

# HEAR OUR THOUGHTS OFF THE PRESS

FHA newsletter

Spring Issue

## WELCOME TO OUR SPRING NEWSLETTER



Hello and welcome to the Spring edition of Hot off the Press!

With longer days and brighter weather, this issue is all about fresh ideas and positive energy. From ways to enjoy the May Bank Holiday to simple creative activities that boost wellbeing, there's something for everyone. We also take a moment to reflect on Autism Awareness Month and share updates from across FHA, including news from our growing Housing Team.

A warm welcome to the 20 new tenants who've joined us since our last newsletter - we hope you're settling in well. As always, we're here to listen, support, and keep improving the services that matter to you.

We hope you enjoy reading your newsletter!

### ***What to Do in the Early May Bank Holiday: A Guide to Enjoying Your Long Weekend***

The early May Bank Holiday is the perfect opportunity to shake off the last traces of spring and dive into a long weekend filled with relaxation, adventure, or a bit of both. Whether you're looking for outdoor activities, cultural experiences, or just a chance to unwind, there's something for everyone to enjoy during this holiday. Here's your guide to making the most of this annual break.

**Full guide  
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>>>>>**

## **SEE INSIDE - We look at Crafting for Wellbeing**

**INSIDE: NEWS • FOCUS ON PERFORMANCE • AUTISM  
AWARENESS MONTH • UPDATES • COMPETITION**



## ENJOY YOUR BANK HOLIDAY WITH...

### EXPLORE NATURE WITH A SPRING WALK

With the promise of warmer weather and blooming flowers, the early May Bank Holiday is a fantastic time to get outside and connect with nature. Consider going for a countryside hike, a coastal walk, or exploring a nearby park or nature reserve. If you're near the countryside, there are often local walking trails to explore, offering scenic views, wildlife, and a sense of tranquillity. For those closer to cities, urban parks are great for a relaxing stroll or even a picnic.

Tip: Pack a picnic with fresh spring ingredients like strawberries, cheeses, and fresh bread to make your walk even more enjoyable.

### EXPLORE LOCAL HISTORY AND CULTURE

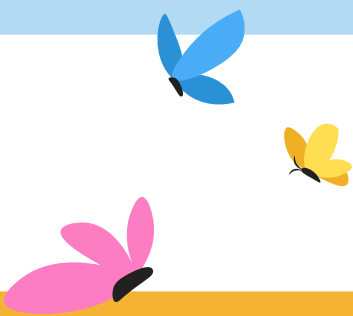
If you're someone who enjoys a bit of history and culture, take the opportunity to explore the museums, galleries, and historic sites in your area. Many attractions have special exhibitions or events around public holidays. Whether you're interested in art, archaeology, or local history, spending a day discovering the culture of your region can be both educational and enjoyable.

Consider visiting local castles, museums, or stately homes. The spring weather also offers the perfect conditions for discovering outdoor heritage sites such as Roman ruins, gardens, or memorials.

### INDULGE IN A DAY OF PAMPERING

Not all holidays need to be packed with activities. If you're craving a more restful experience, why not spend the day pampering yourself? Many spas offer special packages over bank holidays, so treat yourself to a massage, facial, or a rejuvenating sauna. Alternatively, you can create your own home spa day with a bubble bath, skincare treatments, and a good book or film to round off your relaxation.

The early May Bank Holiday is all about making the most of the spring season. Whether you prefer a bustling festival, a quiet day in nature, or indulging in some self-care, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Whatever you choose, make sure to take a break from the daily grind and savour the long weekend. It's the perfect opportunity to refresh, recharge, and embrace the beauty of the season.



## CRAFTING FOR WELLBEING: *Creativity That Heals*

Did you know that getting creative can do wonders for your mental health? Engaging in crafts isn't just about making something beautiful—it's a powerful tool to relieve stress, improve focus, and boost your self-esteem. Enjoying crafts as part of a group is also a great way to make friends and share ideas. Why not give it a go!

Here are a couple of simple but fun activities to try:



### ROCK PAINTING

Go for a walk and grab some smooth stones and let your imagination take over! Whether you paint positive words, cute animals, or colourful patterns, this mindful activity helps calm the mind and bring a sense of accomplishment.

Plus, painted rocks make great gifts or garden decorations!

#### Materials:

- Smooth stones or pebbles
- Acrylic paints
- Paintbrushes
- Sealer (optional)

#### Instructions:

1. Find smooth stones or pebbles from outside or buy some from a craft store.
2. Paint the stones with fun designs like flowers, animals, or inspirational words.

