



Connexus

Repairs

How we are maintaining our service

p.4

Community

Funding communities working together on local projects



Apprenticeships

Providing opportunities for people to learn and develop

p.10



p.12

Issue 4
Spring/Summer 2020



Hello

It's been a worrying time for all of us over the last few months.

At Connexus, we've maintained services, where we are able, according to Government guidelines.

Our biggest priority is to make sure we do not risk your safety or that of our colleagues so with that in mind, there will be a slow return to our full-service delivery while we identify safe ways of working.

Stay safe everyone.

Richard

Prefer to get this newsletter by email? Let us know
hello@connexus-group.co.uk

Performance

October 2019 - March 2020

Satisfaction with the quality of our homes **83.5%**

Satisfaction with our repairs **87.6%**

Satisfaction with lettings **91.8%**

03332 31 32 33
hello@connexus-group.co.uk
[@weareconnexus](https://www.weareconnexus.com)
connexus-group.co.uk



Made from sustainably sourced materials

Contents

Page 2	One Landlord
Pages 3-4	Our Repairs Service
Pages 5-6	Connexus and our communities during Covid-19
Page 7	How we can help as your landlord
Page 8	Our support services
Pages 9-10	Become an apprentice with Connexus
Pages 11-12	Community funding
Page 13	Look at our pets
Page 14	Shared Ownership





One Landlord

Since 1st April 2020 we have been working as one landlord - Connexus!

Becoming one landlord will further streamline our governance and bring us together as one organisation across Herefordshire and Shropshire.

You may have already seen our new vans out on the road and our repairs colleagues in their new uniforms. This Connexus brand will now extend to all our colleagues, websites and the communication that you receive from us.



Repairs

Following advice from the Government, we are currently operating an essential repairs service and we will be reviewing this when it is safe to do so over the coming weeks.

We would like to thank you all for your patience during these extraordinary times.

We do ask that you please only contact us for essential repairs. Essential repairs are those repairs that have an immediate health, safety and/or security risk.

Examples of typical essential repairs include:

- Loss of water supply
- Loss of electricity
- Heating system failure
- Loss of use of toilet facilities
- Gas leaks or suspected gas leaks
- Repairs of faulty smoke or carbon monoxide alarms (you are responsible for changing alarm batteries)
- Insecure outside doors, windows or locks

Grounds Maintenance

The Grounds Maintenance team have gone back to work where they can and have lots of grass to cut. Thank you for your support.

Need to report an essential repair?

Contact us on
03332 31 32 33
or send us a
Facebook message

Repairs consultation

When becoming one landlord, we looked at the existing repairs policies and took the best bits from each to create a new Connexus policy. This was a temporary measure and we now want to find out what you think our approach to repairs should be - what is it that matters most to you when you need a repair.

We already collect your feedback on repairs through surveys, carried out after a repair is completed. But we want to know what you think should happen from when you first report a repair.

We'll ask for your feedback via the web, phone or post - whatever works best for you! We want to hear from as many of our tenants as possible to make sure that we get it right.

This consultation gives you the opportunity to challenge the existing service and shape the way service is delivered in the future.

Over the coming months we'll be asking you:

- What makes a quality repair?
- What frustrates you when you use our repairs service?
- How do you want to communicate with us about a repair?
- What about the repairs service is most important to you?
- What does 'right first time' mean for you?

We'll promote the consultation through social media, the Connexus website and using SMS (where possible). If you don't have access to the internet, please contact our Customer Service team so we can arrange to hear your views via phone or post.



The current repairs policy covers things like:

- What type of repairs are covered by our service
- How quickly we'll respond to different types of reported repairs
- How we'll carry out repairs, appointments, etc.



Responding to the crisis - Connexus and our communities

At the start of lockdown, our teams soon realised that our response needed to focus on our customers and communities. With this in mind, our Customer Engagement Program was launched on 6th April with the target of calling over 10,000 customers across Shropshire and Herefordshire.

