

DFTRA Newsletter

# January – February 2014

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### Safety tips from the emergency services

Fire – Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless, tasteless, poisonous gas.

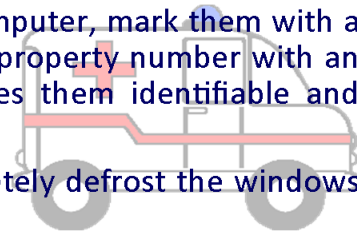
A headache is the most common symptom of carbon monoxide poisoning. Other common symptoms include dizziness and nausea (feeling sick), vomiting (being sick), tiredness and confusion, stomach pain, shortness of breath and difficulty breathing.

If you experience symptoms get fresh air immediately, open doors and windows, turn off gas appliances and leave the house. See your doctor immediately or go to hospital.

All gas appliances, including your boiler, cooker and fire, should be safety checked once a year. If your appliance has not been checked call the council on 0300 555 8283 to make an appointment.

Police – If you have gadgets for Christmas such as a phone or tablet computer, mark them with a DNA solution (Secured by Design product) or write your postcode and property number with an ultraviolet (UV) pen and register at [www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com). This makes them identifiable and traceable.

Ambulance – When the colder weather arrives it's important to completely defrost the windows of your vehicle before driving and drive to the road conditions.



### TV licenses

Did you know that TV licenses maintains a database of registered and unregistered addresses and uses this information to target those who don't have a license? No license could mean a heavy fine!

You need to be covered by a valid TV Licence if you watch or record TV as it's being broadcast. This includes the use of devices such as a computer, laptop, mobile phone or DVD/video recorder.

There are many ways to make a payment including Direct Debit, TV Licensing Payment Card, online, over the phone and cheque through the post.

If you would like more information please call 0300 790 6078 or visit [www.tvlicensing.co.uk](http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk)

### Electricity DIY – a shocking situation!

Did you know that someone dies as a result of an electrical incident in their home every week in the UK, or that electricity causes 350,000 injuries each year or that electricity problems cause half of all house fires?

Truly shocking statistics!

DIY is a hobby enjoyed by many people across the country but often it can cause more harm than good. It is a fact that half of all serious electric shocks in UK homes are a direct result of botched DIY work (source: Electrical Safety Council).

Badly carried out DIY jobs, both big and small, can put people's lives at risk and be very expensive to put right.

During a survey carried out by the Electrical Safety Council it was found that respondents owned up to many shocking events including cutting through power leads, drilling into wiring in walls and carrying out repairs on electrical appliances which were still switched on!

To carry out electrical work you must be a qualified electrician. As a tenant, as part of our re-chargeable repairs policy, you will be responsible to pay for any charges incurred through our operatives putting right any badly done DIY work.

### New flag unveiled

On Saturday 7 December the village of Gornal saw the unveiling of the Village's new Community Flag by the Mayor of Dudley, Alan Finch together with Councillors David Branwood and Stuart Turner who also took part in the ceremony.

The competition was run in conjunction with Love Your Community and the cost of the flag was funded by Ellowes Hall & Area TRA to find the best design from drawings handed in by our local primary schools.

Our Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer had to decide out of all of the designs that had got through to the final round who the winner would be.

This was not a job for the faint hearted as this task was possibly one of the hardest decisions to make as all of the designs were superb and well thought out. However we did eventually come to a decision on the winner - the design that won was by Hannah Baker, aged 9, a pupil from The Straits School.

The design of her flag shows images of traditional Gornal folklore including a picture of the pig on the wall to watch the band go by together with Upper Gornal windmill and Baggeridge pit.

The Mayor stated that it had been a great competition with fantastic entries from local schoolchildren from the local primary schools.

The flag together with the flag pole is situated outside our local library and flies with great pride over our village.

The Mayor then continued his day by opening up the Christmas fare at our local Darby & Joan Club where our TRA committee members were involved with the day.





