

SEVEN LOCKS



HOUSING





NEWS

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Issue 2



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Strong Foundations, Stronger Communities...

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Dear readers

It was good to meet so many of you at our first customer conference in December. The contributions customers made in the workshops will inform service improvements planned for this year.

Customer involvement will continue in our best value reviews of grounds maintenance and aids and adaptations. Your feedback really matters, so look out for other ways in which you can be involved.

Seven Locks isn't just about housing and services, we also want to provide opportunities for our customers and communities. So we are very excited about the launch of our Partnership Apprenticeship Scheme and the opportunity to get a university qualification provided by our Social Housing Governance Award. It is good to be able to provide some really positive news on the jobs front at this difficult time.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of the newsletter.

*Deborah Bennett
Executive Director*

Knowing you helps shape services

It is important that Seven Locks Housing has up to date information about its customers because this helps us shape services to your needs.

So we would like to say a big thank you to all of you who completed the Customer Profile survey we sent to you in November. More than 500 were returned.

The information collected is confidential and will be used to improve services that you have identified as important to you.

We would like to thank those of you who said you would like to be involved in future consultation. We will contact you soon.

If you did not complete the survey the first time around and would like another copy please contact Deborah Floody, Customer Relations Manager, on [01858 414540](tel:01858414540) or email deborah.floody@sevenlockshousing.co.uk



In it, to win it!

Tenants Richard and Ann Parr proved you have to be "in it, to win it" when they won a £50 shopping voucher in the Customer Profile prize draw.

The couple from Tilton-on-the-Hill were the first to be drawn out of the hat after we promised to enter the names of all of the tenants who completed and returned the survey.

The Parr's used their voucher to put towards a new washing machine, after their old one had broken.

Review of ASB policy underway

As part of our promise to take a firm line against people who abuse their homes, Seven Locks Housing is looking closely at how we deal with anti-social behaviour.

We are working with the Board and 7Locks Tenants' Association to review the policy. Procedures and guidance for staff are being developed.

As part of our work in the community, we have sponsored Respect Agenda handbooks for Year 9 pupils at Thomas Estley Community College in Broughton Astley. These books provide help and advice on issues like bullying and harassment.

This is our way of giving something back to the College, where children are working with sheltered housing residents to develop a sensory garden.

Apprentices build for the future

Seven Locks Housing has launched a Partnership Apprenticeship Scheme - providing employment and training opportunities for local young people.

Working with our contractors, Lovell and Connaught Partnerships Ltd, the apprenticeship scheme provides on site work experience and the opportunity to study at college.

Deborah Bennett, Executive Director of Seven Locks Housing, said: "Given the current economic climate we are delighted to be able to provide young people with the opportunity to join us on an apprenticeship scheme.

"Seven Locks Housing is more than just a landlord, we are also a significant employer in the district. We look forward to working with our partners to provide further employment opportunities to local people."

Lovell, Connaught and Seven Locks Housing hosted two open events in October for interested tenants and their families. The application and interview process followed and three apprentices have now been appointed.

David Hinchley, Connaught operations manager, said: "While working with Seven Locks Housing, Connaught is determined, where possible, to



Looking forward to the future: from left, apprentices Craig Adams, Ethan Wright and Jason Rao are all settling into their new jobs

use local, skilled employees and we are hopeful that the Partnership Apprenticeship Scheme will provide opportunities to extend this even further."

Lovell regional training advisor Emma Giles added: "Creating training and employment opportunities in the areas where we work is a key part of our commitment to community involvement."

You're hired

Here we introduce you to the new recruits who were appointed through the Partnership Apprenticeship Scheme.

The apprentices will be working on the £35 million improvement programme for homes. They will also attend Stephenson College in Coalville on block placements to study for an NVQ in General Maintenance.



Ethan Wright, 18, lives in Lutterworth with his parents who are tenants. The keen rugby player, who has played at county level, was a pupil at Lutterworth College. He got his interest in construction from family members.



Craig Adams, 21, lives in Lutterworth with his grandmother who is a tenant. Craig attended Lutterworth College and is enjoying his new role.



Jason Rao, 23, was made redundant in the autumn. After Connaught heard his plight they offered him a post and allowed him to continue his studies. Jason lives in Fleckney and his grandmother is a tenant.