We wanted to reassure you that Connexus are still here, delivering services (as per Government restrictions). The phone calls also identified our most vulnerable customers, who may need further support as the lockdown continues.

Early on, we recognised that a lot of our customers would be facing increased hardship, either through isolation or financial circumstances. We wanted to get to the heart of what our tenants are going through.

Christine Duggan
Director of Housing and Repairs



Foodbanks

Lockdown has meant that foodbanks are experiencing a dramatic increase in demand and a downturn in donations.

Hereford Food Bank is a perfect example of how communities have come together to support these stretched services. They've been sourcing more products from local suppliers, including a dairy, cheese shop and baker. Additionally, in the interests of social distancing, food parcels are now being delivered to clients across Herefordshire by local taxi firms.

Joining other local businesses stepping in to help during these tough times, Connexus has **donated a total of £2,700** to 18 foodbanks and support charities across Shropshire and Herefordshire. Funding came from our Community Development Fund, which you can find out more about on Page 12.

Please contact us on 03332 31 32 33 if you feel you require extra support.



Isolation Creations

It was incredible how creative the nation got in lockdown - and you guys are no exception! We asked you to send in your #IsolationCreation to show on social media and so many of our customers have been drawing, painting, crafting and baking:

Here's a few of our favourites...



Keeping you safe

Connexus are committed to providing you with a home that meets all safety standards. Safety checks have been continuing as usual during the lockdown period. Here's how many checks we've completed from January - March 2020:

2483

Gas safety checks

115

Electrical safety checks

27

Fire Risk Assessments

How do we keep you safe?

In each newsletter, we'll take a look at different issues around safety and your home. This time we focus on how we deal with asbestos.

Asbestos

Asbestos was used in building products until it was banned from the UK in 1999. Asbestos products do not pose a health risk as long as they are left undamaged and are protected through a paint sealant or cannot easily be disturbed.

We keep a register of the location of any asbestos found in our properties. This allows us to monitor the condition of any asbestos in your home, keeping you and our teams safe, and also ensures that any future work carried out on your home is done in compliance with asbestos legislation.

But how can we be sure that we know about any asbestos in your home?

First, we undertake an asbestos survey to all of our properties, including communal areas. During the survey we note any product that is likely to contain asbestos, record its location and in some circumstances take samples. The results are entered onto our register of asbestos and you'll be sent the report.

Secondly, before carrying out an improvement to any property, such as installing a new kitchen, we'll often complete a more detailed, targeted survey. This is where a trained Surveyor will undertake a destructive inspection to identify all asbestos before any work begins.

Samples of any materials that may contain asbestos will also be sent away for testing. The survey and these samples help us to decide on the next steps.

Support services offered by Connexus



Ludlow Foyer

The Foyer is a housing project that provides accommodation for young people aged 16-25 and is linked to training. It opened its doors in 2000 and is the only accredited Foyer operating in Shropshire and Telford.

The Ludlow Foyer can help you access some brilliant training opportunities, support you in looking for a job or help you to continue your education, and, when you are ready, we will help you move on and set up home.

Grain Loft

The Grain Loft offers a unique opportunity of high-quality accommodation for people aged between 18-55 who have low level support needs. The Grain Loft offers apartments where 2 people have their own private accommodation of a large bedroom and bathroom; and share the kitchen and lounge between them. There are also 3 apartments particularly suited and designed for people with disabilities.

Independent Living

Independent Living (often called sheltered housing) helps customers to enjoy their home environment for as long as possible. We promote choice and individual control over decisions while giving reassurance about safety and security. We help customers to find services for additional support with everyday tasks.

We have 29 Independent Living Schemes across Herefordshire & Shropshire

Shropshire Domestic Abuse Service

Shropshire Domestic Abuse Service exists to provide safe accommodation, an outreach and a children/young people's service to adults and their children whose lives are affected by domestic abuse and violence; to empower them, age appropriately, to make decisions for themselves about their own futures.

We work in partnership across Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin with local agencies to enable adults and children/young people to regain the strength and confidence to take control of their lives and to have a future without fear.

