

Front Cover

The Brighter Buzz Summer 2024

The Brighter Buzz is a newsletter, circulated to all tenants and customers every quarter to keep you up to date with news, events and opportunities across the organisation.

Headline: Welcome

Hello and welcome to the latest edition of The Brighter Buzz.

This newsletter is filled with exciting updates on the achievements of you, our customers, and our colleagues. We highlight the new customer engagement work, our commitment to providing decent homes as well as key information about our services during the Christmas period.

Headline: Winter Night Shelter

The Rough Sleeper Team has reopened The Night Shelter as part of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP). We provide 6 emergency bed spaces for rough sleepers over the colder months.

We're proud to offer this vital support as last Winter, 17 people who stayed at the shelter were able to move into more stable, long-term accommodation - we are hoping for similar outcomes this year!

For more information, please contact the Rough Sleepers Team: **0800 970 2304**.

Image: Hillcrest Exterior

Headline: Orchid House is officially open

We're excited to announce that Orchid House is officially open!

Recognising the need for female-only accommodation in Stoke-on-Trent, we've launched a 5-bed move-on facility as part of our housing pathway. Orchid House offers a safe and supportive environment for women, helping them move forward on their journey to independence whilst maintaining a stable home.

At Orchid House, our customers receive tailored support from both the Housing Sustainment Team and Orchid Women's Services so they can access emotional and practical support as they need.

The ladies have wasted no time in creating a welcoming home together, from cooking delicious Sunday roasts and baking chocolate cake to restoring the memorial garden...Happy new home ladies!

Image: Two ladies peeling potatoes to prepare for their Sunday lunch. They are both wearing grey hoodies. One lady has short white hair and one lady has brown hair in a ponytail.

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Headline: Let's shout about...

Sub-headline: Your Stories

We want to make sure that you, our customers are at the heart of everything we do, including our marketing and promotional work - because how can you connect with us if you don't see yourself reflected in our story?

We would like to say a huge thank you to our brave customers; Phil, Treena, Claire and Tina who've shared their personal journeys to help raise awareness around rough sleeping, battling addiction, and cuckooing.

You can check out their stories on our website:

www.brighter-futures.org.uk/newspage/

If you're willing to share your story to help others, please speak to your Worker who can contact our marketing team.

Images: There are four individual images showing all of the customers smiling. Phil has short grey hair and glasses, Claire has dark hair in a bobble and a blue t-shirt, Tina has short brown hair and a green coat, Treena is sat on her sofa with a dark straight bob and navy t shirt. They are all smiling and laughing, looking at the camera.

Sub-headline: Your Champion

Meet Marie, our new Customer Engagement and Initiatives Specialist.

With a passion for inclusion and community support, Marie and the wider team are making sure we amplify your voices so that you feel valued and heard by Brighter Futures.

Marie has already met with some of you to gather your feedback and ideas, she will also be leading the Tenant Satisfaction Measures in 2025 - our annual survey where we ask you to review us so that your opinions directly feedback into our organisation so we know what we are doing well and how we can improve.

Marie is also working closely with Brighter Futures colleagues to appoint Engagement Champions across each of our services. These champions will be your go-to contacts for anything related to engagement and will support you in sharing suggestions about our services and initiatives. In the coming months, we'll be introducing information boards to ensure you know exactly how to get involved and who your Engagement Champions are!

You can get in touch with Marie by asking your Worker to contact her, or by emailing:

marie.john@brighter-futures.org.uk

Image: Marie has dark curly hair to her shoulders, she is wearing a black top and cream cardigan. Marie is smiling in front of the slogan "Live well, thrive, be connected."

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Sub-headline: Your Voices

One of Marie's first projects was to launch Brainstorm Brunches to provide you with an opportunity to come together over a sausage bap and share your ideas for a new, customer-led activities programme.

Marie has already organised Brainstorm Brunches at some of our Homelessness Accommodation Services and is planning to connect with more customers from across the organisation before we launch the 2025 programme.

We can't wait to hear your ideas and see what we can create together!

