

DFTRA News

Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations

November - December 2012



DFTRA Update

Winter freezing chaos

Lift Engineering Services

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Migrants in Dudley learn about first steps into Business

Winter freezing chaos

Bad weather can bring us real problems as pipes and condensation boilers can both freeze. This can cause disruption, inconvenience and damage to your property.

If you have a **condensation boiler** we suggest that you insulate it well during the winter months with waterproof lagging. The way that these boilers are designed means that excess condensation is turned into water, which then drains into the pipe, hits an already frozen section and then backs up. This will leave the household with no heating until the repairs can be completed.

If it becomes frozen try wrapping/holding a hot water bottle or a heat wrap onto the pipe (as long as it is at ground level and safe to do so).

External pipes – it is important that you protect your external pipes to stop them from becoming frozen. Here are some tips on how to prevent the problem:

- ❄ **Insulate your tank and loft**
- ❄ **Lag your pipes** – lagging is available from most DIY stores
- ❄ **If your boiler has a frost protection thermostat check that it is working**
- ❄ **Check your pipes regularly for damage**

If you have no water it could be that your external pipes have become frozen. You should try to defrost the pipe as soon as possible to prevent it from leaking or bursting. To defrost follow these simple steps:

- ❄ **Find where the blockage is located** – it will feel colder than the rest or there may be evidence of it freezing (eg frost)
- ❄ **Ensure your possessions are safe** – just in case the pipe bursts
- ❄ **Turn off your main stop tap and, if possible, the stopcock in your cold water tank**
- ❄ **Turn on the closest tap to the frozen pipe** – to allow defrosted water to flow away
- ❄ **Defrost by the pipe using a hot water bottle or a heat pack. Do not use a naked flame, or a heat gun as these can be hazardous. We also suggest that you do not use a hairdryer as this is hazardous near water**
- ❄ **Once defrosted check your pipe for leaks/damage**
- ❄ **Turn on the stop tap and stopcock to regain normal flow**

If your pipes do burst, clear as many of your possessions away from the water as possible to protect them. Use towels to soak up water. Keep doors and windows open if possible to help dry out your property and keep the heating on. If you do have damaged possessions – do not throw them away as your insurance company may need to see them.

If your boiler fails or you suffer from a burst pipe call 0300 555 8283 and do not attempt to undertake any repairs yourself.

Remember, Dudley Council offers an insurance scheme which you can easily join to help protect your property. Call 01384 815051 for more information.

Scheme launched to keep residents warm this winter

Dudley Council has launched a winter warmth support scheme to keep borough residents warm and well in their homes this winter.

The winter warmth scheme is being managed by the council, working in partnership with other local organisations including NHS Dudley, Age UK, and Dudley Council for Voluntary Services (DCVS). It aims to keep people who may be struggling to keep warm at home, cosy and snug, through the range of assistance available.

The scheme provides a variety of practical hand-on support, information and expert advice to help people keep their homes and themselves warm this winter.

Anyone concerned about keeping their home warm, struggling with paying their fuel bills or worried about keeping well at home during the winter can ask for help from the scheme.

All sorts of help can be provided from expert advice on paying fuel bills, help with energy debt, assistance with home energy efficiency improvements and grants and help accessing warm homes discount funds. Emergency crisis heating measures are also available, such as portable heaters, blankets, hot water bottles and even warm clothing.

The scheme will also arrange for local volunteers to make regular 'befriending' checks on people who may be at risk of becoming isolated during cold weather. They can also help out with shopping trips, collecting prescriptions, dog walking or helping with transport, if needed.

Councillor Steve Waltho, cabinet member for adult social care, said:

"Each year an average of almost 200 people in Dudley Borough are believed to die as a result of freezing winter weather and cold homes. Living in a cold home can lead to very serious health problems, particularly for older people and people suffering from long term health conditions, such as asthma. It can lead to heart and circulation problems and a range of serious respiratory illnesses.

