

# CONNECT

The magazine for Connexus c

Winter 2025

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Simple tips to  
keep you and your  
family safe

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Your questions  
answered

# League of her **Owen**

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**TEST THEM. THEY COULD  
SAVE YOUR LIFE.**





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You could win £25 in vouchers in this issue's redecorating word search.



# In this Issue



## Viewpoint

# New developments and a winning spirit

**W**elcome to our Winter 2025 edition of Connect! In this edition, we chat with Vikki Owen, captain of Shrewsbury Town Women FC, about football, friendship, and finding balance on and off the pitch.

You can also read about our new approach to Awaab's Law, ensuring safer homes and healthier living environments for customers. Plus, find out about the exciting developments happening in Marton and Wem.

And if that's not enough there's some helpful advice

on reporting suspicious emails and texts on page 13.

So, as the nights draw in we hope you enjoy the winter edition with a cuppa in hand. Don't forget, we're always interested in your stories, so please do share your feedback and anything you'd like us to cover.

I hope you have a happy Christmas and New Year. Good luck with the wordsearch on page 15!

*Sophie*

**Sophie Mellings**  
Editor



Chris had a bumper crop of tomatoes this year

# Snapshot

If you have a local story you'd like us to cover, get in touch with the team by emailing [connect@connexus-group.co.uk](mailto:connect@connexus-group.co.uk), calling our number **03332 31 32 33** or messaging us on social media [@weareconnexus](https://www.instagram.com/weareconnexus)

## Community

### Chris' green fingers at Charter Court

**Chris has lived at Charter Court Independent Living Scheme for 12 years. Gardening has been part of his life since age 12, inspired by his father. His very first project was sprouting cress on damp paper towels.**

This year's harvest has been particularly rewarding. "I haven't bought any veg this year," he says, with most meals including potatoes and vegetables straight from the

soil to the plate. The biggest challenge has been the weather: with so much sun, keeping everything watered has taken extra effort.

Runner beans are Chris' favourite, while tomatoes are the most challenging. His top tip for new gardeners: "Start with potatoes, prepare the soil well, and add compost in winter."

You can read more about Chris' gardening on our website.

## Holiday fun

Over 350 free holiday activity places and meals were provided by the New Saints Football Club Foundation Ellesmere last year, thanks to a grant from the Connexus community fund.



Holiday beats





Laying the foundations at Marton

## 10 new affordable homes at Marton

Work has started on ten new affordable homes at Marton in Shropshire. The one-, two- and three-bedroom homes will be a mix of social rent and shared ownership and are being built by SJ Roberts Construction on behalf of Connexus.

They will each benefit from energy efficient features that include air source heat pumps and electric vehicle charging points, while the wider development will be planted with native trees and shrubs to protect and improve existing ecological habitats.

## Edinburgh House redevelopment

Connexus has started work on the redevelopment of Edinburgh House in Wem, Shropshire. The former police station wing will be converted into 13 one- and two-bedroom apartments for social rent.

18 two- and three-bedroom houses for social rent and shared ownership are being constructed by Harpers, and will have electric vehicle charging points and air source heat pumps.

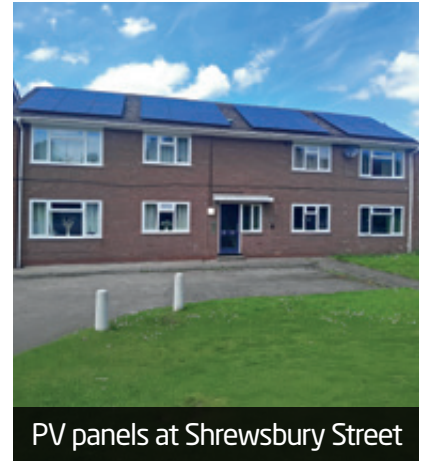
Amanda Knowles, head of development, said: "The redevelopment of Edinburgh

House is a good example of our commitment to build homes that meet the local need. Redeveloping our former office space into much needed homes for the local community is a fitting reuse of the site."