Image: Two male customers are sat at a table. They are both smiling. Ant is sat closest to camera, he has short grey hair, a black t-shirt and a tattoo on his hand which is holding a thermal cup. Marek has longer, brown hair and is wearing a black fleece.

Sub-headline: Your homes

As a landlord, it's our job to make sure we meet the Decent Homes Standard. This means we ensure your homes are safe, comfortable, and well-maintained by looking at factors such as:

- Good repairs
- Modern facilities
- Energy efficiency
- Health and Safety

So without further ado...we're proud to share that 99.5% of our homes meet this standard. We'd like to give a big shout out to our Property Services Team who work behind the scenes to make this happen!

If you ever have any concerns about the condition of your home, please get in touch with us by calling **01782 406 000**.

We're here to make sure you can thrive in a place to call your own.

Sub-headline: Your celebrations

Image: Two people are singing on a karaoke machine. Charlotte, a female, is on the left, she is dressed up for Halloween with white face paint, a white dress with fake blood on. Chax, a male, is on the right, he is singing with his arms out. He is wearing a green bucket hat and a grey jumper. He has a staff lanyard on.

Text: Customers across the organisation have enjoyed Halloween celebrations including spooktacular buffets, pumpkin carving, and a frightening karaoke session.

Events like these help us to build stronger relationships and better support you on your housing journey. Every conversation, activity, and event helps to create a more inclusive and understanding environment for everyone.

And this is just the beginning...so what's next? The Brighter Futures elves are hard at work planning Christmas and New Year celebrations to be enjoyed across the organisation. In the meantime, if you have any ideas, please don't hesitate to contact Marie or ask your Worker to get in touch with her.

Image: Jamie, a male customer, is wearing a black cap and blue jumper. He appears to be concentrating on drawing a spooky face on an orange pumpkin. There are Halloween decorations and snacks in the background.

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Sub-headline: Our Specialists

Introducing... Jess and Kaitlin, our new Access and Sustainment Specialists who have recently transferred from the Housing Sustainment Team.

They will be supporting customers who are facing challenges in managing their tenancy and are at risk of losing their accommodation. At Brighter Futures, eviction is always a last resort, so Jess and Kaitlin will work closely with customers on a short-term basis to help re-stabilise their lives using a person-centered, multi-agency approach. They will be the primary support for any issues related to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), nuisance, or harassment.

Image: Kaitlin and Jess are stood in front of the slogan "Live Well, Thrive, Be Connected". They are both smiling. Kaitlin is on the left with dark hair tied in a bobble and a black blouse. Jess is stood on the right with long blonde hair and a brown jumper. They are wearing staff lanyards.

Sub-headline: Handling ASB

Throughout November, Brighter Futures supported Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) Awareness Week.

This year's theme was **#MakeCommunitiesSafer**, and as a part of our ongoing mission to create supportive, thriving communities, we understand our role in handling antisocial behaviour and supporting you, our customers, in your communities.

Since rolling out our new ASB procedure in October 2023, we're pleased to receive 100% customer satisfaction with our case handling and case outcomes.

Here's how we're making a difference:

- Block inspections with regular checks to focus on repairs and safety.
- House rules in shared accommodation to keep everyone safe and respected.
- Staff training to ensure our colleagues are equipped and empowered to handle ASB cases.

We will continue working towards positive and inclusive communities for you and your neighbours, and we're excited to keep building on our progress!

If you have any questions around ASB, please contact your Worker or ask them for an information guide.

Sub-headline: Assets and Compliance Manager

We would also like to say a warm welcome to Jordan, our new Assets and Compliance Manager.

Jordan is responsible for overseeing the Property Services team, making sure that all our properties are safe, well-maintained, and comply with regulations. His role is key to ensuring that you have a comfortable and secure place to live.

To report a repair, please contact Customer Services on **01782 406 000**.

Image: Jordan, a male, is stood in front of the “Live Well, Thrive, Be Connected” slogan. Jordan has a brown beard and glasses on. He is wearing a light blue shirt and smiling at the camera. He is wearing a staff lanyard.

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Headline: Need to know info

Sub-headline: Opening hours over Christmas

We would like to reassure our customers that we will continue to support you throughout the festive period.