"The winter warmth fund is offering immediate help to anyone struggling to keep warm in their home this winter. I would encourage anyone concerned about keeping warm at home themselves, or worried about a relative, friend or neighbour to call the winter warmth support helpline. Help from the scheme really could save a life"

Councillor Zafar Islam, cabinet member for health and wellbeing, said

"We are asking everyone to look out for themselves, friends, neighbours and relatives who could be at risk from the cold this winter. In particular older people can often become isolated during the winter and quickly fall ill if they are not keeping themselves warm.

"Many people may not be aware that if their home is not warm they are putting themselves in danger. As a minimum to keep warm and healthy, sitting rooms should be 21°C and bedrooms 18°C. The winter warmth scheme will help our residents achieve these temperatures and keep warm and well at home."

Last year's winter warmth support scheme helped almost 250 households to keep warm. Portable heaters, blankets and hot water bottles were provided through crisis funding, people were assisted with their energy debts, and helped to switch to the best energy supplier and tariff for their circumstances. Residents were also helped with applications to the warm homes discount (which helps people with their winter fuel bills) and to energy trust funds.

The winter warmth support helpline is 01384 817086.

For more information contact: Julie Warrilow, Communications 01384 815237

Lift Engineering Services

In November 2011 Lift Engineering Services (LES) won the contract to service and maintain the lifts in the high rise blocks of flats and care homes for the whole of the Dudley Borough. LES are a local company based in Cradley Heath and have been there for a number of years. As well as maintaining the lifts, they also produce them on the factory premises. LES employ many people from the local area and as well as Dudley they also have contracts with Sandwell Council, Wolverhampton Council and many other local authorities.

The LES engineers not only service and maintain the lifts, they also deal with emergency callouts to lift breakdowns and trap ins. This is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all through the year so that the lifts are kept working and the tenants are safe and happy.

LES hold monthly partnership meetings with the Council and also members of the DFTRA board where they discuss what they have agreed to do in the near future and also deal with any complaints that have been received. DFTRA have found that LES are a reliable company and so far have received many compliments from tenants.



Migrants in Dudley learn about first steps into Business

Could learning entrepreneurial skills be one of the ways of dealing with unemployment issues within migrants communities? With the UK economy recovering slowly, many migrant families and individuals still can't afford to ignore their weekly appointments with Job CentrePlus. However, a number of migrants living in Dudley have worked their way into business ventures and others have started collecting the necessary ingredients that could propel them into self-employment.

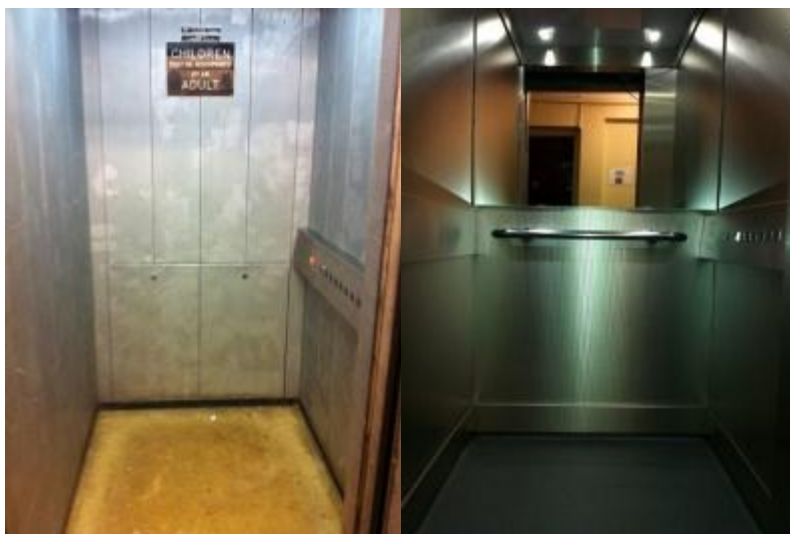
On Tuesday 25th September 2012, individuals from the Migrant communities attended a "First steps into business workshop for Migrants" to learn about the challenges and the benefits of starting a business. The day was held at the Savoy Centre in Netherton and was facilitated by SWEDA (Skills, Work, and Employment Development Agencies).

