important to us, and we are setting up an antisocial behaviour scrutiny group. This group will be consulted about how we manage our antisocial behaviour service and ask residents to scrutinise the service.

We need residents from across Tamworth to join, whether living in council housing, homeowners or privately renting. There will be four meetings every year, each lasting for about two hours.

The next meeting is on 10 April 2024. If you are interested in joining this group, please email us at [neighbourhoodimpactteam@tamworth.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhoodimpactteam@tamworth.gov.uk).

## Noise App

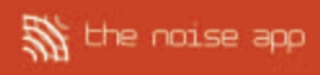
Tamworth has been using the Noise App successfully for several years as it's a great tool for measuring noise nuisance.

We're about to upgrade the app, to allow residents suffering noise nuisance antisocial behaviour to record for longer periods of time. The app is easy to use and can be downloaded from your phone's app store.

All you need to do is download and register for the app, and if you have an ongoing complaint, our team will approve your access to use it.

Anybody already using the Noise App will shortly receive notice of the upgrade of the service and will be invited to download the new version.

**Noise App user guide available by clicking this link.**



# Antisocial behaviour awareness week 1–7 July 2024

As in previous years, Tamworth Borough Council and others will be out and about during antisocial behaviour week to provide information and advice about how to deal with antisocial behaviour.

Throughout the year, our Neighbourhood Impact team works with local police and others managing reports of antisocial behaviour and providing a visible presence in the community. Antisocial behaviour week is an opportunity to highlight the work we do.

More information around planned events will be published in the next few months.

## Cannabis

**We're seeing a rise in complaints of cannabis use, specifically people reporting the smell.**

We take a zero-tolerance approach to drugs in all council housing and council property. With cannabis it's the noxious and offensive odour that is the nuisance for most people reporting it.

Along with our partners within the Community Safety Partnership we write to the alleged offender advising that the use of cannabis is illegal.

If you smoke cannabis and we receive a complaint about you, we will most likely use Community Protection Powers to deal with it. Breach of any notice issued may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued for £100. If the nuisance still continues we can prosecute.

Cannabis use can be reported to Staffordshire Police on 101 (Website is [www.staffordshire.police.uk](http://www.staffordshire.police.uk)) or Tamworth Borough Council on 01827 709709.

## XL Bullies

**XL Bully dogs have now been added to a list of dogs which are banned in England and Wales.**

From 31 December 2023 it's against the law to:

- Sell an XL Bully dog.
- Abandon an XL Bully dog or let it stray.
- Give away an XL Bully dog.
- Breed from an XL Bully dog.
- Have an XL Bully dog in public without a lead and muzzle.

From the 1 February 2024 it is a criminal offence to own an XL Bully dog in England and Wales unless the dog has an exemption certificate. To obtain exemption you will need third-party liability insurance, your dog must be microchipped, and your dog will also need to be neutered.

As the owner, you must also be:

- over 16 years old,
- able to show the exemption certificate when asked by a police officer or a council dog warden, either at the time or within five days.

If you have concerns that an XL bully is being kept unlawfully, please report this to the dog legislation officer at Staffordshire Police on 101.

# Top tips when using key safes

1. Regularly change your key safe code number. If you are a sheltered resident your scheme manager can easily show you how to do this and support you if you need help. During this process you will not need to share your key safe number with them.
2. Choose your own key safe code number.
3. Change your own key safe code number yourself if you're able to do so.
4. When finished using your key safe, remember to clear your key safe code number from display.
5. Only share your key safe code number with people you trust and who need to access your home.
6. If you are a sheltered resident, you don't need to share your key safe number code with your scheme manager and lifeline service, unless you agree to them having it for emergency access only (this process is explained within the sheltered tenant's handbook and tenancy management plan). Just remember to update your scheme manager if you change your key safe code number and they will update their lifeline records accordingly.
7. If you choose not to share the key safe number with the scheme manager and lifeline service, then please let your scheme manager know who to contact regarding accessing your home in an emergency.

## Fire alarms

We are committed to providing safe and well-maintained home for all our tenants.

