



# Tenant Newsletter

SEASONAL  
EDITION  
2023

# CEO message

**Claire Griffiths**



Welcome to our latest customer newsletter. I hope you find it interesting and helpful.

We have spent the last six months making some excellent progress delivering our Corporate Plan, which we launched in the Spring, and we're engaging and listening to you on where we can improve our services and what matters most to you in your community.

We know we need to improve some of our services, and I can guarantee to you that we are prioritising this as an organisation.

I wanted to highlight some of our work over the last six months:

- Commenced our **planned £8 million investment programme** to improve the quality of customers' homes by providing kitchen and bathroom replacements, along with a roofing replacement programme.
- Started on site with **energy efficiency works for 287 homes that currently have an energy performance certificate (EPC) rated below Band C**, as part of the governments' Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) to increase their energy performance and reduce our customers' energy bills.
- **Submitted planning applications in our core neighbourhoods for new affordable homes** including **72 homes at Stonedale** (a mix of family homes and apartments), and **55 new homes at the former Langholme heights site in Norris Green which will be for older people**.

- Working alongside our regeneration partner Lovell Homes, we have continued to make good progress on our **Waterdale Mews development of 88 new affordable homes in Croxteth.**
- **Invested over £18k into various activities within Norris Green, Croxteth, Fazakerley and Sparrow Hall** including food pantries, the development of a community café, mental health first aid sessions, dementia action support group, summer camps for local children and a health and wellbeing project aimed at supporting improved physical and mental health.
- **We are finalising our plans to develop a new Community Hub as part of our refurbishment of our HQ in Lower House Lane.** The Hub will be based on our ground floor and will include both indoor and outdoor accessible spaces that can host a wide range of community and partner led activities, such as individual/group advice and support sessions, workshops, training programmes, meetings spaces, cultural events and digital access for our community. The work will commence in spring 2024, and we hope to conclude by this time next year.
- Developed our new customer portal **myVoice Matters** where over 230 customers have signed up.
- Strengthened our **Homes and Neighbourhoods Committee** with the addition of four new customer members and elected a customer as a new Board member.
- Held a brilliant customer event **Altfest 23 at St John Bosco School** where over 400 customers attended.



We understand that this time of year can be challenging for many of you as the cold weather and Christmas puts additional pressures on finances and other aspects of our lives.

We are here to help, and please do get in touch if you're worried about paying your rent, heating your home, and have any repairs issues, including damp and mould, or require welfare benefits advice or help with rehousing or concerns with anti-social behaviour.

*I hope you find the information included in this newsletter useful and I wish you a peaceful festive period.*

# ALT TOGETHER FESTIVAL 2023



## ALL TOGETHER AT ALTFEST 2023

We'd like to thank all of our partners, staff, tenants, residents and their families for coming along to ALTFEST at St John Bosco Arts College on November 1st and making it a day to remember.

ALTFEST is a big celebration of our communities and was a great opportunity for people to connect with our local services and community partners.

The event was designed to showcase the new Corporate Plan for 2023-28,

and was divided into zones which represented areas of this five-year vision and what it means for our tenants and the communities.

Each of these zones: **INVEST IN QUALITY HOMES, THRIVING COMMUNITIES, EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE AND POSITIVE PEOPLE** highlighted our teams' collaborative efforts to showcase how we're listening to our residents' feedback, what we're doing well already and what we plan on doing to support our local communities and improve on these services in the future.

# Paying your rent over Christmas

Christmas is fast approaching and with that comes disruption to payment dates. Rent will still be due over this period, so if you have a Direct Debit or standing order setup, please be aware that it may not come out when you expect.

If you have payments due out on the following dates, they will not come out until the next working day, as listed.



## 25th December 2023

payment will leave your account on 27th December 2023



## 26th December 2023

payment will leave your account on 27th December 2023



## 1st January 2024

payment will leave your account on 2nd January 2024

Although we are closed over Christmas and New Year, don't forget that you can pay your rent in the following ways:

- Your MyCobalt account
- Paypoint locations
- [www.allpay.net](http://www.allpay.net)
- Post offices
- Online banking

Please ensure there is enough money in your bank account to make your payment or you may be charged by your bank for any returned direct debits or standing orders. Dates of benefit payments can change around bank holidays, and Christmas is no exception, so we'd recommend checking the dates if you claim Universal Credit, tax credits, pension, Disability Living Allowance and anything else.

If you are struggling to pay your rent, please get in touch with us as soon as possible on **0330 303 2222**

# Thriving communities

## Support if you need it

Changes to Universal Credit and rising energy costs could see many residents struggling as we head into the new year. Lots of tenants are missing out on essential items, support and money that they are entitled to, and our team is ready to help.

