

CONNECT

The magazine for Connexus communities

Summer 2026

New survey partner

Acuity Research to
help collect customer
feedback

Nature on our Doorsteps

Capture nature in your neighbourhood
for a chance to win our competition



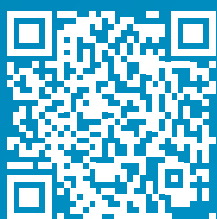
Getting garden smart

Customers in Cleobury Mortimer give
their communal gardens a makeover



Shared Ownership

Looking for a more affordable way to buy your own home?
We advertise Shared Ownership homes available now or coming soon through our website and social media channels.



Shared Ownership lets you buy a share of a home and pay rent on the remaining share, making home ownership more accessible for many people.

To see our current Shared Ownership opportunities, visit **connexus-group.co.uk/shared-ownership** or scan the QR code.

More info: connexus-group.co.uk/properties
03332 31 32 33 • hello@connexus-group.co.uk

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News and stories from where you live.

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A simple guide to how bidding for a home works.

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News and view from chief executive Kate Smith.

In this Issue



Viewpoint

Listening, improving and making summer count



Welcome to your summer edition of Connect.

Inside, you'll find plenty of stories showing how we're working with customers, colleagues and partners to make a difference across our communities.

From new accessible homes in Hereford and refreshed benches in Wem, to young people finding their voice through podcasting and customers helping shape future plans, this issue is full of practical progress and local pride. We're also

sharing important updates on how we're performing, how your feedback is helping us improve, and what happens after you bid for a home. And, because summer is a great time to notice what's around us, don't miss our wildlife photo competition. We hope you enjoy the read, and we'd love to hear what you think.

Sophie

Sophie Mellings
Editor



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, calling our number **03332 31 32 33** or messaging us on social media [@weareconnexus](https://www.instagram.com/weareconnexus)

Community Donation supports vital work

Connexus has donated £3,000 to Shropshire PCAS (Person Centred Advocacy and Support), helping the charity continue its vital work supporting disabled and vulnerable adults across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin.

Based in Oswestry, Shropshire PCAS provides free, independent advocacy services, helping people access support with housing, health, social care, safeguarding and financial issues. The charity

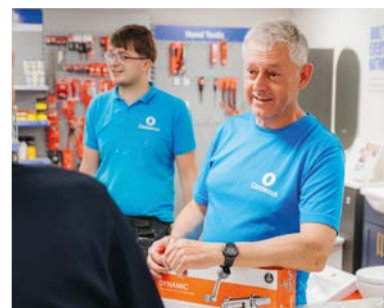
often works with individuals who have complex needs and limited support networks, providing practical help and guidance to enable them to live independently.

Chief operating officer Nick Batt recently visited the charity to present the donation and learn more about its work. Connexus is proud to support organisations like Shropshire PCAS, which play a crucial role in reducing isolation, strengthening communities and helping people thrive.

New materials supply contracts

Connexus has awarded new contracts for plumbing, heating, electrical and general building materials.

The new supplier model will help improve rural coverage, increase access to local merchants and provide more specialist expertise to support services across Connexus communities.





The project will help young people develop new skills

Building confidence through podcasting

Connexus has launched a new podcast training pilot to help young people accessing its support services build confidence, develop skills and share their stories.

Called *Give us a mic*, the project is supported by MRI Software, which has donated podcasting equipment and software licences, and will deliver workshops to help the young people create and

produce their own podcasts.

The project was launched at Ludlow Assembly Rooms with bestselling author and podcaster Alex Bevis and local music artist Macy O, who will continue to support participants throughout 2026.

Working with local partners and charities, the initiative will help young people develop skills, build confidence, and create engaging content.

Revitalised benches ready to serve the Wem community again



Mayor of Wem, Cllr David Parry, with Laura Fullwood from Connexus and John Ralphs from Wem Town Council

Residents and visitors in Wem can once again enjoy the benches on New Street, following refurbishment work carried out through a partnership between Wem Town Council, Connexus and Evans Construction.