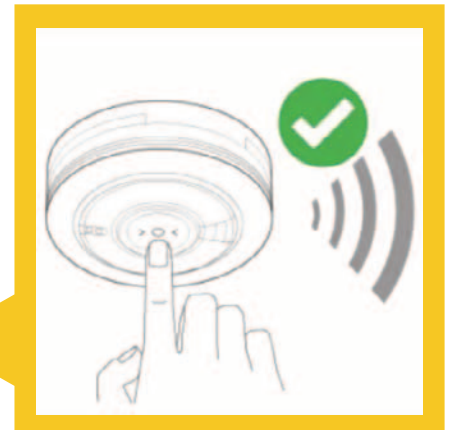
All homes have smoke detectors to allow you to escape quickly should there be a fire. We check these every year.

It is important that the smoke detectors in your property are regularly checked, the fire service also recommend you check they work every week by pressing the test button on the alarm. If the battery needs replacing, please change it if you can, please however take care when using steps to reach the smoke detectors.

For further fire safety advice see [www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk](http://www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk)

Checking your smoke detectors

- Set yourself a diary reminder to check the alarm.
- Let everyone know in your household that you are testing the alarm.
- Never use smoke to test the alarm.
- Press the test button on the alarm for 10 seconds.
- Do not remove the alarm from its base to test.
- Make sure you have safe access to test the alarm.
- Clean the alarms once a month to make sure they are free from dirt and dust.
- Any issues with the smoke alarms, please contact 08001830044.



# Fire escape plan

Have you thought about your escape plan if there is a fire? It's often helpful to involve the whole family in putting a plan together so everyone knows what to do.

Things to consider (low rise buildings.)

- The best escape route is the normal way you come in and out of your home.
- If this is blocked, consider an alternative way out.
- Keep routes clear of trip hazards.
- Make sure any keys are easy to get to and everyone knows where they are.
- Have a torch by your bed just in case it is nighttime.
- Make sure any visitors know your plan.
- Run through your plan with all your family regularly.
- Once outside do not go back into the house, call 999.
- Alert your neighbours.



# Electrical installation condition report

We are committed to providing a safe and well-maintained property for all of our tenants.

To make sure the wiring in each property is safe and appropriate, we're currently testing all properties. Each property will be tested again within the next five years.

## Why we need to check

The test we run will:

- Record any damage to sockets and switches.
- Make sure the property complies with relevant regulations.
- Make sure the wiring is safe.

It is vitally important that these tests are carried to make sure your home is safe for you and your family. To complete the work, we need your support.

When you are contacted by our electrical contractor, please make sure you respond and allow them access to your property to carry out these vital checks.

# Universal credit - tax credits are ending

Universal Credit is the standard benefit to support those who are working and on a low income or are out of work. It is a single payment, paid monthly to those of working age. Universal Credit is replacing what is known as legacy benefits, these are:

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

The Department for Work and Pensions have now started the next stage of moving those who are still claiming one of the above legacy benefits over to Universal Credit. This is known as universal credit managed migration. The Department for Work and Pensions are doing this in stages, and the first stage is Tax Credits

This means Tax Credits are ending and is being replaced with Universal Credit, so if you are claiming Tax Credits you need to watch out for a Universal Credit Migration Notice from the Department of Work and Pension explaining what you need to do.

You will be given a date by which you have to claim Universal Credit. You must make the claim by the date you have been given to continue to receive payments, even if you have just renewed your Tax Credits. Before you make a claim for Universal Credit you must also renew your Tax Credits if you are asked to. You will not be automatically moved to Universal Credit, so you will need to make a claim by the deadline, or your benefits will be stopped.

Important to note: If your Universal Credit is likely to be less than what you receive on legacy benefits you may be eligible for transitional protection, but you will only receive this if you have received a Managed Migration Notice from the Department for Work and Pensions or Department for Communities and claimed Universal Credit by the deadline on your notice.

If you are part of a couple and one of you is of pension age and the other of working age, you will need to make a claim for Universal Credit until you are both pension age. If you are also eligible for help with council tax reduction, you will need to make this claim separately as it is not included in your Universal Credit claim, you can do this by completing the online form at [www.tamworth.gov.uk/benefit-forms](http://www.tamworth.gov.uk/benefit-forms).

For more information see [www.gov.uk/guidance/tax-credits-and-some-benefits-are-ending-move-to-universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/tax-credits-and-some-benefits-are-ending-move-to-universal-credit).



## Rent free weeks

We will always support any tenant who is struggling to pay their rent to try and find a solution that is fair and affordable. It's important you get in touch with us straight away if you need help, don't wait until you are behind with your payments. Please don't ignore the problem as this will only make it worse. Court action is a last resort which can often be avoided by working with us.

