

# Haig News

WINTER 2025



**Honouring the Past, Investing in the Future**

TRUST NEWS • TENANT NEWS • EVENTS • FUNDRAISING • INFORMATION



# Message from Tim Stockings

## Chief Executive

This year, we've marked several important milestones: the 80th anniversaries of Victory in Europe and in Japan, 30 years since the Bosnian conflict and the launch of the UK Afghanistan Veterans Community. We also welcomed the introduction of VALOUR, a new Ministry of Defence initiative to strengthen community support for veterans.

At Haig Housing, we remain committed to making your homes warmer and more comfortable. Over the next five years, we're investing over £40 million in planned works and essential repairs. Every pound is carefully spent – **we receive no public subsidy and are a non-profit making charitable organisation**, so we must make every investment count.

We know that improving homes takes time. In some areas, the cost of a single call-out can exceed a week's rent. That's why we ask for your help in looking after your homes – together, we can make a real difference.

Don't forget we offer a decorating allowance – sometimes a fresh coat



of paint or a tidy-up can lift spirits and improve wellbeing. A well-kept home is not just about bricks and mortar – it's about pride, community, and mental health.

We had a trio of runners in the Royal Parks Half Marathon – a special thank you to Matthew Emberton from Morden who ran for us. Next April we have 20 runners in the London Marathon. We are growing our fundraising efforts to do more for you. Please spread the word and support us if you can.

**Warmest season's greetings from all of us at Haig Housing, with best wishes for the New Year**



## John Bartlett, Chair of Trustees

Now, six months into my role Chairing the Board of Haig Housing, I am hugely excited to be working with Tim Stockings and his team; all of us focused on our mission to provide high-quality, affordable homes for veterans and their families. Tim and his team are fantastic professionals and I can see that they are clearly making a significant difference to improve our housing and to modernise the organisation.

Perhaps most motivating for me has been the opportunity to meet with some of you, our beneficiary tenants, colleagues, and also with some of the charity's supporters. Our event on 4th November 2025 at Drapers' Hall provided a great opportunity to do that. We were able to celebrate almost 100 years of Haig's efforts and to launch a Centenary Capital Appeal to assist in building more new homes. It is early days, but I am confident that these efforts will prove to be a great success.

Importantly, I am supported by a strong and experienced board of trustees – all working on a voluntary basis and contributing expertise and support to the Executive teams. We are excited by the potential to build the Haig brand and to grow our housing offering to UK veterans.

I look forward to keeping you informed on our progress and to meeting with many of you over the coming months.



## Haig Housing awarded Silver for the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme

The ERS Silver Award recognises employers who support the Armed Services community and shows our commitment and pride in employing and supporting Veterans, military spouses, partners and families as well as Reservists and Cadet Force volunteers.

We are very proud to have the Silver award and we are actively encouraging our supply chain partners to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant and ERS, to promote employment for the Armed Forces Community.



### Above:

Sir James Cleverly, Tim Stockings © Andy Sillett Photography

### Left:

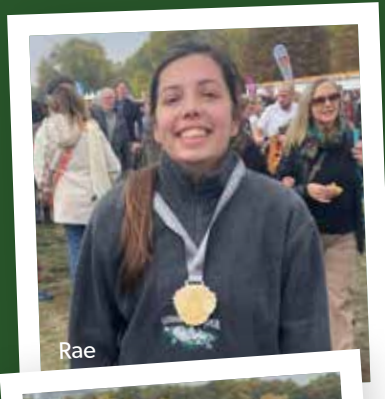
Haig Housing awarded for the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme

### Cover:

Remembrance wreaths at the new Portsmouth Monolith

# Royal Parks Half Marathon

## Running for Haig Housing: Miles that Matter



Rae



Matthew



A massive congratulations goes to our runners who took part in the Royal Parks Half Marathon in October in London.

It was a brilliant day, and our three #TeamHaig runners Rae, Luke, and Haig resident, Matthew, each completing the 13.1-mile course with great determination. Their dedication throughout training was remarkable, and we are incredibly proud of their achievements both on the day and in their fundraising efforts.

Together, they have already raised over £1,500 and we extend thanks to everyone who has donated and supported them throughout their journey.

If you, or any of your family or friends, want to sign up for a Marathon, or if you have another fundraising idea please get in touch [fundraising@haighousing.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@haighousing.org.uk) or visit [www.haighousing.org.uk/support-us](http://www.haighousing.org.uk/support-us)



Luke

### THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT FUND TRUST

*Funded by HM Government*

We are very pleased to announce the award of a £1 million grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT). This significant funding, provided through the Veterans' Capital Housing Fund, is awarded to support the refurbishment and development of social and affordable housing for veterans.

This grant marks an important step in Haig Housing's ongoing fundraising efforts and the team continues to work hard to identify and secure funding streams to support key projects.