View from above

## Warmer Homes



PV panels at Shrewsbury Street

**Connexus has delivered 534 energy efficiency measures across a total of 143 properties as part of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.0 Delivery programme.**

The programme spanned from March 2023 through until September 2025 and brought properties up to a minimum EPC rating of C.

Following a successful bid for Wave 3, Connexus has again committed to improving the energy efficiency of over 230 properties and have applied £6.9 Million pounds of investment to this scheme alongside the Warmer Homes: Social Housing Fund.

Damian Cassidy, head of asset management at Connexus said. "With this new funding, we're excited to continue delivering high-quality, sustainable upgrades to even more homes across our communities, particularly in rural communities where support is most needed."

# A new approach to damp and mould

Awaab's Law came into effect on 27 October this year, and means that landlords like Connexus have to follow strict timescales when dealing with hazards in the home such as damp and mould.

**C**onnexus has created a healthy homes team who will make sure the timescales implemented by Awaab's Law are met and customers are kept informed about their damp and mould repairs.

### New approach

When damp or mould is reported, the customer services team will notify the healthy homes team who will investigate the report, categorise it as Red or Amber, and assign a case coordinator to keep you updated on the progress of your case.

### Red

If the damp and mould is severe, and regarded as an emergency hazard which could be an immediate risk to

health if not dealt with quickly, it will be categorised as Red.

A surveyor will visit your home within 24 hours and arrange for a repair, or if a repair cannot be carried out, you will be offered temporary accommodation until the repair is complete.

The surveyor will carry out an inspection of your entire home, and you will receive a letter with a summary of what the inspection found and the contact details for your case coordinator from the healthy homes team within three working days.

### Amber

If the damp or mould is not an emergency case it will be classified as Amber and an inspection will be carried out within 10 working days of the

problem being reported.

You will receive a letter from your case coordinator with a summary of the inspection within three working days. A damp and mould technician will visit to carry out mould treatment within seven working days and any follow up repairs will be completed within 28 working days.

### Regular Checks

Once the work has been carried out, the healthy homes team will contact you one month, three months, six months and twelve months later to check that the damp or mould has not returned. They will also arrange for a property surveyor to attend to check that the damp or mould work have been successful.





# Your home Safe and sound



If locks are not working, report it as a repair

For more information contact the healthy homes team on 03332 31 32 33 or email [healthyhomes@connexus-group.co.uk](mailto:healthyhomes@connexus-group.co.uk)

You can report problems with damp and mould by:

- Contacting us on WhatsApp **07860 003150** (Mon to Fri 9am to 5pm)
- Using our report a repair form – [connexus-group.co.uk/contact](https://www.connexus-group.co.uk/contact)
- DM us [@weareconnexus](https://www.instagram.com/weareconnexus)
- Email us at [hello@connexus-group.co.uk](mailto:hello@connexus-group.co.uk)
- Call us on **03332 31 32 33**

If you report a problem online, please include photos and video (if possible).

For advice on how to help prevent damp and mould in your home, visit [connexus-group.co.uk/mould](https://www.connexus-group.co.uk/mould)

**The winter months can be unsettling, with shorter days meaning there's less daylight, but there are some steps you can take to reassure yourself and feel safer in your home.**

Always check your windows and doors are closed and locked before you go out. If the locks are not working properly, report it as a repair.

Consider using timers to automatically switch the lights on when you're out. It makes it look like someone's home, and more welcoming when you get home.

Always check ID before letting people you don't know into your home. If it's someone you're not expecting or if you're unsure, don't let them in and call the company they say they're from (use the number from a bill or the company website). Any reputable company will

be happy to show ID and for you to check it.

Security systems like CCTV and video/smart doorbells can be reassuring and a deterrent to unwanted callers to your home. However, if you are thinking about, or are already using CCTV or a video door bell there are privacy rules you need to follow. The details are available on the government website - go to [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and search domestic CCTV.

