

We are Connexus Magazine

Let's get Moving

Shared Ownership can be
a great way to get on the
property ladder



We're hiring

Come and join our
team [p11 >](#)

Your new look
magazine from



herefordshire housing

Hello
We Are
Connexus

Welcome to Duncan

We've got a new look newsletter,
new content and a new interim
Chief Executive - Duncan Forbes

Duncan's a qualified solicitor and has lots of experience in the housing sector. He was one of the country's leading lawyers in providing legal advice to housing associations. He has also legally advised many tenant associations; so he has experience on both sides of the table - tenant and association.

Duncan became the first CEO of Bron Afon Community Housing in 2007, until April last year, after being instrumental in its creation. He is the author and co-author of a number of law manuals and books about housing law and practice and co-author of "Voluntary but not Amateur", a legal handbook for voluntary organisations and Community Groups. Not only is he busy within the housing sector, he is also the Chair of the Brecon Mountain Rescue and Trustee of the Bevan Foundation - we are in good hands!





Universal Credit – It's here

Universal Credit is now live within Herefordshire and we've heard that many of our customers are now making new claims using it.

Universal Credit, known as UC, is claimed and managed very differently to the old benefits (such as income support, jobseekers allowance, housing benefit) and so we're all getting used to how the new system works.

A UC award payment is made up of different parts, known as elements. The type of elements that are paid are dependent on your circumstances. Lots of things can affect your payment award such as being a carer, having a disability or under occupying your home.

A few of our customers have contacted us as they've noticed a problem with their award payments. Unfortunately, we've found that some awards are being calculated wrongly. There have been particular issues with the housing costs (the amount paid towards your rent) that customers have been receiving. A few customers have been underpaid by hundreds of pounds a month.

We encourage any customers who are on Universal Credit and are unsure if their payments are correct to contact our Tenancy Sustainment Team on 0300 777 4321.

Keeping safe at home

We want you and your families to be as safe as possible in your home. Home fires are a real danger, so we thought we'd give you a few tips to reduce the risk of it happening.

- Don't place items on, or close to heaters, lamps or other electrical equipment
- Don't leave the kitchen when cooking
- Keep your oven, hob, grill clean and in good working order (a build-up of fat and grease can ignite a fire)
- Don't block doorways, windows. These are vital exits for you if a fire does start. It also stops firefighters being able to help
- Make sure electrical appliances have a British or European safety mark when you buy them
- Candles are pretty - but dangerous, remember put them out when you leave a room
- Don't overload your extension cables. Certain appliances, such as washing machines, should have a single plug to themselves, as they are high powered
- Make sure your furniture (sofa or chairs) have a fire resistant permanent label
- Unplug appliances when you're not using them or when you go to bed - e.g. mobile phone chargers

Why not start a weekly 'Test it Tuesday' in your home? A regular test of your smoke alarm (as per the manufactures instructions) will ensure that they're working properly. If a fire starts, the alarm will sound and give you, and your loved ones time to get out of your home safely. Remember: it's your responsibility to change the batteries in your smoke alarms.



Whitchurch

Kingsway Court Coffee Morning

Kingsway Court in Whitchurch held a coffee morning to raise money for the Midlands Air ambulance. They raised a fantastic £611.42 and the lovely residents of nearby Prince William Court donated £70 towards this total. Well done to everyone involved.

Independent Living

Ludlow

Whitefriars and Beech Gardens in Bloom

Our Independent Living Coordinator, Julie Fowler and lots of amazing volunteers got crafty this year and lovingly produced poppies from recycled drinks bottles for their Ludlow in Bloom Competition entry. This year's theme was 100 years since the end of WW1, and not only encompassed the poppies but included silhouettes of soldiers and flower displays.

The display spanned the open areas of Whitefriars and Beech Gardens. Well done to the teams. The Whitefriars Scheme won Best Community Garden, and Beech Gardens won the Committee Special award. Three tenants were also awarded certificates for their individual entries.



Herefordshire

Day out for Independent Living residents

Residents from Ballinger Court and Bryngwyn Court Independent Living schemes, Herefordshire, enjoyed a day trip to Swansea recently. They had a great time, with a spot of shopping and a quick stop at Bracelet Bay for refreshments before returning home.



Emergency Call Outs



As the clocks go back, the nights draw in and the weather turns to winter we'll all start to feel the cold. We wanted to let you know that we're committed to keeping you warm and have changed our seasonal water repair policy to make sure this happens

From the 1st October 2018 and up until 30th April 2019, if you report that you have no hot water or heating we will respond within 24 hours - this to us is an emergency.

After the 30th April 2019, as the weather gets warmer, it will revert back to being a 3 day response time. This ensures that our teams are available to respond to emergencies all year round.

Annual Review

Our 2017-18 Annual Report is ready, this year we've kept things visual by making a video. It gives you a summary of how we've been performing across the year and details your feedback; not forgetting how we're changing what we do too. You can watch the video on our Facebook page, just search for "Herefordshire Housing".

Voluntas calling

As of October 2018 you may have noticed calls from a company called Voluntas. We'd like to reassure you that these are legitimate calls that we've asked them to make, on our behalf.



Voluntas are an independent organisation who are professional market researchers. We've worked with them for some time and they're now working with us across Connexus. They are currently calling our customers in Herefordshire about these satisfaction surveys;

- Moving in
- Anniversary of surveys and information updates
- Repairs and Home Improvement Work

Why are we doing these surveys?

We want to know how we can make our services better, so we're contacting you to find out your opinions. We want to know what you think about us, our services, your home and your

neighbourhood. We also want to know if there are other ways in which we can help you, we have lots of services on offer!