Rough Sleepers Team operates every day of the year, including bank holidays.

Homelessness Accommodation Services (90 Hope St, Hillcrest, Orchid House, Davis Street, New Hope, Furlong Court) are staffed every day of the year, including bank holidays.

Orchid Women’s Services will operate as usual on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays but will be closed on Thursday 26th December.

Hanley Connect will be open as usual from Monday to Friday but will be closed on Wednesday 25th December, Thursday 26th December, and Wednesday 1st January. The hub will host a Christmas meal for their customers on Tuesday 24th December, please ask at Hanley Connect for more information.

Housing Sustainment Workers will liaise with customers when they are available over the festive period.

Sub-headline: Other queries

Customer Services will be open as usual from Monday to Friday but closed on Wednesday 25th December, Thursday 26th December, and Wednesday 1st January.

On weekends and bank holidays, please call the Duty Team (**01782 406 000**).

Repairs - only emergency repairs will be handled from Wednesday 25th December to Wednesday 1st January, with normal service resuming on Thursday 2nd January.

Emergency repairs may be forwarded to a contractor if needed.

Sub-headline: Changes to Orchid Women's Services

In August 2024, we were informed by The Oak Foundation that they would no longer be funding Orchid Women's Services due to a change in their priorities. While this means funding has changed, we want to assure you that Orchid Women's Services is still here and open to support you.

We know that the need for help is stronger than ever, so we will continue to fund the service to make sure our female customers continue to receive the support they need.

The service includes:

- Orchid House: 5-bed facility of female-only, supported accommodation.
- The drop-in will no longer be at Garth St but at The Observatory on Dyke Street ST1 2DE instead. The drop in is open Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 9:00 am - 1:30 pm.
- A new Assertive Caseworker role will provide more one-on-one support to females within Brighter Futures' accommodation.
- Ongoing outreach to provide help for vulnerable women including rough sleepers and sex workers.

If you have any questions, please visit the drop-in as detailed above or call: **01782 286 862**.

Image: A building with a sign saying "The Observatory". The image shows the exterior of the building with cream rendering on the top floor and brown bricks on the bottom. There are 5 white windows and a white door. The sky is blue in the background.

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Headline: Staying Safe

Sub-headline: Damp and Mould

Damp and mould are more likely to occur in Winter because of colder temperatures, more time spent indoors, activities like cooking and drying clothes, and poor ventilation, which create moisture that can lead to mould growing in your home. To help prevent this, make sure you:

- Open window vents or windows during the day to improve airflow (particularly in the mornings or after baths or showers).
- Avoid blocking vents or air bricks.
- Regularly wipe away condensation on windows.
- Dry wet clothes outside whenever possible or use a tumble dryer.
- Use extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms.
- Keep a gap between furniture and walls.
- Check for leaks and report them immediately if you find any as they can make dampness and mould worse.

Image: A hand holding a green cloth wiping away condensation from a window.

Sub-headline: Fire Safety

As the temperature drops and we try to warm up, please ensure you remain safe with electricals and avoid the dangers of fire.

- Test smoke alarms, or ask your Worker if you are unsure.
- Always turn off heating equipment when you leave a room or go to bed
- Avoid overloading electrical plugs and adaptors.
- Ensure electrical appliances have a British Safety Standard mark.
- Check and replace any old cables and leads.
- Keep electrical items clean, in good working order, and away from water.

Image: of the British Standard Electrical mark. It is a heat shape with a line across the top, and an S underneath the line.

Image: A finger pushing the button on a fire alarm to test it.

Sub headline: Get in touch

General Enquiries, Repairs and ASB:

01782 406 000

customerservices@brighter-futures.org.uk

Rough Sleeper Team:

0800 970 2304

(Calls are FREE from mobiles, landlines, and payphones. Lines are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year)

Hanley Connect:

07500 444112

Orchid Women's Services:

01782 286 862

If you would prefer to receive email communications, please subscribe online:

www.brighter-futures.org.uk/newspage

Sub headline: Follow us

Image: Facebook Logo, X Logo, LinkedIn Logo

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