christian action housing

TALKING POINTS

ISSUE 21 - DECEMBER 2010

We wish you a Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY OPENING

Christian Action offices will close at 5.00 pm on Thursday 23rd December then will be closed/re-open as follows:

Closed Christmas Eve Fri 24th December
Closed Bank Holiday Mon 27th December
Closed Bank Holiday Tues 28th December
Closed Wednesday 29th December
Open 9.00 to 5.00 Thurs 30th December
Open 9.00 to 5.00 Friday 31st December
Closed Bank Holiday Monday 3rd January

Normal opening hours resume at 9.00 am on Tuesday 4th January 2011.

IF YOU NEED EMERGENCY REPAIRS OVER THE CHRISTMAS PERIOD PLEASE CALL

01992 765990

OFFICIAL OPENING OF KATHERINE HOUSE

The Leader of Waltham Forest Borough Council, Councillor Chris Robbins, formally opened Christian Action's new development at Katherine House on Friday 26th November.

Cllr Chris Robbins, Leader Waltham Forest Council, with Mark Hayes, Chief Executive Christian Action Housing at the opening of Katherine House.

Katherine House is a highly contemporary design, which both complements and contrasts with the neighbouring buildings and provides 17 affordable family homes for rent.

The building has been designed to achieve a high level of sustainability, which will ensure a low carbon footprint and reduce running costs for residents. The new homes are excellently located for services, transport links (including Stratford and Central London) and job opportunities. The top floor also has a panoramic view of the Olympic Park.

Christian Action Housing's Chief Executive, Mark Hayes, said: "We are very grateful for the support we have received from Waltham Forest Council. They helped us secure funding and the planners supported us in developing a stunning contemporary building. We would also like to thank our contractors, Sandwood; our architect Martin Brooker, our project manager HBW and our structural engineers Thomasons. The project would not have been possible without our development partner, Lee Valley Estates."

Debt Smart

citizens advice bureau

- Would you like someone to talk to about existing debt problems?
- Do you need advice about managing your money and dealing effectively with your creditors?
- Maybe you have a benefit problem which you would like to discuss?

Debt Smart is a partnership between Citizens Advice Bureau and Christian Action Housing where you can get free confidential expert advice on all debt and money matters. Contact the Housing Services Team on

SPOT THE CHRISTMAS TREES!

Can you see how many Christmas trees are hidden in this issue of Talking Points?
You will find the answer on the back page.

DON'T BE LEFT OUT IN THE COLD THIS WINTER!

£250 Prize Draw for all tenants with a clear rent account at the end of the financial year March 2011.

As we fast approach the festive season, it is often the case with some tenants to put the one thing that should be at the top of their priority list either at the bottom or off the list completely – that is their rent!

We would therefore encourage you to put some money aside towards your rent before making that bargain purchase this Christmas. By doing so, you will be ensuring the continued uninterrupted occupation of your property in the New Year. If you are finding it difficult to manage your finances, or in debt, we have tailored a money advice service in partnership with Citizens Advice Bureau (DebtSmart) just for Christian Action Housing general needs tenants. You can access this service by telephoning this office to request an appointment with a member of the housing team.

NEIGHBOURHOOD ESTATE SOLUTIONS (NES)

Neighbourhood Estates Solutions (NES) went live earlier this year, providing estate cleaning and grounds maintenance services to tenants in Enfield. NES is a wholly owned subsidiary of CAHA and will channel any profits made back into services provided and the work of the Association.

NES has provided job opportunities for five unemployed young people through the future jobs fund, one is the son of a CAHA tenant. This initiative responds to feedback received from residents about providing local job opportunities.

We hope NES will ultimately provide all estate services, but in the meantime residents in Barnet, Haringey and Waltham Forest will receive estate cleaning and grounds maintenance from Forefront Services. Forefront Services have worked with Christian Action Housing for a number of years and we are pleased to be working with them on this important project.

We will shortly be providing information for the notice board in the communal area of properties. All details concerning your cleaners and gardeners will be available.

NES team member Anthony Aitken says "I enjoy my job and feel proud that I am looking after the estates that I used to play on when I was growing up. I feel that I need to do a good job because I actually live here as well.

"The work can be very challenging as some of the places get very dirty and messy. I enjoy the work, there is always something different to do each day. I get job satisfaction when I leave the estate looking nice and clean and some times we get praised by the residents who say what a good job we're doing".

If you have any comments to make, positive or negative, please contact the Performance Officer on 01992 765950.

Working for Neighbourhood Estate Solutions

If you have cleaning or grounds maintenance skills, or would like to acquire them, and would be interested in working for Neighbourhood Estate Solutions in the future, please contact the Performance Officer on 01992 765950. Your details will be kept on file and when posts become available we will contact you.

NEW MEMBERS OF STAFF

We are pleased to welcome the following new members of staff:

Maria Walker
Property Repairs Manager

Eva Coldwell
Neighbourhood Housing Officer

Kamran Mahmood
Temporary Performance Officer

Congratulations to Jackie Hibbert, Performance Officer, who has been appointed Team Leader, Retirement Housing.

TENANT CENSUS

To ensure everyone has fair and equal access to our services we will be carrying out more tenant census visits throughout 2011.

