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## Your association needs you!



At Gateway, we want you to be involved in shaping the services we provide and let us know what our priorities should be.

There are many ways to be involved, including the Residents' Forum, Residents' Associations, focus groups, the 100 club, the disability panel and many more.

Gateway is keen to develop a **Residents' Panel** which will discuss major issues affecting the way Gateway is run. The panel will also find out residents' views about the issues they are involved in and will be part of the formal committee structure. It will meet 6 times a year. Members of the panel need to be able to understand the 'big picture' and need to be committed to attending regularly.

The aim, supported by the Board, is to move towards a position where the Residents' Panel can tell us 'what tenants want'.

The Residents' Forum will still meet regularly.

The Forum will oversee:

- Community Chest and Environmental Improvement Grants
- policies and procedure reviews
- use of efficiency savings
- the annual residents' event

And will:

- act as umbrella body for Residents' Associations
- supply members for the complaints panel

Do you want a chance to have a real impact on the way Gateway works? Get involved and apply to join the Residents' Panel or the Residents' Forum!

It is very important that both the forum and the panel represents all of our residents – in particular, we need more leaseholders and people from an ethnic minority background, as well as former Labo residents.

For more information, contact **Madeleine Glaisher, Director of Central Services** on 020 8709 4300 or [madeleine.glaisher@gatewayhousing.org.uk](mailto:madeleine.glaisher@gatewayhousing.org.uk).

### You said, we did

#### You said

Can it be an option for residents to select the frequency and date that Direct Debit payments are collected?

#### We did

We have set up a new arrangement with Allpay.net which will allow you to choose the frequency and day on which your Direct Debit payment is collected. This will start on 25 May 2008.

### New maintenance contract

Morris Facilities Services Ltd has been successful in their bid for our 5 year responsive maintenance contract. At present the contact are being finalised. Once agreed the new contract will start on Monday 12 May 2008. They are extremely pleased to have secured a joint working contract with Gateway Housing Association.



Pictured here are just some of the team based in Bow who will be responsible for the new repairs service.

The old office at 29 Lyal Road gets a new look. It is now a 4-bedroom disabled unit and was let in January.



## Resident satisfaction survey 2007

Last year we sent out our residents' satisfaction survey. A massive thank you goes out to everyone who returned questionnaires (about 40% of former BGVPHA residents).

The survey results gave us valuable feedback on the services we provide to you and made recommendations in the following areas:

- Extending our opening hours and Saturday morning opening;
- transferred sheltered scheme works;
- our day-to-day maintenance contract;
- how you contact us; and
- maintaining your property (asset management).

Our Board, Senior Management Team and the Residents' Forum have drafted and agreed an action plan for 2008 and progress on this will be reported to the Residents' Forum from October 2008. The next residents' survey will be in 2009.

If you would like to see the full action plan please contact Shazna Khatun on 020 8709 4360 or [shazna.khatun@gatewayhousing.org.uk](mailto:shazna.khatun@gatewayhousing.org.uk).

## Gateway's Pet Procedure



### You must get our permission to keep any type of pet.

Our pet procedure tells you how to do this and what to do if you keep a pet without our permission.

#### Dogs

You can only keep a dog if you have your own private garden. You must be over 16 and be responsible for your dog's behaviour.

Dangerous dogs (as defined in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991) and dogs that cause a nuisance are not allowed and will be dealt with through our antisocial behaviour policy.

**Registered Guide Dogs are allowed in all accommodation.**

#### Other animals

You can keep other types of animals as long as your home is suitable, it is not a nuisance to your neighbours and you look after your pet.

### Applying for permission to keep a pet

You will need to complete an application form which is available from our Customer Services team on 020 8709 4300. We will check your home's details, looking at garden access and any special conditions which may apply.

If the checks are satisfactory we will let you know any conditions that may apply. If we refuse permission, we will let you know the reason.

### Pets without permission

If you have a pet without permission, your Housing Officer has the right to either ask you to apply for permission or find another home for your pet.

However, if you are allowed to keep your pet and it causes a nuisance, we can withdraw

permission and you will be asked to find it another home.

