

SUMMER 2009

TENANT'S NEWSLETTER

OUT OF HOURS EMERGENCIES REMINDER

May we politely remind tenants not to telephone Bedford Charter House out of hours, before 8.30am and after 5.00pm Monday to Friday and weekends as the on duty Care Staff are unable to assist you. Please telephone the out of hours helpline on 01234 716421 for assistance. Sheltered housing tenants should use their pullcord in the usual way. Failure to follow these procedures may result in a delay in dealing with the emergency. General repairs can be reported to us Monday to Friday 8.30 to 5.30 by telephoning 01234 321400.



HOLIDAYS/ABSENCES

If you are going to be away from your property for more than 28 consecutive days please can you let us know we require this information for our insurance purposes. If you live in sheltered accommodation please also advise your Scheme Manager.

DIRECT DEBITS

We have, after consultation with our tenants, introduced Direct Debits as a method of paying rent. The advantage of using Direct Debits is that you, as the tenant, do not need to contact your bank and arrange for the payment to be changed whenever an amendment needs to be made to the amount you pay, it happens automatically, although you are always notified in writing of any change.

This makes it less likely that you will inadvertently go into arrears if there is a delay in notifying the bank of a change in the amount due.

If you have not yet signed up to pay by Direct Debit and now wish to do so please can you let our Finance Manager, Sally Austin, know and she will be happy to arrange this for you.



VACANCIES

We have two forthcoming 1 bedroom vacancies at our sheltered housing scheme Maydenbury House, 160 Kimbolton Road, Bedford. Both properties have level access showers. If you are over 60 years of age and wish to be considered for these vacancies please contact either Mrs Price or Mrs Turney in the Housing Department to request a transfer form.

LEVEL ACCESS SHOWER REQUESTS



Are you experiencing difficulty getting in and out of the bath? You will need to contact the OT contact centre on Bedford 276665 to request a referral for an Occupational Therapist's Assessment. If you are living in sheltered housing your Scheme Manager can assist you with this. They will also be able to offer advice on other aids and adaptations you may require. Once your OT report has been received this will be sent with a referral to Anchor Staying Put who will arrange to visit you to discuss further.

METER READINGS – NEW TENANTS

Please ensure that you take meter readings for gas and electricity on the day you move in as failure to do so could result in you being liable for the period before you moved in. If you live in sheltered housing your Scheme Manager will be able to assist you with this.

BENEFIT AND DEBT ADVICE

For benefits advice and help with forms contact Bedford Borough Council on 01234 221797 or email custserv@bedford.gov.uk.

Age Concern also offer an Information, Advice and Support Service and can arrange home visits to help complete benefit application forms and to assess and assist with other matters, where applicable. Please contact them on 01234 360510.

National Debtline FREEPHONE: 0808 808 4000

CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

A new scheme which gives people real choice about council and housing association homes was recently launched in June. This is called Bedfordshire Homefinder. Whilst BCHA will continue to hold our own waiting lists we are required to advertise on the Bedfordshire Homefinder up to 50% of our vacancies in our non-sheltered properties. Applicants can view the adverts on the Bedfordshire Homefinder website or listen to the adverts on a dedicated phone line and can then place 'bids' for properties on the website, phone line or by text. Although the new scheme won't increase the numbers of vacancies coming up, the Bedfordshire Homefinder Partnership believes that better information will help people to make realistic choices about their housing. The new service will also be more transparent and accountable to service users.

To visit the Bedfordshire Homefinder website, go to www.bedfordshirehomefinder.org.uk.



INVITATION TO OUR International Day

Thursday, 30th July 2009 at 2.00pm

At Bedford Charter House

All Welcome

National dress optional

THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION

As tenants will recall from previous newsletters, the National Conversation was the initiative of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), the new regulator of housing associations. www.tenantservicesauthority

Over 26000 tenants nationwide responded to the conversation primarily by completing a postal questionnaire. A small proportion of tenants were

interviewed (1726) and 1725 completed an online questionnaire. Over 76% of tenants completing the questionnaire were very or fairly satisfied with the services they received from their landlord. Tenants said the key priorities for the TSA should be:

Repairs and maintenance of homes
Ensuring reasonable or affordable rents
Keeping homes up-do-date and in a decent condition

Tenants felt the most important services from a landlord were:

Repairs	70%
Health & Safety	40%
Keeping tenants' informed	22%
Dealing with complaints	22%

The full report can be viewed on the TSA website.

This research will influence the regulatory regime that the TSA introduces for Housing Associations.

SUPPORTING PEOPLE PILOT

In conjunction with other housing providers within the area BCHA have been invited to join in with a small pilot for Bedford Borough Council Supporting People Team. This is to identify older people in the community who are not currently living in sheltered housing but who may be interested in receiving some form of support, mainly a visit from a Scheme Manager and provision of a call alarm or pendant.

The pilot will run for approximately six months and will be entirely free of charge to those taking part. At the end of the pilot, it will be decided by the Supporting People Team if this will become a longer term service and a charge may then be applicable.

However for those in receipt of housing benefit, supporting people would cover the cost of the service.

If you wish take part in the pilot or require further information please contact either myself or Helen Turney on 01234 321400.

HEALTH & SAFETY

We have been contacted recently by concerned tenants who have voiced their concerns regarding the following:-

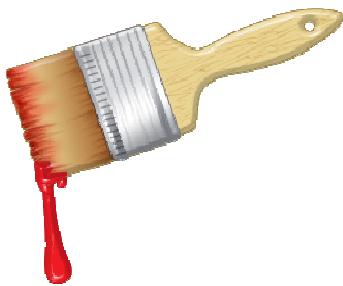
Security of premises – please ensure you or your visitors close the main front doors. Some of our main front doors have not been secured recently.

Use of fire exits – please refrain from using first floor fire escape routes as a means of exiting the buildings. These exits are only to be used in the event of an emergency.

Feeding the birds – although some tenants may enjoy feeding the birds this does create mess and also attracts other vermin such as rats into the communal gardens. Please can we therefore politely request that you do not feed the birds.

Thank you for your kind co-operation.

FORTHCOMING DECORATING WORKS



We will be carrying out cyclical decorating of the communal areas at the schemes listed below. We will contact you again to consult regarding colour schemes and to advise commencement dates as access will be required to enable individual flat doors to be decorated where applicable.

Hurst Grove – external areas only
Conduit Rd – internal and external
Maydenbury House – external areas only

Many thanks for your kind assistance in this matter.

If you have any articles or items for inclusion in our tenants' newsletter please forward these to Mrs Price

If you would like a copy of this newsletter in larger print or another format please contact us.