



**Get
fuel
savvy**

You could save up
to £236 a year on
your energy bill

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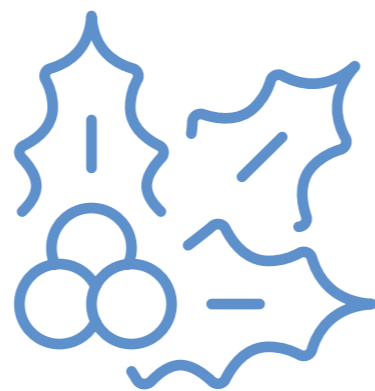


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our services**
You said, we did

Welcome to your winter edition of Round Your Way



We love to hear your thoughts, suggestions and tips.
You can contact the Round Your Way team at
RYW.Magazine@whgrp.co.uk

Christmas opening hours

Our Customer Services Centre and reception will close
for Christmas at 1pm on Friday 24 December 2021.

Both will re-open on Tuesday 4 January 2022.

If you need an emergency repair
during our closing times, please call
0300 555 6666 to access an
out-of-hours service.

**We wish all our customers
a Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year!**



Update on our repairs service

We know some customers are having
to wait longer than usual for repairs
to be carried out.

**We're really sorry for these delays
and are pulling out all the stops to
improve our service.**

Why is it taking so long to complete repairs?

- There is currently a national shortage of building materials like doors, timber and glass.
- High demand for materials means we are often finding out late that supplies are unavailable, forcing us to cancel appointments.
- Labour shortages are making it difficult to recruit the skilled tradespeople we need to carry out repairs.
- More repairs are being reported by our customers, resulting in longer waiting times.
- Positive cases of COVID-19 among our repair teams mean some colleagues are having to isolate.

What are we doing to fix it?

- We are doing extra checks of our stores to make sure we have the right materials in stock.
- We've appointed two new contractors so we can carry out more repairs each day.
- Our teams are working longer so we can get to more jobs.
- We will give as much notice as possible if an appointment needs to be rescheduled.



**Please be
considerate and
polite to our
colleagues. We are
doing our best to
help you.**



Get to know your Community Housing Officer

Our new team of Community Housing Officers are out and about getting to know customers and helping to deliver our range of housing services. Here's everything you need to know:

Q: What has changed?

A: Formerly known as Housing Advisors, we have increased the number of Community Housing Officers in our areas. This approach will enable us to provide a more personalised customer experience.

Q: Why have you introduced Community Housing Officers?

A: When it comes to your home, we understand that not everything can be done over the phone or online. We want your Community Housing Officer to be another point of contact for you and your neighbours, when you need it. We hope this personal approach will help us to continue building strong relationships with all our customers wherever you live.

Q: How will they be able to help me?

A: Perhaps you have a housing or personal issue and you're not sure who to contact or how we can help? Our dedicated team will work with you to understand your current challenge and how best you can resolve it. It doesn't always have to be a challenge either, perhaps you have an idea that would benefit you and your neighbours? Whatever it is, reach out and let them know.

Q: Who is my local Community Housing Officer?

A: The best way to find your Community Housing Officer is to contact customer services with your address.

Soon you will be able to find this information on our website.



Join us on an estate walkabout

Come along to our estate walkabouts to tell us about any issues bothering you in your neighbourhood.

Our next dates are:

Tuesday 25 January
Rosehill Gardens, Willenhall

Thursday 24 February
Myatt Way and Gretton Cr, Aldridge

Tuesday 29 March
New St and Alfred Street, Bloxwich

Keep an eye out for a leaflet dropping through your door with more information.



Not on our streets!

We will spend around **£240,000** this year clearing up waste and unwanted items that have been dumped on our estates. This is money we could be spending on improving our communities. You can help us by:

- reporting fly tipping to us on **0300 555 6666** or to your local council
- using your council's bulky waste collection service to get rid of large items. For Walsall Council ring **01922 653344**
- requesting a larger bin if you need one from your local council. For Walsall Council ring **01922 653355**.

Exclusive opportunities with the

NHS

Our employment and training team can help you navigate the world of job seeking. Our partnership with the NHS has seen dozens of whg customers celebrating a new job.



Have you ever wanted to work in the health sector?