Meeting the local need



The two-bedroom accessible bungalow

Four new accessible homes are nearing completion in Hereford, after Connexus transformed an underused parcel of land at The Oval into much-needed housing.

Designed for households on Herefordshire Council's Accessible Homes Register, the development will provide spacious, high-quality homes for people with specific accessibility needs, close to local shops and bus routes.

The scheme includes two three-bedroom dormer bungalows, a two-bedroom bungalow and a five-bedroom home for up to 10 people. The larger property has also been designed to be adaptable in future, helping meet changing local housing needs.

Funded in partnership with Herefordshire Council and Homes England, the development makes effective use of available land while increasing the supply of accessible homes for local people.

From weekly adverts to offer updates, here's a simple guide to how the bidding process works, when you're likely to hear from us and where to look for other housing options.

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Placing a bid on a home can feel like the start of a new chapter, filled with excitement and apprehension, so it is only natural to want to know what happens after you click apply.

Behind the scenes there is a clear process in place. Homes are advertised every Wednesday through Home Point, and if you meet the criteria you can place a bid while the advert is open. Each one stays live for a week, closing the following Wednesday. Once it closes, the landlord (Connexus, for example) receives a list of applicants ranked by housing need and waiting time, and begins reviewing bids from the top of the list down.

Waiting lists

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The waiting can be the hardest part - especially when you are hoping for good news. While every case is different, a useful guide is that if you have not heard from us within two weeks of the advert closing, your bid has not been successful this time. We will only contact you directly if you have been offered the home. Until then, you can still stay informed by logging into your Home Point account, where



Waiting on a property bid?

Here's what happens next

the status of your bids are shown. And if you are offered a property, you will usually be appointed a specific Connexus colleague to take you through the next steps, explain the process, and give you the latest information on when you might be able to move.

Local connections

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For some homes there is an extra step before an offer can be made. These properties have a local connection requirement, which means we need to carry out additional checks before the rest of the pre-offer process can begin. This is part of the planning rules set by the local authority when homes are built, and the

requirements can vary from one county to another, even from one parish to the next. That is why some applicants may be asked to complete a local connection questionnaire. In some cases this might go only to the top bidder, or the first few bidders, while for other homes it may be sent to everyone who applied. It can add a little extra time and effort, but it helps make sure homes are allocated fairly and in line with local rules.

Other options

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If you are not eligible to join the local authority housing register, there may still be other ways to find a home. Customers with the right type



Your Community

Getting gardens smart for summer



Customers and Connexus colleagues busy getting ready for Summer

of tenancy may be able to explore a mutual exchange, where two or more households agree to swap homes (subject to landlord approval). It is also worth keeping an eye on the Connexus website and social media, as we sometimes advertise homes there if they have not been filled through Home Point. And in very exceptional circumstances, we may need to move an existing customer into a vacant home where there is a verified urgent need and management approval.

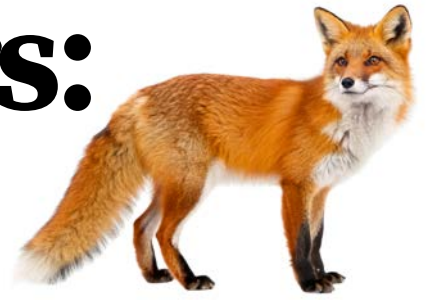
Whatever route you are taking, our aim is to keep you informed and help you understand what your options are every step of the way.

Colleagues from Connexus volunteered their time to help independent living customers in Cleobury Mortimer get their gardens ready for the summer, supporting a range of practical tasks to improve shared outdoor spaces.

During the day colleagues painted benches and garden furniture, tidied communal areas, and worked with customers to refresh flower borders, which helps create a cleaner and more welcoming environment. The volunteering day formed part of Connexus' ongoing commitment to investing in communities, opportunities and skills.



