



## Welcome to your spring newsletter

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## Appreciating the smaller things in life



**As there's not been anywhere to go recently with all covid restrictions, one resident, Barbara Proctor, has found lots of ways to keep herself busy at home.**

Barbara, who lives in Sharnford, has been taking part in a COVID research project since November last year. This involved getting a weekly test for five weeks and then a test once a month for a year.

Barbara has made the most of lockdown catching up on LOTS of books, everything from Enid Blyton to the latest crime thrillers. Our Housing Officer Claire has even been bringing bags of books round, which are then passed on in the village.

Lockdown has also made Barbara appreciate the smaller things in life. Such as a lovely local friend who cooks her Sunday dinner every week and brings it round.

When we caught up with Barbara, she told us:

*"I decided to take part in the COVID research, so that other people might benefit from what I'm doing. It's also quite reassuring to have a regular test.*

*"Lockdown hasn't been too bad as I live in such a nice community. And I love being in my bungalow and enjoy sitting watching the birds in the fields. But, as much as I love the village, I am REALLY looking forward to going on holiday, to a hotel, and being pampered!"*

[Find out more about Barbara](#)

## What's new?

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### > We've updated our Complaints Policy

Following new guidance from the Housing Ombudsman on how landlords should handle complaints, we have [reviewed and updated our complaints policy](#).

#### What does this mean for you?

We'll always try to resolve complaints quickly and informally with you. If we can't reach an outcome you're satisfied with, we have a clear, two-stage formal complaints policy to follow.

We'll use all feedback from our residents to make improvements to our service, and we'll let you know what we done.

#### Who was involved in the policy update?

We consulted with the Resident Involvement Board to get their views on the draft policy and incorporated their feedback into the final version. The policy was agreed by the Leicestershire Rural Housing Association Board.

#### Find out more

You can find out more and [read the full policy on our website](#).

And, if you think we've done something well, please also let us know!

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### > Follow us on Facebook



Keep up to date with the latest news, support and development updates on our [Facebook](#).

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### > Did you know we have service promises?

We strive to always go the extra mile and do our best for our customers. Our service promises let

you know what service levels you should expect from us. Like how quickly we'll respond to you, how quickly repairs will be completed and how we'll keep you informed.

[Take a look at our service promises >](#)

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## > Contacting us

- Some staff are working remotely so may call you from a withheld number.
  - If you want to email us about repairs or tenancy matters please email us via [myhomeonline](#) or at: [enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk)
  - If you call and leave a message, members of staff have 24 hours from when they return from their visits or meetings to contact you.
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### OFFICE CLOSURE DATES

Our offices will be closed on:

Monday 3 May (bank holiday)

Monday 31 May (bank holiday)

Wednesday 23 June (staff training)

You can still report emergency repairs by calling 0300 1234 009.

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### RENT REMINDER

Now you've received your rent increase letter, please check:

- if you pay by standing order: that you've increased your standing order (if you pay by direct debit, you don't need to do anything)
- if you receive housing benefits: that you've informed your Housing Benefit department
- if you receive Universal Credit: that you've updated your journal.

If you need any help with paying your rent, [take a look at our webpages](#).

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### FREE SCAM ALERT SERVICE

There are so many scams going around at the moment, by email, text, phone and social media, and they are getting more and more sophisticated.

Find out more about how to spot a scam with the [Citizens Advice scam helper](#).

Which? (a not-for-profit consumer champion organisation) has a free scam alert service. [Sign up on the Which? website](#) to receive regular email updates on the latest scams and practical advice to keep you one step ahead.

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## TELL US... ABOUT OUR COMMUNICATIONS

We really want to make sure we're providing you with all the information you need and giving you opportunities to get in touch and be involved with us.

We'll be sending a short survey to you all to find out more about how, when and why you'd like to hear from us. We'd really appreciate your input and suggestions.

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## Heating news

### Heating repair delays

We're aware that there are currently delays in completing our heating repairs, and we're sorry if you're affected by this.

We're doing everything we can to address this as quickly as possible. We are reviewing arrangements with our contractors to improve communications and the quality and responsiveness of our service.

We will keep you updated. Thank you for your patience and support.

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### Emergency heating repair response time changes

From 1st April until 31st October, if you experience a total loss of heating, this will not be classed as an emergency repair.

It will be classed as an urgent repair, which should be completed within five working days.

[Find out more about our response times >](#)

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The benefits and support available for people effected by coronavirus are being constantly refined. Below are some which you may entitled to.

