

Lyngline

community news in the lyng

WINTER 2023

Lyng
Community
Association is
on Facebook -
so look us up
and "like" us!



Crafting a merry Christmas

Festive craftwork was the name of the game when we recently kicked off our programme of Yuletide activities.

Around 50 children and their families took part in our Christmas Craft Morning at the end of November.

Young and old got into the seasonal spirit by creating reindeer food, greetings cards, hot chocolate cones, baubles, wreaths and a host of other Christmas decorations.

We also organised a day trip to Manchester's Christmas markets early in December, followed by the Children's Christmas Party a week later.



PICK UP A PUMPKIN!

Picking pumpkins and meeting a medley of farmyard animals were all part of the Halloween fun for members of our Toddler Group this autumn.

Children and their parents enjoyed a trip to Forge Mill Farm, at Sandwell Valley Country Park, in October.

As well as gathering pumpkins, they got the chance to feed the animals, play in the hay maze and try out pumpkin 'messy play'.



Holiday opening

We hope you all have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Over the holiday season, the LCA office will be open on these days:

Monday 18th December - Friday 22nd December – normal office hours (10am-1pm, phones open 1pm-4pm)

Monday 25th December (Bank Holiday) – CLOSED

Tuesday 26th December (Bank Holiday) – CLOSED

Wednesday 27th December - Friday 29th December – normal office hours (10am-1pm, phones open 1pm-4pm)

Monday 1st January 2024 (Bank Holiday) – CLOSED

We are open as usual from Tuesday 2nd January 2024.

The out-of-hours number is 0300 333 6540. This is for **EMERGENCIES ONLY**, so engineers will only attend to make safe and/or contain. All reported repairs will be recorded, then attended to in January 2024.

Listening to what you told us

Many of you took part in our tenant satisfaction survey this summer, with 54% of LCA residents giving us their views. We shared the results with you in a booklet we sent out in October and held a tenants' meeting to gather further feedback.

Now we have drawn up an action plan to address the issues you raised in the survey. Below is a summary of how well we performed in key areas compared to the national average, along with what we plan to do in response to what you told us.

- **Well-maintained homes – 78% (above the national average of 75%)**

We will soon start replacing our oldest kitchens. Those in homes built in 2004 will be done first, followed by those in homes built in 2006.

A few people said they needed help maintaining their garden, so we are setting up a system where you can pay our contractor directly to tidy it for you.

- **Safe homes – 81% (above the national average of 78%)**

We will consult residents on whether they want electric gates re-installed at the car parks behind Old Flour Mills and Southwell Walk, although the resulting service charge rise concerned residents when we consulted about this a few years ago.

We have started replacing old wooden fences with concrete posts and gravel boards and close-boarded panels.

- **Repairs service – 82% (above the national average of 76%)**

We plan to offer the option of a fixed-time appointment (usually morning or afternoon) on top of the current process of our maintenance operative or repairs contractor phoning you to agree a specific time on a convenient day.

Our tenant panel-led review of the repairs service will look at target times and procedures, to ensure improvements are shaped by residents.

The government is proposing annual home visits by social landlords. Once the requirements are agreed, we will let you know how we plan to carry these out.

- **Upkeep of communal areas – 74% (above the national average of 66%)**

A record sheet will allow you to see when the contractor calls to clean at our blocks of flats, we will step up inspections following cleaning visits and consult on whether to increase visits from fortnightly to weekly.

We will consult Frank Fisher Way residents on whether to replace communal area carpets.

We plan to consult on whether residents are happy to pay a higher service charge to cover extra visits from the contractor who maintains the estate's planted areas and car parks.

We are laying fabric barriers and decorative stones in communal planted areas to reduce time spent weeding, and have employed a new staff member to collect litter. We have asked Sandwell Council to introduce communal recycling bins for each block.

- **Positive contribution to the neighbourhood – 77% (above the national average of 67%)**

We run a range of community activities, trips and youth groups but are seeking to organise more events for older people by linking up with Vantage Point retirement scheme.

Having met with Sandwell Council five times in 10 years to discuss increasing estate car parking without success, we are now asking for the dropping of permit charges for residents without a nominated

off-road space and to allow use of residents' parking spaces that would otherwise stand empty. However, only Sandwell Council can make this decision as the parking spaces are on the adopted public highway.

- **Managing anti-social behaviour – 58% (matching the national average of 58%)**

This is an area where we need to improve, so we are organising regular meetings with police to tackle people who are not from our estate but cause problems to Lyng residents.

- **Listens and acts – 66% (above the national average of 63%)**

We are setting up a new tenants panel to advise us on reviewing our policies so we can better understand how we can meet your needs. If you would like to join the panel to share your views, please call us on **0121 525 5969**.

Two tenants have been on our Board for over 10 years but any tenant can apply to become a member. Let us know if you might be interested.

Most residents prefer to speak to us direct but we appreciate some cannot call us during opening hours, so we plan to introduce an online tenancy management service in the next 12 months allowing you to check your rent account online.

- **Keeping you informed – 77% (above the national average of 73%)**

Lyngline helps us keep you informed about our activities and policies, so we will share tenancy-related information more regularly in this newsletter.

We will also remind you annually (instead of every four years) that our homes are not subject to the Right to Buy (as LCA is a charity) or the Right to Acquire (as the Lyng's development did not involve any housing association grant).

- **Treats tenants fairly and with respect – 77% (matching the national average of 77%)**

Our team will meet the new tenants panel to establish how we can improve our relationship with residents. We will hold more regular satisfaction surveys on specific subjects, such as asking 10% of tenants how they felt their last repair was dealt with.