### Army Benevolent Fund

We were very grateful to the Army Benevolent Fund for their generous grant last year of **£150,000**, dedicated to modernising homes for Army veterans across the UK and from which the impact and benefit is now being enjoyed.

This funding is helping us with our programme of kitchen and bathroom refurbishments. If you are an Army veteran and have recently had a new kitchen or bathroom, this is likely to have been funded by the ABF.

We are committed to making homes more comfortable, energy-efficient and safer. Grants like these mean that we can do more, faster.



# Building new homes for Veterans

**W**e are proud to be the UK's leading charity for veterans' housing. To commemorate the centenary of the inception of the Douglas Haig Memorial Homes in 2028 we have launched a major Capital Appeal to fund new homes for veterans and their families in housing need.

## Why are we doing this?

We receive far more applications from veterans than we have homes available. The greatest demand for housing is in London and the South East.

## How will we raise the money?

**Grants** are a big source of funding; earlier this year, we were awarded a grant of £1Million from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

We are targeting **corporates**, and have a target list, which includes financial institutions, construction companies and anyone who wants to partner with us.

**Individual fundraising** by enthusiastic supporters such as our marathon and half-marathon runners. Every £1 raised by individuals or

groups is very welcome. If you have any ideas, please contact **fundraising@haighousing.org.uk**

## Supporters

Haig Housing is a bit of a hidden secret. As a veterans' charity with a long history, we are gradually building awareness of what we do and spreading our message.

At our Capital Appeal launch at the Drapers' Hall in the City of London in November we had some high-profile supporters.

Our Patron, HRH The Princess Royal sent a dedicated message of support. Minister of Veterans and People, Louise Sandher-Jones MP, sent a video message.

Sir James Cleverly MP, current Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, former Foreign Secretary and Army Reserve Officer, came along to find out more.



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

I was delighted to become the Patron of Haig Housing Trust in succession to my late mother HM Queen Elizabeth II, who held this position throughout her long reign.

Haig has been providing homes across the United Kingdom for Veterans and their families for nearly 100 years. Indeed, 68 new homes were built and opened less than six years ago.

Having seen for myself the excellent work that Haig does, I commend to you their current endeavour to raise funds to build 29 new homes and a Veterans' Community Centre in Morden.

You would be supporting an important cause: helping those who have served their country to find a place that they can call home.

### Above:

A dedicated message of support from our Patron, HRH The Princess Royal

### Below:

Mr & Mrs Rana from Morden meeting Chelsea Pensioners Derek and Paul



Our Capital Appeal aims to raise £3M towards building 29 new homes for Veterans and a dedicated Veterans Community Centre on the site of our old office in Morden.

**The entire costs of the development will be funded from fundraising, external grants, bequests, legacies and fundraising, and not from rents.**





# Celebrating 100 Years of Housing Veterans A Legacy of Homes for Heroes

**I**n the aftermath of the First World War, Field Marshal Earl Haig devoted his life to the welfare of ex-Servicemen. He formed the British Legion and was instrumental in setting up the Haig Fund to provide financial assistance to those in need.

The death of Earl Haig in 1928 prompted a move to commemorate and recognise his ten years of hard work and commitment on behalf of those who fought in the First World War and the widows and dependants of those who were killed.

It was thought that provision of housing would be a fitting memorial

rather than to raise 'another piece of statuary.'

In 1928, a fund was established by the Prince of Wales (the future Edward VIII) to build the very first 'Homes for Heroes' in Morden, southwest London. The Prince of Wales made a visit to the new homes and met with residents in 1931.

Today, as Haig Housing Trust, we house over 4,000 residents in 1,500 properties nationwide.

The Capital Appeal will ensure that this vital legacy continues guaranteeing that more Veterans and their families have a safe, secure home for the next century.



## Above:

Earl Haig taking salute

Morden opening

Sanctuary 1930

Morden resident

## Right:

HRH The Prince of Wales





# A Garden for Reflection at Fitzpatrick Court

**A**fter years of looking out over an unused patch of green in the heart of their cul-de-sac, the residents of Fitzpatrick Court in Portsmouth decided to transform it into something special.

Thanks to the Haig Housing Community Fund, which supports projects that "improve our lives," and the determination of resident Christine Silverthorne, plans began to take shape. What started as a simple idea to relocate the Queen Elizabeth Platinum Jubilee plaque soon grew into a much more ambitious vision.

With permission from the local council, the community installed a Tri-Service Monolith, purchased through the fund and crafted by a local stonemason, Darren Somerville, who also moved the Jubilee plaque. The council generously contributed a bench and carried out the groundwork.

This project, three years in the making, is a true testament to the perseverance of the residents – especially Christine – who kept the dream alive.