As well as following the privacy rules, you need permission from Connexus if you want to install CCTV or a video doorbell. To request permission, please contact the customer service team on **03332 31 32 33** or email: [hello@connexus-group.co.uk](mailto:hello@connexus-group.co.uk)

**A**fter eight years in Shrewsbury blue and amber, Vikki is one of the club's most experienced and respected players.

"It's gone quickly," she laughs. "But I've loved every minute."

"It all started really young," she explains. "My family were very into football – my dad coached, so as soon as I was old enough I was straight into it. I was about six or seven when I joined my first team, Wem Raiders."

"I made a lot of friends through football. At that age, that was the best bit, playing with my mates."

She had a taste of academy football with Shrewsbury Town, but it wasn't what she expected. "I went for trials when I was about 12 or 13, and I got in," she recalls. "But I didn't enjoy it as much because my friends weren't there."

Vikki returned to her local side, before joining Crewe Alexandra. She went from the under-21s to the first team over four years there.

"The setup was really professional there," she remembers. "The coaches were



Vikki on match day

# League of her Owen

**Captain Vikki Owen chats to Connect about her career so far at Shrewsbury Town Women FC**

great. But eventually the travel got a bit much."

That brought her back to Shrewsbury, and the women's first team. "It was different by then," Vikki explains. "It wasn't just about friends anymore; it was about loving the game itself. Football became my drive, my exercise, my escape. It's what I love to do."

## Balancing boots and business

Off the pitch, life is just as busy. Vikki works as a veterinary nurse while also running her own dog behaviour and training business, *Helping Paw*.

"I've always loved animals," she says. "I started as a receptionist at a vets, then trained as a veterinary nurse. I love what I do, especially working with dogs."

**"Playing with a smile on your face really does make a difference."**

Balancing her day job, her business, and football isn't always easy, but she says it's all about passion and purpose.

"Football has always been an outlet for me," Vikki says. "Even when I stopped playing for a bit while working long shifts, I missed it."

She hopes that younger girls can find that same passion. "A lot of girls drop out of sport in their teens," she says. "My advice is simple: enjoy it. Don't feel like you have to do it for





anyone else. If you love it, you'll keep at it, and that's when you'll see yourself improve."

## “Enjoying the game”

Vikki also has a message for parents: “Support them, but don't push too hard. Let them enjoy it. If they enjoy it, they'll want to get better. And let them try lots of different sports, it's not just about football: it's about teamwork, confidence, and resilience.”

Her inspirations have evolved. “When I was younger, I looked up to players like Michael Owen because that's who we saw on TV. Now, it's brilliant that girls can watch people like Leah Williamson and think, ‘I could be her.’ The growth of the women's game has been massive.”

## Looking ahead

That growth is visible at Shrewsbury. The women's team continues to go from strength to strength, driven by commitment, togetherness, and community pride.

“This season's going really well,” says Vikki. “We've had a strong pre-season. We're all working hard. The ambition is definitely to win the league and yes, I think it's realistic.”

## “Every time I put the shirt on, it means something.”

Her proudest moments in a Shrewsbury shirt? “Lifting the cup will always stand out. But honestly, every time I put the shirt on, it means something.”

Asked about the future, she grins. “Maybe retired on a beach somewhere! But I'll stay in football as long as I can. I'd love to move into coaching one day. It's nice to give something back.”

And when she's not working? “I love a cosy night in with



Vikki training under the lights

Harry Potter, a cheese board, and my German Shepherd, Rex,” she says. “That's the perfect winter evening for me.”

Whether it's on the pitch, in the clinic, or walking Rex through frosty fields, Vikki's love for football and her community remains constant.

“It's been part of my life since I was six,” she says simply. “And I can't imagine it any other way.”

Shrewsbury Town Women, finished 5th in the West Midlands Regional League 2024-25 season.

Backed by Shrewsbury Town in the Community, the team works to inspire the next generation of sports people through local schools, grassroots programmes, and community outreach.



