



Springing out of Lockdown

As we gradually move out of lockdown, we are hoping to re-start our usual community events, trips and other activities for Lyng families to enjoy.

Our Toddlers Group has managed to keep running, subject to restrictions, and is now a thriving, supportive group with over 20 children regularly attending.

Recent sessions have been themed around a variety of subjects, including animals, World Book Day, Valentine’s Day, St David’s Day and Mother’s Day.

Stacey, one of the group’s volunteers, runs her own book-selling business and now provides regular interactive ‘story time’ sessions to encourage our estate’s younger residents to discover the joys of reading.

Subject to lockdown restrictions being lifted and appropriate safety precautions, we plan to re-open our 5-11 Club and Youth Club by the end of April, and run our summer play scheme for 5-11-year-olds from 2nd to 6th August.

We also hope to organise a summer community trip to Llandudno for over 100 Lyng tenants and friends on 19th August, as well as a family trip in the summer holidays for members of the Toddlers Group and 5-11 Club.

Other plans include fundraising events in aid of Acorns Black Country Hospice.

Amy Rushton, Community Development Officer at Lyng Community Association, said:
“We’d like to thank all those who have supported us through this difficult year by continuing to attend our clubs and following the new rules and procedures.”



Toddlers learn about farm machinery

- We want to hear from you, particularly our older residents, about what kind of activities you would like us to organise. Email Amy at arushton.lca@btconnect.com, call 0121 525 5969 or pop in to the LCA office when it re-opens.



Food bank support

West Bromwich Food Bank continues to support struggling Sandwell residents during the Covid-19 crisis.

The service offers three days’ worth of food, plus toiletries and even pet food if needed. To get a food bank voucher, ask at your local Jobcentre.

The food bank – at West Bromwich Community Church, 23 Victoria Street, B70 8EX – is now open Monday-Friday, midday-1.30pm, depending on food stocks and staff health.

When you visit, although the doors may be locked, the team will answer as soon as possible. Please observe social distancing rules, for your protection and theirs.

- You can call the food bank on **0121 580 0068** or email fb@elimwestbrom.com



A young cowboy tries out the slide



At LCA, we welcome feedback about our services from Lyng residents and housing applicants.

We believe our staff and contractors do a good job, but we realise sometimes things go wrong or we need to re-think certain policies and procedures.

Whether you have a complaint, comment or want to thank us for going the extra mile, please get in touch so we can use your feedback to improve our services:

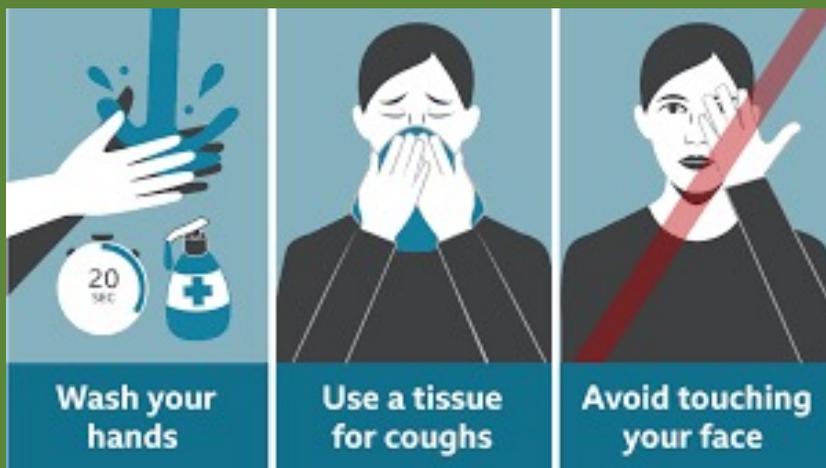
- Call Customer Services on **0121 525 5969**
- Email ralleyl@btconnect.com
- Write to us at 3 Frank Fisher Way, West Bromwich, B70 7AW
- Pop in to the office and speak to our Customer Services Team

We have developed a new Complaints Policy and Procedure this year, in line with the Housing Ombudsman's 'Complaints Handling Code' launched in 2020. You can see the policy on our website at <https://lyng.org.uk/complaints/>

When you lodge a complaint, we will log it and aim to sort it out at the first attempt. If you are not satisfied, you can take it to the next stage.

You can contact the Housing Ombudsman for advice on **0300 111 3000**, email info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk or write to Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ.

Stay safe



Thank you to everyone for helping slow the spread of Covid-19.

It is important we all continue following government restrictions, so keep washing your hands, wearing a mask and social distancing when you're out – even if you've been vaccinated.

Tens of thousands of people have already received their jabs at local centres, including Lyng Medical Centre.

When it's your turn to be vaccinated, the NHS will contact you to advise how to book. If you've already been invited, please make sure you book an appointment as soon as possible – but don't turn up for a vaccination without a pre-booked appointment.



Beware online shopping scams

Online shopping should be safe and easy. But, when an offer seems too good to be true, check the seller is legitimate by considering the following points.

