



# Alpha News

Winter 2023

## **WELCOME TO THE SPECIAL CHRISTMAS EDITION OF ALPHA NEWS!**



We have a packed newsletter for you with a bit of something for everyone including christmas arrangements, our growth plans for next year and how we hope to get residents more involved in decision making.

We're also very excited that Alpha won a prestigious award in November!

At the Affordable Housing Awards we were recognised at the best older persons' landlord in the UK. The judges were impressed at how we put residents first and live by our values. This doesn't mean we'll rest on our laurels – quite the opposite as we know there's always more to do – but it's really heartening that our efforts are recognised. I'd like to say a big thank you to all of our colleagues and to you for making it a joy to work with all our residents.

Christmas is a time for celebration, but also one for reflection. If you know someone who might be on their own this christmas or who's had a difficult year, please take some time to make sure they're OK. A little kindness goes such a long way.

Have a wonderful festive season.

Everyone at Alpha looks forward to working with you next year.

Take care

Graeme



# Fire Safety at Christmas

Christmas is always a great time for looking after friends and family. Whilst we all want to relax and celebrate it is always good to be mindful to look after the safety of ourselves and the people around us.

Some top tips for remaining safe in your home are:

- Be careful not to overload electrics by using multiple plug banks / extension cables.
- Do not use candles or naked flames.
- When using Christmas lights, use LED lights instead of bulbs as they produce significantly less heat.

Unfortunately, the risk of fires occurring increases at Christmas. This is mainly because there are more combustibles available, candles being used, more alcohol, more electric components. Therefore, please be aware and responsible for staying safe as you enjoy the festivities. A safe Christmas is a good Christmas for you and everyone you know.

Remember, if a fire starts in your property, leave the property as quickly as possible, shut the flat entrance door behind you and make your way to the Assembly point.

# Repairs during the Christmas period

Over the Christmas period from 22nd December 2023 to Tuesday 2nd January 2024, our responsive repairs service will be reduced. This means standard repairs will not be undertaken.

Contractors will be available during this period for emergency works should the need arise.

On Christmas day, Boxing day and New Years day no contractors will be working.

Should a contractor be required during these dates, arrangements have been put into place to allow their attendance for emergency repairs.

Any emergency on these dates and the preceding weekends should be reported via the warden call service as per the normal out of hours procedure.

During these dates, attendance will be to make safe only and a full repair will be arranged thereafter as soon as possible on the next available working day.

Alpha staff will also be available to deal with any major emergencies should they arise.





## The Twelve Scams of Christmas



On the **first** day of Christmas a scammer gave to me **A dodgy Parcel delivery**  
On the **second** day of Christmas a scammer gave to me, **a fake gift card**  
On the **third** day of Christmas my scammer gave to me **Online Purchase scams**  
On the **fourth** day of Christmas my scammer gave to me **fake requests for gifts**  
On the **fifth** day of Christmas my scammer gave to me **Chaarity Fraaaauuud**  
On the **sixth** day of Christmas my scammer gave to me **Online selling sites**  
On the **seventh** day of Christmas my scammer gave to me **Bank Impersonation**  
On the **eighth** day of Christmas my scammer gave to me **Fraudulent Christmas Cards**  
On the **ninth** day of Christmas my scammer gave to me **befriending fraud**  
On the **tenth** day of Christmas my scammer gave to me not so “**special**” offers  
On the **eleventh** day of Christmas my scammer gave to me **show time ticket scams**  
On the **twelfth** day of Christmas my scammer gave to me **cost of living payments (show time ticket scams, not so “special” offers, befriending fraud, fraudulent Christmas cards, bank impersonations, online selling sites, chaarity fraauud, fake requests for gifts, online purchase scams, a fake gift card and a dodgy parcel delivery)**

We often expect an increase in deliveries at Christmas, unfortunately fraudsters are clever and will send fake text messages, emails, e-cards etc asking for delivery costs or money often pretending to be a close relative. Never click on links without checking first that the message is genuine and always phone the person on the number you have already to check!

If you are unsure if a website is real or fake you can go to [www.getsafeonline.org/checkawebsite](http://www.getsafeonline.org/checkawebsite) and type in the address you've been given, and it will tell you if it's legitimate or not.

Don't give your bank details, or personal information unless you are 100% confident that who you are paying is legitimate, and only buy tickets from legitimate websites (never from gumtree or Facebook market place etc). Finally – if you are buying anything online, you have increased protection if you use a credit card or paypal (rather than debit cards), but you still have to be very careful.

So that's a wrap (barumbum) for this year, but remember long after the wrapping paper has been thrown away, keep checking your bank statements and query any unusual transactions.

