



Lench's Trust Newsletter

Residents Conference

Autumn Edition



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Introduction from Dominic Bradley

Welcome to the autumn edition of the newsletter, I hope you and your families had a healthy and enjoyable summer.

It remains a busy time for the Trust in our 500th anniversary year. Our most recent event was celebrating Tanner's Close 32nd year anniversary, which we have included photos of in the newsletter!

We plan to finish our anniversary year with a full day of talks and presentations at the Birmingham Midland Institute on Saturday 28th March next year. We will give more details as the event gets closer, transport will be provided for anybody that would like to attend, we would love to see you there!

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Thank you for all those that responded to the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey, overall responses were down from the previous one, however, we still achieved a 60% return rate and will certainly be aiming for higher next time round. That said all our areas have gone up or at least stayed the same which gives us comfort that you feel we are doing a decent job. We will share the results in full in coming newsletters and on our website.

Key highlights include:

94% of residents are satisfied with the overall service of the Trust.

94% of residents indicated that they satisfied that their home is well maintained.

96% of residents felt that their home was safe.

The only score below 86% was the proportion of residents who are satisfied with our approach to complaints handling, which came out at 64% and whilst this is an area we have worked hard to improve on, the sector average is 34.5% so it is important that whilst we acknowledge we need to improve, we also need to keep in perspective we are above average in the sector.

Complaints are the current focus of the Resident Scrutiny Panel, and we look forward to hearing and implementing recommendations on how we can improve & respond to complaints at our Trust.

Update on the developments at Lench's Close & William Lench Woodland Scheme.

We have submitted a full planning application for the 6 additional apartments at Lench's Close on the 13th of June, the planning team at Birmingham City Council are understaffed which has held us up a little, we are expecting a planning determination sometime in October.

With the eco-pods in the self-seeded woodland we are proposing at the back of William Lench Court, we are still working on this application, in particular the drainage strategy which is a key component of what we are trying to achieve as we have had historical

drainage issues on this site that have cost the Trust considerable sums over the years, so it is imperative that we get the strategy right.

Our other major challenge is achieving a biodiversity net gain of 10% and putting pods in a woodland makes this a particular challenge. Once we are satisfied on both counts, we will be able to make a full planning application in the coming weeks.

If we are successful through the planning process, we expect to be onsite on both Schemes at some point in 2026, we have been working with both the Local Authority and Homes England and have received strategic support from both. Importantly we have also achieved provisional grant funding from both Homes England and the Edward Cadbury Trust for both Schemes, which is significant progress.



Conclusion

I hope this give you a flavour of what is happening at our Trust, thank you as always for your ongoing engagement and support and I looking forward to spending time with you all over the Autumn and Winter Months.



Residents Conference 2025

This year is the 500th year anniversary of Lench's Trust's founding, starting in 1525, Lench's Trust has developed and grown a long with Birmingham from its roots as a small market town to the brilliant city it is today.

Thursday 10th July marked a special residents conference during our 500th year as, like Founder's Day, the Trust celebrated within Birmingham's oldest pub – The Old Crown. As a bonus, the sun shined all day with blue skies!



During the conference, Dominic and Senior Management, spoke of many topics about the future of the Trust and what is in the works. To start off Dominic got the ball rolling with what has changed since the last residents conference. Discussing the Co-living house at Tanner's Close, aimed at tackling social isolation, which houses 3 individuals – all over the age of 50. This service has worked extremely well since it opened in January and the Trust hope to continue providing this service for years to come.



Earlier this year, Lench's Trust spoke about working with sponsors to raise funds for special projects and we are pleased to say many of those project milestones have been met and completed.

The Trust also now offer a 'handy man' service, which is a chargeable service to residents and is the result of feedback from last year's residents conference. Additionally, the Trust had its grand opening of "The Bistro" with a new menu and the initial feedback has been Fantastic!

Along with all the sessions on the day, there was also time for some fun, with singing, dancing and acting on a beautifully sunny afternoon – we were delighted with the feedback from you on every aspect of the day, the venue, content and food all went down well!