Christine shared: "We're delighted to have a communal space where people can pause for quiet reflection, enjoy the view towards Portsmouth, or gather for veterans' events. We've already celebrated VE Day here and are looking forward to our first Remembrance Day."

The Monolith was unveiled in October by Lord Mayor Gerald Vernon-Jackson and Tim Stockings, Haig Housing Chief Executive. Particular thanks go to Fitzpatrick Court residents Michael Ennis, Shay Liversedge, and Christine Hutton, for helping make both the project and the unveiling event happen. Tom Elliott from the council and the Colas team were also key to the project's success.





# #ITSOKAYTOTALK

**"It takes a bigger man to talk about their feelings rather than ignoring it"**

**S**o says, Michael in Portsmouth, who has been involved in ANDYSMANCLUB for several years. He found that the group approach "helped me talk about mental health a lot better". Michael worked his way through training provided by the charity and is now a lead facilitator.

ANDYSMANCLUB runs peer-to-peer support groups for men over 18 going through storms in their lives, every Monday at 7pm, excluding bank holidays. Groups are free to attend with no registration required.

The group was founded after the death by suicide of Andy Roberts. Andy gave no indication to his family that he was suicidal; as a result, his brother-in-law, Luke and mother, Elaine, founded ANDYSMANCLUB in hope that men who struggled to open up had a safe space to do so.

Here's Michael proudly carrying the 'Baton of Hope' through Portsmouth. Baton of Hope is the UK's largest suicide prevention initiative and is part of a growing movement working towards a zero-suicide society.

[www.batonofhopeuk.org](http://www.batonofhopeuk.org)



If you have a story you'd like to share, please let us know  
[communications@haighousing.org.uk](mailto:communications@haighousing.org.uk)  
020 8685 5777.

**GOING THROUGH  
A STORM  
OR JUST BEEN  
THROUGH ONE?**

**ANDYSMANCLUB**  
are talking  
groups for men to  
**HELP YOU** through  
those storms.

**FIND OUT  
MORE**

[info@andysmanclub.co.uk](mailto:info@andysmanclub.co.uk)  
[www.andysmanclub.co.uk](http://www.andysmanclub.co.uk)



#ITSOKAYTOTALK

## In Memoriam

**A life of great respect, a passing of deep regret**

### **The Life and Legacy of Squadron Leader Brian Relf**

**S**quadron Leader Brian Relf was commissioned into the RAF Regiment at 18, serving with distinction across multiple roles. He held command positions in Signals, Ground Defence, and Police units, and served as an Air Liaison Officer during the Cold War. His expertise in Bofors anti-aircraft guns took him to Antigua and Cyprus, where he led the Para Support Force.

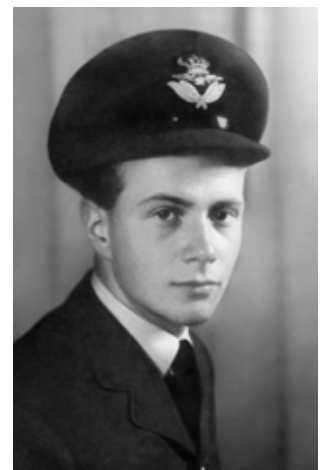
Brian completed operational tours in Northern Ireland and commanded 63 Squadron with Rapier missiles in the Falklands. At RAF High Wycombe, he oversaw SHORAD systems including Bloodhound and Oerlikon missiles.

In 1986, a genetic lung disease – damaged by service – ended his active

duties. He transitioned to training roles at RAF Biggin Hill and Cranwell, mentoring future officers. He earned a BA in History and founded the International Relf Society before retiring in 1997.

Post-retirement, he travelled widely and settled in Suffolk where he pursued his many interests including continuing as a Freemason (he originally became a Freemason in Cyprus in 1973), becoming an author, a church organist, and Vice Chair of the Parish Council. In 2011, he moved to Macdonnell Gardens and became its historian. His book is held in local libraries and museums.

Above all, Brian Relf was a devoted family man and friend. His memory lives on, deeply missed and forever honoured.



# Looking Out for Each Other

Across Haig communities, we hear so many heart-warming stories about neighbours lending a hand – whether it's helping someone with mobility challenges, organising social get-togethers to beat loneliness, putting the green bins out and bringing them back in, or stepping in when someone's under the weather. Sometimes, even a simple, cheerful "hello" can brighten someone's day.

## Living Together – A Few Things to Keep in Mind

### BEING NEIGHBOURLY ABOUT NOISE

Sharing a community is wonderful, but it can bring a few challenges too. One of the most common? **Noise**.

We kindly ask all Haig Housing residents to be considerate about noise levels. Things like children playing, pets or late-night activities can sometimes disturb others.