Have a wonderful Christmas, however you celebrate from all of us at Alpha Living.

By **Chloe Brennan-Ward Age 34 and ¾ (Area Manager)**



# RESIDENT SCRUTINY - HAVE YOUR SAY

Resident Scrutiny involves a group of residents investigating a service provided by Alpha Living and making recommendations about how the service can be improved. The purpose of scrutiny is to improve a service by assessing what works well and where there needs to be improvement.

The process of scrutinising usually involves examining a service and will typically include looking at performance data, listening to residents views and testing service delivery.

We currently have 25 residents who have attended our meetings or are involved in other ways but we are always looking for more. They are a friendly bunch, why don't you think about joining?

## WHAT WILL THE SCRUTINY TEAM MEMBER NEED?

In order to be a member of this important team, they need to:

- Work well as part of a team
- Understand performance information (training will be provided and assistance available as required)
- Challenge appropriately
- Understand that they are working on behalf of all Alpha residents (not just the development they live at)



After listening to resident feedback, the first service that our scrutiny team will be looking at is the service charge packs in early January.

Ultimately, we hope that the packs will be simpler to read and understand when you get them a few weeks later.



Alpha Living residents have now attended 2 scrutiny meeting, and will be reviewing the service charge packs that all residents get in early January.

Effective scrutiny will lead to improvements in services and increases in resident satisfaction.

Our scrutiny meetings are a mix, some residents attend on line (via teams) and others attend the meetings in person.

*If this is something you feel you would like to get involved in, please contact Heather Howard (Customer Experience Manager) either by email at [hhoward@alpha-living.co.uk](mailto:hhoward@alpha-living.co.uk) or by telephone 0330 460 9870.*

## RENT & SERVICE CHARGES

During February you will be receiving information about your rent and service charges for 2024-2025.

In recent years we have sent out information packs which were very large and contained a lot of detailed and often repetitive information about your service charges.

Some of the feedback that we hear from residents is that these packs can be confusing to read. We have taken on board these views and are working with our scrutiny team on changing the information packs to make them easier to understand. We want to remain open and transparent about how service charges are worked out.

We encourage any feedback you may have about the new packs and the services we provide so we can improve the way we communicate and the way we deliver important services where you live.



## LIVING WELL FUND

Since we introduced the Living Well fund at the beginning of the financial year, so far we have helped 19 residents who have contacted us due to financial difficulty for various reasons, and provided a number of different types of help including:

- Supermarket gift vouchers
- Replacement fridge/freezers
- Replacement Cookers
- Bed/Bedding
- Help with energy bills

If you find yourself struggling, please don't be too proud to ask for help - we really do want to help where we can, and we promise there is no judgement.

If you don't tell us - we don't know!

We will not use the fund towards rent arrears - but we will consider all other essential requests.

Please speak to your Development Manager if you are worried, or if you would prefer, you can contact Heather (Customer Experience Manager) on telephone 0330 460 9870, or email at [livingwell@alpha-living.co.uk](mailto:livingwell@alpha-living.co.uk)



# Pasture Road (Moreton)

Our newbuild development project has been in the works for over 12 months and we are looking forward to getting into contract and putting spades in the ground in 2024!

The project will see us deliver a new Extra Care Scheme on Pasture Road in Moreton, comprising of 73 x one bedroom apartments and 8 x two bedroom apartments, creating 81 apartments overall which will be available for an affordable rent for people over the age of 55.

The scheme forms part of a wider regeneration of this large site which will also include a new Lidl supermarket, improvement works to Moreton Library and 44 x 2, 3 & 4 bedroom homes for outright sale delivered by Countryside Homes.

Our ambition with Pasture Road has always been to deliver a more “carbon-conscious” and future-proofed building while maintaining a friendly usability of all systems for residents.

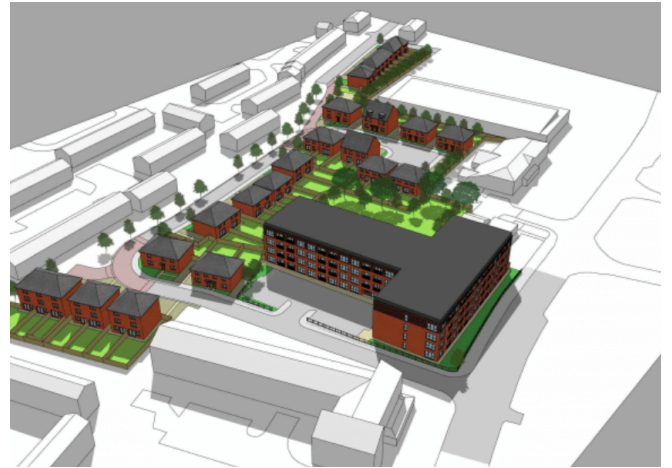
This will be an all-electric building utilising air source heat pumps and solar panels on the roof which will allow us to achieve an EPC rating ‘A’ for all units. This high specification will help residents to reduce their energy bills.