"Pride in our Homes" gardening competition

Seven Locks Housing is launching its first gardening competition - "Pride in our Homes".

Tenants are invited to enter their blooming marvellous displays in one or more of the categories.

Judith Burdett, Chair of the Board, said: "We are hoping that many of you will enter Seven Locks first gardening competition. There are five categories that tenants can enter and there are vouchers up for grabs as prizes."

Categories and prizes

Best Container Prize	£25 vouchers
Best Patio	£35 vouchers
Best Flower Garden	£55 vouchers
Best Vegetable Garden	£55 vouchers
Best Overall Garden	£110 vouchers

Registration for entries will take place during the first week of June and registration forms will be available from Tuesday 26th May until Friday 5th June.

Forms will be available by calling Customer Services on 01858 414500 or to download from our website www.sevenlockshousing.co.uk Tenants living in sheltered schemes can ask their scheme manager for a form.

Preliminary judging will begin on Monday 13th July. The judging criteria will be based on colour, form, variety and health of the plants. The final round of judging will take place w/c 20th July.

The winners will be announced in the October issue.



Be part of the future

Would you like 2009 to be the year you gain a university qualification and help shape the future of Seven Locks Housing?

Seven Locks Housing is offering tenants who are interested in becoming a Board Member the opportunity to study for the Social Housing Governance Award.

The six week training course is free and delivered locally. Developed by Trent and Dove Housing Association it gives an understanding of the role and duties of a housing association Board Member and current issues facing the housing sector.

Fanuel Magaya, a Trent and Dove Housing Association tenant who has completed the course, said: "It was a real eye opener. I know it will be invaluable to me if I am successfully elected as a board member. I have learnt a lot that will help me with my current job and studies."

On finishing the course you would have the opportunity to put yourself forward for any vacant tenant Board Member places that become available. A nomination and election process would then take place.

We currently have one vacancy on our Board for a tenant to join us.

For more information contact Deborah Bennett, Executive Director, on 01858 414537 or email deborah.bennett@sevenlockshousing.co.uk



Customer conference

Seven Locks Housing used its customer conference in December to gather your views about important improvements it is planning to the services you receive.

The day demonstrated our commitment to customer involvement and proved that many of you do want to be involved in how service improvements are shaped.

Customers were invited to attend a series of workshops at the event covering our:

- **Financial inclusion** - the group helped us to develop our financial inclusion package. This useful money management advice service will be available to customers in the early summer.
- **Grounds maintenance** - a Best Value review of the service is due, so finding out what your priorities are was important to us. Customers have signed up to take part.
- **Disability Action Group** - a group of enthusiastic customers have said they would like to be involved in the Best Value Review of our Aids and Adaptations Service. We have also boosted membership to the Disability Action Group.
- **Anti-social Behaviour Policy** - customers read and commented on our new Anti-social Behaviour Policy and procedure.

Thanks to all of our customers who attended. The feedback we received has been positive with 34% of those who attended saying the day met their expectations and 65% saying it exceeded theirs.

Pay your rent by Direct Debit

Have you considered paying your rent by Direct Debit? As long as you have a bank account it is a hassle free way of paying.

Setting up a Direct Debit means the payment amount is taken straight from your bank account each month.

Once it is set up you do not have to worry about remembering to renew it each year - unlike a Standing Order.

Payment by Direct Debit is completely flexible. You can pay weekly, fortnightly, four-weekly or monthly, which ever suits you best.

It also means that if you receive Housing Benefit and the amount you get changes, your Direct Debit amount will automatically change, once we have been notified. The new payment will not come out for at least 10 working days so you have time to contact us if you have any questions.



Rent payment cards

If you currently pay by Standing Order we will be writing to you to see if you would like to switch to Direct Debit. Switching is easy.

For more information contact the rents team on 01858 414507 or 414508.

Keep your rent payment cards safe because, unlike previous years, you will not be issued with a new rent card. The rent payment cards issued last year will remain active and do not expire. Replacements can be issued for lost or damaged cards.

Closure of Woolworths

Following the recent closure of all Woolworths stores, we regret to inform tenants that making rent payments there is no longer possible. All other payment outlets are still available.