Your data is really important to us and we take data protection extremely seriously. For more information and to view our full general privacy statement check our website.

Thank you

We really do appreciate your time answering these questions and thank you for helping us with our surveys.

Customer involvement panel

Our CIP panel are very active in the community and have been up to lots of exciting things over the last few months.

The panel's made of members from across Connexus who are actively working on your behalf (you, our communities).

The panel are involved in both serious things, and fun things too. The group review our services to make sure we are performing as well as Connexus should. They also organise fun

activities and competitions too. The panel are working on lots of exciting things in the coming months, and really hope to have some new members join them soon.

Join us

Come and join the group: We are always looking for new members to get involved, for more information about what the group do, or how you can get involved please contact us.



Kurling Fun

The panel had a great afternoon hosting the annual Kurling competition in Craven Arms. 10 teams took part. The winners were a team from Millmead, Craven Arms.

The event wasn't just about having fun it also raised over £100 for the charity Shrewsbury Ark.

Helping out for Summer Fun

CIP members helped out and had lots of fun with Summer Fun days hosted in Hereford and Ross-on-Wye. The summer fun days were for children and their families with lots of outdoor activities, hosted by Wild Play; and by the looks fun fun fun was had!

Struggling to save for something special?

With Christmas on the way, we're all starting to think about those special things to look forward to e.g. big feasts, presents, Christmas jumpers or perhaps home improvements planned for the new year ahead. But the question is where do you get the money? Money Box Credit Union can help!



Who are Money Box Credit Union?

They're a not-for-profit, members only, ethical and local financial co-operative. You can become a member of money box credit union if you live in or around, or work in Herefordshire.

What do they do?

Money Box Credit Union is your local credit union, offering low rate loans of up to £7,500 (subject to status) and also offer specially designed savings accounts for its members. So you can save with them, or take out a loan and pay it back in instalments. There are no hidden charges or arrangement fees.

For more information on loans and savings, call them on 01743 252325.

Quick Update

Don't forget you can get instant updates about what is happening across Connexus by checking out our website or follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

connexus-group.co.uk

[@weareconnexus](https://www.facebook.com/weareconnexus)

Mould and condensation

Everyday things like cooking, washing and bathing and even breathing causes moisture in the home. It's important to know how to reduce it, before it turns into that nasty mould. Not good for your health, or your home.

Key things you can do

- Put lids on saucepans
- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed and open windows
- If extractor fans are fitted - use them
- Wipe down surfaces when moisture settles (this stops mould forming)
- Don't block air vents
- Vent your tumble dryer
- Keep your home heated to a moderate temperature



Rent Free Week

With Christmas fast approaching it's important to budget and make sure paying your rent is your top priority. Remember that there is a rent free week commencing the 24th December 2018 for everyone who is up to date with their rent payments. Please note however that anyone who is in rent arrears **MUST** continue to make the agreed repayments during this week. If you are experiencing difficulties with your Universal credit/Housing Benefit, we can help by referring you to one of our Tenancy Sustainment Officers. Please call us on 0300 777 4321.

* Please note your home may be at risk if you don't pay your rent



Shared Ownership

Ever thought about owning your own home but can't quite afford a mortgage on the open market? If so, Shared Ownership may be just right for you.

Shared Ownership gives you the chance to buy a share of your home and pay a subsidised monthly rent for the remaining share. In some cases you can staircase to owning 100% at a later date. With Shared Ownership you can buy a newly built home or an existing one through re-sale programmes from housing associations like us.

We have lots of Shared Ownership properties available across Connexus and have lots more to come. To find out more check our website.



We're hiring

We're really excited to tell you about our new recruitment website that was launched back in October.

On the new website you can register for job alerts, based on business area or location and apply for vacancies quickly and easily by uploading your CV.

Our jobs are located across Connexus which includes, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire.

connexus-group.co.uk/careers



Developments across Connexus

We're dedicated to creating not just homes, but communities too, across Connexus. Here's some of the homes we're building.

Hereford - Beattie Avenue

Our proposal is to replace the existing pre-fab homes. Plans are with the local authority for consideration.

Hereford - Blackfriars Street

We've nearly finished, 31 affordable rent homes (22 of these for over 50s), 20 private rent homes will be ready from Spring 2019.

Hereford - Brummie Stokes Court

Previously known as The Ship Inn, this site is now water tight with its roof completed and the rendering being applied. 35 flats, all for affordable rent.

Morville - Haughton Lane

This site comprises of rented and shared ownership homes and is well under way.

Whitchurch - Queensway

This redevelopment of a garage site will provide 5 dispersed independent living bungalows, ready in February 2019.

Ludlow - Marstons Hub

This scheme will provide an iconic extension to the Ludlow Foyer, providing 11 more apartments, in addition to upgrading and modernising the Foyer. The work is due to be complete in June 19.

Shawbury - Poynton Road

Our properties on this site comprise of rented and shared ownership homes, ready for March 2019.

Hereford - Pyefinch Meadow

We are taking ownership of some high quality properties from a local builder. At this site we already own 2 properties, with another 6 (4 rented and 2 shared ownership) ready in phases, over the next 18 months.

Shrewsbury - Radbrook

The first phase of this open market scheme site is progressing well with the first 24 houses and 17 apartments well on schedule. There are 2 show homes and 1 view home. More new homes available soon.

Withington - Whitestone Chapel

We're entering into a contract to build 33 homes on a new site by Whitestone Chapel in Withington. Homes should be ready for occupation in the Spring/Summer of 2020.

Alternative formats: Available in audio, large print, braille and other languages. Please contact us for more information.

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Connexus
People > Places > Partnerships