Housing Support in our communities - SUSTAIN

SUSTAIN support services are funded by Shropshire Council and are available throughout Shropshire as a consistent service.

Our Prevention Support Officers work to help vulnerable people develop the skills and experience to be able to maintain their own accommodation and live independently in the community.

We provide housing and tenancy support to our tenants and people in the community. We aim to provide help for vulnerable adults, of any age, supporting them to develop the skills and to be able to maintain living in their own home and independently within the community.

Apprenticeships - #LifeAtConnexus

Apprenticeships are a great way to build and develop new and existing skills. They can also be a gateway into an organisation, where you can build a career in your chosen profession.

At Connexus we're working hard to develop our own talent, by bringing in new colleagues to train, shape and enhance the services we offer, or by levelling up our existing colleagues. Working as we do, across a broad geographic range and offering a spectrum of differing job roles, we're able to offer some exciting opportunities for people to learn and develop!

Apprenticeships are now much more open and all encompassing, ranging from entry level right through to degree levels, and offer a range of qualifications.

Connexus have apprenticeship opportunities covering a range of roles to include, trades such as carpentry and electrics, office-based positions such as business administrator, customer service, data analyst, ICT technician, and trainee accountant.

Not only do you get an apprenticeship and associated qualification, you'll have access to an array of other training, from excel & word, leadership, management, first-aid, mental health first aid, safeguarding, to name but a few.

All this plus a great welfare package, plenty of annual leave, and lots of other benefits, as well as working for a great company that is helping to create stronger, better, brighter communities.

But don't take our word for it! Let us introduce you to a few of our colleagues...



Hello, I'm Georgie, I joined as an apprentice in 2018 and have since secured a full time position. Connexus was offering amazing apprenticeship opportunities and this was a great starting point in my career. Connexus provided me with a good foundation to build the necessary skills to progress with a career in housing. I was able to work with other departments, developing my knowledge.



Hi, I'm James, I started as a Gas Apprentice in 2013 completing gas servicing, repairs and other works. Since 2018 I've been employed as a gas engineer and carry out gas servicing and repairs for properties across Shropshire.



Hey, I'm Sophie the Communications & Marketing Assistant here at Connexus. I started here in 2015 as a Business & Admin Apprentice within the Communications Team, where I've gained loads of skills & experience to help me get to where I am today.



Hello, I'm Bryn, my apprenticeship was in Electrical Engineering, I started in 2004 at Shrewsbury Arts and Technology College and completed this in 2008. You never stop learning as an electrician as the Regulations have constant updates, and the industry evolves, with new products on the market often requiring manufacture training.

Community Development Fund

The community development fund has been set up to help fund communities working together, on local projects, which have a positive effect in their area. Connexus welcome applications for funds and assistance for new and existing projects that meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. Benefits our tenants and develops links with the wider community
2. Encourages interaction between different generations within the whole community
3. Leads to activities people want, but no one currently provides
4. Generates training or employment opportunities

Community Development Fund - Grants up to £5,000

A long term investment in a project, for example:

- Better management of open spaces to enhance wildlife, clean up derelict space or get people running their own community gardens
- Community groups, such as sports teams, youth groups, parent and toddler groups to encourage new skills e.g. computer skills
- Skills development for young people such as basic mechanics, basic cookery or home maintenance, as long as the skills lead to employment or improved life skills

Do you run a community group that could really benefit from the Community Development Fund? Please get in touch with our Customer Service team.



Feedback and Complaints

Your feedback allows us to identify key areas where we need to improve and know what we're doing well. Despite us always working to deliver good quality services, there will be times where we fall short of this. Learning from your feedback is important and so we'll be carrying out a 6 monthly review, updating you on how we're getting on.

Here is our latest breakdown of what you're telling us.

October 2019 to March 2020

Number of feedback cases and complaints received

Stage	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Totals
Feedback	32	35	25	39	39	50	220
Complaint	1	2	0	2	3	0	8
Review	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Appeal*	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
Ombudsman	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	35	37	25	41	43	52	233

*From April 2020 the Appeal stage has been removed from our updated approach to dealing with complaints.