Wildlife wonders: twenty sights to brighten your summer



Summer is a wonderful time to enjoy the natural world around us. There is so much to notice when we take a moment to slow down and look a little closer, whether in the countryside, the local park, or even in your own garden.

We hope this list inspires you, your family and friends to check out just how much wildlife can be found close to home. Tell us how many you ticked off, or send your photos to be in with a chance to win a prize, at the address below!

□ Butterflies

Look for peacocks, commas and marbled whites basking in sunny corners, or speckled woods and holly blues near hedgerows.

□ Bumblebees and honeybees

Look for bees moving busily between nectar-rich flowers such as lavender and foxgloves.

□ Dragonflies and damselflies

Watch them skim ponds and streams in quick flashes of colour.



□ Owls

Listen for tawny owls calling at dusk and watch for them gliding silently along woodland edges and hedgerows.

□ Ladybirds

Look for them resting on leaves or patrolling plants in search of aphids.



□ Hoverflies

Watch for them hovering like tiny helicopters above beds of summer flowers.

□ Grasshoppers

Listen for their soft chirping and watch for sudden leaps through long grass.

□ Swifts

Look up at dusk to see them scything through the sky on warm summer evenings.



□ Common garden birds

Spot robins, blackbirds and chaffinches flitting between feeders, lawns and shrubs.

□ Goldfinches

Look for them gathering on seedheads, especially teasels and thistles, in flickers of red and gold.

□ Woodpeckers

Watch for them among mature trees, moving between trunks with a distinctive bouncing flight.

□ Hedgehogs and bats

Look at dusk for hedgehogs foraging quietly and bats flitting overhead as daylight fades.

□ Foxes

Watch for them appearing cautiously at dawn or dusk near gardens, lanes and open fields.

□ Rabbits

Look for them grazing in grassy clearings, especially in the stillness of early morning.

□ Deer

Watch for them moving along woodland margins and through quiet countryside fields.

□ Orchids

Look for bee orchids, common spotted orchids and other vivid colours in meadows and grasslands.

□ Wild roses and honeysuckle

Notice their scent and colour brightening hedgerows and country lanes.

□ Burnet moths

Look for their striking red and black markings in sunny grasslands.

□ Skylarks

Listen for their song high above open farmland and grassland on clear summer days.

□ Glow-worms

Look for their tiny lights in meadows, grassland and hedgerows on warm summer evenings.

Enter our summer wildlife photo competition



Get up close to get the best pictures

Have you spotted something unusual or rare in your garden, or while out and about this summer? We would love it if you shared it with us.

Send in your photograph for the chance to win a £20 Amazon voucher, with a £10 voucher for our runner-up. The overall winner will be announced in our winter magazine, where we will feature the winning images and celebrate the wonderful wildlife moments spotted by our community.



Britain's favourite butterfly

To enter, simply send your photo, along with your name and where it was taken, to **connect@connexus-group.co.uk** or **Connexus, The Gateway, The Auction Yard, Craven Arms, SY7 9BW**

So, keep your camera or phone close by this summer – you never know what special wildlife moment might be waiting just outside your door.



Bee orchid flower



A stunning display of flowers



Ask Chris

Each issue customer services manager Chris gets to the bottom of your questions. If you have something you'd like answered, please email **connect@connexus-group.co.uk** or write to us at the usual address.

Q: How can I contact Connexus about a repair or general enquiry?

A: There are lots of ways to get in touch with us. For general enquiries and non-emergency repairs, you can use WhatsApp, web chat, email or through the contact form on our website. If you need to report an emergency repair, or would prefer to speak to someone, call **03332 31 32 33**.

Our customer service team can also start a video call to help diagnose repairs quickly. WhatsApp messages can be sent to **07860 003 150** and will be answered during working hours. Please include your name and address. Because WhatsApp Business messages expire after 24 hours, we recommend resending if you contact us after hours on a Friday, over the weekend or on a bank holiday.

Web chat is available weekdays from 10am to 4pm, and email is available 24/7 at **hello@connexus-group.co.uk**.