Not all noise is a nuisance – life happens! But if it becomes a problem:

- Speak to your **Housing Manager** for advice and support.
- You also have the right to contact **Environmental Health** via your local council's website.



### TOGETHER, WE MAKE HAIG COMMUNITIES SPECIAL

Every small act of kindness and consideration helps create a welcoming, supportive place for everyone. Thank you for doing your bit to keep our communities safe, clean, and friendly. Let's keep looking out for each other – because that's what makes Haig Housing feel like home.





# BEFORE YOU MAKE CHANGES

Before making any changes to your home or garden, you'll need to get permission first.

## Why is this important?

We want to make sure all alterations meet Haig Housing's Health and Safety standards and are approved by our Surveying team. In some cases, you may also need Planning Permission from your local authority.

So, before you start any big projects – whether it's putting up a new garden shed or renovating a room – please download, read and complete a **Tenant Improvement Request Application**.

[www.haighousing.org.uk/residents/downloadable-forms/](http://www.haighousing.org.uk/residents/downloadable-forms/)

# RUBBISH & RECYCLING

Please dispose of rubbish properly – especially food waste, which can attract vermin. During colder months, piles of rubbish can become nesting spots for pests.

And remember: **Fly-tipping** isn't just unpleasant and a health risk – it also increases costs for Haig Housing when we have to clear it up.

## Bins



Use food waste bins to dispose of all cooked and uncooked food, tea bags and coffee grounds



Empty and rinse all containers, squash plastics and flatten down large cardboard boxes before recycling



Please use correct bins when possible instead of only using the general waste bin



Do not leave rubbish outside or next to the bins. This attracts pests and creates hazards



Report overflowing bins to your local council

### ✗ No thanks

- DIY waste
- Electrical items
- Hazardous waste
- Loose oils

## Oils



Do not dispose of fats, oil or grease down the drain, it causes blocked pipes and is harmful to waterways



Let fat cool before scraping into a container to dispose in general waste



Use sink strainers and put any collected food debris in the rubbish bin



Do not dispose of oil, fats and grease at the tip

### ✗ No thanks

- Oil and grease in washing up water
- Sweeping solids into floor drains

## Toilet



Do not flush sanitary products, nappies/diapers, paper towels, wet wipes or anything else



Bag and seal sanitary products or nappies to dispose into general waste bins



Flushing anything else can cause serious blockages and environmental harm



Please only flush toilet paper



Report drain blockages to repairs as soon as possible

### ✗ No thanks

- Wet wipes even labeled "flushable"
- Nappies or diapers
- Sanitary products
- Paper towels or tissues

## Noise



Keep music, TV's and voices at a reasonable level, especially after 9pm



Let neighbours know if you're planning a gathering



Create a peaceful and respectful living environment for everyone



Do not shout, slam doors or hold loud conversations in hallways or shared spaces



Report persistent noise issues to Environmental Health at your local council

### ✗ No thanks

- Loud voices, music and other activities that disturb residents especially in early mornings and late evenings

# Haig Housing Landlord and Tenant Responsibilities for Home Maintenance

Please read the updated responsibilities for various repair types, distinguishing those that fall to the tenant and those managed by Haig Housing Trust as landlord.  
[www.haighousing.org.uk/residents/repairs](http://www.haighousing.org.uk/residents/repairs)

## Haig Housing Trust Responsibilities for Repairs and Maintenance

- Structural elements and building fabric, including windows and external doors.
- Internal fire-retaining doors, typically kitchen doors.
- Fire-rated letterboxes, particularly those on communal exit routes.
- Underground drainage and external waste pipes.
- Guttering, including routine cleaning.
- Installations for water, gas, electricity, heating, and ventilation.
- Communal area maintenance (subject to service charge exemptions).
- Kitchen and bathroom installations.
- External redecoration of communal spaces.
- Roadways and pathways.
- General maintenance to all items in the home installed by the Trust.
- Trees and green spaces not assigned to individual tenancies.
- Sustainability installations provided by Haig Housing Trust (e.g., solar panels).

**Haig Housing Trust reserves the right to install items that are fit for purpose and is not obligated to replace items on a like-for-like basis.**



## Haig Housing Trust's Compliance Commitments

**Haig Housing Trust is committed to maintaining safe, habitable, and compliant properties. The following standards reflect our obligations:**

- Adequate fire precautions are in place within a home or communal space.
- Insurance and third-party liabilities are in place for the fabric of the building.
- Properties are maintained to ensure they are fit for habitation.
- Adequate damp and mould preventative installations are installed.
- Regulation and legislation are observed and maintained.
- Repairs are completed well, economically and in good time using appropriate contractors.
- Appropriate materials are used that meet the British Standard.
- The quality of repairs is monitored and, where appropriate, post inspected.