You could join dozens of our customers who are now working for Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, thanks to our free course!

The two-week training programme delivered by Walsall College has been designed to provide you with all the skills and knowledge required to be successful in working in the NHS - and you don't need previous care experience! We've already had some great results - with customers now working in roles such as Clinical Support Workers and Support Service Assistants.

For more information email NHS.Careers@whgrp.co.uk

HIRING NOW AT WALSTALL HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST

Clinical Support Workers (Bank)

To help with patient care

Support Service Assistants (Bank/Part-time)

To help support with housekeeping duties

Kitchen porters

To help provide patients with food and drink

We have partnerships with many local business who are looking to recruit. Sign up to our jobs bulletin to find out about these vacancies when they are hot off the press!

Email Employment.Training@whgrp.co.uk

Meet Garry

Garry hadn't expected to be starting a new career with the NHS at the age of 66. However, when he was forced to bring his engineering career to an end during the pandemic, he got in touch with our team.



After joining the NHS training programme with whg and Walsall College he was delighted to gain a job as a support service assistant.

Garry said: "There is a new sense of pride in what I do each day. It's satisfying to close the door on a freshly cleaned theatre."

How much could you **save?**

Top 10 tips to save on energy bills

It's unavoidable: energy bills are on the rise. We know you may be worried about how this will affect you, but there are some practical changes you can make to help keep costs down.

Follow our 10 top tips to save up to £236* a year on your bills:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Avoid using standby on electrical devices | Save £35 a year |
| 2. Reduce showering time by one minute | Save £17 a year |
| 3. Turn the thermostat down by 1 °C | Save £55 a year |
| 4. Wash clothes at 30°C not 40°C | Save £13 a year |
| 5. Only boil as much water as needed | Save £6 a year |
| 6. Wash up in a bowl rather under a tap | Save £25 a year |
| 7. Use your washing machine and dishwasher once less each week | Save £16 a year |
| 8. Tuck curtains behind the radiator and close internal doors | Save £25 a year |
| 9. Switch bulbs to LED bulbs | Save £30 a year |
| 10. Turn lights off when not in use | Save £14 a year |
| Total | Save <u>£236 a year</u> |

*estimated figure

Don't suffer in silence

Follow our five simple steps to manage your finances.

1) Tackle any debt

Dealing with debt can be complicated, but the first step is to acknowledge that you need to act and access advice and support.

- Contact Step Change on **0800 138 1111** or at www.stepchange.org
- Gain information and financial support from Turn2Us **0808 802 2000**

2) Set a budget

Knowing where every pound is being spent is a great first step to budgeting. Use MoneyHelper's simple budget planner www.moneyhelper.org.uk

3) Check your benefits

Did you know 7.1 million people in the UK are missing out on benefits they are entitled to? Check yours at www.turn2us.org.uk

4) Reduce energy use

We know many of our customers are worried about how rising energy prices may affect them. Get advice from Warmer Homes West Midlands on **0808 196 8298**

5) Talk to us

Contact our money advice team on **0300 555 6666** or email Money.Advice.Service@whgrp.co.uk. We can look at ways to maximise your income, make sure you get any benefits you are entitled to and tackle any debt problems you have.



How you've shaped our services

Making sure our new choose & move app was easy to use

Some of our customers tested the application online and told us how we could improve it. They pointed out which sections were hard to understand and as a result we changed some of the wording and how customers could input some of the information.

Letting us know your thoughts on our Income Collection Policy

Customers joined an online meeting and told us that the policy should be flexible and tailored to meet individual needs. As a result we changed the policy and will not take a one size fits all approach.

Helping us design our new homes

Customers took part in a workshop to let us know what kind of house layouts they liked and disliked. We used their feedback when designing our new house types to make sure they were more in line with their preferences.

Sharing your views on health services in Walsall

Our customers got involved in some work the NHS were doing and shared their experiences of accessing health services.



We need you!

