

The newsletter for
Seven Locks Housing
tenants

SEVEN LOCKS



HOUSING

living

JANUARY 2011
ISSUE 8

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for less

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Strong Foundations, Stronger Communities...

Dear readers...

Seven Locks Housing was three years old in December and during this time we have made many changes.



The Status customer survey (see page 6) told us how pleased you are with these changes, particularly the improvements to your homes and to our standards of customer service. Some changes have been more challenging than others.

One of our biggest challenges has been getting charges for services on a proper footing. We want to make sure they are fair and that our customers are paying the right amount for the right services.

Many of you who live in general needs accommodation are currently paying service charges through your rent. The work we are doing now will take the cost out of rent. This means your rent will reduce by the cost of the service charge. We will charge for the services you receive separately. If you live in our sheltered accommodation you will always have paid a service charge separate to your rent

This work means that for the first time you will be able to see what the services you are paying for cost. Where you think costs are high you can ask us to explain why. The work we have done has already highlighted, for example, that the cost of lighting communal staircases in our blocks of flats varies significantly and we will be investigating this.

I know you will be worried about affordability. Remember, if you are paying service charges for the first time, your rent will reduce by the cost of the service charge. In most cases if you already qualify for Housing Benefit, this will cover the cost of the services. Housing Benefit does not now, and will not cover the cost of providing heating or hot water to individual flats. If you do not qualify for Housing Benefit and have any worries about affording the charges please speak to your Area Housing Officer about your concerns.

Are there services that Seven Locks Housing could provide that would benefit you and your community? Now that the charges for the services you currently receive are identified and fair, and you know what services cost we will be talking to you about what additional services you might choose to buy in the future.

Deborah Bennett – Executive Director

Seven Locks sheltered tenants 'have a go'



Our Sheltered Scheme Managers have been working in partnership with Harborough's Active Together team, bringing social activities to our tenants in the Harborough Priority Neighbourhood area.



Wii™

The Action Group organised 'Have a go Wednesday' last September at Naseby Community Hall, our popular community venue. Tenants from nearby sheltered schemes were invited to the pilot event to gauge interest in attending regular activities.

Around 18 of our tenants took up the challenge. Trying out a range of arts and crafts activities, healthy eating and picking up some handy computer and internet skills.

John Piggot attended and really enjoyed the event. He said: "I spent some time learning how to use a computer and can now use two fingers instead of my usual one.

"I also thoroughly enjoyed the food stall with healthy eating ideas and am now a committed Red Bush tea drinker."

Last year, we also worked with the Active Together Harborough Team and the Action Group to bring Wii Sports to Naseby Community Hall and Huntingdon Gardens sheltered scheme.

Clover Court Extra Care Scheme enjoyed Armchair Aerobics, which has proved beneficial in preventing and recovering from falls.

Seven Locks has given a donation to help to buy the Wii equipment. We are planning to roll out Wii Sports events and Armchair Aerobics to more of our sheltered schemes this year.

Active Together Harborough is looking for relatives, friends of tenants or willing volunteers to help set up a regular Wii-Sports sessions within our Harborough Sheltered schemes.

All volunteers will be required to have a CRB check carried out. If this is something that you could devote some time to and would like further information, please contact Zoe Calder, Physical Activity Development Officer of the Active Together Harborough team on 01858 821276.

Stay warm for less

Now that winter is here and we have had a spell of cold weather, the energy companies are putting up their prices again.

To help you save money and keep warm this winter, the following measures could help to reduce your heating bills:

- See if your energy supplier offers a discount if you have your gas and electricity supplied by the same company. This is known as a dual fuel and can save you money.
- If you only use electricity to heat your home, make sure you have the right meter and are on the right tariff. Electric heating systems are most cost effective if you use:
 - Economy 10
 - Whole House Rate
 - Energy Fit (comes with a usage monitor)
 - Energy Plan 22
 - Staywarm
- Make sure you have enough insulation in your loft. We have a programme to improve the insulation in our properties.
- Use the room stat on your heating system to control the temperature in your house and have the boiler set at quite a high level (approximately 60°C).
- If you have a debt with an energy company and cannot change to a cheaper supplier look at this website www.edfenergytrust.org.uk. They may be able to help you with a grant or advice.
- Turn things off, not just standby. If you leave a computer monitor on, even if the computer

is turned off, it will cost you up to 5p/hr. This may not sound much but this will soon add up. It could be costing you £5 per week. The cost of putting your TV on standby will be less, but not much.

When you are not using a room, turn the radiator valve down to 1 or 2 and keep the door shut. This will stop any leaks and keep your home warmer.

If you are at home all day, it is usually cheaper to have the heating on at a lower setting e.g. 15°C than at a higher setting e.g. 22°C for only a few hours a day. This is because a constant lower level will warm up the whole house, including the walls.