Security checks still apply when discussing account details, so please have your full address and contact number ready. Opening hours are 8.30am to 5pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and 9.30am to 5pm on Wednesday.

Q: I'm moving to start a new job and will be leaving my property in Hereford. What do I need to do to end my Connexus tenancy?

A: When you're moving out, you must give Connexus at least four weeks' written notice, either by letter or by asking for a Tenancy Termination Form.

Once notice is received, we will confirm your tenancy end date, explain when your keys must be returned and arrange to inspect the property. You remain responsible for paying rent until the tenancy end date.

Before leaving, make sure the property is clean, in good repair and clear of all belongings and rubbish, including in lofts, gardens, sheds and outbuildings.



Gardens should be tidy and not overgrown. If we need to carry out work because the home has been left in poor condition, you may be charged.

You must also take final gas, electricity and water meter readings, pay any outstanding bills and tell your suppliers the date you leave, your readings and your new address. It is also a good idea to redirect your post and inform your council's Benefits Team if you receive Housing Benefit.

Q: I'm worried about rising energy costs and being able to pay my bills. Where can I get help and advice?

A: If you are struggling with energy costs, contact your supplier as soon as possible and explain your situation. Providers are required to help and may be able to offer payment plans or other support. Connexus may be able to help too, with guidance on benefits, emergency funds and other support you may be eligible for. We also work with organisations and charities that may be able to help. Email hello@connexus-group.co.uk or call **03332 31 32 33**. You can also find more information on our Financial support and benefits webpage.



Struggling with energy costs?
Contact your supplier.

Having your say

Could you get involved?



We are encouraging customers to get involved and help shape Connexus services and your community through a range of customer involvement opportunities including panels which review performance and repairs, as well supported housing and anti-social behaviour focus groups, with more initiatives planned for the future.

Whether you can spare a little time or want to take a more active role, there are flexible options to suit everyone.

No previous experience is needed, and support and training is provided throughout. Getting involved can be a great way to build confidence, develop new skills, meet new people and make a positive difference in local communities.

Find out more on the Connexus website:
connexus-group.co.uk/get-involved

Making improvements that matter

Connexus recently received updated gradings following a scheduled regulatory inspection from the Regulator of Social Housing. The assessment, based on discussions with both colleagues and customers, resulted in a G2 for governance, and V2 for financial viability and a C3 grading for consumer standards.

These gradings look at different aspects of how we perform as a business. Governance looks at how well we are run, including decision-making and how those decisions are overseen. Viability assesses

our financial strength and ability to invest in homes and services. The consumer grade reflects how well we meet standards for the quality of homes and services, safety, and how we listen and respond to customers.

Our consumer grading (C3) shows we need to do better, we know this. In particular, we need stronger, more reliable information about our homes and our customers. We recognise this and have already been taking action including a new customer focussed approach, delivered through our Customer Service Strategy – which customers helped to develop.

We've also been introducing new systems and ways of working to help us manage

Feedback New survey partner

Acuity Research are our new independent survey partner, who are working with us to carry out customer telephone surveys about the services we provide. The feedback helps us understand what we're doing well and where we need to improve.

Calls from Acuity Research will come from **01588 676 296** and will only take place between **9am and 8pm Monday to Friday, and 11am to 4pm on Saturdays**. Information about the survey and how to recognise a genuine call is available on the **connexus-group.co.uk/**

customer-feedback-performance page of the Connexus website.

The surveys support our work on Tenant Satisfaction Measures, which are used to monitor how housing

providers are performing in areas such as repairs, safety, communication and complaints handling. We use what customers tell us to shape action plans and keep improving services.

You can provide feedback at any time by contacting us using the details on page 15.



Acuity Research is our new survey partner

Sandpits plans

our homes more effectively, understand your needs, and improving how we communicate and respond. These changes are still being put in place, so while progress is underway, we're not yet able to show their full impact just yet.