Get involved and help us improve our services

We want to hear from you! Whether you have a few minutes or a few hours spare each month there is a way for you to get involved:

- **On the go** with a quick survey, phone call, video or poll
- **At our office** as part of a regular group
- **At home** with a virtual meeting
- **In the community** in a one-off local meeting

Visit whg.uk.com/haveyoursay

Meet Irum

Irum has been a whg customer for 15 years. She joined Customer Voice to get more involved in the work of whg and started to take part in customer surveys about topics like repairs. This led her to a volunteering role with our Community Champions. Thanks to the skills and experience she gained she was then offered a role as one of our Kindness Champions.

Irum said: "Being part of Customer Voice has been a great way to find out what whg has to offer, as well as helping to shape those services."



What to do if something isn't right

We aim to provide high-quality services to all our customers and want to get things right first time. However, we recognise that sometimes things do not go as well as we want and if we make a mistake we want to sort it out quickly.

If you aren't happy with our service we want to know, so we can put it right and make sure it doesn't happen again.

You can make a complaint direct to us in the most convenient way for you – in person, in writing, by telephone or by email.

We will ask you what your complaint is about and what you would like us to do to put things right.

We have to follow the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code which sets out exactly how we should handle all complaints. This means you can be sure we will handle your complaint fairly and reasonably.

Our full complaints procedure is available at whg.uk.com



How did we do?

It's important that we share how we are performing as an organisation. Each year we publish an annual report that looks at how well we are serving our customers. As well as using our own data, we asked around a quarter of our customers what they thought, through surveys and in face-to-face groups.

Scan the code to see Natalia Hill, Chair of our Customer Experience Committee, introduce the report. To read it yourself, turn over the page.



How did we do?

Our Annual Report 2020/21

This Annual Report looks back on a challenging year.

The pandemic meant we had to make some tough decisions as we adapted to continue delivering our services safely for you.

Despite this, regular comparisons showed that our performance compared well with other providers.

Our report shows:



How well we delivered our services



How our performance compares with other landlords



Our future plans to improve our services

We spent **£41.7m** improving our homes



£10.3m Our routine repairs service

£15.1m Planned maintenance like replacement kitchens, bathrooms and heating

£16.3m Major works such as structural repairs

We built **332 affordable homes**

And started to build **325 more**

Generating **£16.5m** to invest back in to our homes and services

Our response to the pandemic

10,448

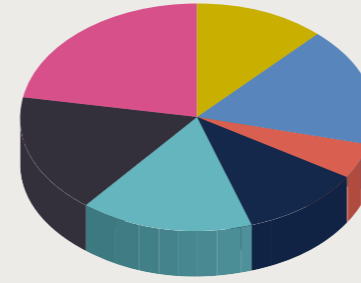
calls answered by our customer services team in April 2020, as we extended our opening hours to deal with demand

25,384 welfare calls made to customers

7,063 support packages delivered by volunteers

1,582 food vouchers provided

For each **£1** of rent we spent:



- **17p** - Housing management (including colleagues)
- **6p** - Tenancy & estate costs
- **11p** - Repairs (inc. colleagues)

- **16p** - Planned maintenance
- **17p** - Major works
- **22p** - Debt and interest
- **12p** - Building homes

We engaged with almost **5,000** customers for your feedback on how we do things



1,406 expressions of dissatisfaction (19/20: 821)

141 formal complaints (19/20: 172)

86% of customers were satisfied with the services we provide (19/20: 86%)



77% felt whg listens and acts upon their views (19/20: 77%)

84% would recommend us to family or friends (19/20: 82%)

90% of repair appointments were kept (19/20: 98%)

82% of customers were satisfied with their last repair (19/20: 84%)

15 days average time for a routine repair to be completed (19/20: 9 days)

Our money advisors helped **2,638** customers with financial guidance (19/20: 2,291)

And helped customers claim

£8.7m of benefit entitlements (19/20: £8.1m)



We helped **1,567** customers improve their chances of finding work (19/20: 1,274)

184 customers secured a new job (19/20: 149)



492 customers benefited from Black Country Click Start digital training



Building strong communities by working together with you to achieve

£43.2m worth of social value (19/20: £37.7m)

Our future plans

1. Improve our digital online services, like our website and customer portal
2. Your feedback told us that our repairs and neighbourhoods services need to improve to match other providers
3. Grow our Customer Voice platforms so your feedback is always heard

Keeping well

this winter

Meet our Kindness Champions

How have you felt over the last 12 months? Did self isolation make you feel more alone? Are you finding it hard to get back out and about after avoiding crowded places for so long? You're not alone. We know that so many people have struggled with loneliness and isolation recently, and that's where our Kindness Champions come in.

