



Sheltered Scheme Newsletter

Winter 2025

For environmental reasons, we don't print a copy of this newsletter for every tenant.

Once you're finished reading, pass me along to your neighbour to enjoy!

If you'd like any news or events included in the next newsletter, please email:

**Communications
@redkitehousing
.org.uk**

or speak to your
Sheltered Specialist.

More news can be found on our website at redkitehousing.org.uk/news.

As the days grow colder and the festive season approaches, we're here to help you feel connected and supported.

Inside, you'll find highlights from recent events, practical tips for staying safe and warm, updates on support and activities available this winter, and important information about our Christmas opening times and emergency contacts. So why not grab a cuppa, settle in on the sofa, and enjoy some light reading?

Tenants enjoy free brunch thanks to Community Morning quiz

Following our annual Community Morning in the summer, tenants from Parsonage Close enjoyed an all-expenses-paid brunch at Hills Café. Each year, teams across different Sheltered Schemes take part in our Sheltered Scheme quizzes, and the winning team earns this special treat – dining alongside Sheltered Services Manager, **Kevin Eckley**.



Red Kite wins Phoenix Award for mediation support

We're excited to share that we have won the Phoenix Award from Alternatives to Conflict, recognising our work in supporting tenants through mediation.

At the end of October, Antisocial Behaviour Specialists **Mary** and **Lou**, along with Head of Community **Nicola**, attended a celebration at The New University in Aylesbury to accept the award.

The Phoenix Award highlights our commitment to helping tenants resolve neighbour disputes and noise complaints through mediation.

By offering early support and guidance, our Antisocial Behaviour team helps tenants manage conflict constructively, reducing the need for formal action and creating a safer, more supportive environment for everyone.

We'll continue working with Alternatives to Conflict and other partners to make sure tenants have access to the support they need, when they need it.

If you're experiencing antisocial behaviour, please don't hesitate to report it. Give us a call on **01494 476100** and help us continue building safe and supportive communities.



Hedgehog heroes at New Court: Springboard funding turns into community initiative

After spotting several hedgehogs around New Court Sheltered Scheme, one of our tenants successfully applied for Springboard funding to host a very special guest.

Our Springboard fund is a community grant programme that allocates money to support local projects that improve lives and strengthen communities.

On Thursday 16th October, hedgehog expert and author Hugh delivered an engaging and informative talk to tenants and neighbours, sparking a wider conversation about how we can support Britain's favourite animal.

Our tenant's passion for wildlife has inspired real action across Red Kite:

- **Natural habitats:** Our grounds maintenance contractor, John O'Conner (JOC), will be creating hedgehog-friendly spaces across several of our schemes. They'll also check under hedgerows before cutting to avoid disturbing any hidden hedgehogs.
- **Toolbox talks:** Hedgehog awareness will now be included in JOC's regular team briefings.
- **Signage:** We've created informative signs to be placed near the habitats to raise awareness.
- **Tenant engagement:** Sheltered Specialists will share the initiative during upcoming surgeries, and Community Specialists will display leaflets on noticeboards in relevant blocks.

This is a fantastic example of how tenant-led ideas can lead to meaningful change. Thank you to our eagle-eyed tenant and everyone involved for helping us make our communities more wildlife friendly.

Inclusive coffee morning for tenant volunteers

In October, our Digital Engagement Specialist **Sanjay** hosted a special coffee morning with our tenant volunteers, continuing our commitment to making these gatherings more engaging and inclusive.

This session was inspired by a heartfelt request from one of our volunteers who wanted to learn British Sign Language (BSL). In response, Sanjay partnered with Bucks Adult Learning to deliver a hands-on workshop led by BSL trainer **Farah**.

Farah began by sharing her personal story, offering a powerful and moving insight into her experiences growing up deaf.

Volunteers and staff learned how to sign the alphabet and useful everyday phrases. Farah also explained that sign language varies across the world and shared helpful tips on how to respectfully get a deaf person's attention and communicate effectively.

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Everyone left feeling more confident and better equipped to communicate in inclusive ways that help strengthen our community.



Raising money for a special cause and bringing the community together

On 31st October, tenants and residents from New Road Gardens and the surrounding area gathered at Sands Village Hall for a Macmillan Coffee Morning organised by **Sally**, one of our tenants. Sally, who previously served as the scheme's warden, holds New Road Gardens close to her heart and continues to stay in touch with fellow tenants.