You can get more advice on energy saving tips from the Energy Saving Trust web site at www.energysavingtrust.org.uk



Helping you manage condensation in your home

Condensation mainly happens in the winter when moist air comes into contact with air or a surface that is at a lower temperature. This causes water droplets to form.

When this happens on your window, the glass mists up and drops of water run down the window.

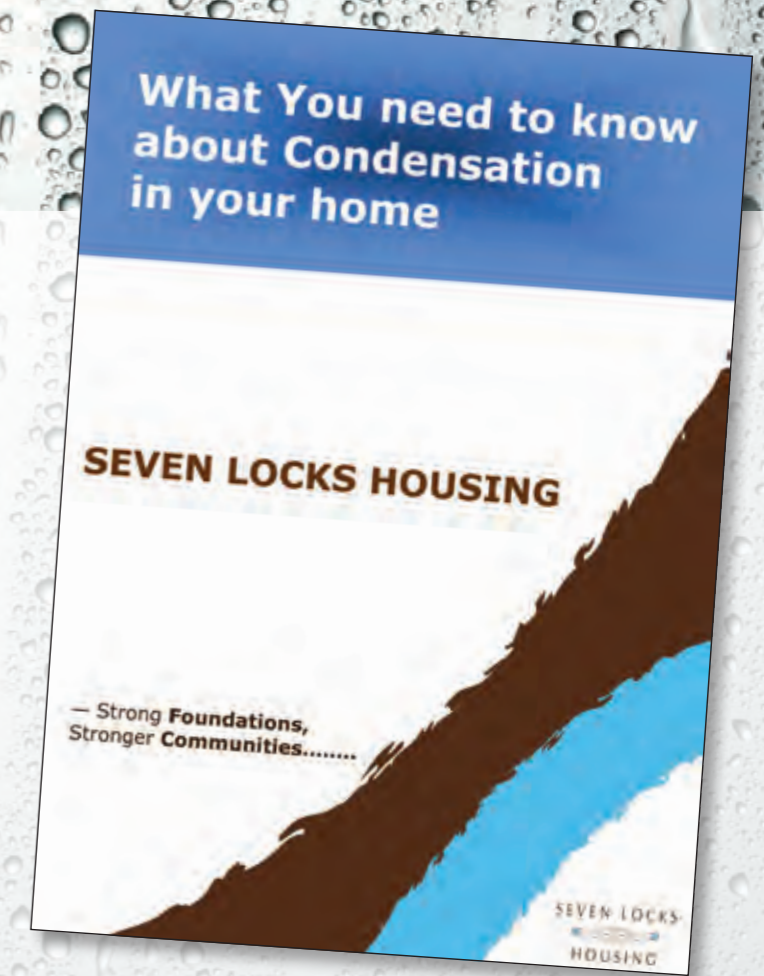
When it happens on a wall, the wall soaks up the moisture and becomes damp. Mould can then grow on the damp areas.

Moisture comes from the following sources within a house:

- We produce water vapour during normal day-to-day activities.
- Our bodies produce moisture all the time when we breathe.
- We put lots of moisture into the air when we bath or shower, cook or wash the dishes.
- Drying clothes indoors.

The best way to manage condensation is to keep your home warm and well ventilated.

Simple things like opening a window and shutting the bathroom door when having a bath or shower help.



If you have extractor fans in kitchens and or bathrooms always use them.

If you have mould growth in your home because of condensation, generally, it is easily removed.

It can be wiped off using a disposable cloth and a general household cleaner. To stop the mould growing back wipe over the area every few days using diluted household cleaner.

Seven Locks Housing has produced an information leaflet 'What you need to know about condensation in your home'.

If you would like a copy of this leaflet we will happily send you one in the post. Please contact Customer Service on 01858 414500.

How STATUS information helps us tailor our services to meet your needs?

Cost effective ways to contact us

To make it affordable for you to contact us to report a repair, which 77% of respondents had done in the last 12 months, we introduced our freephone **0800 1300 365** number.

We now realise that many of you use mobile phones to contact us. Calls to freephone numbers are free from landlines, but are charged at varying rates from mobile phones.

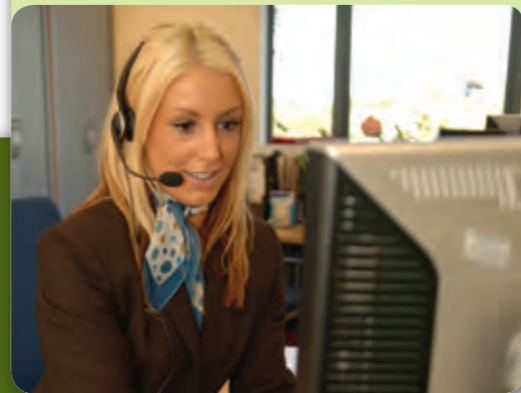
We will be checking to make sure that the 0800 1300 365 service is the most cost effective way for you to contact us.