Funded by the NHS in partnership with Walsall Together, our new team of Kindness Champions have been recruited to work alongside and support customers who are feeling alone.

They are all whg customers and can help you learn how to deal with the ups and downs of life. This might be by visiting you for a friendly chat, helping you find activities to get involved in or supporting you as you decide where you want to be in the future and how to get there.



■ Check out one of our summer events supported by our Kindness Champions.

■ To contact our Kindness Champions email Kindness.Counts@whgrp.co.uk



Let's talk loneliness

As coronavirus social distancing restrictions ease, many people will still feel lonely and isolated, so it will be more important than ever to take action if you or someone you know is feeling lonely.

Follow these simple actions to help tackle loneliness:

- 1) **Go at your own pace.** Do what feels right for you.
- 2) **Join a group.** Welcome others back into your life. Our Kindness Champions can help you find a group and accompany you until you feel confident.
- 3) **Check in.** Check how family and friends are doing. A friendly face is always a welcome boost.
- 4) **Volunteer.** Take part in things that are of value to you. Our Kindness Champions can help you find volunteering opportunities.

Meet Kindness Champion Suzie

"I'm looking forward to bringing communities together within the wellbeing schemes and running activities to encourage socialising. I've already been meeting with customers and getting to know them - one woman said my visit had made her day."



Supporting you to feel happier and healthier

Our social prescribing team can help you feel happier and healthier by supporting your needs in a way that works for you. Many customers have said how the support they have received from the team has helped them to feel more confident, less lonely and hopeful about their future.

Meet Daniel

Thirty-seven-year-old Daniel was referred to our social prescribing team after his father died. He was feeling low and struggling with some money issues, and our team provided practical and emotional support to help him get back on his feet.

Daniel said: “Last year I was in a really bad place. Lisa, from the social prescribing team, picked me up and was there when I needed someone to talk to.”

“She sorted out food parcels for me and supported me to find a new job.”

“It’s made a huge difference and the future is much brighter.”

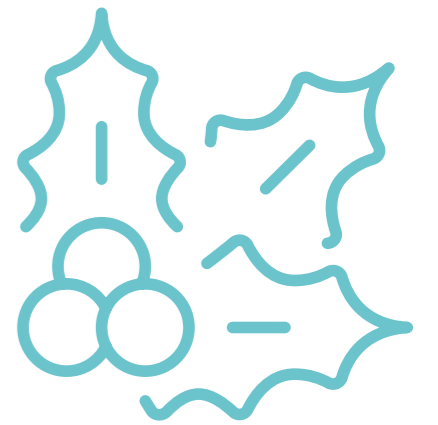


Meet Bradley

Bradley is pursuing his dream of being a hairdresser after the social prescribing team gave him the confidence he needed to go for it!

The 26-year-old said: “Lisa from whg was so supportive and really helped me to come out of myself. She helped me come to terms with my mental health and made sure I could access counselling services. I received support with budgeting and filling in paperwork and together we worked out a plan for how I could become a hairdresser.”

“Now I can see light at the end of the tunnel and I feel really positive about the future.”



Think NHS 111

If you have an urgent but not life-threatening medical need, make sure you contact NHS 111 first rather than going straight to A&E. Depending on the situation you can:

- Find out what local service can help you.
- Be connected to a nurse, emergency dentist, pharmacist, or GP.
- Get a face-to-face appointment if you need one.
- Be given an arrival time if you need to go to A&E – this might mean you spend less time waiting to be seen.
- Be told how to get any medicine you need.
- Get self-care advice.

Contact NHS 111 either by visiting the website www.111.nhs.uk or by calling **111** – 24 hours a day seven days a week.

Limit the spread of COVID-19 and winter illnesses

Help keep your loved ones safe this winter by following these actions that limit the spread of COVID-19 and illnesses such as flu and the winter vomiting bug.