Participants explored the steps that they needed to consider when thinking about self-employment and starting up in business. The preparation for this workshop involved massive consultations with migrants and several planning meetings with Jill Poole from HM Revenue & Customs, Kim Avantaggiato from the Dudley Council's Participation Development Team, Tony Andrew from SWEDA and Martin Smith who is Chair of both DFTRA and the 5 Estatesplus.

The seminar was designed to be informal and provided an opportunity to ask questions in order to identify the next steps to take. The importance of business planning and a clear focus on market knowledge was explored by Andy from SWEDA.

Mona Ali, one of the participants, said: *"This has been a very good experience; however, migrants may still be disadvantaged in their ability to raise the starting finance. Also migrants may still be unable to access informal financial information available across the Borough. Thus, much is still to be done to support these groups to achieve their potential."*

Following this workshop, business ideas started building up with the support from SWEDA in one to one support meetings. If you have an interest for starting your own business, and want to more about future training and workshops, please get in touch with the 5 Estates Projectsplus on 01384 456166.



Here is an example of the fantastic work that LES do. This is a reline of a lift, before and after.

Don't forget, if you have an article that you would like featured in our newsletter, let us know!

You can email it to:

caroline@dftra.org.uk

or post to:

**DFTRA, Ground Floor Complex,
Booth Court, Lower Derry Street,
Brierley Hill, DY5 2SJ**

Call 01384 868 010 with any queries.

Visit to Walsall Housing Group

On Monday the 5th November a number of tenants and Dudley council officers visited Walsall Housing Group to meet some of their tenant Walsall Housing Group volunteers. The visit was arranged following expressions of interest from tenants and residents during Dudley's review of their ASB service. A small group of volunteers had looked at good practice across the country and wanted the opportunity to meet with like-minded individuals who were actively working with their landlord to improve the service to customers.

When we arrived we were taken to the dining room for coffee and to wait for the Walsall Housing Group volunteers to arrive. The offices are open plan and very modern. All aspects of work goes on in the one building; lettings, payment of rent etc. When the Walsall Housing Group volunteers arrived we asked them why they had decided to become Walsall Housing Group volunteers, they told us that it was because they had all been victims of Anti-Social Behaviour in one form or another and they wanted to help others in similar situations. They had been on different courses such as Alcohol and Drug Abuse and Domestic Abuse as well as Anti-Social Behaviour and Mediation training. They told us that the Walsall Housing Group tenant volunteers do not have any face to face contact with people; it is all done over the phone for health and safety reasons.

Initially the Walsall Housing Group volunteers receive a call from the Anti-Social Behaviour team to report an issue, they then phone the person to discuss their issue, if a follow up call is required then this would be made. Phone numbers are never given out and they ensure that all calls are from a withheld number. We were told that Walsall Housing Group try to solve all cases of Anti-Social Behaviour within 28 days of the initial phone call. When the calls are received, they are put into categories. Category one is the most important so it would be fast tracked and passed to the Anti-Social Behaviour team to be processed within 24 hours of the initial call.

Walsall Housing Group have 17 blocks of high rise flats and CCTV is currently installed in 2 of the blocks but the intention is to have CCTV in all 17 blocks by 2013. We were also informed that they have other security and monitoring devices which can be put into people's properties.