We are very proud to publish the results of our STATUS Survey. What you have told us shows that our customer focus is working to improve satisfaction with our services.

- **92%** satisfaction with Seven Locks Housing as your landlord.
- **95%** satisfaction with your neighbourhood as a place to live.
- **93%** satisfaction with the general condition of your home.
- **91%** satisfied that the rent represented good value for money.
- **88%** satisfied with how we dealt with your enquiries.
- **89%** found staff helpful.
- **85%** satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service.
- **87%** feel that Seven Locks Housing keep you informed.
- **65%** thought that their views were taken into account.

We are beginning to use some of the information that your STATUS responses provide to tailor our services to meet your needs.

89% of people who completed the STATUS survey said that they had contacted us by telephone in the last 12 months



Improving your neighbourhood

The STATUS survey said **95%** of people who completed the survey were satisfied with their neighbourhood.

However, when asked about problems in the area, by far, the biggest concern was car parking.

Using our Environmental Improvements Budget we will be looking to see if it is possible to make improvements to car parking arrangements at sheltered schemes and in areas where we have general needs properties.

The second issue raised was rubbish and litter. Housing Officers will be looking at this during the estate inspections.

Consultation with you will be a major part of improving all of these services. If you are asked your opinion, please take the time to tell us what you think.

95% of people who completed the survey are satisfied



Mrs Helmore of Brooklands Gardens, winner of our STATUS survey prize draw receiving her £50 prize.

Keeping our most vulnerable customers safe

Earlier this year, one of our tenants had a problem that meant that emergency services needed to get into the property.

Due to the circumstances, entry was only possible by damaging the door.

To save the upset and delay this may cause in the future, we have now fitted key safes to many of our properties. These key safes are now available for tenants to use.

People who use them decide their own code for the safe. The Lifeline operators, our 24 hour service for vulnerable residents, have been notified of each individual code.

Now, if the emergency services need to get in to help someone, they contact Lifeline.

After security checks are complete, Lifeline will provide the code. This means that these properties can be accessed quickly and safely in an emergency.

Many of our customers who have had the key safes fitted have contacted us and said they thought it was a wonderful idea which provides peace of mind.

A very costly exercise!

Refusing to let us in to carry out an annual gas safety check can end in court and leave you with a hefty bill.

As your landlord, we have a legal duty to carry out an annual gas safety test in every one of our properties. These checks are carried out by Jeakins Weir.

We do everything we can to comply with this duty which ensures the safety of every tenant that has a gas appliance in their home.

Last year, two tenants did not allow Jeakins Weir into their homes to carry out the test.

Their failure to respond to appointment cards, letters and solicitors' letters, left us with no option other than to apply to the Court for an injunction to force entry to carry out the test.

After proving to the Court that we had tried to contact the tenants on a number of occasions injunctions were granted.

As a result, all of the Court costs – approximately £750 for each one – will be charged to these tenants. Until it is paid in full, it may also have an impact on their ability to get credit or to move home.

The Court action and this debt could so easily have been avoided if our contractors had been given access. The test only takes an hour and requires tenants to be available for half a day.

We will be contacting all of you again this year to arrange the annual gas safety test.

Help us to help you by getting the test done as soon as you are contacted. It will make sure that you are not at risk from unsafe gas appliances that could lead to carbon monoxide poisoning.



Supporting People Update

In November we visited our sheltered housing schemes to talk to residents about reviewing support services.

These services are funded by Supporting People through Leicestershire County Council.

At these meetings we advised residents that we awaited Leicester County Council's announcement about the specification to continue to deliver services.

Unfortunately, this announcement has not been made. Leaving us unable to give you more information at the moment.

Rest assured when we have this information we will be visiting all schemes to discuss and explain the issues further.



How are we doing?



Below is a table which explains how we've been performing in key areas for the period to the end of September 2010. The performance in key areas relates to issues raised in December 2009 customer survey comments.

KEY: Are we meeting our targets?

- Meeting or exceeding target
- Marginally below target*
- Significantly below target

KEY: Are we getting better?

- Performance improved against last quarter
- Performance has remained the same against last quarter*
- Performance deteriorated against last quarter

*Tolerance 5%

*Tolerance 1%

Performance in key areas	Year end 2009/10 March	Target 2010/11	Performance 30/06/10	Performance 30/09/10	Are we on target?	Are we getting better?
% of emergency repairs completed on time	99.99%	100%	99.99%	100%		
% of customers satisfied with completed responsive repairs	95.30%	95%	94%	94.60%		
% of telephone calls returned within 24 hours	89.52%	90%	90.12%	97.18%		
% of letters responded to within 10 working days	89.08%	95%	87%	85.26%		
% of initial response times to Anti-Social Behaviour cases (1-5 working days)	100%	100%	88%	87.5%		
% of rent arrears	1.98%	2.6%	2.79%	2.20%		
Average days to re-let a general needs dwelling	29.46 days	26 days	22.6 days	26.29 days		
% of support plans reviewed (sheltered schemes)	93.30%	86%	84.84%	27.49%		

Adapting your home to meet your needs

Some of you who completed our Customer Profile Survey told us that your home may need to be adapted to meet your changing needs.