Our G2 rating reflects confidence in our plans and leadership, and our V2 rating confirms we are financially stable, though still need to make sure we keep an eye on costs and invest in the right way to benefit our customers.

We know there's more to do, and we're committed to making lasting improvements that make a real difference for our communities. You can find updates on how we're working to improve our services and the outcomes from our regulatory inspection at connexus-group.co.uk/performance

You can read the full regulatory judgement from the Regulator of Social Housing at:



Meeting the community at the latest Sandpits event

Connexus is continuing work to improve the Sandpits estate in Ludlow through a combination of refurbishment and regeneration that could deliver new affordable housing.

Regeneration plans aim to provide a wider range of modern, energy-efficient homes, including family housing, bungalows and accessible properties, while carefully considering the character of the neighbourhood. Alongside this, a final phase of refurbishment will see more existing homes upgraded

with improvements such as new kitchens, bathrooms, windows, roofs, heating and insulation.

Residents have been closely involved in shaping proposals through consultation events, meetings and conversations. Feedback has helped influence plans and highlighted important local priorities, including housing choice, parking and sustainability. Connexus will continue working with residents as proposals develop, ensuring local views remain central to any decisions being made.

Warmer homes investment



We're investing £5.7 million this year to help make more customers' homes warmer, more comfortable and cheaper to run.

This is part of a wider three-year, £10 million programme, supported by Government funding and delivered with our partners at Broad Oak Group and the Midlands Net Zero Hub.

Over the past year, 87 homes have benefited from improvements such as solar panels, loft insulation and air source heat pumps. This year, we'll focus on helping even more customers by carrying out targeted upgrades to homes that are close to meeting modern energy efficiency standards, with improvements tailored to each property.



CEO Kate Smith Acting on feedback

One of the most important things we can do as a housing association is listen.

The decisions we make affect people's homes, neighbourhoods and communities, so customers need genuine opportunities to share their views. Listening helps us understand what matters most, make better decisions and ensure local voices help shape the future.

A good example is the work taking place at Sandpits in Ludlow (page 13). Over the past year, we've spoken with customers, residents and local stakeholders through one-to-one conversations, community drop-in events and ongoing engagement around proposals for the estate.

The feedback we've received has been invaluable. People have told us about the types of

homes they want to see, the importance of maintaining community connections and the need for homes that can meet changing needs over time. Those views have helped shape our thinking and inform the options we're exploring.

We won't always be able to deliver everything people ask for, but we can listen, explain our decisions and continue working alongside customers. That's how we make better decisions and build stronger communities.

Looking ahead, we'll be creating more opportunities for customers to influence services, investment decisions and plans for their neighbourhoods. We'd really appreciate your input and will be offering different ways to get involved, whatever time you have available.



Woody word search

Here's a list of 18 words associated with trees and woodland, but which is missing from the word search?

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

SILVER BIRCH

CYPRESS

ALDER

CHESTNUT

BAOBAB

BEECH

SCOTS PINE

GINKGO

WILLOW

SYCAMORE

SPRUCE

OLIVE

ASH

OAK

MAPLE

SEQUOIA

WALNUT

LARCH



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 16 October 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.

CONNECT

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connect@connexus-group.co.uk

Connexus website

www.connexus-group.co.uk

On social media

@weareconnexus

Next edition due winter 2026.

Well done to everyone who entered the Decor-a-Search word search. The missing word was **Linoleum**. The winner of the £25 Amazon Voucher was Ms Stokes from Ludlow.

Safety starts at your door...

LET ME IN!

We must ensure that the electrical installation and electrical equipment we own in your property is safe.

When we visit to check the electrics in your property we may:

- 🏠 Conduct a visual inspection of the electrics.
- 🏠 Send a qualified, competent electrician, who may undertake a Periodic Inspection which will result in the creation of an EICR.
- 🏠 Carry out any necessary repairs or remedial work.

Please allow up to 4 hours for checks to be completed adequately.

This poster was created by the Electrical Safety Roundtable. Please contact your housing provider if you are concerned about the electrical installation in your property.

