

# Empower's Tenant Newsletter

SUMMER EDITION | AUGUST 2024



## Sam Formby – Never give up

We are excited to share that Sam Formby, an Empower tenant, has written an inspirational book about his life.

Sam has lived in his home for the last 10 years and his book tells the story of how exercise changed his life after a devastating life changing illness. You can buy Sam's book and read more at [www.samformby.co.uk](http://www.samformby.co.uk)



## How are we doing?

Every two years we will be asking you to take part in a Tenant Satisfaction survey to gather your views on how satisfied you are with the services we provide.

Thank you to everyone who participated and returned their survey in 2023/24. Here's how we performed in some key service areas. (Full details of our survey approach and responses will be included in our Annual Report to be published later this year).

100% compliance was achieved in all building safety checks including:

Gas Safety

Fire Risk Assessments

Asbestos

Legionella

Lift safety

We also reported compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

**94%**

satisfied with the overall service we provide

**93%**

feel that we treat you with fairness and respect

**87%**

satisfied with the repairs service we provide

**85%**

feel that we listen to your views and acts upon them

**88%**

satisfied that we provide a home that is safe.

**63%**

satisfied with our approach to handling anti social behaviour

**81%**

satisfied that their home is well maintained

**33%**

satisfied with our approach to handling complaints

# Welcome to your Summer edition of our Newsletter from Empower

This information can be made available in alternative formats, such as easy read or large print and may be available in alternative languages upon request. **Please contact 01257 260712 or email [HM@empowerhousing.org.uk](mailto:HM@empowerhousing.org.uk)**

## Get involved!

We have recently been working with a group of tenants who are helping us to develop our service standards for tenants across a number of service areas.

Early feedback from tenants is how much they have enjoyed working with and helping us get our services right.

Service Standards provide you with details of the standards you can expect from Empower as your landlord when delivering services and making sure that we get our services right for you.



### The services we are developing standards for include:

How you can contact us and how we provide information

Repairs

Health and Safety

Complaints and Feedback

Tenant Involvement

Lettings and Tenancy Management

Rent and Rent recovery

## How to get involved

Over the next 12 months we will be looking for volunteers who would like to meet, either face to face or on-line and form small focus groups.

Your views of our services can influence and help us continually improve what we are doing.

If you would like to get involved please email the Housing Management Team at [HM@empowerhousing.org.uk](mailto:HM@empowerhousing.org.uk), alternatively, you can contact the team on 01257 260712 option 3.

## New members to the Empower team

We would like to introduce and welcome two new colleagues to the Empower team:



**Hello My name is Steve** and I am the new Property Manager . I joined in March 2024 and my primary role is to ensure we provide the service you expect from our repairs and planned works.

I have worked in construction for over 40 years and have worked for several housing associations in various senior positions.



**Hello, my name is Julie**, I joined Empower in July 2024 as Finance Manager. I have worked in the social housing sector for 16 years and I'm excited to be part of a team who really care about our tenants. I'm also proficient in Makaton signing.



## We value your complaints

We aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible and as a result make sure we learn and improve our services.

Last year we received 8 complaints which were all dealt with within the required timescales and none were escalated to Stage 2.

### Complaints Received 2023/24



## Complaints learning - You said, we are doing!

We welcome all feedback from you and your representatives and recognise that this feedback provides valuable information that we can use to improve the services we offer.

From the complaints we received last year here are some of the service improvements we have identified:

You told us we could improve how we communicate with you and your representatives during the repairs process.

### We have:

- Improved our methods of communication with you and how this is recorded on our Housing Management system, in particular when there is a delay with repairs and informing you.
- Reviewed and improved the process for obtaining quotes for work to ensure there is a timely follow up to minimise delays in works being completed.

You told us we could improve how we dealt with your reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB).

