



The
United
Reformed
Church



RMHS Newsletter

Retired Ministers' Housing Society (RMHS)

Spring 2026

Spring is finally on the way after a long and wet winter. Last month, as I was pruning my roses in anticipation of spring, I reflected on the cycle of withdrawal and renewal through the seasons and the onward growth. Here at RMHS we continue to have setbacks from time to time but continue to grow and improve our services.

In this newsletter, you will hear from Judith about our resident census. We've recently learned that we don't know everyone living in our properties, and we need to better understand this to better serve our residents. Reverend Paul Whittle also introduces our Residents Committee, which aims to give a voice to our residents to the Board and improve our communication. Francesca and Claudia share more news about continued improvements and upgrades to our properties. As the stock condition surveys are starting to show us, there are still some properties with repairs which have either not been reported or where in the past repairs were not done or, not completed to a satisfactory standard. I would very much encourage you if there is any issue with your home to please report it to us. Our systems for dealing with repairs are now much more robust and we take concerns seriously. And finally; we know our website continues to be inadequate. To work in tandem with the wider URC family, the launch of the new site has been slightly delayed but a much improved website will be launched in the coming weeks with much more information on policies, procedures and will make it much easier to find the information you need.

We also have reflections and news from residents – a wonderful reflection on spring from Mrs Jean Floe, and I am sure you will join all the RMHS team with sharing joy and congratulations with Reverend and Mrs Hall on their milestones. Wishing you all joy for the forthcoming Easter celebrations!

With best wishes,

Irmani Smallwood, Chief Executive Officer

A Prayer for Easter

Easter is a time of celebration, and the Church has learned to celebrate it well. We sing loudly, dress the sanctuary with colour, and proclaim resurrection with confidence. Yet all our celebration is shaped by hindsight. We know how the story turns out. We stand on the far side of the empty tomb. It is much harder to place ourselves honestly in the atmosphere of that first Easter morning.

That day began not with trumpets, but with tears. The disciples' hopes had been shattered at the cross. Grief hung heavy in the air. Love had been crucified, and with it their expectations of the future. Into that raw landscape comes the gentle question: "Woman, why are you weeping?" It is both tender and searching. It honours the reality of sorrow rather than dismissing it.

Mary comes before daybreak, carrying heartbreak with her. She is the first witness not because she is triumphant, but because she is faithful in grief. Scripture does not tidy away emotion; it tells the truth about it. Tears matter. They are seen by God. They are not weakness but prayer poured out without words. Yet the human heart does not ultimately long for a chance to cry — it longs for a day when tears are no longer needed.

Mary's turning point comes not through argument or explanation, but through recognition. She hears her name spoken. In that moment, grief is not denied — it is transformed. Darkness does not pretend to be light; rather, light breaks into darkness. Resurrection is personal before it is public.

"I have seen the Lord," she says. That is the Easter confession — not a theory, but a testimony.

This Easter, the question is not only what we celebrate, but what we will say. Where has Christ spoken our name? Where has hope met us in our sorrow? Resurrection still begins there.

Prayer

Lord God, early in the morning you brought creation to birth, shaping life in beauty and risk; may your name be hallowed.

Early in the morning you came among us in Christ, sharing our flesh and tears; may your name be hallowed.

Early in the morning you bore the cross in love; may your name be hallowed.

Early in the morning you rose in glory and called your people back; may your name be hallowed.

Today bring new life, love, forgiveness, and freedom by your Spirit.

God strong and holy, have mercy on us. Amen.

Revd. Nicola Furley-Smith, Deputy General Secretary (Ministries)



Introducing The Residents Committee

Recent days, weeks and months have seen a number of changes in the practices and operations of the Society as the Board and Staff have been working hard to develop a more efficient, robust, and effective organisation, always with the aim of producing the best possible service to the tenants. The mix of changing legislation and working out best practice does not always make this easy, but much that is beneficial has been achieved of late.