Solutions could involve helping you with housing costs by looking at benefits or grants available, referring you to other agencies who can help with debt advice, such as **Tamworth Advice Centre**, or coming up with a repayment plan for money you owe.

Please contact your tenancy sustainment officer on 01827 709514 or email: [IncomeTeam@tamworth.gov.uk](mailto:IncomeTeam@tamworth.gov.uk) for help and support.

You may be entitled to claim benefits including Universal Credit, which may help cover the cost of part, or all your rent.

### IMPORTANT NEWS

Rent free weeks for 2024-2025 are:

18 March 2024

25 March 2024

19 August 2024

16 December 2024

17 March 2025

24 March 2025



## Contents insurance

We have negotiated a home contents insurance scheme for tenants and leaseholders.

The prices are competitive, and it's important to protect your own personal contents in your property against loss or damage caused by fire, flood, and burglary.

The council's insurance policy only covers the building not your personal contents.

Full details are available at: [www.tamworth.gov.uk/contents-insurance](http://www.tamworth.gov.uk/contents-insurance)

If you require this document in an alternative format or language, please contact us on 01827 709709 email: [enquiries@tamworth.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@tamworth.gov.uk)



# Tamworth Advice Centre

The Tamworth Advice Centre can:

- Check you are getting all the benefits you are entitled to and help you apply for them.
- Help you in setting up your own bank account.
- Help you deal with debts and to learn to budget within your means.

They can also help with employment issues and with specialist debt advice such as bankruptcy, debt relief orders, breathing space applications and if you are being taken to court.

Tamworth  
Advice  
Centre

DELIVERED BY CITIZENS ADVICE

## There are various ways to contact the Tamworth Advice Centre:

Online: **Quick instant Online Self-Referral Form**. They will then arrange for an advisor to call you.

Phone: For advice and booking appointments - (Free phone) 0808 278 7972, 10.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday (quoting you live in Tamworth)

Email: [tamworthadvice@citizensadvicemidmercia.org.uk](mailto:tamworthadvice@citizensadvicemidmercia.org.uk)

Website: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/mid-mercia](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/mid-mercia)

Your Tenancy Sustainment Officer (TSO) Tel 01827 709514 can refer you to the Tamworth Advice Centre. Once referred, they TAC will contact you to offer help and support.

Free, confidential advice. Whoever you are.

## Stop loan sharks

We work in partnership with the England Illegal Money Lending team to stop loan sharks operating in Tamworth.

**STOP LOAN SHARKS**  
Intervention . Support . Education

If you are a victim of a loan shark or wish to report a suspected loan shark, contact the Illegal Money Lending team for confidential help and advice on 0300 555 2222.

## Identity badges

All Tamworth Borough Council staff and repairs contractors should be wearing an identity badge when they visit your home.

If it is not displayed, then please ask to see this before allowing entry to your property.

# The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

## What is the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023?

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act lays foundations for changes to how social housing is managed. It includes increased regulation of social landlords and new rules for protecting tenants from serious hazards in their homes.

The act allows the Regulator of Social Housing to hold landlords to account with regular inspections. It introduces new social housing consumer standards and gives the Secretary of State power to require social landlords to investigate and rectify serious health hazards.

## When do the changes take effect?

The act received royal assent on 20 July 2023, so it is now law, but many provisions need regulations before they can come into force. These are expected to be published this year.

## Proactive enforcement powers

Currently, the regulator must have reasonable grounds to suspect that a social landlord's breach of the consumer standards has caused, or could cause, serious detriment to a tenant before it could use its intervention powers.