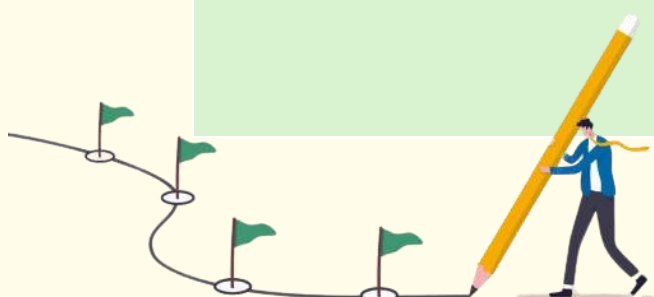


Across the page, you will see 'you said, we did', to show the changes throughout the year since our last meeting.

Feedback from the 2024 Conference

Lench's Trust is committed to listening to its residents and below are some of the areas you, our residents, wanted to see improvements in at the last conference (2024)

YOU SAID	WE DID
More interaction with young people, more visitors to the Schemes	- Legacy Project with Whitehouse Primary School and local school choirs invited to each Scheme. - Recently re-entered Moseley in Bloom for the first time in years! Brought lots of people into the Scheme! - There was a Christmas Fayre at William Lench Court, with our very own Father Christmas making an appearance.
More Care staff to assist less able-bodied residents to attend activities.	Lots of changes throughout the whole of Housing & Care, with the Care team now able to provide such assistance to ensure all residents are able to join in activities.
Work to bathroom floors/ speed of repairs/ gutters need cleaning.	- Tanner's Close had their bathroom floors resprayed as part of their choice for 2025! - Guttering has been added to the contract for Window Cleaning. - A maintenance schedule of works has been issued to residents, so they are aware if projects are happening, that will mean there is a delay in a general response time. Timescales for repairs are also advertised around the Schemes.
ENS messages – not everyone can read these	New facility on your ENS tablets for anyone with sight impairment, allowing messages to be heard. The facility has been tested and works well.
More Senior Management presence at Scheme meetings	January 2025 saw the Senior Management Team attending meetings with residents at their Schemes on a quarterly basis. Really pleased with both the attendance and feedback so far.



Good Neighbour Awards

This year Scheme Managers at Lench's Trust had a difficult time nominating residents for the Good Neighbour Awards, there were so many to choose from and every resident brings their own qualities to each Scheme. However, after much deliberation there were 5 residents from 3 schemes that edged a close contest.

Firstly, starting with Tanner's Close, this relatively new resident has fully integrated themselves into life at the Scheme. With his genuine warm and kind nature, getting to know everyone, always happy to help others whenever he can, and joining in any event that is on. A role model of a good neighbour, Mark Spiers (we now know he can also sing a tune or 2!)



Mark Spiers receiving his good neighbour award and saying a few words.

Next, unfortunately one of the dynamic duo could not attend the residents conference, however, this pair always support each other in their events at Lench's Close and are extremely generous with their time and effort; going above and beyond when planning and hosting events at the Scheme. A real dream team, Yvette Powell and Carl Goodridge!



Nad with Yvette as she accepts her award

Last, but by no means least, these beautiful human beings at William Lench Court show up to pretty much every event/ activity whether to offer a helping hand and make sure others are having a good time with lots of laughter and fun thrown in too. Both gentlemen always show exceptional kindness to their fellow neighbours, Anthony Evans and Peter Bassett.



Peter and Anthony accepting their awards with tears of joy!

Congratulations to all the winners nominated
for this year's
Good Neighbour Awards!



Our Scrutiny Panel and Service Improvements

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, Lench's Trust residents have joined a Scrutiny Panel and within the current newsletter we have an update of what has been happening from William Lench Court's very own Eileen Leventhal...

Scrutiny Panel Update and What Comes Next?

We are excited to share with you the latest update from our resident Scrutiny Panel, we've been to another very effective meeting at Firs Close which is part of the Harborne Parish Lands Charity on the 17th September.

We were made to feel very welcome by their friendly and helpful staff, including Steven the Chief Executive. We were also provided with an excellent lunch.

Thanks to Emma's direction and guidance, we are now progressing through examining the complaints processes in place within the 6 organisations involved in this scrutiny project.

We are grateful that Val has now agreed to lead the Culture and Communications group. They reported that they have received good feedback from SJMT and YGT and really welcomed the Annual Complaints and Performance Report they shared with the group.