Tell-tale signs that a website isn't genuine

- ✗ No padlock logo in the address bar (URL), indicating it is an unsecure site
- ✗ Ridiculously generous discounts
- ✗ You are asked to pay by bank transfer

Tips for secure online shopping

- ✓ Look for the padlock symbol in the address bar (but remember this only means the information you enter is private, not necessarily that the site isn't fraudulent)
- ✓ Avoid paying by bank transfer as it's similar to handing over cash, making it difficult to get your money back if there's a problem
- ✓ If you're on an online marketplace, use safe payment options
- ✓ Try to pay by credit card, as it gives extra protection if something goes wrong
- ✓ Check customer reviews and read the terms and conditions

Don't rush into anything that you're not sure about. Missing out on a deal is much better than falling for a scam – and, if something looks odd, it probably is.

Balcony fire hazards

If you live in a flat with a balcony, please ensure you use it safely to avoid fire risks. Storing potentially flammable items there poses a danger to you and your neighbours.

- **Don't** use balconies to store items such as furniture, kitchen appliances, decorating materials or toys.
- **Don't** have barbecues on balconies.
- **Do** put out cigarettes fully, wherever you smoke.

For more advice, call us on **0121 525 5969**.

Together with Tenants



NATIONAL HOUSING FEDERATION

We are always keen to hear your views. As such, we have adopted a new national housing association initiative – the ‘Together with Tenants’ Charter.

This charter focuses on strengthening the relationship between us and our residents, listening to our tenants, being accountable, providing quality services and learning from your complaints.

The government plans to include many aspects of the charter in future housing legislation and expects it to have been shaped in partnership with residents.

It sets out seven commitments that you should expect from your landlord:

- 1) To be safe in your home.
- 2) To know how your landlord is performing, including on repairs, complaints and safety, and how it spends its money.
- 3) To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong Ombudsman.
- 4) To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.
- 5) To have your voice heard by your landlord.
- 6) To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in, with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
- 7) The government will ensure social housing can support people to take their first step to ownership.

Using this charter as a basis, we want to work with our residents to make sure we listen to what you have to say and take your views into account in improving our services.



Listening to you

LCA is committed to involving residents in scrutinising our services, consulting on policy and ensuring compliance with regulatory standards.

Lyng Tenants’ Panel involves residents and other interested parties in reviewing services, policies and procedures, with their findings reported back to the LCA Board.

We gather your views in various ways during the course of our work, and what you say is also fed back to the Board. We are now exploring how to feed back information in a similar way from the Board to our residents.

All tenant recommendations are monitored by Lyng Tenants’ Panel through to implementation.

- To find out more, tell us your views or get involved, email tnash.lca@btconnect.com



Good neighbours

Over the last difficult year, many of our residents have asked whether there are any informal support groups for people living on the Lyng.

So we are now keen to set up a Lyng Befriending Service. We want to organise a small group of people living on the estate who can offer each other some practical and emotional back-up – such as phoning for a chat every few days or offering to pick up shopping if needed.

LCA General Manager Tony Nash said: **“We’re really keen to get a befriending service like this off the ground. As well as helping people out when they need a bit of extra support, it will also boost community spirit on the Lyng.**

“We would love to see the group build so that members become true friends, who can then perhaps join some of our community activities like the summer seaside or Christmas shopping trips.”

Interested? Give us a call on **0121 525 5969** or pop in to the LCA office when it re-opens.

Befriending service

Older people who are lonely or isolated may want to try reaching out to Age UK's befriending service.

If you are in need of a friendly chat and a bit of company, this free service may give you the lift you need.

To find out more, just call
0800 434 610.



Window blinds warning

Over 30 children have died in the UK after becoming entangled with blind or curtain cords in the last 15 years.

To reduce the risk of such tragic accidents, please ensure such cords are at least 1.5 metres away from the floor. Most blinds fitted from 2014 have this clearance but, if fitted before then, please check.

Struggling with fuel bills?



If you're struggling to afford your gas or electricity bills, contact your supplier to discuss how you can pay off what you owe them.

Tell them you want to pay in instalments as part of a payment plan. This will involve fixed amounts over a set period of time, so you pay what you can afford.

If you struggle to afford the payment plan, you must talk to your supplier again to work out a better deal – or they may install a pre-payment meter.

You might be able to re-pay your debt from your benefits through the Fuel Direct Scheme. Contact the Jobcentre to arrange this.

Alternatively, you may be able to get a grant from a charitable trust. Check out www.lets-talk.online for more information.

Support for older residents

Age UK Sandwell offers a free and confidential information and advice service for older people, their families and carers.

The charity provides specialist advice and information about services, benefits and support groups.

Its services include:

- Home visits to people who are housebound to provide help filling out forms
- A benefits advisor who can visit you to help complete claims for benefits such as Attendance Allowance and Carers Allowance
- Information on care homes, nursing care, legal assistance, transport, consumer issues, disabilities and local health services.

The charity's telephone service allows you to contact one of its advisors, who can help you with:

- Social care – such as finding a care home or getting some help in your own home
- Your income – including a free benefits check, help with applying for benefits and pension advice
- Your home – such as how to keep warm, adaptations and preventing falls
- Legal issues – including wills, Powers of Attorney and how to deal with an estate.

You can call Age UK Sandwell on **0121 437 0479** (Monday-Friday, 9.30am-3:30pm) or the national Age UK information and advice line on **0800 055 6112** (open 8am-7pm, every day).