The event, hosted by The Women's Institute, known for its commitment to community, education, and charitable causes, was not only about raising vital funds for Macmillan Cancer Support but also about bringing people together. With homemade cakes, warm drinks, and friendly conversation, the morning offered a welcoming space for everyone to catch up, share stories, and enjoy each other's company. Sally's thoughtful efforts helped create a lovely atmosphere that reminded us all of the strength and warmth of our community.

The coffee morning raised £314, with guests enjoying a lively tombola, taking part in the 'guess the teddy's name' competition, and winning a wonderful selection of prizes.



Did you know?

Did you know you can access copies of the Sheltered Newsletter on our website? Head over to redkitechousing.org.uk/newsletters to read the latest edition or previous copies. You'll also find links to our digital newsletter here. You can sign up to receive copies of the digital newsletter by heading to shorturl.at/4gxdL.

Rent First this Christmas: We're here to help

As Christmas approaches, we know it can be a time of extra pressure, with bills and spending sometimes feeling overwhelming. We want to remind you that your rent is the foundation of a secure home, not just at Christmas, but all year round. Many tenants have everything in hand, but if you're feeling uncertain or worried about your rent or household bills, please remember you're not alone.

Our team is here to offer support and guidance in a friendly, judgement-free way. Whether you have questions about your rent, want to talk through your options, or just need someone to listen, don't wait until worries become problems, reach out to us early for confidential advice. Sometimes a simple conversation can make all the difference.

If you'd like to set up a Direct Debit, talk through your options, or find out more about the support available, give us a call on **01494 476100** or visit our website redkitehousing.org.uk/money.



Think **#RentFirst**
this Christmas

"If you need support with your rent, we're just a call away."

Red Kite
Community Housing

Heating advice and a making use of your cosy communal space

As the colder months set in, it's important to make sure your home stays warm and comfortable. If you're having problems with your heating, we have a helpful checklist you can try before reporting a repair, like checking your boiler's display, resetting the system, or making sure your thermostat and timers are set correctly. You'll find step-by-step guidance and advice on what to do if you need help on the website at redkitehousing.org.uk/heatingrepairs.

Remember, if you're struggling to keep your home warm or want to save on energy bills, you're always welcome to use the communal room in your scheme (where available). It's a warm, comfortable space where you can relax, enjoy a hot drink, and catch up with neighbours - helping you stay social and save money on heating your own home at the same time.

If you have any concerns about your heating or need support, don't hesitate to get in touch with us. Give us a call on **01494 476100**.



Helping Hand

Buckinghamshire Council's Helping Hand service is here to support residents who are struggling with the rising cost of living. Whether you need help with food, energy bills, or essential household items, the team can provide practical assistance and advice.

Through the Household Support Fund, Helping Hand offers emergency help for those on low incomes or facing financial hardship. Support can include food vouchers, help with heating costs, and even essential furniture or appliances.

Call **01296 531151** to apply.

If you're finding things tough, don't wait, reach out to Helping Hand and get the support you need. For full details, visit [buckinghamshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living](https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living)

Tackling damp, mould and condensation: Report it at the first sign

With the cold weather well and truly here, and one of the things to watch out for at this time of year is condensation in your home, particularly on the windows in the morning. Left untreated, condensation can lead to mould growth which can be potentially harmful and lead to health issues and breathing difficulties.

Please make sure you tell us as soon as possible if you're concerned about damp, mould or condensation in your home. You'll need to provide us with some details and then we'll get back to you with some next steps. You can complete our online form at [redkitehousing.org.uk/hazardform](https://www.redkitehousing.org.uk/hazardform) or alternatively we can take you through the questions over the phone - call us on **01494 476100**.

Condensation appears due to a lack of adequate ventilation which causes humidity levels to rise. While condensation may not be the only cause of damp and mould in our homes, it is the easiest to manage. By making a few simple changes, you can drastically reduce the risk of mould forming in your home - following these simple tips on our website now is a lot easier than removing it once it sets in.

If you already have mould in your home, get in touch with us as soon as you can.

If you're struggling to heat your home there are lots of ways we can support you - head over to our energy saving web page at [redkitehousing.org.uk/energy](https://www.redkitehousing.org.uk/energy) for information and advice, and a list of other organisations who can help. You can also give us a ring on **01494 476100**. Please don't sit at home worrying - we're here to help.

Festive cheer from Sandcastle Nursery

On Monday 24th November, New Road Gardens Sheltered Scheme was filled with festive spirit thanks to a special visit from children and staff at **The Sandcastle Nursery**. The little ones arrived with thoughtful gifts for tenants – a bag of biscuits and hot chocolate – and brightened the common room with cheerful nursery rhymes.