### We have:

- Delivered further training for the Housing Management Team on ASB management
- Delivered complaint handling training to all colleagues
- Reviewed and updated our ASB policy and procedures
- Changed the way we record ASB complaints

### Over the coming months we will be asking for your feedback on your experiences including:

- How we dealt with your anti-social behaviour case
- How we dealt with your complaint
- How we did letting your new home



## What you said about us - Compliments

“ Services all good. Very responsive in terms of maintenance and repairs. Recent leak (for example) was dealt with very quickly. Always a good experience with EHA

” We couldn't be happier with the service provided from EHA. The work that's completed is always up to a high standard, we feel they all go over and above at times

“ Keep up the great work you are doing. It's so good to see the people we support being included and empowered in their decision making about what they want & need in their own homes

” The staff that attend are always friendly and chatty and any repairs that are reported are always followed up and fixed - if it's not the same day it is the day after which is fantastic.

“ Thank you so much to Carl and Andy for working to make a nice patio area for the tenants

” Feel well listened to on behalf of tenants

## All About You

We will soon be updating the information we hold about you on our records via our All About You Equality data collection form.

We encourage you to complete this information as this will help us improve how we communicate with you and design and deliver services.

**Is the information you provide safe?** Yes, we take your privacy very seriously, and have strict rules about who can see your information and how it can be used in line with legal requirements.





## How to make a complaint

Sometimes we may get it wrong. If something does go wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. You can make a complaint by;

- contacting the Housing Management Team on 01257 260712, option 3.
- Reporting on line via the Empower website
- Reporting to a colleague when they visit you
- In person at Empowers office
- Email to [admin@empowerhousing.org.uk](mailto:admin@empowerhousing.org.uk)
- Writing to us at: Empower Housing Association, 33-35 Hollinshead Street, Chorley, PR7 1EP

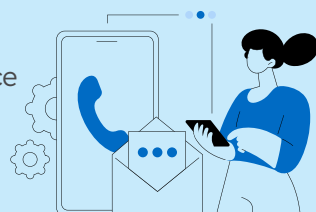
Our complaint handling procedure can be found on our website [www.empowerhousing.org.uk](http://www.empowerhousing.org.uk) which explains and provides further detail on how you can make a complaint.

Empower is a member of the Housing Ombudsman Service. If you are not happy with how we have responded to your complaint you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service online at <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>, or

**By phone:** 0300 111 3000

### In writing to:

Housing Ombudsman Service  
PO Box 1484  
Unit D, Preston PR2 0ET



## Home contents insurance



### Why do I need it?

Contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions. No matter how careful you are, there's always a risk that your belongings could be broken, damaged or stolen. It's a good idea to consider what a home contents insurance policy would cover you for to help you make an informed decision on whether you need one.

To help you decide whether home contents insurance is right for you, the National Housing Federation has identified the My Home Contents Insurance Scheme who can offer you insurance for the contents of your home including cover for items such as furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, bedding, electrical items, jewellery, pictures and ornaments.

We cannot guarantee that this scheme provides the cheapest insurance cover available, or that it provides the widest cover, and you are recommended to seek alternative quotations and choose the cover that best suits your needs.

For further information please visit our website <https://empowerhousing.org.uk/home-contents-insurance>

## Damp, mould & condensation

**Damp, mould and condensation can continue to be a problem even in warmer weather.**

Make sure you keep your home well aired, dry clothes outside where possible and wipe down any condensation on windows to stop it from forming into mould.

Please report all damp, mould and condensation concerns to our Maintenance Department, providing pictures if possible, at [maintenance@empowerhousing.org.uk](mailto:maintenance@empowerhousing.org.uk), alternatively contact the team on 01257 260712 option 1. The team will arrange for an inspection to be completed.



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## Keeping your appointments and allowing access

**Sometimes we attend a repairs appointment and no one is home and the repair or visit cannot be completed.**

We want to make sure that when you report a repair or we need to carry out an annual safety check or service we are able to do this on the date and time that has been arranged with you or your representative.

We understand that sometimes your plans may change and you are unable to be home at the time your visit is due. It's really important that you let us know if you won't be home so that we or our contractors don't have a wasted journey.

01257 260712 – option 1  
[Maintenance@empowerhousing.org.uk](mailto:Maintenance@empowerhousing.org.uk)

## More home inspections?

**You may have been wondering why members of the Empower team have been undertaking surveys of your homes. This is to make sure that your home meets the required Decent Homes Standard set out by the Government.**

It is yours and our opportunity to identify hazards or issues within your home. Where necessary we will take action to deal with any risks to health that may have been identified.