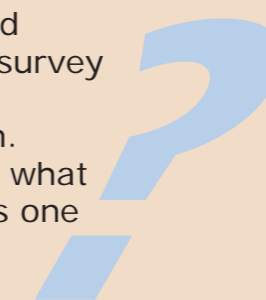
Customer survey

Every three years, Seven Locks Housing is required to carry out a customer survey called a STATUS survey. This survey will ask questions about your landlord and the services delivered.

Our first STATUS survey will take place in early summer and, if you are randomly selected to take part, we will contact you with more information. The survey will then take place by telephone.

Are you satisfied?

If your home is being improved you will receive a satisfaction survey when the work is complete. Please take the time to fill it in. It is important that you tell us what you think of the service as it is one of the ways that Seven Locks Housing measures the performance of our contractors.



7 Locks Housing Tenants Association

The latest news
from 7Locks
Housing Tenants'
Association

Chairman's Corner

It's fair to say we all realise the credit crunch is here and we're wondering how we can save money? Turning the heating down two degrees, switching off lights when leaving a room, installing energy saving light bulbs and using your washing line instead of the dryer are all practical solutions. But can we go one step further?

How about growing your own vegetables? If you are a keen gardener you may be interested in entering the "Pride in our Homes" gardening competition.

I met PC Andy Smalley at the Customer Conference and invited him to our next tenants' association meeting. PC Smalley has a particular interest in working in partnership to address problems of anti-social behaviour.

Dealing with anti-social behaviour causes a strain on police time. The topic is constantly in the media and housing providers need strong partnerships to deal with it.

PC Smalley has asked that we work with them to identify problem areas or incidents and report them to the police as they happen. We have been told that all information given will be kept confidential. Why not pick up the phone and call PC Smalley on 0116 222 2222 ext 3914 to see how you can help in your area.

I am always interested in your concerns. If you have an issue that remains unresolved after contacting Seven Locks Housing, then write to me at the Tenants' Resource Centre, Brooklands Gardens, Walcot Road, Market Harborough.

Stan Parsons, Chairman

A seat on EMTPF

Freda Carnell realises being a member of 7Locks Housing Tenants' Association has opened doors to getting involved in local, regional and national housing issues.

She is 7Locks Housing Tenants' Association's representative on the East Midlands Tenant Participation Forum (EMTPF).

Tracey Silk is Seven Locks' representative on EMTPF, if you would like to find out more contact Tracey, details on the back page.



Community focus on – Billesdon

With a church, a pub and village green, call in to the local if you are in need of a feast.

Billesdon is compact and quiet, as the bypass takes traffic east.

This development in 1986 left the village with a sense of peace.

As the lanes rise and fall with twists and turns, around every corner there is a wonderful view.

Take the time to walk where the lanes show their history.

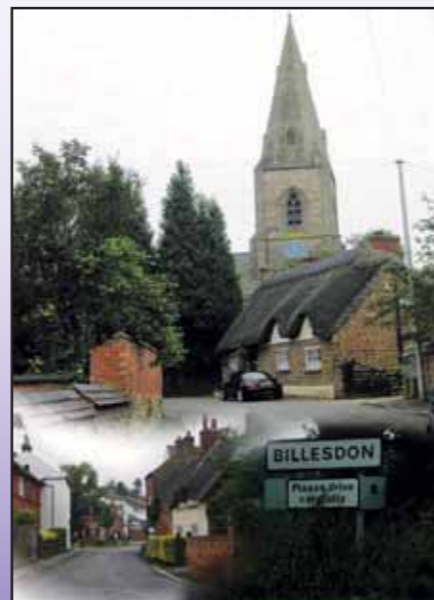
With a mention in the Domesday Book and a church dating from 1162.

There is a real sense of the old and the new.

Billesdon is a vibrant village. There is an active drama group, a dancing school, the Women's Institute and various keep fit classes. The local chapel offers transport to and from its fortnightly Friday afternoon lunch. The village has a primary school, a doctor's surgery and a Post Office.

Log onto www.leicestershirevillages.com/billesdon to find out more.

So what is Seven Locks Housing doing in Billesdon? Look out for information about the refurbishment underway at Knights Close in the next newsletter!



Pride in our homes

We are working hard to improve services to all of our properties, including flats with communal entrances.

As your landlord we are responsible for repairing and maintaining these communal areas, residents also have a responsibility to keep them clean and clear.

We have begun a review of the services we provide to communal areas, and how they are funded.