One recent innovation is the introduction of a Residents Committee which will function as a sub-committee of the Board Meeting. The remit of the committee is to oversee feedback, concerns, complaints and experiences and report as necessary to the Board. It will oversee the reporting of complaints and advise the Board on policy matters that have an impact on residents. It will

be a link with the Ministries Committee, especially through the RMHS Sub-Committee of Ministries. The current members of the Residents Committee are Revd Geoff Felton, Revd Dr Carla Grosch-Miller and Revd Paul Whittle and committee meetings will also include three members of staff, Irmani Smallwood (Chief Executive), Judith Williams (Head of Housing Services) and Katia Crowley (Governance and Communications Officer).

The committee would be happy to hear from residents on relevant matters and the best way of contacting us is an email to Katia Crowley as Governance and Communication Officer (rmh@urc.org.uk), though a phone call or letter to the Society's office would also work.

Paul Whittle, Chair, Residents Committee

Housing Services Update

Welcome to the Housing Services section of the newsletter, where we share key updates on the work of the Housing Services team.

Introducing the Head of Housing Services – Ms Judith Williams

I'm pleased to introduce myself as the Head of Housing Services.



I oversee new tenancy arrangements, tenancy sustainment, end of tenancy, the annual rent review, safeguarding, welfare concerns, management of vacant properties, with a passion for delivering excellent, customer-centred service to our residents.

How to contact Housing Services

The Housing Services team has a dedicated email for you to contact us:

housingservices@urc.org.uk

You can also call:

Kathleen Benjamin on 020 7871 7871 or

Helen Corbett on 020 7916 8682.

Housing Services

Our team supports all aspects of housing management, including rents, voids, new tenancies, tenancy endings, and a range of other tenancy-related matters. If you have any queries or need guidance on any housing issue, please feel free to get in touch with us — we're always happy to help.

At RMHS, we are committed to helping residents remain in their homes for as long as they can do so safely and comfortably. Circumstances can change during a tenancy, and residents may need different types of support. As part of our tenancy sustainment approach, we signpost residents to helpful organisations such as Age UK for welfare advice or the local authority for Housing Benefit and other financial assistance.

If aids or adaptations are needed to support

independent living, we discuss this with residents and guide them to contact their GP or Adult Social Care. Local authorities assess and install these adaptations, and our team often supports the process when permission is required. Our aim is to provide practical help that enables residents to maintain their tenancy with confidence.

Rents

The Society's financial year ends on 31 December each year. Annual rent statements will have been issued before the end of March. If you have not received your annual statement by the middle of April, please contact Housing Services and we can arrange for a copy to be emailed or posted to you.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties or have any concerns about falling behind with paying your rent, please do not hesitate to contact us and we can signpost you to organisations that can provide advice should you wish.

Resident Census 2026

The Society has a legal duty to know who is living in RMHS properties. Over the next few months, members of our housing services team will be contacting residents to conduct a resident census. We will be asking for the names of all the people who live in your home to ensure our records are up to date and we comply with our legal requirements.

Resident Surveys

Thank you again to the 81% of residents who completed the Wellbeing Survey, 2025. It was a fantastic response rate and helped the Housing Services team to better understand the needs of our residents and will help us improve our services.

We will be sending out a survey in the summer of 2026, specifically reaching out to residents who were unable to complete the Wellbeing Survey last year and to new RMHS residents who have joined us since last Summer.

Fridge magnets

We are happy to enclose with this edition of the RMHS Newsletter, a fridge magnet, with details of who you should contact to report repairs to your home.

Please put this in a prominent position on your fridge so the numbers are always readily available to you.

We would be grateful if you share these important contact numbers with family members and/or carers who visit you in your home.



Sustainability Project Update – RMHS Retrofit Works: A Case Study

The roll out of our energy efficiency upgrade work is well underway. **Upgrades at 20 properties have been completed**, with another **7 due by the end of March**. Feedback from residents who have had works completed has been generally positive, and we hope this continues as the programme progresses.