We're here to help, if you're experiencing financial difficulties as a result of Coronavirus please email us via [myhomeonline](#) or at [enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@midlandsrural.org.uk) as soon as possible so we can provide advice and support with managing your rent payments.

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## The latest furlough news

The furlough scheme will now run until the end of September 2021.

[Find out more](#) about how it works, if you can work part-time, what if you're on a zero-hours contract and if can you be rehired if you were made redundant.

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## Universal credit and employment benefits

If you have lost your job or are working reduced hours you may be able to claim benefits including:

- Universal Credit
- New Style Jobseeker's Allowance (New Style JSA)
- New Style Employment and Support Allowance (New Style ESA)
- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

[Find out more about these benefits >](#)

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## Are you or your child required to self-isolate?

Since 8 March 2021, the government's £500 Test and Trace Support payment for people claiming qualifying benefits or working tax credit - has been extended to also include the parent or guardians of children who have been told to self-isolate.

[Find out more about this support >](#)

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## One-off £500 payment

The Government have introduced a new, one-off £500 payment for working households receiving tax credits. This payment is to provide extra support, as the temporary increase in Working Tax

Credit (WTC), introduced at the start of the pandemic, ended on 5 April 2021.

[Find out if you're eligible and how the payments are made >](#)

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## Self-employment grants extended again

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) has been extended again, with an additional grant, now making five grants in total.

[Find out more about self-employment support >](#)

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### Working from home FOR EVEN ONE DAY due to coronavirus?

If your employer *requires* you to work at home, FOR EVEN ONE DAY during the 2021/22 tax year, you could be eligible to claim a full year's tax relief on £6 per week – that's worth £64.20 to you a year.

And, if you haven't already, you can still claim a full year's tax relief for 2019/2020.

[Find out more about claiming this relief >](#)

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## Could you be entitled to pension credit?

Pension credit is a tax-free, means-tested benefit to help with your living costs if you're over state pension age and on a low income. It can be worth £1,000s a year and can give you access to other benefits including council tax discounts and free TV licences for over-75s.

[Find out if you're eligible](#) with the pension credit calculator.

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### New benefit checking tool

The government have launched a new benefits checking tool to help people get a quick idea of what financial support they may be able to claim.

It takes a few minutes and doesn't require detailed information, nor does it store your personal data. It's an easy first step for anyone who is unsure whether they want to start a claim.

[Find out more about the benefit checking tool >](#)

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## Every day is different – Social care recruitment

The Department of Health and Social Care are currently running a social care recruitment campaign. Jobs on the campaign website range from care workers who don't need any previous

experience, to finance assistants and lettings officers, to business managers and IT specialists.

For more information and to search for roles, visit [everydayisdifferent.com](https://www.everydayisdifferent.com)

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## 100s of free courses available

As part of the Prime Minister's Lifetime Skills Guarantee, if you're 19 or over you can now access a course for free. There are 2 options available:

- Free level 3 qualifications
- Free skills bootcamps

[Find out more about these courses >](#)

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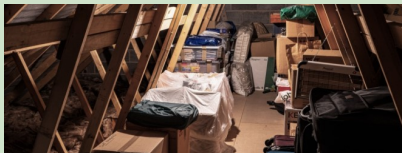
## New envelope colour for Department for Work and Pensions

Not the biggest news, but worth a mention so you don't accidentally bin something important. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have started sending some letters in white envelopes now, rather than the usual brown (manila) envelope.

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## Ask us...

Have you got a question about your home or the services we provide? If so, ask away! We'll answer one of your questions in every newsletter. Simply email them to [communications@midlandsrural.org.uk](mailto:communications@midlandsrural.org.uk)



### "Is it ok to store things in my loft?"

No, we recommend you don't use your loft as a storage space. There are a few reasons for this:

- when you open your loft hatch, it lets warm air from the home into a cold space, which is then trapped and can cause condensation
- the loft joists are not designed to hold heavy weights or be walked on
- putting items on to the insulation may squash it making it less effective.

## *In your own words*

**“The whole moving in process has been absolutely brilliant, I can’t fault anything.”**

*Leicestershire Rural Housing Association resident*

### **Share your story**

We're on the look out for residents to feature in future issues of our newsletter. If you'd like to tell us why you like living in your home and community, call 0300 123 4009 or email [communications@midlandsrural.org.uk](mailto:communications@midlandsrural.org.uk)

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