The scheme itself has been designed to promote a healthy and active lifestyle for residents while being ready to deliver care support 24 hours a day.

The scheme design consists of spacious apartments with private balconies, a large communal lounge with a residents’ kitchen area, an assisted bathroom with a rise and fall bath, and a beautifully landscaped sensory garden in a private and secure setting within the heart of a thriving community.

## ARTISTS IMPRESSION

### Aerial View



### Street View



# Rent Payments at Christmas

As Christmas approaches, many of us are eagerly looking forward to spending time with loved ones, exchanging gifts, and enjoying festive meals.

However, for many people, the Christmas period can bring added financial stress.

It's crucial to prioritise your rent payments, even during this time of year, to maintain housing stability and peace of mind. Here are a couple of tips to help you:

- Prioritise your bills (rent should be top of any list!)
- Avoid Impulse Spending; While it's tempting to splurge in the sales, try to resist impulsive purchases that you may later regret
- Talk to us before you find yourself in financial difficulty or as soon as you can - we may be able to signpost you to available resources.

# Useful contact numbers

Citizens Advice tel: 0800 144 8848

Pension Service Tel: 0800 731 7898

Age UK Advice Tel: 0800 678 1602

Money Helper: 0800 138 7777

NHS (none-emergency) 111

Anxiety UK 03444 775 774

Turn2us (debt) Tel: 0808 802 2000

Samaritans Text: 116 123

Alpha Duty Officer: 0330 460 9870

# Staff Conference and Values

Back in October we held our Staff Conference, which was an inspiring day for all involved. A key part of the day was reflecting not just the great work we do and the important reasons why, but also looking at how we do what we do, and as such we took the opportunity to launch our new values.

Our values were designed and co-created through focus groups held with both staff and residents. The sessions held were positive, with each group providing their voice and bringing their lived experiences of Alpha, resulting in values that are at the heart and soul of who we are.



As a organisation, we know that it is our values that makes Alpha, Alpha, and what stands us apart from other housing providers.

This is something that was highlighted by the judging panel in The Affordable Housing Awards and something that we are proud of as it shows that our values are not just words but livable.

Our new values are:

### **Brave and Bold**

We create a space for belonging and inspire our residents, colleagues and customers to be the best possible version of themselves, to make bold choices, grow, learn and excel.

### **Compassionate**

We put the person at the heart of everything we do and celebrate the diversity of our residents, colleagues and customers. We don't just say we care; our actions show we care.

### **Honest**

We are open and honest; we value and respect each other's opinions and thoughts. We are inclusive in our interactions and encourage others to be the same.

### **Positive**

We are inclusive in our approach, we are resilient and focused on delivering the best possible outcomes for our residents, colleagues and customers.





# Alpha People

Meet **Irene** from St Clements Court in Macclesfield.

Irene runs the social club at the development and organises various activities throughout the year for the residents including coach and canal boat trips as well as trips to the theatre.

Every Wednesday morning, whilst tea and toast are being served in the communal lounge, she collects subs off participating residents and arranges the weekly bonus ball draws.

For the last 13 years, Irene has decorated the Christmas tree in remembrance of her daughter Christine who sadly died of breast cancer aged just 31 back in 2003.

She left 3 children, the youngest being 9 months old at the time but who is now 21years of age.

Before Christine passed away, she had brought a big Christmas tree however it was never put up in her home as her husband said it was too big, so Irene accepted.

Each year Irene buys a new ornament, and places it on the tree in memory of her daughter.

Thank you Irene, from all the residents at St Clements Court, and all staff at Alpha Living - you really are a special lady.



FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN A £50 GIFT CARD VOUCHER COMPLETE BOTH PUZZLES AND RETURN TO YOUR DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

## Circle the 5 Differences



## Unscramble the words below

*Christmas*

### WORD SCRAMBLE



NADYC NECA \_\_\_\_\_

TMEOSIL \_\_\_\_\_

LYLOH \_\_\_\_\_

NSAAT \_\_\_\_\_

VLESE \_\_\_\_\_

LHIESG \_\_\_\_\_

OKAENFWSL \_\_\_\_\_

DENIRERE \_\_\_\_\_

EGLJIN LSEBL \_\_\_\_\_

NALEG \_\_\_\_\_

IRNWTE \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name:

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Your address:

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