# Tenant Responsibilities

(Unless otherwise specified in the tenancy agreement)

- Keeping the interior of the home in a clean and safe condition.
- All internal decorations including associated repair and preparation work i.e. filling holes.
- Maintain front and back private gardens, including moss removal, shrub trimming, grass cutting, and care of tenant-planted trees.
- Keep gardens clear of bulk waste and excess items.
- Maintain sheds not installed by the Trust or considered permanent fixtures.
- Replacing fuses on personal appliances such as kettles and TVs.
- Replace light bulbs and fluorescent tubes (excluding Ingress Protection IP-rated sealed lights, typically in bathrooms).
- Maintain and repair supplementary outdoor lighting installed by the tenant such as motion sensor lights.
- Replace lost keys and arranging locksmiths (e.g. doors, sheds, garages, windows, gates).
- Replace damaged locks and padlocks on gates and sheds.
- Cover glazing repairs caused by tenant or guest damage (subject to review in crime-related cases).
- Replace damaged toilet seats.
- Replace sink and bath chains and plugs.
- Maintain doorbells not linked to communal systems.
- Maintain letterboxes and post boxes unless fire-rated.
- Maintain personal clothes lines not part of communal fixtures.
- Bleed air from radiators and top up heating system pressure.
- Keep sinks, toilets, and drains clear of blockages (e.g. oil, sanitary products, wet wipes, toilet rolls, excess hair).
- Maintain gifted items (e.g. carpets, white goods, sheds).
- Carry out all precautionary measures to avoid the build-up of damp and mould in the home.
- Keep internal ventilation units and fans free of dust and debris.
- Insure personal belongings by purchasing a home contents insurance policy (the Trust is not liable for damage due to fire, flood, or break-ins).
- Return the property to its original condition as it was at the start of the tenancy.



## Reporting Issues

If you wish to report a repair, contact the Support Hub (Monday to Friday 9am-5pm excluding bank holidays)

[Repairs@haighousing.org.uk](mailto:Repairs@haighousing.org.uk)

020 8685 5777 (option 1)

**You can really help the Team** by including your name and address in your email or voicemail. It makes us

far more efficient in dealing with your problem. Please provide photographs of the repair if possible.

**Please log all repairs with the Support Hub directly. Don't assume that if you have mentioned a repair to your Housing Manager that this will be logged.**



# Incomes Update

The Income Team is here to help if you have financial worries. Please contact us immediately if you have any questions about your rent, or find you are unable to keep your account in credit: [Incomes@haighousing.org.uk](mailto:Incomes@haighousing.org.uk). 020 8685 5777 (option 2). We can get in touch with you over the phone, by email or by text. Whatever suits you.

Contact us on 020 8685 5777 (option 2) or email [incomes@haighousing.org.uk](mailto:incomes@haighousing.org.uk)

## Universal Credit

### Make sure you have:

- ✓ Checked that your housing costs have increased to the rent set this year.
- ✓ Put Haig Housing as a **Private Landlord**.
- ✓ Checked the Haig Housing address is correct, this should be: Mountbarrow House, 12 Elizabeth Street, London, SW1W 9RB.

If you don't have the information or are unsure, please contact the Incomes Team.

## More households now eligible for the Warm Home Discount

The Warm Home Discount Scheme is a one-off £150 discount on a claimant's electricity bill. Some residents who didn't get help last winter might be able to get help this winter.

In England and Wales, this means households who receive Housing

Benefit, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Pension Credit and Universal Credit will now be eligible.

The government announced that every household where the billpayer receives an eligible means-tested benefit will now be in line for the discount.

Where the eligible person was named on the electricity bill as of Sunday 24 August, households will receive the £150 discount automatically.

[www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme)



## Useful budgeting tools and support

- Household Budgeting tool helps you to get a better overview of your finances. [www.haighousing.org.uk/residents/downloadable-forms](http://www.haighousing.org.uk/residents/downloadable-forms) > Click on **Household Income and Expenditure Form**.
- Agencies and organisations which provide free and confidential living and welfare support [www.haighousing.org.uk/residents/rent/rentsupport](http://www.haighousing.org.uk/residents/rent/rentsupport)

The Income Team works closely with other Veterans' charities which can provide help and support. This is feedback from a caseworker at the **Royal British Legion**:

“

**John explained he had found the income and expenditure form very useful and was working his way through it to cut his spending and pay his priority debts.”**



# Beware of No-Win, No-Fee Solicitors Targeting Tenants

Recently, some tenants have reported being approached by solicitors offering “no-win, no-fee” legal services. These firms often claim they can help you win compensation for issues like disrepair or housing problems – at no upfront cost. While this might sound appealing, it’s important to understand the risks.