Last November, CCS and RMHS held two online coffee morning events with residents to share information on the retrofit program. This provided a great opportunity for residents to meet the team and ask any questions they had about the program.

Recently, we spoke with one of our residents who have had the retrofit works completed at their property. They were **“very satisfied” with the changes at their property**, despite being initially anxious about having the works undertaken. They explained that their early concerns stemmed from not fully understanding the upgrades, the potential disruption to daily life, and the ongoing maintenance involved. In conversation with our team, they shared that **“as time went on our confidence grew as each concern was addressed”**.

When speaking with the residents, they noted that most works ran smoothly and according to schedule at their property, however an issue with dismantling the scaffolding had caused minor delays. Despite this, they stated that **“CCS kept us fully up to date with where things were”**. The CCS team have been working hard to ensure that **clear timetables are provided to residents in advance of works commencing** and that it is adhered to as closely as possible.

Looking back on their experience, the residents offered thoughtful advice for others who have yet to receive their home upgrades. Firstly, **“our advice would be, ideally, have nothing in the loft – or reduce it to a minimum for easy access for the**

contractor”

. Loft improvements are often a key part of the upgrade process, so keeping this area clean and easy to access helps save time and avoids extra work for the contractors. And finally, **“embrace this opportunity, it is worth it!”**.

We hope to continue hearing positive feedback from our residents about the retrofit works taking place. If you have anything to share with us or any questions, **please reach out to me and I'd be more than happy to speak with you**.

Claudia Cholakian
07889 224 457 - claudia.cholakian@urc.org.uk
Sustainability Coordinator - RMHS



COMING SOON!

The refreshed RMHS website will be going live this Spring.

Visit us online at

www.rmhs.org.uk



Property Services Update

Welcome to the Property Services section of the newsletter, where we will be sharing important updates on all property and compliance-related matters.

Property Inspections

RMHS will be carrying out detailed stock condition surveys of all our properties. Although we have conducted such surveys before, these new assessments will help us plan future improvements more effectively. We have recruited two temporary surveyors to help us with these surveys and Glenn Cryer will be covering the Northern region and John Ramba will be covering the Southern region.

Both Glenn and John bring years of expertise and knowledge to RMHS, and residents will be contacted in due course by them to arrange the surveys. The stock condition survey approximately takes between 1-4 hours based on the size of your property and please do highlight any repairs to the surveyors whilst they are on site.

Annual Gas Safety Checks

Each year we carry out a gas safety check in your home before your current certificate expires. This is a legal requirement and helps keep you, your home, and your neighbours safe.

The good news is that the appointment is usually quick and simple. A qualified engineer will visit your home to make sure everything is safe and that your gas appliances are working properly.

Please make sure you keep your appointment and allow the engineer access to your home on the

day. If you can't make the appointment, please let us know as soon as possible so we can arrange another time that works for you.

Electrical Safety Test

We carry out an electrical safety tests in your home up to a maximum of five years. The inspection is completed by our contractors and helps keep your home safe.

During the visit, the electrician will check things like wiring, sockets and other electrical systems to make sure everything is working properly and safely. These checks help identify items such as worn wiring, damaged accessories such as sockets or unknown faults that could cause problems. Electrical safety checks are an important part of keeping your home safe and are included as part of your tenancy agreement.

Water Safety (Legionnaire) and Asbestos

HSL Compliance is still undertaking legionnaire risk assessments on behalf of RMHS. If you have been contacted by HSL, please arrange your inspection as soon as possible. For residents who have already had their assessment completed, RMHS will contact you shortly if any remedial works are required

Acorn Analytics is still undertaking asbestos inspections and if you have been contacted by them, please arrange your inspection as soon as possible.

Francesca Pitts BSc (Hons) MCIQB
Head of Property Services

A double celebration

Everyone here at RMHS is absolutely delighted to share our warmest congratulations with Revd Roger Hall and Mrs Mary Hall as they celebrate two truly remarkable milestones.