**If you are struggling, please get in touch with us on 0330 303 2222**

## Food pantries

Our two local food pantries offer huge savings compared to local supermarkets, and it costs just **£3.50 a week** to receive on average **£15-20 worth of food**, including meat or cheese, bread, eggs, vegetables, toiletries and tinned food.



### **Croxteth Food Pantry** (Croxteth residents)

Croxteth Family Matters,  
35 Moss Way,  
Croxteth  
L11 0BL

Pantry collections take place on Thursday and Friday. Members must book a slot in advance. To fill out a registration form, please call in between Monday and Wednesday.

Call **0151 281 4529** or email [croxtethfamilymatters@outlook.com](mailto:croxtethfamilymatters@outlook.com)



### **Fazakerley Community Federation 'Fed Club' Food Pantry** (Fazakerley residents)

The Community Centre,  
Formosa Drive,  
Liverpool  
L10 7LQ

Fazakerley Community Federation 'Fed Club' Food Pantry is open every Tuesday from 10am-12pm

Call **0151 523 1073** or email [fazfed@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:fazfed@hotmail.co.uk)



## Foodbanks

If you have no money for food, please ring Cobalt's welfare benefits team on **0330 303 2222** and they will issue you with an e-voucher for a three-day food parcel from one of your local foodbanks.

**Please note these locations and times are subject to change, and you will be advised on the most suitable foodbank during your call.**

### Tuesday

#### Where?

St Christopher's Church,  
Lorenzo Drive, Norris Green L11 1BQ

#### When?

12-2pm

### Wednesday

#### Where?

Good Shepherd Church,  
Lower House Lane, Liverpool L11 2SF

#### When?

9.30-11.30am

### Friday

#### Where?

St Andrew's Church Hall,  
Adshead Road, Liverpool L13 0AL

#### When?

10.30am-12.30pm

### Friday

#### Where?

St Paul's Distribution Centre,  
Formosa Drive, Fazakerley L10 7LB

#### When?

12-1.30pm

# Benefit Entitlement



When was the last time you checked your full benefits entitlement?

Visit [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk) and search for...

## Complete your details

You may need to give information, for example your current household income, what benefits you are currently receiving, and how many people live in your household. If the calculator tells you that you should be claiming different or additional benefits, get in touch!

Our **Welfare Benefits advice line** is available on Monday and Wednesday from 10am-1pm. Call us on **0330 303 2222** and select (**option 6**) for your free benefits check.

## Useful links

[Shelter.org.uk](http://Shelter.org.uk)

[Citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits](http://Citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits)

[Carersuk.org/help-and-advice/financial-support](http://Carersuk.org/help-and-advice/financial-support)



## Are you claiming tax credits?

Just a reminder for those of you that claim tax credits, you will be moving to Universal Credits over the coming months.

**Important. NO ACTION is required until you receive your Migration Notice Letter.**

The Migration Notice Letter will come from the DWP when it is time to switch. Please **do not** make an application to Universal Credit before you receive your letter.

**We will share further information as soon as we receive it from HMRC and DWP to try to make the move as smooth as possible for you.**



## Warm Home Discount

You could get **£150 off** your electricity bill for winter 2023 to 2024 under the Warm Home Discount Scheme, letters will be sent out in October 2023.

Find out more: [www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme)

## Winter Fuel Payment

If you were born on or before the 26th September 1955, you could get between **£100 and £300** to help you pay your heating bills.

Find out more: [www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment](http://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment)

In 2023/24 the Department of Work and Pensions will extend the **£300** boost to winter fuel payment.

# Pension

Did you know, over 9.7 billion pension pots are unclaimed in the UK?

If you've worked, you may have lost pension pots that could still be claimed.

The Government's free search tool is designed to help you find lost pensions.

Visit [www.findpensioncontacts.service.gov.uk](http://www.findpensioncontacts.service.gov.uk) to get started



## Our welfare benefits team are here to help!

Call us on **0330 303 2222** and select (option **6**) to speak to our welfare benefits team during the times below:



You can also get in touch with our welfare benefits team by emailing [welfarebenefits@cobalthousing.org.uk](mailto:welfarebenefits@cobalthousing.org.uk) (please allow up to 48 hours for a response) or filling out the online referral form on our website: [www.cobalthousing.org.uk/moneyadvice](http://www.cobalthousing.org.uk/moneyadvice)

# In the community

## WE ARE

Currently distributing 120 Winter Warmer Packs across our neighbourhoods. Packs contain a hat, snood, gloves, socks, blanket and a flask and are going to some of our most vulnerable tenants over the cold winter months.