# DFTRA Awards Night 2013

After asking the opinions of our members about previous awards nights, we decided to take a different approach to the organisation of the event for 2013. Caroline and the board at DFTRA decided to ask for volunteers to form an event planning group, which began meeting in October. The group spent some time looking over the feedback from previous years and one of the common suggestions was that a bigger venue would be preferred. After some consideration, the group decided on The Secret Venue in Brierley Hill. The group helped with everything from choosing the trophies and selecting the food for the buffet to table decorations and even decorated the room ready for the event.

There were 6 awards given out to thank members for their hard work and commitment. A special award was given to a TRA member whose commitment to their TRA has been outstanding. This was an award given in memory of the late Chairperson of DFTRA Allan Miles, who sadly passed away last year.

The event was very well attended and there has been some good feedback on the new venue and the evening as a whole. We must thank Dodds, LES, C7 painting, Chris Kelly, Solar Glass and Mecca Bingo for the raffle prizes, and to Lovell for the generous donation, also many thanks go to the planning group for the hard work and time that they put into making the DFTRA Awards Night 2013 a success.



**Lil Stanley**

**Commitment to the Community**



## The award winners

**Vikki Moyle**

**Dedication Award**



**Wells and Manor Courts TRA**

**Outstanding Contribution**

(Collected on behalf of the TRA by Participation Development Officer Janet Hand)



**Christine Whitcombe**

**Allan Miles Award for Outstanding Commitment**

Collected on behalf of Christine by Participation Development Officer Jill Hulme



**Hannah and Amanda Howse**  
**Commitment Award**

**The Participation Team and Diane Channings**  
were given special thanks for their help



**Terry and Joan Porter**  
**Commitment Award**



**The event planning committee**

**All award winners**



### Looking for somewhere smaller to live?

If you are a Dudley Council tenant who is interested in moving to a smaller property we may be able to offer you a support package if you are in receipt of state pension\*.

We currently have a waiting list for family homes which outstrips supply. Many families with children are living in homes which are too small for their needs. Because of this we are trying to free up homes which are under occupied.

Perhaps your children have now flown the nest, or you are finding it hard to maintain your home or garden, or you simply find the stairs too hard to cope with. If you have a 2, 3 or 4 bedroom house which is just too big we may be able to move you somewhere more suitable to your needs.

This scheme can help you through the process of finding and moving to a more suitable home, helping to take the stress out of arranging the move.

By downsizing to a smaller property you may save more than £40 per week, or £2,000 a year, due to cheaper costs such as rent and energy.

For more information telephone 0300 555 2345 and ask about the downsizing assistance scheme.

\*In the case of joint tenancies both must be in receipt of state pension.

### Let's Swap

Let's Swap is a new mutual exchange scheme for the West Midlands, Dudley Council is part of this new mutual exchange scheme which was launched in July.

If you are a tenant with Dudley Council, and you want to move and remain in rented accommodation, then our mutual exchange scheme offers the opportunity to swap with other tenants.

Mutual exchange may also be a good option if you are on our transfer list waiting for a property to become vacant. The demand for council housing in the borough is much higher than vacant properties. Therefore, if you already have a property and want to move it may be quicker to do a mutual exchange.

Let's Swap is the first regional system in the Midlands and has been developed by the WMBUS (West Midlands Best Use of Stock) partnership. There are 26 partners in WMBUS made up from local authorities and housing associations from across the region.

Registration on the Let's Swap scheme is free for Dudley tenants.

For more information visit:

[www.let's-swap.org.uk](http://www.let's-swap.org.uk)

### Decorating allowance cards

Following a successful three month trial housing services has launched a new decoration allowance scheme in conjunction with B&Q.

The initiative will be open to identified tenants who have moved into a new home or where they have had major works carried out and are eligible for a decorating allowance.

Instead of vouchers or cash being issued a B&Q decorating card will be supplied pre loaded for the amount allocated by the housing officer.

The card can then be used to purchase interior paints, wood care and varnishes, wallpaper and pastes, non powered decorating utensils, sandpaper, fillers and sealants.

### Payday lenders' websites blocked

Controversial payday loan websites have been blocked on the Council's public access computers in libraries and other community venues. The action aims to help residents avoid being drawn into excessively high interest loans.

