

THE INFORMED

Winter/Spring 2024



Sapphire
Independent
Housing

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If you'd like to be featured in the next issue, please write to us at theinformed@sih.org



SAPPHIRE WOULD LIKE TO WISH EVERYONE A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

January is a great time to look back at our achievements and celebrate our successes. It's also time to make plans and set goals for the new year – perhaps learn a new skill, or unleash our creativity. The winter months can be the perfect time to make new connections and get more involved in activities happening in our community. Speak to your housing officer to find out more about what's happening in your scheme.

Regular activities continue throughout the winter. At Conway House, residents can enjoy a hearty breakfast from 10:45 – 11:45am every Monday. Please be sure to bring your own plate, cup, knife, fork or spoon with you!



If you find the season stressful, then why not take part in some gentle exercise, stress-relief and relaxation? Come along to our yoga sessions, taking place in Conway House every Tuesday in the Training Resource Centre. No experience necessary, and everyone's welcome!

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT SAPPHIRE?

Residents at Bethany House took part in some wonderful activities over the last few months! They had a day trip to Brighton, a fabulous BBQ with mouth watering cakes, and were treated to a luxurious manicure!

Residents celebrated Black History Month with a series of activities in October, from movie nights to exhibition trips. Everyone enjoyed the delicious meal made by fellow resident Brenda.

SUMMER BBQ AT BETHANY HOUSE



PAMPERING NAIL TREATMENTS



RESIDENTS AT BETHANY HOUSE ON A DAY TRIP TO BRIGHTON



OLU (FORMER HOUSING OPERATIONS MANAGER) TUCKING IN AND ENJOYING THE MEAL



THANK YOU BRENDA FOR THE GREAT FOOD, WHICH WAS ENJOYED BY ALL!



Supa from Bethany House has been actively involved in tidying up the small courtyard and reviving our plants. Thanks you for doing an amazing job Supa!

At Conway House, activities for residents are in full swing, with Breakfast Club on Mondays, Yoga on Tuesdays, Art Therapy on Thursdays and a great range of activities daily including Table Tennis, Arts and Crafts, Morning Workouts, Movie Nights, Coffee and Chats and much more! We've also been running the FEAST Healthy Eating on a Budget Programme (see page 7 for more), and Piece by Piece at the TRC, organised by the Employment and Training Co-ordinator for Conway House residents. We've even set up a new drum kit which was enjoyed by all!

MORNING EXERCISE AT CONWAY HOUSE



NEW DRUM KIT AT THE TRC



FRIENDLY GAME OF TABLE TENNIS



MATCH NIGHT!



RESIDENTS ENJOYING ART THERAPY SESSION



Hepburn Court celebrated Halloween with resident adults and children organising a party! A fun time was had by all involved!



Hepburn Court also had a coffee morning in September and due to the success, more will be organized in the future.

NEWS FROM ST EUGENE COURT

Residents at St Eugene Court have a brand-new shed for their communal garden, thanks to the generous support of our neighbours, the Institute of Contemporary Music Performance (ICMP).

ICMP, who's Queen's Park Campus is directly next door to St Eugene Court, carried out extensive renovation works from December 2022 to September 2023, and this caused some disruption for our residents. Thankfully ICMP were considerate neighbours, keeping us up to date on progress. They were also kind enough to replace and erect a new shed for our garden.

Sapphire and St Eugene Court residents would like to say thank you to ICMP for keeping us regularly consulted on developments, and for the much larger shed, which we will benefit from greatly. Thank you ICMP!



YOU SAID WE DID

We are continuing to listen to residents on how we can improve our service, and these are just a few examples of the action we are taking.

Bethany House

You said: You wanted to bring back Gails and Pret donations...

We did: We contacted Gails and Pret with your request and waiting for their response. Fingers crossed – we'll keep you posted!

You said: You needed help with the £200 grant for working residents.

We did: We organised a grant workshop to help all residents who need support.

You said: You wanted to be the chef in the kitchen instead of the staff.

We did: Handed over the chef's hat and residents can now cook in the kitchen instead of staff.

Hepburn Court

You said: You would like coffee mornings to take place.

We did: A coffee morning was organised for February and September and more are to follow shortly.

St Eugene Court

You said: You would like to have a hose to water the plants and flowers in the communal garden area.

We did: We purchased a hose for all residents to use at St Eugene Court.