## WE ARE

Hosting a weekly credit union here at Cobalt to encourage customers to join to access safer lending opportunities.

## WE HAVE

Provided funding towards a Norris Green Food Pantry which is coming soon and will run every Tuesday from 10am to 2pm at Ellergreen.

## WE HAVE

Provided funding towards Triple C Community Café also in place of the pantry – giving residents a safe space to socialise and get a hot meal.

## WE HAVE

Funded 10 local community groups to put on various Halloween/Bonfire related projects.

## WE HAVE

Funded 13 community groups to put on Christmas projects across our Neighbourhoods. This gives access for lower income families to access free events with their children.

## WE HAVE

Funded 'FairShare' memberships for additional food, to be delivered on a weekly basis, for 3 of our partners supporting our tenants around food poverty.

## Community Hub

We are developing plans for a new Community Hub which will be located on the ground floor in our Head Office. Our aim is to have the right services for our tenants available in the Hub as well creating a space that can be used to strengthen bonds within our communities.

While our plans develop, we are supporting a number of activities so why not pop along.

Activities include, **Communities Together Choir**, **Liverpool in Work**, **Citizens Advice Bureau drop ins**, **Knit and Natter**, **JAM** (Mens Mental Health) and **Bacon Butty Friday**.

For more information or to get involved contact [allpartnerships@cobalthousing.org.uk](mailto:allpartnerships@cobalthousing.org.uk)

Keep an eye on our socials for upcoming activities.



## It is important that you allow our contractors access to your home to complete repairs, upgrades and safety checks.

If we are unable to gain access to your home to complete a service or repair we may need to refer the case to solicitors. Any costs incurred may be rechargeable to you.

**Did you know...** We spent £20,000 on legal costs in the last financial year, due to being unable to gain access to homes for safety checks.

**Did you know...** We have 100s of missed appointments every month.

We will always write to you in advance of an upcoming safety check or planned works and our contractors will write to you with an appointment.

We understand that there may be a good reason why you may not be able to make your appointment, so if you need to cancel or rearrange, **please get in touch with us as soon as possible.**

### Ways to get in touch



Visit our reception



Live chat with us on our website and social media



Send a message via your MyCobalt account



Email [info@cobalthousing.org.uk](mailto:info@cobalthousing.org.uk)



Phone us on 0330 303 2222

**Cobalt**  
Housing

### Reporting damp and mould



We featured an article in our last issue about how to recognise damp, mould and condensation in your property, what causes it and how to report it before it becomes a problem for you and your family.

It is more likely to occur in the cold winter months so if you have any concerns about damp, mould and condensation in your property, please report it to us immediately.

Please email your details, and any images, to [homerepairs@cobalthousing.org.uk](mailto:homerepairs@cobalthousing.org.uk)

# Safety Checks

Over the next year these are some of the key upgrades, repairs and safety checks that may impact on you and what it means if we are unable to gain access to carry them out.



## Fire safety check

In our blocks of flats, we carry out an inspection of the communal area on a monthly basis. Additionally, we work with a specialist team that carry out a fire risk assessment within the communal area and in a number of flats every year.

If you live in a flat we will also need to carry out an inspection on the front door into your home, it is now a legal requirement for us to carry out this check every year.



## Gas safety check

It is a legal requirement for gas appliances such as your boiler or gas fire to be serviced every year.

If you don't allow us access to complete the service you and your family could be at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.



## Electrical Safety check

We are required to carry out an electrical safety check every 5 years, this includes testing the electrical wiring, socket and light fittings in your home.



## Stairlift and through floor lift service

We are legally required to carry out a 6 monthly service and a separate independent inspection of stairlifts and through floor lifts. This is to keep the equipment in good working order and to identify and rectify repairs before they stop the lifting equipment from working.



## Planned Maintenance

**Did you know that as part of our commitment to “investing in quality homes” we’re spending over £100 million on planned works to upgrade our homes over the next 10 years.**

If your home is due to receive upgrade works, you will receive a letter from Cobalt detailing what work is due to take place, when it is due to start, and the name of the contractor delivering the work. If we are unable to gain access to complete these works the work might be delayed or you may be removed from the programme.

# Fire safety at Christmas

With Christmas coming there are a number of things you can do to make sure you, your family and neighbours are safe when it comes to fire.

- Check your Christmas tree lights carry the British Safety Standard sign



- Make sure cigarettes are properly put out.