This year we will be writing to those of you who have indicated that you may need some assistance.

It could be something as simple as a grab rail at your front or back door or to help you get in and out of the bath.

Other people may need a major adaptation - a level access shower or a downstairs toilet.

Not all properties are suitable for all adaptations. If this is the case we will talk to you about a move to more suitable accommodation.

We have introduced an Aids and Adaptations Service Standard as a result of feedback and consultation with customers who have used our Aids and Adaptations Service.

This is used when you apply for an aid or adaption to your home.

It tells you what to expect from us and gives you an idea of how long things will take. When we have completed the adaptation the standard is used to check if you are satisfied.



Seven Locks Housing
SERVICE STANDARDS
 What you can expect from our
AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS SERVICE

We Will:-

- Provide clear information and advice about what may be available to you
- Acknowledge receipt of all adaptations requests within 10 working days and give you the name of the person who is dealing with your request
- Keep you informed throughout the process
- Complete Minor Adaptations within 28 working days
- Complete Major Adaptations for Level Access Showers, Stair Lifts and Ramps within 20 weeks
- For all other Major Adaptations we will agree a timescale with you.

If you would like to talk to us about Aids and Adaptations
Telephone: 01858 414500
Or email: info@sevenlockshousing.co.uk

D. Bennett
 Deborah Bennett
 Executive Director

S Conway
 Sarah Conway
 Chair of the Board

Dated 17th March 2010
 - Strong Foundations,
 Stronger Communities.....

Service Charge

In the October newsletter we answered some of the most frequently asked questions about service charges.

Since then we have completed a great deal of work to check and be clear about the actual costs of providing our services. We are also calculating our estimated costs for services in the new financial year.

Every customer received a letter in January with more information and we will be sending a formal notice before the end of February 2011.

We want to make every effort to help you to understand the charges. If you need further information please talk to your Area Housing Officer.



Update
January 2011

Build your confidence

The Adult Learning Service is running a new six week course to show you that it is possible to feel more positive about yourself and your skills.

Life is full of opportunities but a lack of confidence can hold you back. Do you dread meeting new people, job interviews or standing up for yourself?

If you have answered yes to any of the above the six week Build Your Confidence course could be for you.

In early February, Market Harborough residents will receive a leaflet through your

door about different services available to people living in the town.

You'll be able to find out more about training providers, where to go for careers advice and information about Clockwise, the local credit union.

If you would like to know more about the Build Your Confidence course please call Lesley Sluman on 01858 468407.

Leicestershire Adult Learning Service

Build your confidence

FREE COURSE!

Starting Monday 28th February

10.00-12.00 for 6 weeks
 Coventry Road, Market Harborough

No experience or qualifications necessary

If you are interested ring
Lesley Sluman on 01858 468407



Useful contacts

Area Housing Officers

Ken McDonald – 01858 414518
Sarah Edwards – 01858 414515
Cheryl Latham – 01858 414517
Wendy Beaumont – 01858 414516



Customer services

01858 414500
email: info@sevenlockshousing.co.uk

Customer Involvement

Tracey Silk – 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.

Tenancy Services Manager

01858 414514

Aids and Adaptations

Howard Skip - 01858 414525
Nick Munns – 01858 414526

Modernisation and improvement programme

Sam Steer – 01858 414530
Catherine Searcey – 01858 414530

Customer Relations Manager

Deborah Floody – 01858 414540

Address

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

Website

www.sevenlockshousing.co.uk

Opening times

Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm
On the first Wednesday of every month staff training will take place and we will open at 9.30am
To discuss Housing issues you can contact your Area Housing Officer to make an appointment for a visit to your home.

100th birthday celebrations

Clarice Lygo, Elsie Calvert and Harry Spooner all celebrated 100th Birthdays last year. We make a presentation of flowers for all 100th birthdays.



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
અથવા અક્ષરો અથવા ઓડિઓ રચનામાં પણ મળી રહેશે.

अनुरोध पर यह दस्तावेज 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 ਖਾਸ਼ਾਮਾ ਵਿਚ, ਬੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਆਡੀਓ
ਟੇਪ ਤੇ ਰਿਕਾਰਡ ਹੋਇਆ ਵੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਲਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ.

Anson House has a hearing loop systems in reception,
interview rooms and the Boardroom and a minicom
service.