SAPPHIRE ANNUAL REPORT

To view the latest annual report please visit the website below:

<https://www.sih-annualreport.co.uk/>

BERTRAM'S STORY

Before Bertram moved into Conway House in October 2018, he was having a difficult time. He was in a bad place because of his drug taking, and his life had started to unravel.

Bertram had become homeless, and his daughter let him stay with her. But when she became pregnant, her home was overcrowded. Due to the anxiety felt by all, Bertram was on the point of being homeless again – when fortunately he was referred to Conway House.

Bertram was really anxious about moving into a hostel, because of having a preconceived idea of how it would be. He said he didn't think he would have survived, if Conway House was like the hostel he thought it would be.

Instead, when he moved into Conway House, he couldn't believe how nice it was, and was so impressed. The rooms were clean and tidy and it had all the mod cons – something he never expected. Bertram couldn't believe how lucky he was, and so grateful to be given this opportunity.

Bertram received support from the staff at Conway House and said that Sharon, his Key Worker really helped him throughout his time there. Even though he was happy moving to the scheme, it was a very daunting time for him, trying to rebuild his life again.

In the beginning of 2022, a general needs property became available at Sapphire, and Bertram was interviewed to see whether he would be suitable. Unfortunately on that occasion, it was felt he was not quite ready to move on to permanent accommodation.

This made Bertram realize that even though he had made progress, he still needed to improve further. With determination for this to be a real turning point in his life, Bertram stopped taking drugs (prescribed), as they still had a negative impact on his physical and mental health.

In November 2022, Bertram was given another opportunity to be considered for permanent accommodation, and on this occasion, when he was interviewed he was successful!

Sharon, his Key Worker applied for a grant to help furnish his flat and managed to get him a fridge and bed. This was a great start for Bertram moving into his new home.

Looking back, Bertram says that not being accepted for the first property he interviewed for really drove him to sort his life out. It made him more determined to reach a positive outcome where he could start to live independently.

It's been a year since Bertram moved into his new home and he is really happy and settled there. It's just a few minutes' walk away from where his daughter lives, and he sees both her and his grandchild regularly, and says she is still a great support to him.

Bertram's story shows that moving into a hostel at a difficult time in his life has been a positive experience. Living in Conway House and benefiting from the support of his Key Worker helped him find the necessary tools to feel confident enough to be able to move into a permanent self-contained flat of his own. Congratulations Bertram!



Fire door entry programme

- We are near completion of the fire door remedial programme, and
- would like to thank residents for their co-operation at properties
- we have attended to date. We will be contacting residents of the
- remaining properties to confirm our attendance when carrying out
- the rest of the remedial works. Thank you again.

HOW ARE WE DOING?



SAPPHIRE'S SATISFACTION SURVEY

Key Metrics Summary 2023 – Residents

Sapphire has commissioned Acuity to undertake an independent satisfaction survey of its residents to collect data on their opinions of the attitudes towards their landlord and the services provided.

The survey was designed using the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures from the Regulator of Social Housing, which became mandatory from April 2023 and will be reported for the first time in 2024. The survey reveals that just under two thirds of residents are satisfied with the overall services

provided by Sapphire. Increasingly, all the other measures within the survey recorded higher levels of satisfaction. The highest satisfaction is for the repairs service in the last 12 months and Sapphire being easy to deal with (both 76%) and treating residents fairly and with respect and the time to complete repairs (both 74%).

Our overall satisfaction is 63%. It has dropped from previous surveys, and we are working to improve this across all our schemes and services.



67% Well maintained home



68% Safe home



76% Repairs – Last 12 months



74% Time taken – Last repair



70% Repairs – Overall satisfaction



73% Communal areas clean and well maintained



71% Positive contribution to neighbourhood



67% Anti-social behaviour



76% Easy to deal with



70% Listens and Acts



73% Keeps you informed



74% Treats fairly and with respect

CSE ASSESSMENT UPDATE

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



Our latest CSE took place on the 7th December 2023 and we are pleased to report that Sapphire has passed the interim audit. We will provide you with a further update in our next newsletter in the summer 2024.

JOURNEY MAPS

Over the past couple of years, we have been consulting with residents about our policies and procedures, and we appreciate your suggestions and recommendations. In response to this, over the coming months, we will be working with residents to implement the recommendations and put these into practice.

GENERAL NEEDS DROP IN

Head Office – Drop in on the first Tuesday of each month from 10am-12pm.

St Eugene Court – Drop in on the first Wednesday of each month from 2pm-4pm.