We will introduce late-night opening on Thursdays for people who cannot call us during the working day, and we are reviewing our complaints service to see how we can improve.

We will re-publish our service standards so you can see what we aspire to and highlight if we are failing to achieve them.

- **Complaints handling – 62% (compared to the national average of 34%)**

We receive very few formal complaints as we try to resolve issues immediately, but we will consult the tenants panel to review our approach and see how it could be more effective.

- **Overall satisfaction rate – 78% (compared to the national average of 75%)**

This has fallen significantly in a climate where social landlords have seen an average 10% drop in satisfaction over the past seven years. We want to achieve 90% satisfaction, so our focus is to work with tenants to achieve this in the next couple of years.

HOW WE COMPARE

If LCA was a football club, we would be in the second of four tiers in a social landlord league table – equivalent to the Championship. But we recognise we need to be in the top tier so will spend the next 12 months listening more, improving services and assessing progress with our next tenant satisfaction survey in 2025.

Community charity success



The Lyng community came together to raise £800 for good causes with two fundraising events at Vantage Point in September.

LCA tenants and their friends joined residents at the retirement scheme for a horse racing night which brought in over £400 for our children's clubs.

People of all ages also came along for our Macmillan Coffee Morning to sample home-made cakes, leave messages for lost loved ones on our remembrance table and raise around £400 for Macmillan Cancer Support.



Seafaring adventures

Children enjoyed a treasure trove of fun during our pirate and mermaid-themed summer play scheme.

Thirty youngsters attended the August week's craft sessions, making maps, compasses, swords, treasure chests and messages in bottles, along with mermaid wands, jewellery and hairpieces.

As well as playing games such as 'pin the patch on the pirate' and cannonball skittles, they visited Oak House Museum for temporary tattoos, scavenger hunts and games of 'find the flags'.

They also had a trip to Conkers discovery centre, in Derbyshire, which the children loved.

LCA Community Events Co-ordinator Amy Rushton said: "They were so brave, tackling every obstacle, and it was lovely to see the older children helping the younger ones when the obstacles seemed insurmountable."

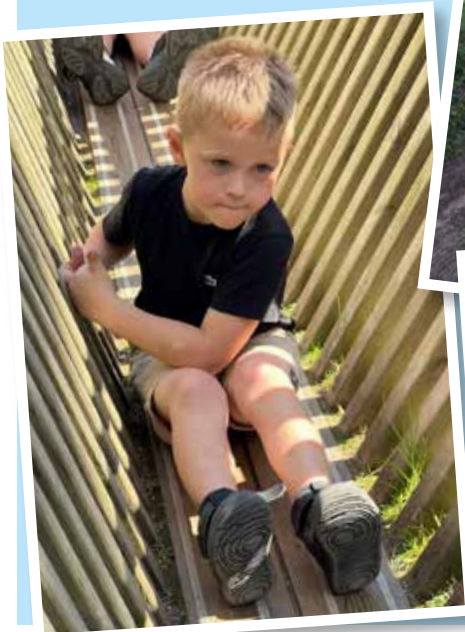
She added: "We are so grateful to our dedicated staff and volunteers, as weeks like this wouldn't be possible without them."

Parents commented:

"My child has had a fantastic week and won't stop talking about it. Thank you so much!"

"Your care for each child and love you show for your role knows no bounds. You are so appreciated in the community and worth your weight in gold."

"You guys are brilliant with the kids. I know 100% they are in safe hands and I love how you love them like your own."



Castle casts its spell

Haunted hollows, mysterious mazes and dungeon ghost hunting cast a spell on Lyng families during our Halloween trip to Warwick Castle.

Fifty people joined us for an amazing experience, as the castle's spookiest residents brought over a thousand years of haunted history to life.

Soggy seaside antics

Almost 100 Lyng residents and friends joined us on our summer day trip to Wales.

They explored the delights of Barry Island and nearby Cardiff on a rainy day in August, making the best of what the area had to offer despite the unseasonal weather.



Beware festive fat!

After cooking up your festive feast on Christmas Day, do remember not to pour fat or oil down the sink.

Hot fat turns solid when it hits cold pipes and will end up blocking your drains – as demonstrated by this photo, taken on a call-out to one of our homes.

Please also remember not to allow rice or other food particles to go down the plughole, as they cause blockages too.



Service charges explained

As an LCA tenant, you pay a service charge as part of your weekly rent.

If you live in a flat, your service charge covers:

- power supply to communal lights in corridors, hallways and outside your block
- fortnightly cleaning of corridors and hallways
- maintaining planted areas and all external areas around the block (two visits per month in the summer but once a month in winter)
- providing and maintaining the door entry system, fire alarm and emergency lighting
- providing carpets
- window cleaning (two visits per year)
- providing and repairing unadopted areas (those not maintained by the council).

If you live in a house, the service charge covers:

- power supply to communal lights in areas such as car parks
- maintaining planted and external areas (two visits per month in summer but once a month in winter)
- providing and repairing unadopted areas.

CHALLENGING HATE CRIME

Hate crime is violent, intimidating, upsetting, embarrassing, humiliating or offensive behaviour motivated by hostility or prejudice towards aspects of a person's identity such as race, religion, disability, age, gender or sexual orientation.



This may include verbal or physical abuse, threatening behaviour, malicious communications, property damage or arson.

• If you experience or witness hate crime it is important you report it to the police and Lyng Community Association, so we can take action together to tackle the issue.

Call **999** if the crime is in progress or someone is in imminent danger. If not, call 101 or log the incident online at https://www.report-it.org.uk/your_police_force