Matt, the Website review lead, has created a spreadsheet consolidating the marking from each resident on the websites.

We will be sending a survey out to all residents in the next few days. This is to ask about your general understanding and awareness of the complaints process, and your experiences if you have had cause to raise a complaint. We would be grateful if you could complete and return these as soon as possible. We want to understand your experience (if you have complained) and your feelings about how a complaint might be dealt with.

Phil updated us on the progress with the Report writing; he has developed a first draft but awaiting findings from all to complete the task. Don also shared his use of technology to help write the report with useful headings.

All the Trusts complete an **Annual Self-Assessment Report** against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and must submit these to the Ombudsman. The reports are also published on each of the Trust's websites. We encourage residents to look these up on the websites because this shows how each organisation assesses its **own performance** and the measures; they put in place to improve on any gaps.

These reports can usually be found with 2 or 3 clicks from the home page. See below for websites:

- Sir Josiah Mason Trust (SJMT) <https://www.sjmt.org.uk>
- Yardley Great Trust (YGT) <https://www.ygt.org.uk>
- Solihull Care Housing Association (SCHA) <https://www.scha.org.uk>



- Broadening Choices for Older People (BCOP) <https://bcop.org.uk>
- Harborne Parish Lands Charity (HPL) <https://www.hplc.org.uk>
- Lench's Trust <https://www.lenchs-trust.co.uk>

Many thanks to the Scrutiny Panel members who are giving up their time and utilising their skills to ensure the success of this undertaking and to the Staff, CEOs and Trustees for their commitment to our work so far.

October should see the report coming together nicely and we look forward to sharing it with you as soon as it's been accepted by your Trustees.

Thank you
Eileen and the Panel

We hope you have all received the Resident Scrutiny Panel Survey, if not, please ask a member of your housing team to provide a copy.

Moseley in Bloom

We had the pleasure of celebrating Moseley in Bloom at Lench's Close for the first time in a few years. The gardens were filled with vibrant flowers and unique ornaments (we liked the flower filled boots best!); it was lovely atmosphere on the open day with hundreds of visitors coming to see the display. Thankfully, the weather was also on our side!

Massive thanks to Paul, who did an amazing job once again, without him, we would be lost! Some of our residents own displays were breathtaking and a real community effort that we were proud to be a part of. With thanks to our sponsor WSP as their contribution made this possible! Send them some love over on X @WSP.



Tanner's Close 32nd Anniversary!

We ended September with a bang! Celebrating Tanner's Close 32nd Birthday with Back in Time, one of our absolute favourite entertainers! There was a hula-hooping competition, dance off with guitars and some leprechauns added in for good measure, finished off with a buffet and refreshments from our very own Bistro!



What Is Next? Turning up the heat on fuel poverty

So, what is next for Lench's Trust? During 2026 there will be an investment into Lench's Close to make sure homes are more energy efficient for residents, this includes an upgrade of the heating systems. We have begun this year by replacing all the pipework to the communal heating into the homes a huge job by our Grounds Maintenance Team over the summer months making sure this was completed before the colder weather sets in.

We are pleased to report that we have secured £22,950 in revenue funding, to help residents benefit from lower energy costs and to gain insights to help other organisations improve energy efficiency.

We successfully applied for a grant from the Heat Network Efficiency Scheme (HNES).

This is a £77m grant support programme that provides funding to public, private and third sector applicants in England and Wales, to support improvements to existing district heating or communal heating projects for customers and operators.

The monies will be spent on commissioning independent heat network specialists Chirpy Heat to monitor the performance of the communal heating at Lench's Close and William Lench Court.



Lench's Close was built in the early 1980s, and it is hoped the six-month review of the heating system will improve the comfortableness of residents, spot reliability issues so they can be addressed quickly, flag ways to save on energy use and identify where there are opportunities to further contribute to the region's net zero targets.

Dominic Bradley, Chief Executive of Lench's Trust, said: *"We're delighted to have secured this funding, which will benefit not only our schemes and residents, but also*

wider landlords across the city with similar communal heating.

"By better monitoring the performance of the heating, we can begin to realise fuel and carbon savings in our existing projects, increase our transparency and visibility on net zero performance and – most importantly – improve residents' quality of life.