Lifting the cup is a career highlight



# Ask Chris

Our new customer service manager Chris gets to the bottom of your questions. If you have something you'd like answered, please email [connect@connexus-group.co.uk](mailto:connect@connexus-group.co.uk) or write to us at the usual address.

## **Q. What should I do if my smoke alarm is beeping?**

A. This is often the alarm letting you know the battery needs replacing. Even mains powered smoke alarms have a backup battery that needs replacing from time to time. You should replace the battery and give the alarm a once over with a duster or vacuum.

If the alarm is still beeping after this or you are unable to replace the battery yourself, please contact us and our repairs team will arrange to visit you. We recommend testing your alarm once a week by pressing the test button on the alarm.

## **Q. What should I do if my carbon monoxide alarm is going off?**

A. Open doors and windows immediately, switch off all fuel burning appliances and turn off the gas at the emergency control valve which is located at your gas meter. This will shut the gas off to your whole home. Please evacuate and call Cadent – National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999 who will send an engineer to investigate.

Do not re-enter your home until a gas safe engineer or the emergency services confirm it is safe to do so. If anyone is experiencing symptoms such as headache, nausea or confusion, please seek medical advice.

Call us on 03332 31 32 33 as soon as possible after contacting Cadent to arrange for a gas engineer to attend following their visit.

## **Q. I want to move to a different property, what do I need to do?**

A. The majority of Connexus' available homes are advertised through either Shropshire Homepoint ([www.shropshirehomepoint.co.uk](http://www.shropshirehomepoint.co.uk)) or Herefordshire Home Point

([www.herefordshire.homeconnections.org.uk](http://www.herefordshire.homeconnections.org.uk)). These are two separate systems despite having similar names.

The housing registers are managed by the local authorities and landlords like Connexus advertise their available homes on there.

Both Shropshire Council and Herefordshire Council have made some changes to the systems they use. As a landlord that advertises through both these systems, we know that has caused confusion for people registering or trying to re-register and there are lengthy processing times for applications. If you have any queries regarding your housing application, please contact



It's really important alarms are tested regularly





either Shropshire Homepoint or Herefordshire Home Point to discuss further as Connexus is unable to advise on the progress of applications.

If you're not eligible to join a housing register, another option to move is mutual exchange — a swap between social housing tenants. Contact us for more details and to check if you qualify.

#### **Q. What are the changes to Shropshire Homepoint and Herefordshire Home Point?**

A. For Shropshire Homepoint the system changes has affected how people can bid on properties. The system now only allows people to bid for homes they are eligible for. For example, level access accommodation, homes with adaptations, and households that fulfil the required bedroom need.

The change to Herefordshire Home Point has meant that everyone who was registered before November 2024 has to re-register.

Once you are registered, it's a good idea to check it is up to date and you've supplied everything to support your application. Out of date information on applications can cause delays when looking for alternative suitable accommodation.

## Complaints

# Your right to complain – and be heard



We're committed to learning from complaints and feedback

**A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by Connexus, our staff, or those acting on our behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.**

If you need help making a complaint, a reasonable adjustment to access a service, or need information in a different format or language, just let us know; we're here to support you.

You can also contact the **Housing Ombudsman Service** at any time. They offer free, impartial advice and support on making complaints. You can reach them at **[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)** or call **0300 111 3000**.

We constantly review the complaints we receive to learn and improve. Every year we write a complaint performance and service improvement report and complete a self assessment

which is shared with the Housing Ombudsman. You can find these on the complaints page of our website. If you would like a paper copy, just ask our customer service team on 03332 31 32 33.

So, if something goes wrong, we want to hear from you. We'll always treat your concerns seriously and try to resolve them quickly and fairly.

You can make a complaint in any way that suits you.