Tenants loved every moment, clapping and singing along. Some even taught the children a few new rhymes to take back to nursery! It was a heart-warming exchange that brought smiles all round.

After the children said their goodbyes, **Barbara** and **Emma** from the Red Kite team made sure no one missed out. They knocked on every door of tenants who couldn't attend, delivering the handmade gifts and spreading festive joy.



Who's at the door?

With lots of contractors working with us to improve your homes, it's important to stay vigilant and check who's at the door.

If someone says they're working on Red Kite's behalf, always ask to see their ID badge before letting them in. Every operative should carry one and show it to you without hesitation.

If you're ever unsure, give us a call on **01494 476100**, we're here to help.

See reasons why we may want to visit your home
redkitechousing.org.uk/your-home/visits-to-your-home.

Hot Christmas day lunch delivered to your door

Hope Community Seventh-day Adventist Church is offering a free hot Christmas Day lunch for elderly residents, vulnerable individuals, and families in need.

Contact **07368637542** or **christmas@hopesda.org.uk** by Saturday 13th December to book a **free** hot meal.

Hope Community
Seventh-day Adventist Church
Giving Hope this
Christmas
A Free Hot
Christmas Day
Dinner
Delivered to your door
25TH DECEMBER LUNCH TIME
For the Elderly, Vulnerable
& Families in need
Sponsored by
Generous Local Organisations &
Hope Community SDA Church
**Contact : 07368637542 or
christmas@hopesda.org.uk
to book a meal by
13th December**
Chapel Lane, High Wycombe HP12 4BY

Beware of scams!

Fraudsters often try to create a sense of urgency or use threats to trick you.

Watch out for poor spelling or grammar, requests for personal details or payments, and messages claiming you must act immediately.

If something doesn't feel right, don't click any links or share your information.

Talk to a friend or family member before responding.

You can report scams by forwarding suspicious emails to **report@phishing.gov.uk** or sending scam texts to **7726** (free).

Red Kite's 12 Days of Kindness returns for the third year running!

We're excited to let you know that our 12 Days of Kindness campaign is back this December! Since 1st December, we've been celebrating the fantastic local groups and charities that make a real difference in our community.

Each day Monday to Thursday, we're giving away a £200 voucher to a nominated community group or charity. To take part, simply head to our Facebook or Instagram page and nominate your favourite group by commenting and tagging them on our daily post. Each group only needs one nomination per day to be entered into the draw, and winners are chosen at random and announced every afternoon.

Last year, your nominations helped us support 12 brilliant organisations, and we saw first-hand the positive impact this had across our community. We're hoping to make an even bigger difference this year, so keep an eye on our posts and get involved!

You can find all the details and terms and conditions on our website redkitehousing.org.uk.



Just a reminder that when our office is closed, our Out of Hours team steps in to help. They're here to support you with emergencies only.

If you've got something else on your mind, whether it's a question, concern, or update, please get in touch with us during our opening hours. We're always happy to help!

- Monday - Thursday: **8.45am - 5.15pm**
- Friday: **8.45am - 1pm** (please note, our office is closed on Fridays).

Quickest way to contact us:

Webchat:
www.redkitechousing.org.uk

Quietest time to call:

11am - 12.30pm
Tuesday - Friday and
3pm - 5pm **Tuesday - Thursday**

Our busiest day:

Monday



We've started our visits – Come and have your say

We're delighted to let you know that visits to our Sheltered Schemes have now begun. These visits are part of our commitment to listening to tenants and making sure your voice shapes what we do.

Over the next few months, members of our Executive and Senior Leadership Teams will be coming to every scheme to meet tenants face-to-face. It's your chance to tell us what you love about your home and community, and where we can do better. We want to hear it all – the positives and the things you'd like to see improved.

You'll receive a letter with the date of your visit, and posters will be displayed in communal rooms as a reminder. Please come along and share your thoughts. Your feedback matters and helps us make be the best we can be.

Your visit will include one or more of the following staff:



Susan Hickey
Interim Chief Executive



Sarah Mei Ying North
Director of Customer Services



Nicola Botterill
Head of Community



Darren Mealings
Interim Director of Property & Development



Alan Core
Head of Property



Alan Keers
Deputy Group Chief Executive & CEO Twenty11



Iain Bacon
Interim Group Director of Resources

For more info, please contact us:

✉ shelteredservices@redkitechousing.org.uk

☎ 01494 476100

We look forward to meeting you!