To get us started we will carry out a one-off clean to the internal entrances, hall, stairs, landings and windows of these blocks.

Residents have been contacted and we have provided skips to help them get rid of bulky rubbish.

During the review we will work with residents to make sure the project is a long term success. Together we can make sure that the communal entrances, communal gardens and areas around these homes are maintained to a high standard - giving us all pride in our homes.

The National Conversation

The new Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is giving tenants the chance to have their say about standards in social housing.

The TSA is the new regulator for homes owned by housing associations like Seven Locks Housing and takes the place of the Housing Corporation.

The first thing the TSA needs to do is draw up a brand new set of standards for all social landlords. The TSA will then use these standards to monitor how housing associations do in achieving them - and taking action against those who don't.

The TSA is going to listen to tenants across England to help them understand what you want to see in the new standards. It is calling this 'the National Conversation', and it was launched on 19th January.

Members of 7Locks Tenants' Association attended a regional event in February. Seven Locks Housing held local events in February and will feed back your views to the TSA.

Have your views heard by completing an online questionnaire and get more information on the TSA website:

www.nationalconversation.co.uk

SITUATIONS VACANT

Budding newshounds

Have you found the newsletter interesting?
Could you help us produce articles?

If the answer is yes, you may be interested in joining the Seven Locks Housing News' editorial panel.

For more information contact Deborah Floody, Customer Relations Manager, on 01858 414540 or email deborah.floody@sevenlockshousing.co.uk

Mystery Shoppers

Do you want to help Seven Locks Housing improve the services you receive?

If so, why not volunteer to become a Mystery Shopper.

As a Mystery Shopper you will test parts of the service and let us know the standard of help you have received. This could include ringing to book a repair or reporting an incident of anti-social behaviour.

We want to measure the level of service we are providing and what better way for us to do this than by getting our customers involved.

This is an opportunity for you to work with us to improve housing services. Full training will be given.

For more information contact Tracey Silk, Tenant Participation Officer, contact details on back page.



Tell us what you think

Now you have read the newsletter we want to hear what you think. Please complete this short survey and return to Deborah Floody, Customer Relations Manager at Seven Locks Housing. Alternatively, you can email your views to deborah.floody@sevenlockshousing.co.uk

What do you think of Seven Locks Housing News?

Do you have any other comments:

Competition time

Congratulations to George Burdett of Swinford who won the £20 voucher in last edition's competition.

Do you want to be in with a chance of winning a £20 voucher? See if you can spot the answer to this question, which is hidden somewhere in the text of this newsletter.

In which year was the road bypassing Billesdon built?

Please fill in your comments above and your answer below, with your name and address, and return to: Deborah Floody, Customer Relations Manager at Seven Locks Housing.

Answer:

Name:

Address:

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HOW TO CONTACT US

Seven Locks Housing

1A Anson House, 8 Compass Point, Northampton Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 9HW

Opening times

Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm

Telephone: Customer Services

01858 414500

Email: info@sevenlockshousing.co.uk

Web: www.sevenlockshousing.co.uk

For all customer involvement enquiries contact Tracey Silk on 01858 414519

Repairs freephone 0800 1300 365

No matter what time you call to report a repair, even if it is out of hours, please call the repairs freephone number.

We hold weekly surgeries at Lutterworth Service Shop. You can make an appointment to see your housing manager or drop in to discuss any housing issues on: Monday and Thursday from 9.30am to 12.30pm and 1.30pm to 4.30pm.



Equality and Diversity Statement

- This document is also available in other languages, large print and audio format upon request. Contact Customer Services on **01858 414 500**
- આ દસ્તાવેજ વિનંતી કરવાથી બીજી ભાષાઓ, મોટા છાપેલા અક્ષરો અથવા ઓડિઓ રચનામાં પણ મળી રહેશે.
- अनुरोध पर यह दस्तावेज़ अन्य भाषाओं में, बड़े अक्षरों की छपाई और सुनने वाले माध्यम पर भी उपलब्ध है
- Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany także w innych wersjach językowych, w wdużym druku lub w formacie audio.
- ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ 'ਤੇ ਰਿਕਾਰਡ ਹੋਇਆ ਵੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਲਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।
- Anson House has hearing loop systems in reception, interview rooms and the Boardroom and a minicom service.