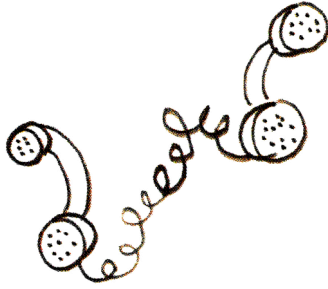
As a result of the visit those who attended (residents and officers) are motivated to find appropriate roles for volunteers in the delivery of services responding to problems of ASB. The group have agreed to develop opportunities under four themes. These are:

- a) assisting residents to report problems of ASB
- b) problem solving using mediation and restorative justice
- c) providing support and advocacy to service users
- d) scrutiny of service provision on ASB

We found the visit very interesting and I thought that the people who went learned quite a lot from the visit. Over all it was a very informative day out.

Stan Chance, Vice Chairperson DFTRA

5 Ways to Well Being

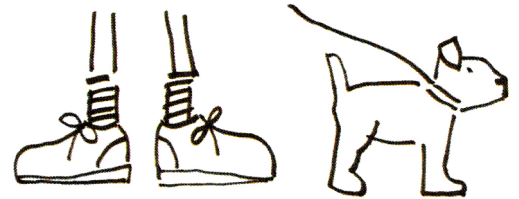


Connect...

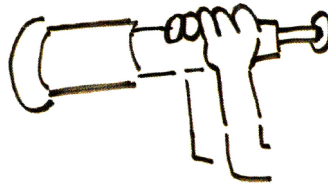
Connect with the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be Active...

Go for a walk or run. Step outside., cycle, play a game, garden, dance, exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.



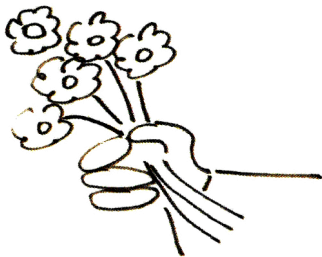
Take notice...



Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Keep learning...

Try something new. Rediscover a new interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.



Give...

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

The five ways to wellbeing...

Were developed by the Centre for Wellbeing at the New Economics Foundation commissioned by Foresight's Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project and based on research from across the world to consider how to improve everyone's mental capital and mental wellbeing through life.

DFTRA Update

This section will be a regular feature for future newsletters, in order to keep everyone up to date with the latest news and information from Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations.

Firstly, we would like to congratulate Phyllis on yet another karate achievement - her 2nd Kyu! A big well done from everyone at DFTRA.

Important information from partnership meetings:

- ❄ The Board are currently looking at the amount of unused materials that are being disposed of in the Council. This is obviously a big concern, and the issue will be pursued.
- ❄ Recently we met with Nigel Columbello and Jamie Gutteridge to discuss Homechecks. A review has been carried out and a report has been produced on the subject. Having looked through the report, the Board agree in principle with it. The report will go to Area Panels and be open to further consultation.

As always, if you have any issues or concerns please get in touch and we will do our best to help - and if we can't, we probably know someone who can!

Office updates:

As you are probably aware, we have been making some changes to the office, including the reception area. There are new work surfaces in place, a front desk, new IT equipment enabling the use of WiFi for TRA members as well as a new colour scheme and carpet.

Our plan is to have a re-launch of DFTRA in the new year, including an event in order to invite TRA members to come down and see the changes and tell us what else they want from us in the future. Along with the re-launch, we will also have a new logo and 're-branding.'

Our email addresses now end with @dftra.org.uk, so info@dftra.org.uk, caroline@dftra.org.uk, etc. However, emails sent to the @dfta.org.uk address will be automatically redirected to the new address until further notice.

Thanks to our new phone system, we now have a fully functional answering machine, which is available for you to leave a message on 24 hours a day. However, if you wish to speak to someone then office hours are 9am until 4pm.

Office open hours for TRA members to come and talk to a fed member or use the facilities are 9am until 12.30pm from Tuesday until Friday. If these times are not convenient, let Caroline know on 01384 868 010 to arrange a time that is best for you.

Finally,

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

...see you in 2013 for what we're hoping will be our most exciting year yet.