Cold weather advice

Cold weather can sometimes make some health problems worse and even lead to serious complications, especially if you're over 65 or have a long-term health condition.

If you need to leave your home during very cold weather...

- Dress in layers of lightweight clothing which keep you warmer than a single layer of heavy clothes
- Wear a suitable warm coat, gloves and hat
- Remove layers as necessary to prevent overheating and perspiring, as this can lead to chills
- Wear shoes or boots with a good grip to prevent slips and falls on wet or icy surfaces
- Slow down when walking across slippery surfaces and be especially careful on stairways
- Make sure you eat well and have regular hot food and drinks. Don't skip breakfast - it provides you with the fuel to start your day

Find out more at redkitehousing.org.uk/weather.

Winter Fuel Payments 2025/26

From winter 2025/26, most pensioners in England and Wales will receive a Winter Fuel Payment automatically to help with heating costs.

If your annual taxable income is above £35,000 and you don't receive Pension Credit or another means-tested benefit, you'll still get the payment, but it will be recovered automatically through income tax by HMRC. You don't need to claim - payments are made automatically.

Remember to be vigilant, the DWP will never text or email asking for your bank details. If you get a suspicious message, forward it to [7726](tel:08007726) (free) to check if it's genuine. Make sure you block and delete any scam texts without clicking links.

REMINDER: It's important to have your own contents insurance, as Red Kite insures the building but isn't responsible for your personal belongings. So if your furniture, electrical items, or valuables are lost or damaged due to fire, theft, or flooding, you'd need your own policy to cover the cost.



Celebrating the festive season considerately

The festive season is a time for joy and togetherness, but it's also important to celebrate in a way that respects your neighbours. Here are some simple tips to help keep things cheerful and considerate:

Keep the noise down

- If you're playing music or watching TV, keep the volume at a reasonable level
- Remember that noise travels more at night when everything else is quiet
- If you live upstairs, avoid placing speakers directly on the floor
- TVs mounted on party walls can cause vibrations – try to leave a gap between the TV and the wall.

Be mindful with parties and parking

- If you're hosting friends or family, let your neighbours know in advance
- Ask guests to park considerately so everyone can access their spaces.

Drink responsibly

- Alcohol can sometimes lead to louder celebrations – keep an eye on the noise and make sure everyone stays safe.

Giving us your feedback

Your feedback is what helps us to be the best we can be. Feedback can come in the form of a complaint, compliment or general comment – but whatever it is that you want to tell us, we're here to listen and do something about it.



By giving us positive feedback, you let us know where we're performing well and giving you a good service. When you tell us about something that hasn't gone well, or didn't meet your expectations, we use that information to improve our services and do our best to make sure it doesn't happen a second time.

The Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman is an independent organisation which deals with disputes between tenants and landlords. If you've been through our internal complaints process and still feel that we've let you down, you can escalate your concern externally with the Housing Ombudsman, or contact them at any time for advice.

Take a look at our feedback pages for more information: redkitehousing.org.uk/feedback. You can also give us a call on **01494 476100** to give us feedback.

National Involvement Week: How tenant voices shape Red Kite

In November, we celebrated National Involvement Week – a week dedicated to tenant engagement and the powerful impact of tenant voices at Red Kite. From 10th to 14th November, we showcased how tenant-led groups and panels drive positive change, ensuring our services reflect the needs and aspirations of our communities.

At the heart of this is our Development Panel, a group of tenant volunteers who help shape new homes from the ground up. They select contractors, choose finishes, and make sure every property feels like home.

Tenant volunteers also lead the way in supporting community initiatives. Feedback this year led to changes in our Springboard Fund, making it easier for Sheltered Schemes to apply for grants. As a result, six schemes received funding for events like VE Day buffets, fish and chip nights, and seaside trips.

Our Environmental Improvement Group funded the Downley Skip Day, bringing residents together to tackle fly-tipping and dispose of bulky waste responsibly – a great example of tenant-led projects making a real difference.

The Core Procurement Group influences procurement decisions, while the Resident Representative Team scrutinises key services, from repairs to damp and mould. This year, they are focusing on improving energy performance in our homes.

A huge thank you to every tenant who gets involved and helps us build a better future together.

Want to join our team of volunteers? Volunteering is a great way to learn new skills, gain experience, and make a real difference. Call **01494 476100** or email contact@redkitehousing.org.uk to find out more.