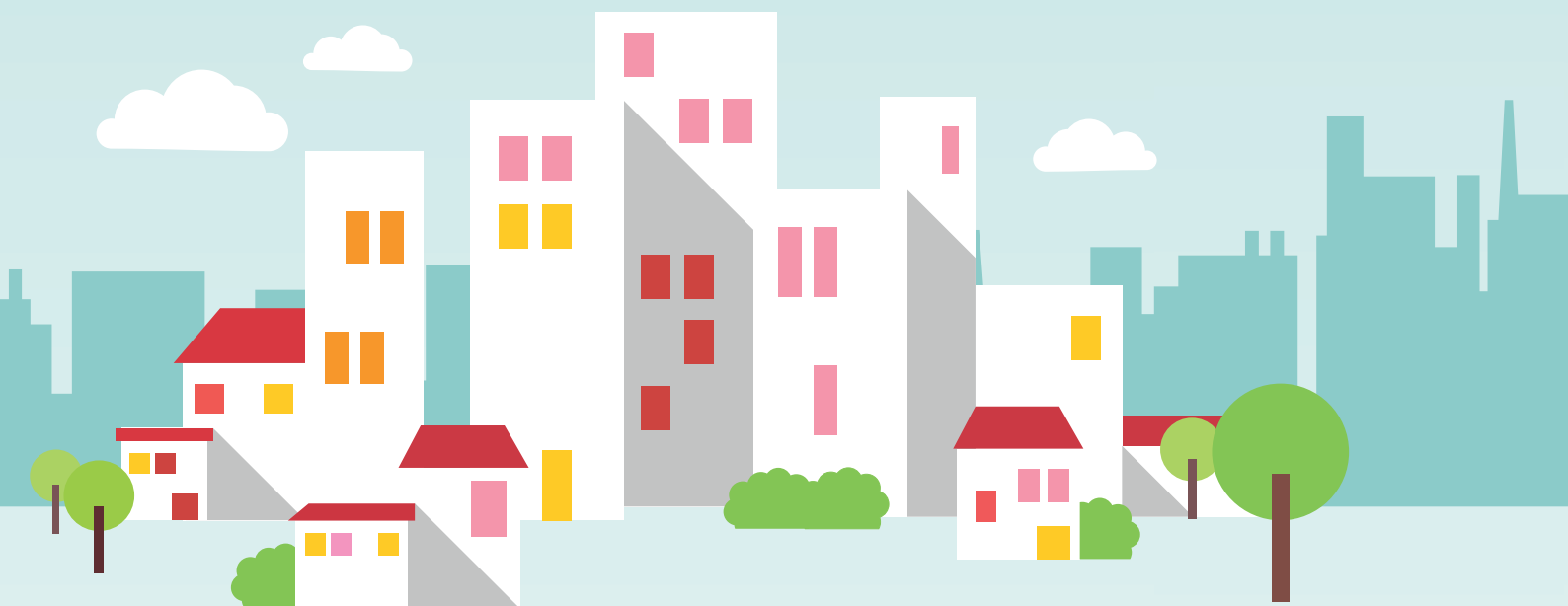
The act removes the 'serious detriment' test from the consumer standards for social homes. This allows the regulator to take action before people are at risk.

It gives the regulator stronger powers, including the power to impose unlimited fines.

## Performance improvement plans

The regulator will be able to give notice to require a social landlord to prepare and implement a performance improvement plan where the landlord is failing to meet regulatory standards.

Performance improvement plans are intended to be used proactively and will enable the regulator to hold providers to account.





## Tenant safety: Awaab's Law

The act introduces what has become known as 'Awaab's Law', named after two-year old Awaab Ishak, who died in December 2020 from exposure to serious mould in his parents' social rented home. The government consulted on new requirements at the beginning of the year and the feedback is being reviewed.

The Secretary of State is expected to create new requirements for landlords to address hazards such as damp and mould within a fixed period. This measure could help prevent tenants from developing serious health issues because of poor conditions in their homes.

## New social housing standards

The regulator's proactive role will be supported by new consumer standards and a regular inspections regime. These are expected to take effect from April 2024.

Private registered providers, such as housing associations, already have inspections. For local authorities, this will be new.

Find the existing and new consumer regulatory standards on the government website at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

The new consumer standards cover a range of issues including health and safety, landlord transparency, and housing management staff qualifications.

## Housing management staff qualifications

The regulator can set standards on the competence and conduct of all staff involved in the delivering housing services.

This includes mandatory qualification requirements for senior managers and executives.

## Housing Ombudsman

The regulator and the Housing Ombudsman must co-operate to prepare, publish and review their Memorandum of Understanding. The memorandum will outline how they plan to work together to make sure there is a joined up approach to regulation and the handling of complaints for the benefit of tenants.

The ombudsman will have the power to instruct social landlords to measure their service against ombudsman guidance on issues such as damp and mould.

# Comments, Compliments and Complaints

How to report a problem and who to contact with comments, compliments or complaints about council services.

We provide a wide range of services for people who live and work and visit Tamworth.

Your feedback is very important to us, it helps us to improve the services we provide to better meet the needs of our customers. As part of this, we encourage feedback when we have done something well, or when you think we have done something wrong.