## What’s the Catch?

- **Hidden Costs:** If your case succeeds, solicitors may take a large percentage of your compensation as their fee
- **Debt Risk:** If the case fails, you could still be liable for certain costs, especially if you’ve signed agreements without reading the smallprint
- **Pressure Tactics:** Some firms use aggressive marketing or make promises they can’t guarantee

## What Should You Do?

- **Speak to Us First:** If you have experienced a problem, speak to the Haig Housing team in the first instance
- **Use Trusted Channels:** If you need legal advice, seek help from reputable sources like Citizens Advice or regulated solicitors
- **Check Before You Sign:** Always read the terms carefully and ask questions

## Remember:

You have rights as a tenant, and there are safe ways to resolve issues without risking unexpected bills. If you’re unsure, contact us before agreeing to any legal action.



## Watch out for Scam Texts

Please be aware that scammers are sending fake text messages pretending to be from government departments.

These texts often target older people and may mention schemes like the Warm Home Discount scheme.

Please do not click on any links or respond. If you’ve clicked and shared personal details, contact your bank immediately.

Scam texts should be reported  
[www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk)  
**0300 123 2040**

## Solar Panels

We do not instruct anyone to contact residents about Solar Panel rebates or Smart Export Guarantees.

The only company the residents need to speak to regarding their Smart Export Guarantee is their own energy provider.

If you think that a call or an email is suspicious, please contact [enquiries@haighousing.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@haighousing.org.uk) or **020 8685 5777** to check the legitimacy.



# Keeping Your Home Warm, Healthy and Safe This Winter

Winter can be tough, but with a few simple steps, you can keep your home comfortable, healthy, and safe. Here's what you need to know:

## 1 Make the Most of your Heating

- **Check your radiators:** Make sure they're heating evenly. If you notice cold spots, they may need bleeding.
- **Keep radiators clear:** Avoid placing furniture or drying clothes directly on radiators, as this blocks heat and can cause damp.
- **Use thermostatic valves:** If your radiators have them, set rooms you use less often to a lower temperature to save energy.



## 2 Look After Your Home

- **Ventilate your home:** Colder weather can cause condensation to build up, leading to damp and mould. Keep windows open a little when cooking or showering or use extractor fans to reduce moisture in the air.
- **Report any damp:** If you notice damp patches, please report them as soon as possible. We're here to help tackle any issues before they get worse.



## 3 Stay Safe

- **Test alarms every month:** Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms save lives – just press the button to check.
- **Use heaters carefully:** Keep them away from curtains and never leave them on overnight.
- **Don't overload sockets:** Plug heaters straight into the wall.
- **Gas Safety:** If your home has a gas boiler, keep an eye out for your annual gas safety check appointment. It's crucial to let our team in to complete this.



## 4 Water Hygiene

- **Flushing taps:** If you're going away for the holidays or won't be using your taps for a while, remember to run all taps and showers when you return to avoid stagnant water building up in the pipes. This helps prevent any potential water hygiene risks.





# Your heating, your home



**W**e are upgrading all central heating and hot water thermostats to Switchchee devices. This is an important part of Haig Housing's upkeep of properties and an investment in the future.

Many housing providers are installing smart thermostats as they provide data and insights which means that we can see if your home is at risk of condensation, damp and mould and can act sooner.

## What is a Switchchee?

- A Switchchee is a smart, touch-screen, connected thermostat for your heating and hot water that doesn't require WiFi.
- It's a simple and easy to use device that gives you greater control – you can set your heating and hot water to suit your individual needs which optimises energy usage to lower bills.
- You can set your heating and hot water via the touch screen on the device or by a smartphone app.

## What do I need to do?

You will be notified by letter when your Switchchee is going to be installed. The Switchchee Trusted Installer will then contact you to arrange a convenient installation date.

Once the installation is complete, your installer will give you a demonstration of your new device and explain how to use it. They will leave you with user guides and further details. The friendly team at Switchchee are at the end of the phone if you need any further help.

## Messaging Facility

The Switchchee device has a messaging facility, which we will use from time-to-time to send you messages. These might be to inform you about something happening in your area, a reminder about a service visit or a message for all residents. We may occasionally send you a short survey. If you have a message waiting for you, the envelope button on the top right of your screen will flash. Simply touch the button and follow the on-screen instructions.

## Help with your Switchchee

If you have any questions about your Switchchee, help is available at the end of the phone.

For installation enquiries:

**0800 133 7957 Mon-Fri**

**9am-6pm**

**[install@switchchee.com](mailto:install@switchchee.com)**

**For help  
using your  
Switchchee**

**0800 133 7957**

**[support@switchchee.com](mailto:support@switchchee.com)**



# Digital Veteran Card

**L**aunched on 17th October, the new digital Armed Forces Veteran Card (or 'digital Veteran Card') is designed to work alongside the existing physical Veteran Card, giving veterans greater flexibility and choice in how they access services and discounts.