Safer Behaviours and Actions



Christmas dinner on a budget

How to have an affordable feast

- **Think ahead.** Spread the cost by buying something extra every week in your weekly grocery shop in the run-up to Christmas.
- **Find a good deal.** Make the most of supermarket budget ranges and weekly offers.
- **Get creative.** Choose frozen (rather than fresh) turkey or cheaper cuts of meat (which may just need slower cooking).
- **Make it fun.** Get your children involved in preparing and cooking festive food, avoiding the need to buy pricey ready-made items.
- **Avoid waste.** We all tend to buy too much food for Christmas, so only buy what you need and use any leftovers to make soups, snacks or the classic Boxing Day curry.
- **Shop around.** Buy ingredients like spices from local Asian/continental shops, which are usually cheaper than supermarkets.
- **Grab a last-minute bargain.** If you hold your nerve and are flexible about your menu, there are huge discounts on seasonal food come Christmas Eve.





**Christmas is coming.
On reflection, wouldn't it make sense
to have some contents insurance?**

Burglars don't stop for Christmas!

● Pay-as-you-go

Insure your belongings

It's our responsibility as your landlord to insure the structure of your home but this doesn't include what's inside, like your furniture and personal possessions.

As a tenant of whg you are eligible for a home contents insurance scheme, created just for whg starting from just £0.66p a week for £5,000 standard cover. There's no long-term commitment and it can be cancelled at any time. Excesses may apply regarding an Accidental Damage claim, please review your policy wording for full details.

Call: 0300 555 6666

Terms and conditions apply, contact above.

Special exclusions/limits apply

Price includes Insurance Premium Tax (IPT) charged at the appropriate rate.

The policy is underwritten by Aviva Insurance Limited. Aviva Insurance Limited, Registered in Scotland Number 2116. Registered Office: Pitheavlis, Perth PH2 0NH. Authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority.

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Win an iPad!

We've hidden the name of one of Santa's reindeer in the wordsearch. Find out who it is for a chance to win!

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| F | C | Q | A | G | M | Z | J | R | P | E | U | C | G | E |
| D | A | S | H | E | R | S | L | E | I | G | H | H | I | R |
| I | H | T | C | C | F | K | J | E | S | D | S | Y | N | R |
| P | H | A | H | S | E | K | I | N | S | Y | C | H | G | I |
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| W | O | N | S | H | C | C | A | R | D | I | F | T | B | K |
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| C | A | R | O | L | S | F | O | M | E | S | R | T | R | S |

Wordsearch

- Elves
- Carols
- Tinsel
- Sleigh
- Holly
- Snow
- Father Christmas
- Christmas Eve
- Tree
- Card
- Gingerbread
- Yule



For your chance to win, fill in the form below, cut it out and pop it in the post for free.

Name: _____

Contact number: _____

Contact email: _____

I give my permission to be contacted by phone about sharing my views on whg Yes No

I give my permission to be contacted by email about sharing my views on whg Yes No

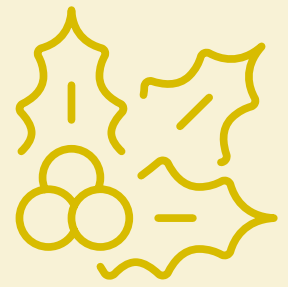
Please see how we process your personal data by reading our Privacy notice

www.whg.uk.com/privacy-policy/

If you wish to withdraw consent you can do so by contacting customervoice@whgrp.co.uk

To be in with a chance of winning an iPad

Which reindeer name is hidden in the wordsearch? _____



Would you like to get involved in our plans for the future?

Do you have ideas for how we can improve your neighbourhood?

We are currently working on our Housing Strategy. This is a document that sets out how we will develop our services and ensure our customers are supported throughout their tenancies.

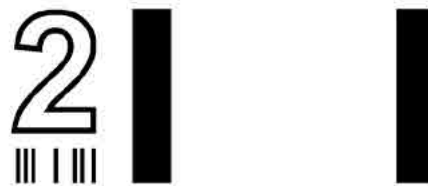
We would love to hear from you, as your feedback will help us with our plans.

There are lots of ways for you to share your views and help us, and we will also be dropping into communities to chat with customers.

Scan this QR code to find out more
or email customervoice@whgrp.co.uk



 Cut here



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