Current themes

We not only review the number of complaints we receive but also the theme of what they are about is also important

- Action (lack of or delay) - 37.6%
- Quality of work/service - 20.4%
- Communication - 11.8%
- Colleague conduct - 10.2%
- Policy or procedure - 8.1%
- Other - 11.8%

Here are just a few of the ways we have learnt from your feedback:

- We provided clarity on our Repairs Policy and will use feedback to shape the new policy due in 2020/21
- We simplified our call line, reducing the number of options from 7 down to 3



We encourage all feedback from customers and have developed the Complaints Policy along with the complaints procedure to ensure that we deal with complaints effectively and fairly.

For more information on our complaint process, Complaints Policy or details on how to make a complaint contact our Customer Service team or visit our website.

Connexus Pets

We'd like to introduce you to some of our colleague's pets. Whilst we've been working from home, we've been sharing some photos with you on our social media pages.

Company is important, even when you work from home. Let us introduce some of our furry Connexus home office co-workers, and feel free to introduce your own!



Barney is making the most of his owner being at home by sunbathing, watching his owner work & taking full advantage of the choice of chairs in the garden...



Ozzy the black cocker spaniel, he loves going for long scenic walks in the hills around Church Stretton and is a keen co-worker!



Nelly enjoys food like most dogs and is her owners shadow when he's at home.



It's never a productive day for Macy!

Share your photos of your pets with us @weareconnexus

In our community



"A tenant told me that when I'm on site they hear the sound of my heels and it makes them feel safe. So each Wednesday I blow the dust off a pair of heels, so they know when I've arrived."

Independent Living Coordinator



The neighbour's children wave as they pass and lift their new baby up so I can see her through the window. All the lovely calls from neighbour's lift my spirits so much, as do the Connexus wellbeing calls. I've never felt so loved."

Independent Living Coordinator

What have you been doing?
send your photos to @weareconnexus



Our tenants at Westlands in Wem put up bunting in celebration of VE Day. They've also been having a little sing on a Thursday evening. One song was You'll Never Walk Alone.



30 years since picking up the needles, Jill has been knitting a 'Lockdown Square' each week to stay focused.



Shared Ownership

Want to own your own home?
Shared Ownership may be just right for you

If you can't quite afford a mortgage on the open market, Shared Ownership offers you the chance to buy a share of your home and pay a subsidised monthly rent for the remaining share. In some cases, you can staircase to owning 100% at a later date.

With Shared Ownership you can buy a newly built home or an existing one through re-sale programmes from housing associations like us.

You'll need to take out a mortgage to pay for your share of the home's purchase price, or fund this through your savings. Shared Ownership properties are always leasehold.

Qualify for Shared Ownership?

- Can't afford to buy on the open market and at least 18 years old
- Have a household income of less than £80,000 per year
- Preferably a first-time buyer*
- Have a good credit rating
- Have at least £1,500 of savings to cover the one-off costs (things like solicitor fees). Remember this doesn't include any mortgage deposits, developer reservation fees or stamp duty (if applicable). Most schemes will require you to have a deposit of at least 5% of the share you are buying.

Currently Available:

Please see up to date information on what's available at the following sites:-

Withington

1 x 3 bed end terraced, 1 x 2 bed mid terraced, 1 x 2 bed semi detached

Condoover

4 x 3 bed semi detached, 2 x 2 bed semi detached

Baschurch

1 x 3 bed mid terraced

Bishops castle

7 x 3 bed semi detached, 4 x 2 bed semi detached

Ford

13 x 3 bed semi detached, 3 x 2 bed semi detached

We have lots of Shared Ownership properties available across Connexus and lots more to come. To find out more have a look on our website.

connexus-group.co.uk

Sign up for job alerts



connexus-group.co.uk

03332 31 32 33

hello@connexus-group.co.uk

@weareconnexus

connexus-group.co.uk