The digital card is issued to the user's device on a government-secured app, and includes the same information as the physical card plus the veteran's latest service.

It's part of a Government project to bring all documents – driving licences, DBS checks, Blue badges, birth certificates etc, online.

## A Veteran Card enables you to:

### Prove you are a Veteran

- To charities that provide support to veterans.
- To service-specific charities and associations [Digital Card only].
- To government when accessing services where Veteran tailored provision could be available (e.g. DWP, NHS or Local Authorities).

### Access discounts/concessions

- For museums and other attractions.
- Through the Defence Discount Service and Blue Light Card to save money on shopping and eating out.
- Through the Veteran Railcard for discounted rail travel across the UK.

### Prove identity

- When voting in local and general elections as Voter ID.
- When travelling on domestic flights with British Airways.
- When applying for training and roles within the security industry (coming soon).

## How to apply for your digital Veteran Card

**Veterans who already have a physical card will need to:**

- Visit [gov.uk/veteran-card](https://gov.uk/veteran-card) and select that they already have a Veteran Card.
- Create or sign in to GOV.UK One Login. This requires downloading the GOV.UK One Login app, where

the digital card will be stored under the 'documents' tab.

- Once in the app, simply sign in and follow the prompts to add your document to the app.

### If you don't already have a physical card:

Apply for a card online at [gov.uk/veteran-card](https://gov.uk/veteran-card)

- During the application process, when the physical card is being issued, information on accessing the digital card will be provided.
- The digital Veteran Card will be available as soon as the application is approved. The physical card will be sent by post and can take up to six weeks to arrive.

## Issues applying for a Veteran Card, or details appearing incorrect

Contact the Veterans UK Helpline for support:

[veterans-uk@mod.gov.uk](mailto:veterans-uk@mod.gov.uk)

**0808 1914 218 (freephone) Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm.**



Your service,  
recognised

Your benefits,  
simplified





# Your opinion matters

## Veterans' Digital Needs UK – Survey

**D**igital technology and internet access have become essential for accessing healthcare, social services and support networks.

Many UK veterans face barriers that limit their access to and use of digital services.

Understanding these barriers, such as limited access to devices, unreliable internet connections, or the need for support in using digital technology, is important to ensuring all veterans can fully benefit from online services and support.

This survey by King's College London aims to understand the extent and nature of digital needs among UK veterans, as well as identifying which veterans are most affected.

- Former UK Armed Forces personnel (Army, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force, or other regular forces, including

National Service).

- Individuals aged 18 or older.
- Currently residing in the UK (England, Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland).
- You can also complete this survey on behalf of a veteran (for example, if you are a carer or family member supporting them). Please select the option "I am completing this on behalf of a veteran" when starting the survey.

Simply complete an anonymous online questionnaire. If you can't do it yourself, you can get a carer or a family member to complete it for you. There's a prize draw for £50 shopping vouchers as a thank you for your time

Any questions contact [ukmrg@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:ukmrg@kcl.ac.uk)

### VETERANS: HAVE YOUR SAY ON DIGITAL NEEDS

Take part in our survey to help us understand the digital needs of UK Armed Forces veterans

Scan to  
Take Part



## Female Veterans Transformation Programme: National toolkit launched

The Female Veterans Transformation Programme (FVTP) has launched its Female Veterans Toolkit, a comprehensive online toolkit with advice, resources, and training materials designed to improve services for female veterans.

It is aimed at Service providers in the commercial, statutory, and charitable sectors, including charities, employers, and government bodies.

The toolkit covers a range of topics, including health and wellbeing, employment, community, and justice. It was created by the FVTP in collaboration with NHS England and WRAC.

The toolkit is available online at [www.covenantfund.org.uk/female-veterans-toolkit](http://www.covenantfund.org.uk/female-veterans-toolkit)



## Audiobooks

Calibre Audio have a collection of over 20,000 audiobooks specifically for those with a print disability. Any physical, cognitive, neurological or sensory disorder is also included.

Their streaming and download service is £3 per month/£30 a year but for veterans with qualifying disabilities, the service is free.

More information: [www.calibreaudio.org.uk](http://www.calibreaudio.org.uk)  
01296 432339 Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm

 **Calibre** audio



**Free audiobooks  
for UK veterans**  
who find reading difficult

Qualifying conditions include:

Visual impairment Dyslexia ADHD PTSD



Visit [calibreaudio.org.uk](http://calibreaudio.org.uk) or call 01296 432339  
to find out if you qualify

A charity registered in England and Wales (286614) and Scotland (SC391461)

# 30 Years After Bosnia – Remembering UK Forces

**T**his year marks three decades since the Bosnian War ended in December 1995, following the Dayton Peace Agreement. The conflict claimed over 100,000 lives and displaced millions, making it Europe's worst humanitarian crisis since World War II.