- Call 03332 31 32 33
- Email [complaints@connexus-group.co.uk](mailto:complaints@connexus-group.co.uk)
- Write to Connexus, The Gateway, The Auction Yard, Craven Arms, SY7 9BW
- Visit our website [connexus-group.co.uk/complaints](http://connexus-group.co.uk/complaints)
- Contact us on Facebook @weareconnexus
- In person by speaking to a Connexus colleague

# Tenant Satisfaction Measures

**C**onnexus, like all landlords, gathers feedback on how it is performing in a number of areas including property condition, complaint handling and repairs known as Tenant Satisfaction Measures. The information is gathered through telephone surveys carried out by an independent company throughout the year and we are pleased to be able to provide you with an update of how we are performing.

### Working together

At our latest Voice of the Customer Forum, we explored what's going well and where we need to improve. The good news? More customers feel treated fairly and with respect, that's up by 2.6%! But we know there's still work to do, especially around repairs, property condition, and keeping everyone informed.

Repairs remain a top priority. We're tackling delays by improving supply chains and introducing a live dashboard to track progress. The team is also sharpening its focus on planning, scheduling, and supervision, supported by enhanced system training for colleagues, all aimed at delivering a better

### Our performance 2024/2025

Measure	% Satisfied	% Dissatisfied
Overall satisfaction	76.8	23.2
Satisfied with repairs	80.6	19.4
Time taken to complete repairs	77.6	22.4
My home is well maintained	76.4	23.4
My home is safe	84.6	15.4
Connexus listens to me and acts on my views	67.1	32.9
Connexus keeps me informed about things that matter to me	73.4	26.6
Connexus treats me fairly and with respect	81.4	18.6
Satisfied with how my complaint is handled	41.3	58.7
Communal areas are clean and well maintained	71.4	28.6
Connexus makes a positive contribution to my neighbourhood	70.0	30.0
Satisfied with how my ASB case was handled	65.6	34.4

service for you.

A big thank you to everyone who shared feedback, whether through surveys or by raising concerns when things didn't go right. Your voice really does shape what we do next.

Got feedback or ideas? We'd love to hear from you,

get in touch and help us make things even better!

### Get involved

If you'd like to find out more about becoming an involved customer visit our website [connexus-group.co.uk/be-involved](https://connexus-group.co.uk/be-involved)





# Fight back against scams



Suspicious text or email? don't just ignore it, report it

## Our performance 2024/25

Measure	Performance
Homes where gas safety checks have been carried out.	99.3%
Homes where fire risk assessments have been carried out.	100%
Homes where asbestos management surveys or re-inspections have been carried out.	100%
Homes where legionella risk assessments have been carried out.	100%
Homes where communal passenger lift safety checks have been carried out.	100%
Number of anti-social behaviour cases, opened per 1,000 homes.	20.2
Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard.	0.5%
Non-emergency repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale.	87.6%
Emergency repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale.	89.1%
Number of stage one complaints received per 1,000 homes.	34.3
Stage one complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales.	67.6%

**If you receive a suspicious text or email, you can report it to the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC).**

Emails or texts that are designed to trick you into revealing sensitive information such as passwords, credit card or personal details are called Phishing emails or Phishing texts.

You can report them by forwarding phishing emails to [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk), forwarding suspicious texts to 7726 (it's free). Every report helps the NCSC take down malicious sites and protect others.

Action Fraud have an alert service to receive direct, verified, accurate information about scams and fraud in your local area. You can receive these alerts by email, voice mail or text message. Register for alerts on the Action Fraud website: **[actionfraud.police.uk/sign-up-for-action-fraud-alert](https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/sign-up-for-action-fraud-alert)**

## New Chair of the Board

Anne Turner has been appointed as the new Chair of the Connexus Board, succeeding Michele Ibbs who steps down after three years in the role.



Anne Turner

Anne worked for over 25 years as a Finance Director in the housing sector in three major Midlands housing associations. She has chaired Connexus' Finance and Investment Committee since joining the Board in autumn 2024.

Michele Ibbs said: "After three busy years at Connexus as Chair, I am pleased to be able to hand the baton on to Anne."