Revd Hall was recently presented with a 70 Years' Service Certificate by the Synod Moderator - an incredible testament to his lifelong dedication and faithfulness. At the same time, Revd and Mrs Hall are celebrating their 70th wedding anniversary, a beautiful reflection of enduring love and commitment.

What an extraordinary pair of achievements! Thank you both for allowing us and our residents to share in such a special and joyful time.



“The Long and Winding Road.”

As a new tenant, I was surprised when Judith suggested that I wrote a reflection about our journey together. At a time of upheaval for the team at RMHS and my total ignorance of house-hunting and using IT the journey was difficult, but we have arrived at a new spring, and I am enjoying seeing my garden coming alive at my lovely new home. I am where I need to be, close to my son and his family and by the sea. Wonderful. I am so grateful that RMHS can offer housing to Ministers and spouses.

I was once told that my expectations are so high that I must always be disappointed - I was silent for a moment as I realized that the opposite is often true and I am amazed at the outcomes after difficulties.

Our journey has reminded me of the song “The Long and Winding Road”. Sir Paul McCartney

described it as a “melancholy reflection on unattainable goals and the difficulties of life’s journey.” I overthink everything. I worry about the state of the world, and about the future for my grandchildren. I struggle with the concept that Christ is sovereign over all. Does that apply to world leaders, pandemics, climate change, and human behaviour? Then I look around and see this earth is amazing, life itself is unbelievable, being human is astonishing despite the difficulties. The song ends with hope - “the long and winding road that leads me to your door”.

So, as we move into a bright new spring, let us remember the assurance that our Christ is sovereign over all; that all is well, and all will be well. We are where He wants us to be here and now and His promise is that the long and winding road will lead us to His door.

Mrs Jean Floe, RMHS Tenant.

Our repairs service

Your feedback tells us that if you’ve got a problem in your home, whether it’s minor or major, you want it to be resolved quickly.

How to report issues

The quickest and easiest way to report non-emergency repairs is to contact our Repairs and Maintenance Officer.

Call, 07436 356 449 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)

You can also report repairs by email to: property.services@urc.org.uk

Is it an emergency?

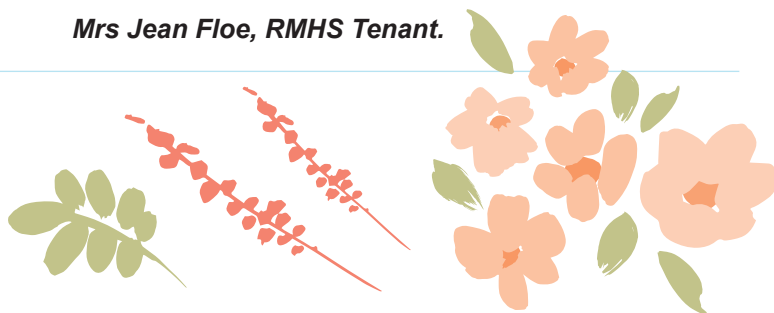
For all out of hours and emergency repairs contact Service Solutions Direct.

Call, 01772 289 499

For Worcester Bosch Boiler Breakdowns only

Call, 0330 123 9339.

They will confirm if your boiler is covered under their warranty. If it isn’t please contact Service Solutions Direct for further support.



Our Service Standards

To be clear on what you can expect from us, the Repairs and Maintenance Policy, in our Asset Management Handbook, sets out clear standards on how quickly a repair should be done. You can read this in detail on our website www.rmhs.org.uk

If you would like a printed copy of the Asset Management Handbook or, have any questions, call us on 07436 356 449 or email property.services@urc.org.uk



Emergencies

Within 24 hours



Urgent repairs

7 working days



Routine repairs

28 calendar days

Tackling condensation, damp and mould in your home

At RMHS, making sure our residents have warm, dry homes that are free from condensation, damp and mould is a key priority.

The key thing to remember is not to wait - report it straight away. Even a small sign of condensation, damp or mould can be a sign of a problem with your property which is better addressed proactively, rather than waiting until it gets worse.