Information about how to contact us with a compliment, comment or complaint is available at: <https://www.tamworth.gov.uk/comments-compliments-complaints> and through the MyTamworth portal. You can also phone us on 01827 709709.

## Make things right campaign

The government has launched a nationwide campaign to help raise awareness of tenants' rights and how to escalate a complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

We're supporting this campaign, and want to make sure you know your rights and how to escalate a complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.





HM Government

### Social housing issue? Know how to complain.

- 1** Report it to your landlord.
- 2** Complain to your landlord, if you're still not happy.
- 3** Escalate to the Housing Ombudsman, if you're not happy with your landlord's final response.

Everyone deserves a safe and secure home. **Know your rights.**

Visit [gov.uk/social-housing](https://gov.uk/social-housing)



Make things right



Holistic • Outreach • Multi Agency • Empowering

# Are you at risk of becoming homeless...

**Citizens Advice Mid Mercia** are pleased to announce in conjunction with its partners Betterway Recovery, Tamworth Home Start, Number 8 Charity and Community Together CIC the introduction of a new service for Tamworth. The service will be supporting anyone who may be in danger of losing their home even if you may not yet realise it; for example, **rent arrears, mental health worries, warning of breach of tenancy agreement, alcohol and substance misuse, failure to meet mortgage payments;** whatever it might be help is at hand. Working in conjunction with your Tamworth Borough Council Housing Teams, the service will take a holistic approach providing wrap around support and early interventions to help you keep your home.



Holistic help to stabilise housing problems.

Outreaches within communities working towards positive outcomes.

Multi-Agency approach, one hub for all issues

Empowering and enabling people to build resilience and a better future.

For more information or if you're worried about losing your home then call the Tamworth **FREEPHONE** Telephone Support Line

## 0808 175 4041



# Contact us

If you have a concern or question about any council service, please contact us. Here is a quick guide on the best ways to contact us:

## Online:

Many services are often just a click away with our online forms and information.

Use a search engine to find the information you are looking for, or use the search box on our website or navigate through our various sections to find what you need from council services to jobs, events and much more!

- Using the council's official website for services and information [www.tamworth.gov.uk](http://www.tamworth.gov.uk)
- Manage your tenancy online, in real time, using the MyHousing portal.
- Use our online contact us form at <https://mytamworth.tamworth.gov.uk/do-it-online/contact-us/contact-us>

## Webchat:

Chat with one of our customer service team for general enquiries or repairs – go to our website and click on the chat button.

## Phone support:

Sometimes a conversation is the best way to get things done. Call 01827 709709 to speak directly with our friendly customer service team Monday to Friday 8.45am to 5pm.

For housing repairs call 0800 183 0044. This number is available 24/7 and should also be used to report an out of hours repair in an emergency.

## Social media:

Stay in the loop by following us on social media. Connect with Tamworth Borough Council on Facebook. We have a Facebook page for Tamworth Castle and Tamworth Assembly Rooms.

## Visit us:

You can also visit us at our front desk at the information centre within Tamworth Assembly rooms, Corporation Street, Tamworth B79 7DN. The desk is open Monday to Saturday 10am to 4pm.



# Register for MyHousing

Our MyHousing portal allows you to:

- See your current rent account balance.
- Report repairs.
- Report antisocial behaviour.
- Pay your rent.
- Make a housing application for another property all online.



Sign up at <https://myhousing.tamworth.gov.uk> or visit our Tamworth Borough Council website and search MyHousing portal.

When you sign up, you'll be asked to create a password so you can safely and securely access your personal details.

# Food donations thank you

A big thank you has been passed to Equans, our repairs contractor, for the food donations that were collected and distributed to families in need in supported accommodation.

Every single family expressed their sincere gratitude for the kindness shown in a time where many people are experiencing financial difficulty.

# Would you like a printed copy of the Open House newsletter?

Would you like to receive a printed copy of the Open House newsletter, please contact Tenant Involvement on 01827 709709 or email [Tenantparticipation@tamworth.gov.uk](mailto:Tenantparticipation@tamworth.gov.uk) and we'll add your name to the list.

**Tamworth Borough Council,**  
**Marmion House, Lichfield Street, Tamworth, Staffordshire B79 7BZ**  
**[www.tamworth.gov.uk](http://www.tamworth.gov.uk)**