Watch this space in future newsletters as we will bring you news of new Journey Maps! We will initially be concentrating on the Repairs Journey Map, with more to follow.

If anyone is interested in being involved, please contact your keyworker or Housing Officer.

HEALTHY EATING ON A BUDGET PROGRAMME!



FEAST With Us recently launched a new **Healthy Eating on a Budget Programme**, and residents at Conway House were invited to take part.

The programme aims to empower people experiencing food poverty to independently access their nutritional needs, make informed dietary choices and improve dietary behaviours. Most importantly, the programme is designed to be budget-friendly and accessible to all.

Interviews were held by students from a local university, and 18 residents were selected to take part. Feast With Us ran the programme three times at Conway House, and attendance and engagement was 100%. All residents who took part received a £10 gift voucher, and a useful 'Cooking on a budget' recipe manual.

The Programme was taught in three Levels, and as an incentive, those that completed all Levels also received a £10 Sainsbury Food voucher to put towards some tasty ingredients!

In Level 1, participants learnt the theory behind diet and nutrition, and practical skills to cook healthily on a budget. In Level 2, participants cooked in the kitchen, and in Level 3 they all obtained food and safety hygiene training.

Sapphire would like to say a big **Well Done** and **Congratulations** to:

Shahil Abdul, Bambo Ayinde, Michael Connolly, Nicholas Friend, Peter Galer, Ali Ghobashavi, Chikezie Nnadi, Andre Stephenson, and Abdi Warsame, for completing the programme.

WILL THE COST OF LIVING EVER CRISIS END?

The cost of living crisis seems as though it has lasted an age. Although inflation is easing slowly, people have faced prices rising at rates not seen in decades while their wages have not kept up. This has left them struggling with debt and sacrificing the essentials. So will the cost of living crisis end, and will prices ever come down?

Don't panic. The cost of living crisis will come to an end eventually. Prices will stabilise and grow more slowly and real wages should catch up, with progress being made on this already. In the meantime however, people are still struggling financially. Any residents who are worried or struggling should talk to us, by contacting their keyworker or housing officer. We also have some tips to help in this time of crisis.

Food banks are community organisations that can help if you can't afford the food you need. You'll usually need to get a referral to a food bank before you can use it. This includes all food banks run by the Trussell Trust.

You can get a referral for yourself and any family members you live with – including your partner. You might be able to use some food banks without a referral – for example, if it's run by a church. Contact your local food bank to see if you need a referral.

Getting a referral

You can [ask Citizens Advice to refer you to a food bank](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/contact-us/)¹. They'll usually make an appointment for you to discuss your situation with an adviser first.

The adviser will ask you some questions to check you're eligible for the food bank. If you're eligible, they'll give you a voucher for your nearest food bank.

They can also check if you should be getting any benefits you're not currently claiming and tell you about other local help you could get. The adviser can give you advice about budgeting and any debts you have.

If you can't go to Citizens Advice

You can ask for a referral from another organisation – for example your GP, housing association or social worker.

Your local council might be able to tell you how to get a referral to a food bank. You can [find your local council's contact details](https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council)² on GOV.UK.

When you contact your local council, ask if they can also help you with other essential costs like clothes and petrol. They might give you help from their 'household support fund' or 'welfare assistance scheme'.

Going to a food bank

When an organisation refers you to a food bank, they'll give you a voucher and tell you where the food bank is. Check if the voucher is only valid on a specific day – you can ask the person who refers you.

If the food bank is run by the Trussell Trust you can [check the address on the Trussell Trust website](https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/)³.

The food bank will give you a food parcel. Your parcel will usually contain enough food for three days. The food bank might also be able to give you essential toiletries, like toothpaste or deodorant.

When you visit the food bank, let them know if you have any allergies or dietary requirements – they should be able to help you.

The food bank might be able to deliver your food parcel if:

- you live in a rural area and can't afford to travel
- you're sick or disabled and can't travel

Contact the food bank to check if they can deliver.

If the food bank is run by a church or other religious group, they'll still help you if you're not religious or from a different religion.

1. <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/contact-us/>

2. <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

3. <https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/>

OFFERS AND DISCOUNTS



What is Too Good To Go?

The **Too Good To Go** app lets you buy and collect 'Magic Bags' of food, at a great price – so it gets eaten instead of wasted.

The app is completely free to use and you are only ever charged if you secure a 'Magic Bag' of food.