Anne said: "I am delighted to succeed Michele as Chair of Connexus. Since joining the Board last year, I have greatly enjoyed my role, particularly seeing first-hand the positive difference Connexus makes in our communities".



## CEO Kate Smith Building momentum at Connexus

**It's certainly been a busy 2025 at Connexus. We've established a new executive leadership team and launched a refreshed corporate plan, which aims to improve our efficiency, simplify organisational structures, and create more customer focussed ways of working.**

We've also welcomed Anne Turner as our new Chair of the Board. I would like to thank Michele Ibbs for her dedication and leadership over the last three years, and helping to build an organisation which is stronger, more resilient and better able to deliver for its customers.

I look forward to working closely with Anne, whose experience and deep

understanding of the sector will ensure we have continuity in our governance approach as we deliver our vision of creating homes you can build a life in. We have also welcomed two new board members, Philip Angle and Anne Copeland who will strengthen our Board for the future.

We are building momentum across Connexus. We have worked hard to deliver a programme of modernisation, which will see Connexus better able to deliver for our customers. I really hope that this is beginning to show in our services to customers across our communities. From all of us at Connexus, have a great Christmas and a happy New Year.





## Decor-a-Search

Decorate this word search with words from the list all tied to the theme of redecorating. But there's a twist: one word didn't make it into the puzzle. Can you spot which one is missing?

R	E	C	W	P	J	P	L	U	M	B	I	N	G	F
Z	I	I	P	A	B	N	R	A	D	I	A	T	O	R
P	V	F	S	X	L	E	M	U	L	S	I	O	N	B
X	B	Y	V	X	M	L	C	O	N	C	R	E	T	E
A	O	A	G	L	U	Z	P	Q	J	O	U	L	I	C
R	P	S	T	L	M	L	P	A	S	R	V	A	T	U
C	L	H	G	H	O	T	V	E	P	G	R	D	I	R
H	A	O	R	V	T	S	D	A	T	E	A	D	L	T
I	N	W	O	I	U	U	S	D	R	A	R	E	I	A
T	K	E	U	L	Q	B	B	L	Z	N	P	R	N	I
R	H	R	T	H	O	V	J	K	E	X	I	S	G	N
A	S	C	R	E	W	D	R	I	V	E	R	S	B	S
V	G	D	R	A	I	N	P	I	P	E	C	K	H	O
E	N	J	H	A	C	K	S	A	W	R	E	N	U	E
W	C	A	B	I	N	E	T	Z	N	N	E	S	O	B

ARCHITRAVE  
BATHTUB  
CABINET  
CONCRETE  
CURTAINS  
DRAINPIPE

EMULSION  
GLOSS  
GROUT  
HACKSAW  
LADDER  
LINOLEUM

PLANK  
PLUMBING  
RADIATOR  
SCREWDRIVER  
SHOWER  
TAPS

TILING  
VARNISH  
WALLPAPER

## CONNECT

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www.connexus-group.co.uk

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@weareconnexus

Next edition due spring 2026.

Well done everyone who entered the winter word search. The missing word was **edam**. The winner of the £25 Amazon voucher was Mrs Carpenter from Hereford.



The word missing from the word search is .....

Name ..... Address .....

The first correct answer drawn from entries will win £25 in Amazon vouchers. Draw closes Friday 27 February 2026. To enter, cut out this section of the page and send it in an envelope to **Connexus, The Gateway, The Auction Yard, Craven Arms, SY7 9BW** or email us your answer (including your full name and address) to **connect@connexus-group.co.uk** - good luck! For full terms and conditions visit the Connexus website.



# Help us keep your home healthy

.....

**Stock condition survey visits are essential to help plan future improvements and check the health of your home.**

If you receive an appointment, please make sure you are in to let our property surveyor team complete the visit. If you can't make the appointment, please let us know by calling **03332 31 32 33** and we'll arrange a more convenient time.

To find out more visit **[connexus-group.co.uk/essentialvisits](https://connexus-group.co.uk/essentialvisits)**