#### Why it's great:

Rock painting is simple, creative, and very relaxing. It's also great fun to swap and share with others.

3. Once the paint is dry, you can seal your designs with a clear acrylic sealer if you like.
4. Use the rocks as decorative pieces or even hide them around your community for others to find (sometimes called "rock hunting").



### PRESSED FLOWER BOOKMARKS

Nature and creativity come together in this relaxing craft. Simply collect flowers or leaves, press them in a heavy book for a few days, then arrange them and glue them onto card. These beautiful keepsakes encourage mindfulness and make perfect personal gifts.

#### Materials:

- Flowers (daisies, pansies, or any small flowers)
- Heavy book (to press flowers)
- Blank bookmarks or cardstock
- Glue
- Clear contact paper (optional)

#### Instructions:

1. Press the flowers between the pages of a heavy book for 2-3 days until they're flat.
2. Once dried, cut out the flowers and arrange them on a bookmark or card.

3. Glue the flowers onto the bookmark, and optionally, cover the bookmark with clear contact paper for durability.
4. Trim the edges and add a ribbon at the top for a decorative touch.

#### Why it's great:

Pressed flower bookmarks are a beautiful craft and also provide a connection to nature.



# APRIL IS AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH: UNDERSTANDING, EMPATHY, AND SUPPORT



April marks Autism Awareness Month, a time dedicated to increasing understanding, promoting acceptance, and celebrating the diversity of individuals on the autism spectrum. As a community, it's important that we come together to learn more about autism, support families who may be impacted, and create an environment that is welcoming to everyone, regardless of their differences.

## What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) refers to a range of conditions that affect social interaction, communication, and behaviour. People with ASD may experience the world in unique ways, often with strengths and abilities that differ from those of others. While every individual with autism is different, common characteristics can include challenges with communication, difficulty with social interactions, and repetitive behaviours or specific routines.

## How Can We Be Supportive?

As neighbours and members of a larger community, there are simple, effective ways we can show support and foster an inclusive environment:

- **Be Informed:** Educating ourselves about autism can help reduce stigma and increase empathy. Understanding that autism is a spectrum can help us appreciate the diversity of experiences and challenges faced by individuals with ASD.

- **Respect Differences:** Individuals with autism may have different sensory needs, communication styles, or behaviours. Being patient, understanding, and respectful of these differences can go a long way in making everyone feel comfortable and valued.

- **Support Families:** Many families with children or loved ones on the autism spectrum face unique challenges. Offering a helping hand, whether it's sharing information, offering support for daily activities, or simply being a friendly neighbour, can make a big difference.

## How You Can Get Involved

- **Wear Blue for Autism:** In honour of Autism Awareness Month wear blue this month to show your support. This small gesture can help raise awareness and start conversations about autism. Our team in the North East got involved and wore blue to the office in support of Autism Awareness day.
- **Attend Local Events:** Many organisations and support groups

hold events throughout April to raise awareness about autism. Look for local events or fundraisers that support autism research and advocacy.

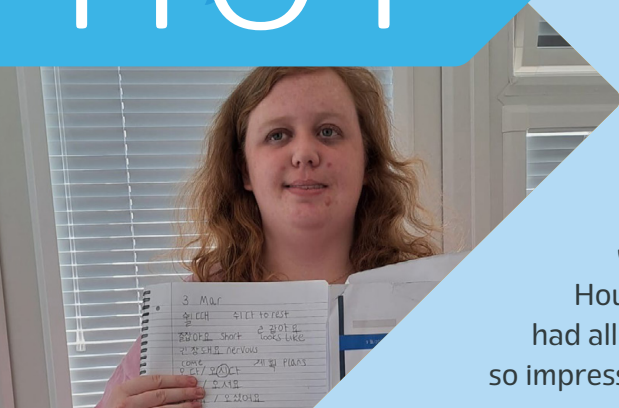
- **Support Autism Charities:** If you are looking for ways to make a difference, consider donating to organisations that support individuals with autism and their families. Every contribution, no matter how small, can make an impact.

## A Call for Unity

Autism Awareness Month serves as an important reminder that each individual deserves respect, understanding, and support. By educating ourselves, fostering an environment of inclusion, and offering empathy to those who need it, we can create a stronger, more compassionate community.

Together, let's raise awareness, celebrate differences, and continue building a space where everyone feels safe, heard, and valued.





## LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE

One of our tenants at Lane End House is taking a reading, writing and spoken exam in Korean language. When our Housing Officer Lindsey visited, she was shown revision sheets that had all been written in Korean with the English word written under it, so impressive. She is a real inspiration.

## MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS: TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

At FHA, we recognise the importance of mental health and well-being. It's normal to feel stressed or anxious from time to time, but it's important to prioritise your mental health. One simple and effective way to manage anxiety is through breathing exercises.

Try this quick technique:

- **Sit comfortably,**
- **Close your eyes,**
- **Slowly inhale through your nose for a count of 4,**
- **Hold your breath for 4 counts,**
- **Exhale slowly through your mouth for 6 counts,**
- **Repeat this for a few minutes, focusing on your breath.**

This can help calm your nervous system and bring you a sense of peace.

Remember, taking small steps towards self-care can make a big difference!



## BENEFITS NEWS

**Minimum Wage Increase:** From April 2025, the minimum wage will rise from £11.44 to £12.21 per hour. The rate for 18-20-year-olds will increase from £8.60 to £10.00 per hour.

**Benefit Up-rating:** Working-age benefits will be updated in 2025-2026 by the September 2024 CPI inflation rate of 1.7%.

**State Pension Increase:** The basic and new State Pension will rise by 4.1% in 2025-2026, giving pensioners just under £12000 per year.



## FOCUS ON PERFORMANCE

You've told us what's important to you in terms of the services we provide and how effective we are at providing them. This includes our repairs performance and how quickly we are completing repairs, and our performance around allocating empty properties and managing rent arrears.

We are serious about continually looking to improve how we deliver our key services to you, and we benchmark our performance over a number of areas.

**Here is a quick look at how our performance has been during 2024/2025.**

Average time to complete emergency repairs **1.8 days**

Average time to complete non-emergency repairs **15.6 days**

Emergency repairs completed within target **90.4%**

Average days to re-let our homes **255 days**

Current tenant rent arrears as 1.31% of gross rent due **97.69%**

Rent lost through homes being empty **2.24%**



## FHA UPDATE

Over the past couple of months, we have expanded our Housing Team and brought 2 new Housing Officers into our team.

Ryan Briggs joined our team in March and will be covering North East and Yorkshire portfolio.

Amy Stepp joined our team in April and will be covering East England Portfolio.

We made the decision to grow our Housing Team to strengthen engagement with our tenants and improve service delivery. We want to get out to visit our tenants more often and get involved where we can. Our Housing Team will be carrying out their visits over the next few months and we hope you will give our new team members a warm welcome when you see them.





## COMMUNAL DECORATION

We have received great feedback around the full communal decoration completed at Clark House. The Care Provider said 'The painters have now completed all the decorating and it looks great. Everywhere looks nice and clean. The lads who attended were great and very helpful.'

## COMPETITION TIME

Can you spot the 5 differences between the 2 spring bunnies? If you can, send us a photo to [hello@falconha.org](mailto:hello@falconha.org) and we will announce the winner in our next newsletter.



**Makes: 12-16 brownies**  
**Prep Time: 30 minutes**  
**Cook Time: 30 minutes**

## Easy brownie recipe

**Quick to make and devour, this easy brownie recipe made with cocoa powder will be your new go-to. Perfect warm as a dessert with cream or ice cream.**

### Method

1. Preheat the oven to 170C/150C Fan/Gas 3½ and line a 20cm/8in square brownie tin.
2. Put the butter and cocoa into a saucepan over a low heat, stirring frequently until the butter has melted. Remove from the heat and leave to cool for 2 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, whisk the eggs, both sugars, vanilla, and salt for about 2 minutes until pale. Add the cocoa and butter mixture and stir to combine.
4. Sift the flour over the mixture and use a rubber spatula to mix thoroughly. Pour the mixture into the prepared tin, spread level, and bake for 18-20 minutes until just firm to the touch.
5. Leave to cool in the tin before cutting into squares.

### Dietary

The secret to getting the perfect fudgy brownie is to remove them from the oven just before they are fully baked, so that the remaining heat just tips them over into being firm.

### Recipe tips

- 175g/6oz unsalted butter, diced
- 100g/3½oz cocoa powder
- 3 free-range eggs
- 125g/4½oz caster sugar
- 125g/4½oz soft light brown sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla bean paste or extract
- Pinch salt
- 85g/3oz plain flour

### Dietary

Nut-free / Pregnancy-friendly / Vegetarian

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