- Never place candles near your Christmas tree or materials that can catch fire easily.



- Decorations can burn very easily, so do not place them near lights or heaters.



- Test your smoke alarms monthly and only remove batteries when replacing them.



- Keep candles, lighters and matches out of children's reach. Never leave burning candles unattended.



- Most fires start in the kitchen, so avoid leaving your cooker unattended and avoid cooking under the influence of alcohol.



- Never overload electrical sockets. Always switch Christmas lights off and unplug them before you go to bed.



# Your Voice Matters

My Voice Matters is a space for Cobalt Housing tenants and local residents in our communities to give us feedback, tell us your views and help us to understand what matters to you.

Your voice does matter, sign up today.

visit [www.myvoicematters.org.uk](http://www.myvoicematters.org.uk)

# MyVoice Matters

## YOU SAID

## WE DID...

### YOU SAID:

You told us that pictures of different causes of damp would be helpful.

### WE DID:

So we developed a leaflet showing all the different types of issues and how to report it.

### YOU SAID:

Our ASB team worked with local schools to speak to Year 5 and 6 pupils about what community improvements they would like to see, and the children said that reducing dog fouling was one.

### WE DID:

We worked with our partners to organise clean up days and ran a poster competition for the children.

### YOU SAID:

Our complaints process on the website wasn't clear enough.

### WE DID:

We worked with our tenants and made improvements to the website.

### YOU SAID:

You wanted our reception open until later.

### WE DID:

We introduced Talk to Us Tuesdays where reception was open until 7pm.

## YOU SAID

## WE DID...

### YOU SAID:

You wanted to see Cobalt out in the community.

### WE DID:

We worked with Liverpool City Council and ran a number of roadshows out and about in each of our neighbourhoods.

### YOU SAID:

You told us about grot spots in your neighbourhood.

### WE DID:

We worked with Liverpool's Street Scene Team and carried out some key clean up days.

### YOU SAID:

You wanted other ways to speak to us rather than ring in.

### WE DID:

We introduced our Live Chat facility.

### YOU SAID:

You wanted other ways to engage with us in different ways, other than through FB or Instagram.

### WE DID:

We purchased a bespoke engagement platform, and working with our involved tenants, developed My Voice Matters.

### YOU SAID:

You wanted a menu of choice to become more involved with Cobalt.

### WE DID:

With our involved tenants, we looked at developing a new framework with more options to be involved.

### YOU SAID:

You wanted more information on the Government's Four Million Homes Project.

### WE DID:

We supported our involved tenants to take part in the Four Million Homes training sessions and also to sign up to the national panels.



# Positive People

## Entry Level & Apprenticeship Opportunities

We love to grow talent across our workforce, and as a result, we have some entry-level & apprenticeship opportunities coming up soon within Cobalt.

**If you are interested and would like to find out more, please contact us at [recruitment@cobalthousing.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@cobalthousing.org.uk)**