Every day, fresh food that is often delicious goes to waste at cafes, restaurants, hotels, shops and manufacturers – just because it hasn't sold in time. The **Too Good To Go** app lets you buy and collect 'Magic Bag's of this food – at a great price – so it gets eaten instead of wasted.

How do I get my Magic Bag?

1. Download the free **Too Good To Go** app via: <https://www.toogoodtogo.com/en-gb>
2. Scan this QR code on your phone and it will link to the app with instructions to download



3. In the app, search for your local your local shops and stores who take part in **Too Good To Go**
4. Reserve and purchase your 'Magic Bag'
5. Collect your 'Magic Bag' in your allotted time slot and enjoy!

Supermarket bags through the app are often the best value, because they contain groceries you can put towards a meal rather than bakeries or eateries.

Save your money and the planet by picking up a 'Magic Bag'! Each bag will cost in the region of £3.00 to £4.00, and you'll get surprise surplus food, grocery items, from fruit and veg, to milk, cheese, bread, pastries and baked goods.

BENEFIT ENTITLEMENTS

Extra help for people on the lowest incomes

With the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, we want to ensure residents are receiving their correct benefit entitlements. Please see the following which may provide useful information.

Cost of living payments during 2023/2024

The cost of living payment is £900 and paid in three instalments across the year:

- First instalment of £301 was paid during Spring 2023.
- Second instalment of £300 was paid during Autumn 2023.
- Third instalment of £299 will be paid during Spring 2024.

You may be entitled if you get any of the following benefits or tax credits on certain dates:

- [Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance](#)
- [Income-related Employment and Support Allowance](#)
- [Income Support](#)
- [Pension Credit](#)
- [Universal Credit](#)
- [Child Tax Credit](#)
- [Working Tax Credit](#)

Click on the links above to find out more about these allowances, or see websites on page 11.

Winter Fuel Payment

If you're entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment for winter 2023 to 2024, you will get an extra £150 or £300 paid with your normal payment from November 2023.

The amount of Winter Fuel Payment (including the Pensioner Cost of Living Payment) you will get for winter 2023 to 2024 depends on when you were born and your circumstances during the qualifying dates.

You can get a Winter Fuel Payment for winter 2023 to 2024 if you were born before 25 September 1957.

continued overleaf...

Disability Cost of Living Payment eligibility

You may be entitled to a Disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 and should have received by May 2023:

If you feel that you have not received any of these payments, please report on:

<https://secure.dwp.gov.uk/report-a-missing-cost-of-living-payment/welcome>

What are the benefits of a credit union in the UK?



One of the main advantages of borrowing from a credit union is that their interest rates are often lower than other types of lenders. This is because, as a not-for-profit organisation, they exist to serve our members, not to make money for shareholders.

Credit unions work by all members sharing a 'common bond'. For example, you might: live, work, study or volunteer in a certain area. Work in the same industry or for certain employers.

To find out more information and to find out where your local credit union is, please review the link <https://www.findyourcreditunion.co.uk/>

Some useful tips on how to cut your food bill

1. Download the Too Good To Go app and start benefiting from 'Magic Bags'
2. Freeze food to avoid wastage
3. Grow you own fruit and vegetables (easier in the warm weather)
4. Sign up to Loyalty Cards to get the benefits
5. Buy items in bulk (within reason)
6. Keep a watch on expiry dates, to avoid waste
7. Avoid buying big brands – supermarket own brands can taste just as good, and be much cheaper
8. Shop later in the day, when more items are on offer, and it's easier to pick up a bargain!

WINTER PESTS

As a resident, it is your responsibility to keep your home clean and tidy. This means regularly cleaning surfaces, floors, and appliances to prevent food and crumbs from attracting pests. You should also dispose of your rubbish properly and make sure that any bins or containers are securely closed. Store food in airtight containers to prevent pests from accessing it.

If you notice any signs of pests, such as droppings or chewed furniture, you should report the problem to SIH as soon as possible by contacting your Housing Officer, or by emailing info@sih.org.

It is important to act quickly to prevent the problem from getting worse.



TENANT RESPONSIBILITIES

Residents must remember to test their heating systems to make sure they are working correctly. This can be done simply by switching on the boiler and letting it run for 20 minutes to make sure all the radiators are getting warm, the water runs hot, and there are no signs of leaks or stains from pipework.