"Our residents are in later life and so proven to be more likely as a demographic to experience the health impacts of fuel poverty. Feeling colder as you are older is something we - and our residents - want to avoid, whilst also protecting the environment for future generations."

Louise Singleton, Programme Manager at the Heat Network Efficiency Scheme (HNES), explained why the funding is so important and why Lench's Trust was successful in its application.

"We are delighted to be supporting Lench's Trust as they strive to create a more comfortable indoor environment for their residents, while reducing their energy consumption in the process."

"Heat networks offer customers a cost-effective and efficient supply of heat and will play a key role as we decarbonise the way we heat our homes. However, through projects such as this, we can increase confidence that any older infrastructure is operating as it should be or spot issues early, particularly as we move towards the winter months."

We will keep you updated on our findings, as it's our plan to get all properties at Lench's Close to EPC C or above, we are working with the West Midlands Combined Authority on support and funding to make this happen.

Carrying on the Legacy

Lench's Trust has hit it's 500-year anniversary, but with that the legacy will continue!

-  The Trust has started managing four Walsall Almshouses Charities – the first outside of Birmingham for the Trust.
-  Publishing some of the untold stories of some of our residents and staff
-  Growing our Care & Catering services.
-  Continuing to meet the needs of a growing elderly population.



Welcoming the Walsall Almshouses

We have some exciting news to share; we have secured a new partnership which has seen us take on the management of 31 additional almshouses in the neighbouring borough of Walsall. We have agreed an arrangement to manage and oversee the four almshouse charities across six sites throughout Walsall.

The charities, namely The Henry Boys Almshouse Charity, Harpers, Marsh & Crumps Almshouse Charity, Charity of Mrs Catherine Walker and Margaret Colquhoun Chavasee Almshouses, were all formed as a result of charitable giving from individuals from as far back as 1508. All the original dwellings have been – in full or in part – rebuilt since but retain their original objectives to support those in need.

As an example of the rich history, one of the Walsall Almshouse charities was created to benefit some of the poorest “certified housekeepers” of the parish by Mrs Catherine Walker who left £100 for this purpose when she died in 1756.

Dominic Bradley said this about the new partnership: *“We are already starting to get to know the residents, and we want to ensure they benefit from access to a wider community and the facilities and activities we collectively offer across our Trust. We see this as a long-term strategic partnership formally linking all our charities through joint governance.”*



The stunning Henry Boys Almshouses

This new contract arrangement started officially on 30th June 2025.



The beautiful Marsh House, of Harpers, Marsh & Crumps Almshouse Charity

Patti Lane, Chair of Harpers, Marsh & Crumps Almshouse Charity, said: *“Meeting the Management Team from Lench’s Trust has renewed the commitment of Harper, Marsh and Crump trustees to care and support our residents in the best possible way.*

Lench’s team interaction with the Trustees has been so open and informative and now to witness their personal meeting with our resident, we know this is the right decision to engage Lench’s Trust as our Managing Agents.”

Neil Walker, Trustee at Henry Boys, said *“A shared vision, common purpose and a track record of delivering for residents were fundamental search criteria for new managing Agents.*

In Lench’s Trust we have found an excellent match. We look forward with great anticipation.”

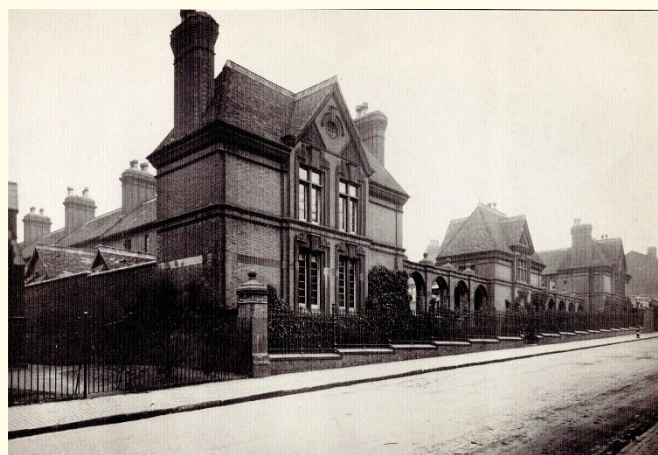
Birmingham's untold stories of old age and the welfare state captured in new published research

Lench's Trust, one of England's oldest charities, has teamed up with Bournville Almshouse Trust and the University of Birmingham to capture the previously untold lives of older residents in poverty.