If you notice any signs of damp or mould in your home, report it straight away on 0207 520 2716 or via email Propertyservices@urc.org.uk

What can you do in your home to reduce the possibility of condensation?

Condensation usually appears where there isn't enough ventilation, so you might see it in the bathroom or kitchen, or in places where air doesn't flow easily.

In the kitchen



When you're cooking or boiling a kettle, try to keep the door closed to prevent steam moving around your home. Steam will collect on walls and windows and create condensation.



Make sure your extractor fan is switched on if you have one, if you do not have one in your kitchen please report this to us as soon as possible so that we can arrange one to be installed.



Cover your pans with lids when you're cooking and leave your extractor fans on, you can also open your windows. Both of these will help to clear the air of moisture.

In the bathroom



Condensation, damp and mould in the bathroom is caused by hot baths and showers that send moisture into the air. When you're taking a shower or bath, make sure your extractor fan is switched on if you have one. If you do not have one in your bathroom please report this to us as soon as possible so that we can arrange one to be installed. You can also open a window to get rid of the steam.



Make sure your extractor fan is switched on if you have one. If you do not have one in your bathroom please report this to us as soon as possible so that we can arrange one to be installed. You can also open a window to get rid of the steam.

Elsewhere in the home



When possible and safe, try to keep your windows open to encourage fresh air to flow around your home.



Try to avoid drying clothes inside or over radiators.



Try and keep your furniture at least 5cm away from walls to allow air to flow around it.



Try to leave your central heating on a constant, low setting for as much time as possible, or set the timer to boost the heating in the morning and the evening.



Don't overfill your wardrobes and cupboards as warm, damp air can collect inside.



If you have a tumble dryer, make sure that it is vented to an outside wall, or the condenser is regularly emptied.



How to contact The RMHS Staff Team

Irmani Smallwood	Chief Executive	020 7916 8636	rmh@urc.org.uk
Judith Williams	Head of Housing Services	07572 337 502	housingservices@urc.org.uk
Kathleen Benjamin	Specialist Housing Officer	020 7871 7871	housingservices@urc.org.uk
Helen Corbett	Housing Officer (part time)	020 7916 8682	housingservices@urc.org.uk
Francesca Pitts	Head of Property Services	020 7691 9868	propertyservices@urc.org.uk
Ted Ford	Senior Maintenance Surveyor	07739 360 034	propertyservices@urc.org.uk
Glenn Cryer	Maintenance Surveyor	07551 460 024	propertyservices@urc.org.uk
John Ramba	Maintenance Surveyor (part-time)	07551 673 442	propertyservices@urc.org.uk
Maria Cardazzone	Compliance Coordinator	020 7520 2716	propertyservices@urc.org.uk
	Repairs and Maintenance Officer	07436 356 449	propertyservices@urc.org.uk
Claudia Cholakian	Sustainability Coordinator	07889 224 457	propertyservices@urc.org.uk
Roger Corbett	Property Transactions Coordinator	020 7916 8643	rmh@urc.org.uk
Katia Crowley	Governance and Communications Officer	020 7916 8636	rmh@urc.org.uk

Please send any emails regarding Repairs, Compliance, Sustainability, etc. to the dedicated Property Services inbox: propertyservices@urc.org.uk

Please send any emails regarding rents, your tenancy, or a change in occupants to the dedicated Housing Services inbox: housingservices@urc.org.uk

Please send any emails regarding general enquiries or complaints to: rmh@urc.org.uk

Visit our Website: www.rmhs.org.uk

**For all out of hours and emergency repairs please contact:
SERVICE SOLUTIONS DIRECT, on 01772 289 499.**

**OR, for Worcester Bosch Boiler Breakdowns only, please contact:
WORCESTER BOSCH, on 0330 123 9339.**

They will confirm if your boiler is covered under their warranty.
If it isn't please contact Service Solutions Direct for further support.