**MyCobalt is your own personal login area where you can manage your home and your tenancy online.**

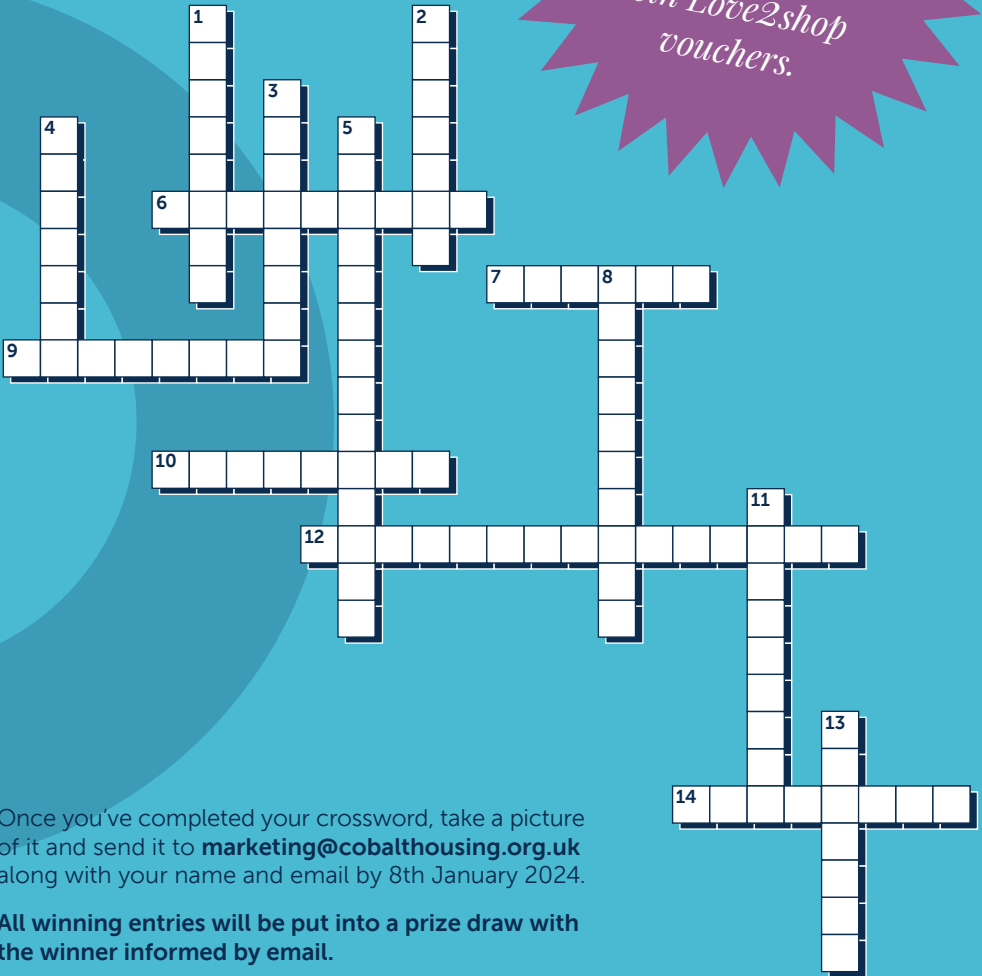
### At MyCobalt you can:

- Pay your rent online
- View your rent account
- Print a rent statement
- Request a rent payment card
- For Non Emergencies Only - Book a repair to your home
- View your repairs history
- Update your personal details
- Communicate with our Customer Services Team through direct messaging

**[mycobalt.cobalthousing.org.uk](https://mycobalt.cobalthousing.org.uk)**

# Crossword competition

*Simply fill in our fun crossword and you could win Love2shop vouchers.*



Once you've completed your crossword, take a picture of it and send it to [marketing@cobalthousing.org.uk](mailto:marketing@cobalthousing.org.uk) along with your name and email by 8th January 2024.

**All winning entries will be put into a prize draw with the winner informed by email.**

## Across

- [6] Our City
- [7] What we need to make repairs and safety checks
- [9] Online area where you can manage your home and your tenancy
- [10] Rudolph is a red-nosed what?
- [12] A way to get on the property ladder
- [14] The attitude of our people



## Down

- [1] What we want our communities to be
- [2] What you get once you've retired
- [3] A way to speak to us instead of ringing
- [4] The standard of our homes
- [5] A way to get paid to work whilst learning the job
- [8] The level of customer service we strive for
- [11] The festive season
- [13] Our Tenant Community Event



# Ways to get in touch

Between Wednesday 20th December 2023 – Tuesday 2nd January 2024

<p>Wednesday 20th December 2023 9am-5pm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Call us on <b>0330 303 2222</b></li><li>• Email us at <a href="mailto:info@cobalthousing.org.uk">info@cobalthousing.org.uk</a></li><li>• Send us a message at <b>MyCobalt</b></li><li>• <b>Visit our reception 1pm-4pm</b></li></ul>
<p>Thursday 21st December 2023 9am-5pm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Call us on <b>0330 303 2222</b></li><li>• Email us at <a href="mailto:info@cobalthousing.org.uk">info@cobalthousing.org.uk</a></li><li>• Send us a message at <b>MyCobalt</b></li></ul>
<p>Friday 22nd December 2023 9am-5pm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Call us on <b>0330 303 2222</b></li><li>• Email us at <a href="mailto:info@cobalthousing.org.uk">info@cobalthousing.org.uk</a></li><li>• Send us a message at <b>MyCobalt</b></li><li>• <b>Visit our reception 10am-1pm</b></li></ul>
<p>Friday 22nd December 2023 at 1pm until 9am</p> <p>Tuesday 2nd January 2024.</p>	<p><b>CHRISTMAS CLOSURE</b></p> <p><b>Emergencies only on 0330 303 2222</b></p> <p>All other enquiries will be responded to upon our return.</p>
<p>Tuesday 2nd January 2024 9am-5pm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Call us on <b>0330 303 2222</b></li><li>• Email us at <a href="mailto:info@cobalthousing.org.uk">info@cobalthousing.org.uk</a></li><li>• Send us a message at <b>MyCobalt</b></li></ul>