We also recommend:

- Keeping heating at the very low setting of 12 degrees
- Set heating to come on for few hours early in the morning and again late evening to keep the property above freezing
- Ensure adequate ventilation: Wipe down surfaces affected by condensation regularly to prevent mould growth.

WARM SPACES



Warm Welcome is a community-led initiative where businesses, community, faith or social enterprise organisations provide a welcoming space for residents to stay warm and engage with others in their community.

They can be found in libraries, children's centres and other community buildings across the borough.

Each **Warm Welcome** space offers something a little different. But wherever you visit, you'll find a warm and friendly place to enjoy. You'll also be able to get help and support with the cost-of-living crisis if you need it.

Everyone is invited to come in, relax and meet up with others in a safe and warm place.



For more information and where you can find a **Warm Welcome** in your local area, please visit: <https://www.warmwelcome.uk/#map>
You can also contact your Housing Support Officer or

Housing Officer for further information.

Warm Welcome aims that by working together, they can turn financial worry and loneliness into warmth, positivity, and local connection.

FESTIVITIES AT SAPPHIRE

As part of the Christmas festivities at Sapphire, residents at Conway House enjoyed a delicious festive meal prepared by FEAST on Friday 22nd December, and on Thursday 21st December, residents at Townsend House, had a celebratory meal. A fun and festive time was had by all.

Watch this space for photos of Christmas and New Year activities at Sapphire, which will be displayed in the next newsletter in Summer 2024.



Cost of living payments useful links

- **Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance:** www.turn2us.org.uk/Benefit-guides/Jobseeker-s-Allowance/What-is-Jobseeker-s-Allowance
- **Income-related Employment and Support Allowance:** www.turn2us.org.uk/Benefit-guides/Employment-and-Support-Allowance/What-is-Employment-and-Support-Allowance
- **Income Support:** www.turn2us.org.uk/Benefit-guides/Employment-and-Support-Allowance/What-is-Employment-and-Support-Allowance
- **Pension Credit:** www.turn2us.org.uk/Benefit-guides/Pension-Credit/What-is-Pension-Credit
- **Universal Credit:** www.turn2us.org.uk/get-support/information-for-your-situation/universal-credit-uc/what-is-universal-credit-uc
- **Child Tax Credit:** www.turn2us.org.uk/Benefit-guides/Child-Tax-Credit/What-is-Child-Tax-Credit
- **Working Tax Credit:** www.turn2us.org.uk/Benefit-guides/Working-Tax-Credit/What-is-Working-Tax-Credit

CONTACT US

The Informed is a bi-annual publication.

Our next issue will be out in Summer 2024. Please send any comments, questions and story ideas to:

TheInformed@sih.org

For a PDF version or any previous issues of *The Informed* please visit the Residents' section of our website www.sih.org and click on publications.

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If you would like this publication in large print please contact Nina Williams on 020 7485 8889



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IN PEOPLE | Gold

PLEASE NOTE

Head Office is open Mondays to Wednesdays by appointment only from 10.30am – 5.00pm.

If you would like to make an appointment, please call **020 7485 8889**.

If you have any emergency repairs please contact the out-of-hours number on **020 7372 6633**.

GENERAL ENQUIRES

Head office

1 Holmes Road,
Kentish Town,
London, NW5 3AA
Tel: 020 7485 8889
Email: info@sih.org
www.sih.org

SUPPORTED SCHEMES

Bethany House

13 Lloyd Square,
London, WC1X 9AR
Tel: 020 7837 3420

Conway House

18-22 Quex Road,
Kilburn, NW6 4PL
Tel: 020 7372 6633

Hepburn Court

Brookside,
Gowar Field,
South Mimms,
Hertfordshire,
EN6 3QE
Tel: 01707 662 667

Townsend House

135 Aycliffe Road,
Borehamwood,
Hertfordshire,
WD6 4HA
Tel: 020 8207 1562

GENERAL NEEDS SCHEMES

Caulfield Court

Baynes Street,
London, NW1 0TZ

College Yard

9 College Yard,
London, NW5 1NX

Dunne Mews

57 Leighton Road,
London, NW5 2QH

Forde House

129 Queens Crescent,
London, NW5 4HE

Hackett House

12 Kingsgate Road,
Kilburn, NW6 4TB
Tel: 020 7692 7285

Highgate Road

54/56 Highgate Road,
London, NW5 1NU

St Eugene Court

82 Salusbury Road,
London, NW6 6PA

Tara Lodge

Mutrix Road,
London, NW6 4BF