

SEVEN LOCKS



HOUSING




NEWS

www.sevenlockshousing.co.uk

OCTOBER 2010

Issue 7

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Strong Foundations, Stronger Communities...

Garden parties

In our last newsletter we told you that we wanted some of you to join us in celebrating our achievement of delivering our major improvement programme ahead of schedule.

Unfortunately we had to cancel the children's tea parties as very few people replied to the invitations.

However, the garden parties at our sheltered schemes were a roaring success.

We decided on themed garden parties as we knew we couldn't rely on the weather. Not wanting any rain on our parade we brought the outside inside and decked the communal rooms with vibrant flowers.

Residents were entertained by Phil Ski, Mike James-Smith and Our Flossie who encouraged those present to sing and dance along.



Dear readers...

Along with this edition of our newsletter you will find your copy of **Seven Locks Housings' first Annual Report for tenants. I hope you enjoy reading it.**



Deborah Bennett

The report tells you about the service standards we are developing in consultation with tenants. It also tells you where we are performing well and where we still have more work to do.

We have worked with the Resident Scrutiny Panel to make sure that the document is readable, interesting and informative.

The questionnaire on the back of the Annual Report is an opportunity to tell us what you thought of the report and what you would like to see included in future annual reports.

A big thank you to all of you who completed the STATUS survey telling us what you think of the services we provide to your homes and communities.

The STATUS survey is crucial to us. It helps our regulators, the Tenant Services Authority, judge our performance. It gives us vital information and feedback on how to plan service and business improvement and development.

We are so pleased with the headline results. For example:

- 92% overall satisfaction rate with us as your landlord. This is a 10% increase on the last STATUS survey you completed pre-transfer in 2007.
- 88% satisfaction rate with how we were able to deal with your enquiries. This is a 30% increase on the 2007 survey.

In the next edition of your newsletter we will tell you how we will use STATUS information to continue to improve our service to you..

Deborah Bennett - Executive Director



John and Debbie Wheatley outside their new bungalow

New eco-homes

The grass is greener for a Broughton Astley couple as they move into our first eco-homes to be built.

This summer John and Debbie Wheatley were handed the keys to one of two bungalows that have been built on a former disused garage site in Glebe Road, Broughton Astley.

The couple, who both have mobility problems, have transferred from a flat they rented from us in the village to the two-bedroom bungalow. They applied for the property through **Harborough Home Search**.

The bungalows are categorised as a Lifetime Homes, which means they are designed to help people live independently for longer.

They have their own renewable energy source. Electricity is generated from solar panels on the roof, which provides free electricity for the Wheatley's to us during the day – greatly reducing their electricity bills.

In order to benefit, the couple use energy consuming appliances, such as their washing machine, during the

day. This maximises the free electricity produced. Instead of traditionally at night when they may have benefited from Economy 7.

Mr Wheatley said: "We are absolutely delighted with our new bungalow; it is really going to make a difference to our lives. The solar panels on the roof will greatly reduce our energy bills, which is a bonus."

Deborah Bennett, Executive Director of Seven Locks Housing, added: "This development is a great achievement for Seven Locks Housing.

"We said we would provide 60 new affordable homes in our first five years of business. Along with the 31 properties we have already developed, these two sustainable eco-homes and the six currently in development at Kibworth, means we are well on our way to achieving that target.

"As part of our commitment to deliver new affordable homes, we are reviewing many of our under-used garage sites to investigate the possibility of using this land to provide much needed social housing."

Don't slip into arrears over the festive period

We understand how difficult it is to make ends meet at times and over the festive period there is even more pressure on your purse.

Please make sure that you choose to put paying your rent at the top of your Christmas to-do list.

If you don't already pay your rent by Direct Debit, now is an ideal time to think about setting it up - it's very simple.

A telephone call now and you won't even have to think about making the effort to pay your rent over the Christmas period. It will be paid direct from your bank account - and it couldn't be easier we can do this all by phone! Please call 01858 414507.

If you don't have a bank account with direct debit facilities, we could arrange one for you and we will also pay the associated costs of running the account for the first year.

You can also pay online, over the telephone, by text or by Paypoint.

For more information please call us on **01858 414507**.

Customers get involved

Co-regulation and Resident Scrutiny are now a step closer at Seven Locks Housing thanks to six of our customers.

They responded to our article in the last newsletter and are now well on the way to completing the training and receiving their Management Endorsed Award through the Board Development Agency.

Since running this initial course other tenants have contacted us to find out more about being more involved in Resident Scrutiny. We will provide training for these people so that they can be actively involved.