Professor Nick Crowson, Professor of Contemporary British History at the University of Birmingham, led the research project which offers unprecedented insights into the lived experiences of residents at Birmingham's historic almshouses, including detailed case studies from Lench's properties.

The resulting academic study, which has been published in the journal of Cultural and Social History, helps fill an underexplored area of research around older people facing hardship. In a UK-first, it explores how Birmingham's older residents have reshaped what it means to age from the late 19th Century to the early 20th Century, and the future importance of the Almshouse model in society.

Nick Crowson said: *"Through exploring the everyday lived experiences of the residents of these iconic Birmingham almshouses we see how these institutions, intended for some of society's most vulnerable, were shaped as homes as much by the residents themselves as by staff and trustees."*



The research, titled 'Almshouses, Old Age and the Welfare State in Modern Britain,' reveals the hidden-in-history stories of individual residents and demonstrates how almshouses like Lench's Trust provide not just housing, but vibrant communities that supported independence and dignity in later life.

Founded in 1526 by William Lench, the Trust has been serving Birmingham's elderly community for nearly five centuries.

Dominic Bradley, Chief Executive of Lench's Trust, said: *"This research provides invaluable documentation of our long history of housing & support for Birmingham's residents."*

"It shows that our almshouses were never simply 'final destinations' but rather enabled older people to maintain active, independent lives within supportive communities – a vision that remains true today."



“As we mark our 500th anniversary, it is work such as this that allows us to fully understand the lessons and lives of the past, which informs the next stage of our Trust’s journey. It is incredible to reflect that 500 years on from now, someone will be reviewing our milestone year and all the new Schemes, services, partnerships and residents’ lives in Birmingham we’ve captured.”



Using newly-available material from the 1921 census and 1939 register, the research brings to light extraordinary stories of Lench’s residents, including Ellen Rebecca Vale, who lived at the Ladywood Road almshouse and famously responded to the 1911 census marital status question with poetry: “Single I am, Which pleaseth me best – I had several good

offers – You may Guess the rest.”

Another untold life is that of Birmingham born Clara ‘Lizzie’ Lishman (née Robinson, 1864–1943) who appears as a ‘retired’ widow living at Lench’s Conybere Street in the 1939 register. In the late 1870s, while Lizzie was in her teens, she worked as a domestic servant alongside her maternal Aunt. She left Birmingham some point in the 1880s for Kent, where it is likely she met her husband-to-be William, a former assistant school master and Coldstream Guardsman. The couple then moved to Norfolk with Lizzie working as a ‘mental nurse’ in an asylum whilst raising five children before returning to Aston, Birmingham in the early 1900s. In December 1916, upon discovering one of her sons had enlisted, under-age, with the Coldstream Guards, Lizzie successfully petitioned the army to ensure that he was held back from active service until his seventeenth birthday. After her husband died in 1924, Lizzie continued to live independently until she entered the almshouse around 1935.

The research also documents the evolution of care at Lench’s properties, tracing the transition from community-based matrons like the celebrated Ann Starling (1788-1891), who served at Ladywood Street for over 50 years, to professionally qualified nursing staff by the early 20th century.

Historical records show that exceptional longevity among Lench’s residents dates back centuries. In 1840, Rebecca Hodgetts died aged 97 at the Dudley Street property, while Jane Upton lived to 100 at the same address in 1914. This mirrors contemporary research suggesting almshouse residents enjoy increased life expectancy, attributed to strong community bonds and reduced isolation.

The study positions almshouses like Lench’s as pioneers of “independent living” models that have influenced modern approaches to elderly care. As the welfare state faces increasing pressures, the study suggests that the community-focused, small-scale model pioneered by organisations like Lench’s Trust offers valuable lessons for modern elderly care provision.





The study used innovative methodology combining census data, genealogical research, institutional records, and digitised newspaper archives to reconstruct the individual life stories of almshouse residents.