### Appeals

If you do not agree with our decision you can appeal. We will take advice from an animal welfare organisation to find out whether your home is suitable for your pet.

**For more information or a copy of our Pets Procedure, please phone 020 8709 4300.**



# Housing Quality Network review

## How we involve our residents



Housing Quality Network (HQN) recently reviewed our resident involvement activities.

They reviewed our policies and procedures and spoke to staff and residents. They have produced a report and action plan.

The review looked at what we do to involve residents and made some recommendations about what changes need to happen to ensure that we involve residents more effectively. It also shows us

what The Housing Corporation and Audit Commission expect us to do so residents are involved and able to influence decision making.

The review included what we need to carry out to make sure our performance improves. It was discussed with the Residents' Forum on 27 March. We will report progress to Senior Management Team, the Residents' Forum and the Performance Management Committee throughout 2008/09.

## Rent statement arrears

When you receive your rent statement (which you have done this month with this newsletter), if you receive Housing Benefit you will notice that sometimes your rent statement shows you are in arrears – even if you are not!

This is because the date the Housing Benefit is paid to us is not always the same as when your rent is charged. Housing Benefit is usually paid every four weeks, in arrears.

If you see you're in arrears and you don't think you should be, **don't panic!**

Check the previous dates of your rent statement and look at the pattern of when payments go in and out of your account.

If you still are worried, please speak to your Scheme Manager or Housing Officer.

If you are having problems paying your rent, please don't ignore it – talk to us and we can help you by either arranging affordable repayments or by referring you to our debt advice partner, Money Matters.

## SENIOR SECTION SENIOR SECTION SENIOR SECTION

### Let's get quizzical

Congratulations to St Thomas House for winning the sheltered housing quiz in March. The prize was £50, plus a trophy to be passed onto next year's winning team.

Teams were entered from St Thomas House, Regency Court, Ted Roberts and St Johns. We hope that next year more schemes will come along as everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves!

### Are you over 60?

Do you want to escape the fast pace of London life?

### Do you live in social housing?

If the answer to all of the above is **yes**, then Seaside & Country Homes could be for you.

**Seaside & Country Homes** is aimed at London's social housing tenants who are over 60 and who want to move out of London. They have one and two bedroom flats and bungalows across the south and east of England, mostly in seaside towns or in the countryside.

Contact our Lettings team on 020 8709 4300 for more details.

## Did you know...

...you can now pay your rent at Woolworths with your rent card?

# WOOLWORTHS

Simply hand over your rent card, together with your payment in cash or with a debit card at any Woolworths store.

## Leaseholder lines

### Ex-Labo leaseholders rent accounts

Welcome to Gateway!

Following the merger, we are working hard to set up your rent accounts.

As soon as they are set up we will write to you and let you know. We will also include forms if you want to set up a Direct Debit.

Your housing officer is Shopna Rob. Please call 020 8709 4300 if you need more information.

## Sheltered service charges

The Board has agreed to recalculate utility bills at the following schemes:

- Mandela House
- Rochester Court
- Hugh Platt House
- John Tucker House
- John Bond House
- Vic Johnson House
- Appian Court
- William Guy Gardens
- Lawrence Close

We hope to get your recalculated rent and service charge bills to you as soon as possible.

We have appointed an independent energy consultant to give us accurate estimates for the coming year and to work on ways to reduce utility bills in the future.

## Introducing the customer services team

We have introduced a residents-only phone line. This is **020 8709 4300** and will go straight through to our new style Customer Service team, managed by Cat Cox.

The Customer Service team is available on the phone from 8am - 6pm, from Monday to

Friday. The office is open from 9am-5pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and 8.30am - 6pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The person who answers the phone is trained to deal with your call and will be able to deal with most of your queries,

whether you want to report a repair or find out how much is in your rent account.

Your housing officer will be out and about on estates and will only deal with your more in-depth queries, including first stage antisocial behaviour issues.



Cecilia Harman



Farida Akhter



Rachel Denny



Rushna Bari



Ruhela Parvin



Fatima Bibi



Fahima Begum



Mandy Geeves



Deborah McNamara



Salma Rahman