Once completely trained, the Resident Scrutiny Panel, supported by an experienced Independent Chair, will develop their action plan detailing how they will begin to examine our services. They will look at how we perform and if our services represent Value for Money.

With Resident Scrutiny in place our customer involvement structure is complete. Within this structure we consult our customers on an individual basis to find out what you think about our services. Members of our Customer Panel, act as individuals or as groups that provide us with feedback on specific areas of service. Finally we have the members of the Resident Scrutiny Panel and our Tenant Board members who represent the views of our customers as a whole.

If you would like to find out more about getting involved at a level that suits you please contact Tracey Silk on **01858 414519**.



Jean is blooming marvellous

Jean Parker is a real asset to her neighbours on Welland Park Road.

It's her hard work that provides them with year round colour in the flower tubs at the front of the bungalows.

Jean has developed a really colourful arrangement with the gardeners at Welland Park.

As they change the seasonal planting at the park in town they provide Jean with any

plants that they haven't used. Jean then plants whatever they provide in the large tubs at the front of the bungalows, providing year round colour for all of the residents.

When it comes to the maintenance of the tubs, Jean also stains them on an annual basis to keep them looking good. Seven Locks Housing really appreciate Jean's hard work and reimburse all her out of pocket expenses.

The right move

Deciding to move into sheltered accommodation has made a world of difference to one resident.



**Bob's name has been changed.*

Bob*, 60, had lived in private rented accommodation for 19 years and had worked for the same firm in quite a stressful job for more than 30 years.

However, his health began to deteriorate and his emotional well being went into a downward spiral. He lost his job and with no knowledge of the benefit system didn't know how to get financial help. After living for three

New gardens for Skippon Close

Residents of Skippon Close now have their own private outdoor space, thanks to our environmental improvement project.

The people who live in these flats in Market Harborough flagged up a number of issues, including the garden spaces were not clearly marked and as a result un-cared for. They were also completely open to the main street and provided no privacy or security.

After talking to the residents and listening to their issues, we set about making a difference.

Work on the first block of flats is now complete and the gardens are individually laid out. There are new paths, drying facilities, gated bin storage and fencing onto the street

which provides improved security and privacy.

you said
we did

These improvements will be rolled out to all of the flats in Skippon Close.

Rachael Shepherd, who lives at Skippon Close, said: "The improvements to the garden have made a real difference. We now have a private space that we can tend to and be proud of.

"There is now a real sense of community. My neighbour and I now spend time together in the garden."

If you want to find out more about our Environmental Improvement Programme, contact Tracey Silk on **01858 414519**.



months with no heating, electricity or water and almost eight weeks with very little to eat, Bob was taken into hospital. It was here that one of the nurses mentioned sheltered accommodation.

Bob registered with Harborough Home Search and after eight months moved into a one bedroom flat in one of our sheltered schemes.

"I've never looked back," said a delighted Bob. "My luck turned around the day I moved into this flat, I think I'm healthier now than I have been for 40 years.

"The flat was carpeted and very well decorated. Other residents helped me out with furniture. There are always people around to talk to and someone to help and offer advice if I need it.

"Also it's great having a landlord who gets repairs done."

Keen to give something back Bob now gets involved in many of the activities at his scheme. Having now bought some more new furniture, he has put some of the items that were given to him into storage.

He said: "Just in case someone needs the sort of help that I was given."

If you want to find out more about sheltered accommodation or you know someone who might benefit contact Tracey Dorman on **01858 414533** or Customer Services on **01858 414500**.

We can't promise it will make as big a difference as it did to Bob's life, but we can offer secure affordable accommodation with support. We could even offer assistance with the cost of moving.

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 June 2010. The performance in key areas relates to issues raised in December 2009 customer survey comments.

KEY: Are we meeting our targets?	KEY: Are we getting better?
Meeting or exceeding target	Performance improved against last quarter
Marginally below target*	Performance has remained the same against last quarter*
Significantly below target	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	Are we on target?	Are we getting better?
% of emergency repairs completed on time	99.99%	100%	99.99%		
% of customers satisfied with completed responsive repairs	95.30%	95%	94%		
% of telephone calls returned within 24 hours	89.52%	90%	90.12%		
% of letters responded to within 10 working days	89.08%	95%	87%		
% of initial response times to Anti-Social Behaviour cases (1-5 working days)	100%	100%	88%		
% of rent arrears	1.98%	2.60%	2.79%		
Average days to re-let a general needs dwelling	29.46 days	26 days	22.60 days		
% of support plans reviewed (sheltered schemes)	93.30%	86%	84.84%		

Are you ready for the Digital Switchover?