The research for this article was, in part, made possible with funding from the University of Birmingham QR Policy Support Fund for the 'Utopias in Crisis' project and University of Birmingham's College of Arts and Law Graduate Scholar Scheme.

For more information about Lench's Trust, visit: www.lenchs-trust.co.uk

To access the full academic paper, visit:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14780038.2025.2550071?src=>

Autumn Recipe – Caribbean Chicken Soup

When I think of Autumn, I think of something hearty with a warm broth. This recipe is a dish I like to make in the evening afterwork. I'll make a big pot of it and it'll keep me full throughout the week!

Ingredients:

- 🌿 3 Large potatoes, (peeled and cubed)
- 🌿 2 Carrots, (peeled and cubed)
- 🌿 Corn on the cob (cut into small chunks)
- 🌿 1kg Chicken wings
- 🌿 1 Spring onion sliced
- 🌿 Black pepper
- 🌿 All purpose seasoning
- 🌿 Chicken seasoning
- 🌿 Mild curry power
- 🌿 2 Magi Cubes
- 🌿 1 Cock soup sachet
- 🌿 1 Large white onion diced
- 🌿 2 Garlic diced
- 🌿 Vegetable Oil
- 🌿 Hot water from the kettle.



Method:

1. To start, put the chicken in a bowl and season with the all-purpose seasoning, mild curry powder, spring onion, chicken seasoning and black pepper. Mix well and put to one side. (You can do this the day before for extra flavour)
2. Next add some oil to a pot then add the garlic, cook for 2 mins until golden and fragrant. After that add the onion and cook through until golden.
3. When the onion and garlic is cooked, add the chicken, vegetables, half the cock soup sachet and cook for about 5 mins to get everything coated in seasoning. When done, add hot water to just about cover the chicken (add more or less water depending on how thick you like your soup).
4. Let the soup cook for 15mins then add the 2 magi cubes, the corn and the remainder of the cock soup.
5. Cook for another 30 – 40mins, stirring every 10 mins to prevent sticking, until the meat and veg is soft!

And serve!



Lench's Trust Home Help Services

These services are available at William Lench Court, Lench's Close and Tanner's Close!

Calls can be implemented in 15-minute slots with an hourly rate of £19.61

Our Services Include:

- 🌲 Deep Cleans
- 🌲 Carpet Cleaning
- 🌲 Sitting Calls
- 🌲 Escorting to appointments
- 🌲 Regular weekly domestic calls
- 🌲 Laundry
- 🌲 Light Local Shopping
- 🌲 Bin Collection
- 🌲 Care Services

If you would like to make further enquires or arrange for our services, please contact Em or Margaret on 0121 426 0451



Puzzle Pages

Colors of Fall Crossword



Across

3. Bring in the crops
5. Keeps the doctor away
6. Good to eat or decorate
8. Keeps crows away
11. Morning ride for many
14. Time of the year
15. A different kind of ear
16. Good for pie or carving
18. Fun evening ride
19. Favorite fall sport
21. Where corn grows
26. Thanksgiving bird
27. Neck warmer
28. Frozen dew
29. Handmade blanket

Down

1. Pressed fruit beverage
2. Gathers leaves
4. Ninth month
7. Halloween month
9. Horn of plenty
10. Many leaves
12. Acorn but not a nut
13. Eleventh month
16. Mayflower traveler
17. Cornfield puzzle
20. Need in the fall
22. Place for education
23. They change colors
24. Cool night air
25. Follows the summer

		8	7					
5					2		3	
			3				5	
								3
	6	2				1		
		1	8		7	5		
9		6	1	2	3	4		
		7		5	8	3	9	
	8			7				5

Riddle:

I'm not bought or sold, yet I'm worth more than gold.
 I'm needed when things don't go as they should.
 I'm silent, unseen, but I carry great weight—
 With me, you'll endure; without me, you'll break.
 What am I?



4	8	3	9	7	6	2	1	5
1	2	7	4	5	8	3	9	6
9	5	6	1	2	3	4	8	7
3	4	1	8	9	7	5	6	2
8	6	2	5	3	4	1	7	9
7	9	5	2	6	1	8	4	3
2	7	4	3	8	9	6	5	1
5	1	9	6	4	2	7	3	8
6	3	8	7	1	5	9	2	4

Riddle Answer: Patience