We are also carrying out stock condition surveys to better understand the condition of your home and to help plan for future maintenance. This includes assessing things like kitchens, bathrooms, windows, doors and boilers.

The survey results will allow us to create a replacement programme for the next 30 years and allow us to budget effectively to pay for any works.



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## Tenant recharges

**When you call us to report a repair, you will be informed if the repair is your responsibility in line with your tenancy agreement.**

If Empower is not responsible for the repair or the repair is as a result of damage caused to the property by you or your visitors, you will be informed that you are responsible for payment for the repair and may be invoiced for the costs of the repair.

We will work with tenants, Care Providers and representatives where there are instances of damage resulting in recharges having to be made. Any rechargeable repair will include EHA's 10% + VAT admin fee for organising the works.

# Safety First

## Compliance inspections

We want to ensure that your home is safe and to do this we carry out annual compliance inspections, with each visit taking around 3 hours to complete.

We will require access to your home during this time to ensure the property remains safe for you, and will include the following actions:

- 3-hour power down of emergency lighting
- Individual fire door inspections
- Visual checks on all emergency exits
- Thermostatic Mixing Valve (TMV), isolation valves and water temperature checks
- Monitoring the condition of any asbestos present
- Damp, mould and condensation check
- Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) of any white goods (appliances) which have been provided by us.
- Smoke alarms

Please make sure you are available for your appointment and if you need to re-arrange please contact our Maintenance Team; on 01257 260712, option 1

## Performance review checks

As part of our plans to improve tenant involvement and how we deliver services, we are reviewing how we engage with you when we visit you in your home.

If you would like to get involved with this review, please can you consider the questions below and email the Housing Management Team – [HM@empowerhousing.org.uk](mailto:HM@empowerhousing.org.uk) your answers:

- How often would you like/expect visits to be carried out
- What would you like to discuss and be included in the visits?
- Do you have any other feedback regarding Empowers services and how we might improve the way we engage with you?



## Smoke alarms

We check smoke alarms annually when we complete our compliance visit. The alarms are also checked during the 5-year electrical inspection.

We do recommend that you test your smoke alarms regularly and report any issues to our Maintenance Team.



# Blooming Fantastic!

In Spring we launched our Empower in Bloom sunflower competition. We asked you to send in photos and the height of your sunflowers and they are coming along nicely!

The closing date has been extended to 27th September 2024 so get those entries in!

## Prizes:

- 1st – £100 voucher to spend at your local garden centre along with a bespoke Sunflower Trophy
- 2nd – £50 Garden Lovers hamper
- 3rd – £25 Love to Shop voucher

**BONUS** – £10 Love to Shop voucher for the best overall photo out of all the final entries

More information can be found on our website [www.empowerhousing.org.uk](http://www.empowerhousing.org.uk)



## A day in the life of – Rachel

We sat down with Rachel – one of our Maintenance Officers and asked a few questions about her role at EMPOWER.

### How did you come to work in social housing?

After my children had reached a certain age, I wanted a career change and I had heard about the work that Empower does, and I liked it. I felt this would be a good change and challenge for me.

### What does your role at Empower entail?

My role involves dealing with incoming calls from tenants and their representatives to report maintenance and repair issues for all properties, arranging works, looking for new contractors when needed, processing invoices, confirming appointments with Care Providers and tenants daily and maintaining good working relationships.

I also go out to visit tenants with Richard our Housing Tenant Support Officer.

### What is the most meaningful part of your job

Achieving job satisfaction – when the job has been done within time and the tenants and Care Provider are happy with the works carried out. It is lovely to hear the great feedback received from our tenants and their representatives, which confirms that we are doing a good job which makes it worthwhile.

### What are your biggest challenges?

The biggest challenge is finding good contractors who can get work done within the timeframe allocated for repairs, especially if it is an emergency. We will always, where possible, go above and beyond to try and resolve any issues that arise.



**Rachel Challender**  
Maintenance Officer