On 30th March 2011 the current TV transmitter sending out Anglia region TV will be turned off.

On 17th August 2011 the transmitter sending out Central region TV will be turned off.

In its place the digital TV transmitter will be turned up to full power.

If you receive your TV signal through a communal aerial you do not have to do anything. We have carried out work to the aerial. However, if you have an individual aerial on your home you are responsible.

If you have a satellite or cable system in your home you do not have to worry about the switchover as your TV signal is not provided by the national transmitter system. For full information on how to and where to get the right equipment visit www.digitaluk.co.uk

However, if you are over 75 or, registered blind or partially sighted you can get the equipment for free. For details of eligibility and what help is available visit www.helpscheme.co.uk

Telephone **0800 40 85 900**
 Textphone users **0800 40 85 936**
 Email **info@helpscheme.co.uk**
 Text **80002**

Don't miss out, get connected today!



Respect for Seven Locks

The Respect Standard for Housing Management sets out six core commitments for dealing with Anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Accountability and leadership

We take ASB and respect issues seriously and we promote our commitment to the Respect Standard in our offices, this newsletter and on our website.

Empowering and reassuring

- Working with customers we have developed our ASB standard.
- Tenants can also get involved in our Estate Walkabouts and Flat Inspections.
- Our ASB Standards information leaflet and policy are available on our website and at all of our offices.

Prevention and early intervention

- We will use the powers available and explain the consequences of continuing with the behaviour.
- Our Area Housing Officers will work with tenants at risk of committing ASB.

Tailored services

- We will work to protect vulnerable tenants and work with victims and those who carry out acts of ASB.

- We will consider renting our own noise monitoring equipment.
- We will monitor our performance against our ASB Standards.
- We involve other agencies and offer free mediation for dispute cases.

Protecting communities

We have the tools and powers needed to tackle ASB. We will use these powers swiftly.

Support to tackle causes of ASB

- We aim to reduce unacceptable behaviour by providing support to victims of abuse, hate crime or other forms of harassment.
- We will support people attending court to give evidence.

We need your help. If you are experiencing ASB you need to tell us so we can work towards resolving the problem.

If you would like to talk in confidence, please contact your Area Housing Officer.

Service charge update

After receiving information on service charges many of you contacted us. Below are some of the most frequently asked questions and answers:

Will Housing Benefit pay my service charge costs?

Yes, most service charges qualify for Housing Benefit.

Will I be paying for services that I didn't pay for before?

At the moment most people are paying the service charge through their rent, the work we are doing now will separate the cost out. This means that your rent will reduce by the cost of the service charge. Other customers, specifically those in sheltered housing, already pay a separate service charge. The work we are doing is to make sure that you are being charged the actual cost of this service.

What is tree maintenance?

This is the cost of maintaining trees on communal land belonging to Seven Locks Housing. We divide this cost between everyone who lives in that neighbourhood. We do not maintain trees in individual gardens.

What is Ad-hoc bulky refuse removal?

Most of our customers contact the council when they have large items of rubbish that need to be removed, but some don't. When this happens, if this rubbish is on our land, we have to remove it. If we cannot identify who has left it, we divide the cost of removing it between everyone who lives in that neighbourhood.

In November we will write to tell you how much it cost to provide the services that you received last year. The introduction of service charges is about making things clearer. For some people this letter will show a nil cost if we didn't deliver that service last year.

Useful contacts

you said
we did

Area Housing Officers

Ken McDonald – 01858 414518
Sarah Edwards – 01858 414515
Cheryl Latham – 01858 414517
Steve Calvert – 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

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.

OFFICE CLOSURE - 4TH NOVEMBER

Our offices will be closed for staff training on Thursday 4 November. You can still report your repairs as normal using **0800 1300 365** and if you have an emergency enquiry you will be provided with a number to contact by ringing **01858 414500**.

CHRISTMAS OPENING TIMES

Our offices will close at 4pm on Christmas Eve, Friday 24 December and re-open at 9am on Wednesday 29 December. They will close again at 4pm on New Year's Eve, Friday 31 December and re-open at 9am on Tuesday 4th January 2011.



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
ચા 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, ਬੌਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਆਡੀਓ
ਟੇਪ ਤੇ ਰਿਕਾਰਡ ਹੋਇਆ ਵੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਲਿਖਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ.

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