UK forces deployed from 1992 under UN and later NATO mandates, beginning with Operation GRAPPLE. British troops worked in dangerous conditions – protecting aid convoys,

enforcing ceasefires, and supporting civilians amid ethnic violence. Their efforts helped stabilise Bosnia and pave the way for peace. UK troops remained until the transition to a Bosnian Government in 2007 under a EUFOR mandate under Operation ALTHEA.

Thirty years on, we remember the resilience and sacrifice of those who served. Their mission remains a powerful reminder of the role UK forces play in upholding peace and humanity in times of crisis.



## UK Afghanistan Veterans Community – Launched September 2025

**T**he UK Afghanistan Veterans Community (AVC) is a service charity for those who served in Afghanistan. Founded by Afghanistan veterans, it was officially launched in September 2025 with backing from Veterans' Minister Alistair Carns and support from Rolls-Royce, the Royal British Legion, government figures, industry, and veterans' families.

AVC focuses on three pillars:

- **Communicate:** A digital-first community hub connecting veterans, offering peer support, and signposting broader charity and government services
- **Commemorate:** Representing Afghanistan veterans in national memorial events such as the Cenotaph parade, and organising community activities.
- **Educate:** Promoting the stories and achievements of UK forces in Afghanistan through public education, government engagement, and museum collaborations

Research commissioned by AVC showed:

- 92% of veterans fear their sacrifices will be forgotten
- 90% believe more should be done to commemorate their service

- 94% consider their identity as Afghanistan veterans a vital part of their lives

### How to Join

AVC welcomes all who served across the 20-year UK campaign (including Operation PITTING in 2021).

1. Visit the AVC website [www.ukafghanveteranscommunity.org](http://www.ukafghanveteranscommunity.org)
2. Complete a **short registration form** (entering email, service background, etc.)
3. Submit the form to become part of the community

AVC offers UK Afghanistan veterans a dedicated platform to connect, commemorate and ensure stories of their service remain an integral part of national memory.





**“When You Go Home, Tell Them Of Us And Say,  
For Your Tomorrow, We Gave Our Today.”**

## **Morden**



## **Ashted**



## **Carlisle**



## **Yorkshire**



## **Leavesden**





# Christmas Closing

The Haig Housing office will be closed from 1pm on Wednesday 24th December and will reopen at 9am on Monday 5th January 2026

If you have an emergency, please call **020 8685 5777** and your call will be transferred to Local Assist, the out of hours service.

If you have any issues with your heating or hot water, please contact Robert Heath on **0330 058 6481**. They will be operating over the Christmas period.

## How to contact Haig Housing

### Website

[www.haighousing.org.uk](http://www.haighousing.org.uk)

### Main office

020 8685 5777

[enquiries@haighousing.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@haighousing.org.uk)

### If you need to report a repair

020 8685 5777 option 1

[repairs@haighousing.org.uk](mailto:repairs@haighousing.org.uk)

### Emergency Repairs out of hours

020 8685 5777

Please hold and your call will be put through to Local Assist

### Heating and hot water problems

Robert Heath 0330 058 6481

(24 hours a day)

**Smell gas?:** 0800 111 999

### Rent enquiries

020 8685 5777 option 2

[incomes@haighousing.org.uk](mailto:incomes@haighousing.org.uk)

### Electric Vehicles (EV)

[www.haighousing.org.uk/sustainability/homeevchargers](http://www.haighousing.org.uk/sustainability/homeevchargers)

### Switchee Smart Thermostat

0800 133 7957

[support@switchee.com](mailto:support@switchee.com)

### Sustainability

[sustainability@haighousing.org.uk](mailto:sustainability@haighousing.org.uk)

### By post

Haig Housing Trust  
Mountbarrow House  
12 Elizabeth Street  
London SW1W 9RB

### Electricity outage

In the event of non emergency the UK number to call your electricity network operator to report a power cut or damage to electricity lines and substations in England, Scotland and Wales is **105**. This number is free and provides a simple and memorable way to get help and information during an electrical issue.

### Need help?

If you're in crisis, call 999, or if you need immediate support, please call 111 and press 2, or Samaritans on 116 123 or CALM on 0800 58 58 58.

## This is your newsletter

We'd love to get your news. If you have something you'd like to share with other residents or if you have any feedback, please let us know.

[communications@haighousing.org.uk](mailto:communications@haighousing.org.uk) 020 8685 5777

## Is English not your first language?

If you need any Haig official information translated or need a translator for any verbal communication with Haig Housing, please contact our Head Office to arrange this.

## Do you have a visual impairment?

If you need copies of any Haig information in **LARGE PRINT** or **BRAILLE** please contact our Head Office.

## Production

Produced by Haig Housing with contributions from beneficiaries, veterans, staff and supporters. Thanks to all of you.

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