As an alternative for people who are looking to borrow money the Council is encouraging people to take advantage of Castle and Crystal Credit Union which offers savings accounts and a range of loans with interest rates to suit individual circumstances.

As well as the credit union's main office in Dudley, Castle and Crystal now provides a new service at Stourbridge Library which is open from 10.30am to 2.30pm each Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

For more information call 01384 815771 or visit: [www.castleandcrystal.co.uk](http://www.castleandcrystal.co.uk)

Castle and Crystal Credit Union, 25 New Street, Dudley DY1 1LT

### A chance of winning £100 in shopping vouchers

By simply signing up to pay your rent via Direct Debit before June 2014 you will be automatically entered into the monthly free prize draw to win £100 of supermarket vouchers.

There's a 1 in 3000 chance of winning—that's better odds than the lottery!

Terms and conditions apply, for details visit [www.dudley.gov.uk/rents/](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/rents/)

#### **Winners so far include:**

July - Mr and Mrs Hamer from Upper Gornal

August - Mr T Walters from Bilston

September - Mr Nzeyimana from Dudley

October - Miss Pritchard from Halesowen

### Living on a budget

According to research for the Payments Council millions of benefits claimants in the UK will struggle to manage their money under Universal Credit. When Universal Credit is introduced most people will receive their benefits once a month and the Payments Council said that 2.7 million current claimants will struggle with their finances as a result.

The Council's adult and community learning team has joined up with housing services to offer tenants the Live4Less programme which provides tips and practical advice on how to manage money and make budget savings. The programme is supported by the local Citizens Advice Bureau.

The course covers budgeting, setting priorities, reducing transport costs and improving energy efficiency, including how to find the best deal from energy companies. It also covers other topics such as food and healthy eating on a budget.

The course lasts for 6 weeks with a 2 hour session every week and to date over a hundred people have taken part.

Feedback shows that people have saved money in a variety of ways including utilities, TV broadband packages, food bills and home insurance. Some people who took part have also commented on a change to their health and well-being by following tips on healthy eating and cooking.

For more information contact Adult and Community Learning on 01384 818143.

If you are receiving benefits and concerned that you may struggle to manage your money under Universal Credit please contact the council – 0300 555 2345.

## DFTRA Update

**Happy New Year to all! We hope that you all had a lovely festive period.**

Thank you to everyone who helped to make the DFTRA Awards 2013 a great night. You have probably seen some of the photos from the night inside this newsletter, but to see them all please check out our website, Facebook or Twitter where you will find links to the whole album. We will be aiming to send photographs of TRAs to members by email in due course.

### **Office updates**

2014 has started with a review of procedures for DFTRA, which will hopefully result in even smoother working for everyone at the organisation. One of the changes is a new way of recording issues that get reported to us which will make things easier to follow up, as well as other new ways of working within the organisation.

There will continue to be changes made to the office in order to make it more useful to visitors and we encourage anyone to get in touch should they need to come and see a DFTRA representative.

Communication will be something that we will focus on in the next few months, so your TRA will probably be hearing from someone from DFTRA just to say hello and see if you need anything from us or have any issues that you would like to raise. As always if you require a representative present at a TRA meeting please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Social Media training will be happening soon! If you're interested please let DFTRA or the Participation Development Team know as soon as possible, even if you're a beginner!

### **Partnership meetings**

Due to the Christmas period there is nothing new to report from partnership meetings, as always if you have any issues that you would like us to raise please let us know.

### **The new engagement structure**

The new structure is moving forward and there will be updates shortly, if you would like to speak to someone regarding the structure contact Martin Smith (DFTRA) or Jill Hulme (Participation Development 01384 815 168).

If you have an article that you would like included in a future edition of this newsletter please send them to us.

## **Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations**

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

-- **Tel: 01384 868010** --

-- **Website: [www.dftra.org.uk](http://www.dftra.org.uk)** --

-- **E-mail: [info@dftra.org.uk](mailto:info@dftra.org.uk)** --