The form contains questions about you, the people who live in your household and your needs. It is important that we keep the data held about you and your family up to date to ensure we meet your changing needs. This information will be used only for monitoring, we understand that some of the information we are asking for is personal; we treat all sensitive personal information confidentially and the data will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

CONDENSATION ADVICE

At this time of year we get a lot of calls from tenants reporting damp issues in their properties, we find that the majority of these problems are not damp but are caused by condensation in the home. We hope the enclosed leaflet will help you deal with any condensation issues you may have.

ANNUAL REVIEW 2010/2011

Also enclosed with this issue is a copy of Christian Action's Annual Review "Change for the Better" which we hope you will find of interest.

VOLUNTEER MUMS AT ETAPP

ETAPP started in 1995 to provide play and support for children and families living in temporary accommodation. During the 15 years ETAPP has been open thousands of people have attended the morning play sessions held in Palmers Green, Edmonton and Freezywater.

With ETAPP support and empowerment these families have grown and developed over the years and many of the long term clients have progressed and forged careers, stability and success in their lives.

There are currently three mothers working or training as volunteers this term one of them, Tara Dezzar and her four children have attended ETAPP since 2002, she says "I like to volunteer at ETAPP as the staff work so hard. I want to help others and I didn't want to stop coming to the sessions!".

Project Co-ordinator Lorinda Knott says "This scheme helps to build confidence for many women who have been out of the working market for some time. We hope to continue this support and provide a springboard for our mothers to start their working career."

ETAPP is open to all families in temporary accommodation in Enfield and all Christian Action Housing Association Tenants in temporary accommodation and their children. For more information call: 01992 765 929/938

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF LETTINGS

Christian Action (Enfield) Housing Association has undertaken a Best Value Review of its Letting Policy and Procedure which was agreed at the Tenant Audit Panel (TAP) in July.

The process involved a Focus Group involving tenants who were keen to participate in reviewing our policy.

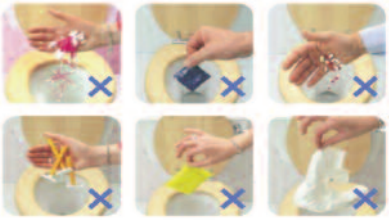
Some of the comments and suggestions included:

- a formal complaint form should be added to our sign-up pack;
- the Association should consider extending existing properties;
- occupancy checks to determine if properties are being sub-let;
- include housing provision where adult children could be offered one bed properties.

There will be a review of the complaints & compensation policy so if you are interested in shaping how these services should be delivered, please contact Wendy White 01992 765900.

BIN IT - DON'T FLUSH IT

Every year the repairs team receives hundreds of calls from tenants reporting toilet or sewer blockages.



When contractors attend they usually find that the blockage has been caused by people putting non-flushable items down sinks or toilets, these could include cotton buds, disposable nappies, hand wipes, etc. It is very expensive to clear the drains and if you have caused the blockage you will be recharged.

Sanitary items and other personal waste should be disposed of responsibly in household waste bins or in the special bins in public toilets.
Personal products, for hygiene reasons should first be placed in bags and then **PUT IT IN THE BIN.**

HEALTH & SAFETY OF COMMUNAL AREAS

Regular inspections of all communal areas are carried out by the housing management team each month.

Staff highlight any discrepancies identified with the individual tenants concerned such as blocking communal areas, etc. You must not store any items in the communal areas, electrical intake cupboards, wedge open fire doors, as this seriously affects tenants' health & safety in the event of a fire.

If your property does not have a smoke alarm, please contact the repairs department on 01992 765990 who will arrange for one to be installed, or contact your local Fire Brigade. If you have any concerns regarding health & safety, please contact your Neighbourhood Officer.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF CHRISTIAN ACTION'S HOMES

In the New Year we will be sending tenants our proposals for further investment in Christian Action's homes.

We think we should focus on improving the following where these are out-dated or do not meet current standards:

- Bathrooms
- Kitchens
- Energy efficiency/sustainability
- Accessibility
- Security

If you think there are other things we should consider, please contact us:
info@christianaction.org.uk

TALKING

Local Needs, Local Solutions, Local

business for neighbourhoods

Putting **you** at the **heart** of what we do

christian action housing

Thank you to everyone who returned the survey form asking for comments about the report. The overall response to the new format was very positive. Of the 143 tenants who replied, 91% said they found the report helpful, 2% found it unhelpful with 7% saying they found it neither helpful nor unhelpful.

81% thought that the report contained the right amount of information, 11% thought it contained too much and 8% not enough.

Having read "Our plans for improvement", 83% said that they thought the Association is concentrating on the right things, 4% said we were not and 13% said they were unsure.

The prize draw winners were:

1st Prize - £250	2nd Prize - £100	3rd Prize - £50
Ms W - Hendon	**Mr T - Leyton**	**Mrs A - Enfield**

TOUR OF CYRIL SMITH COURT & STRATHEDEN LODGE

It was with great pleasure that Mark Hayes, Chief Executive and Patricia Johnson, Head of Retirement, took Councillor Ahmet Oykener on a tour of the newly completed retirement scheme, Cyril Smith Court and Stratheden Lodge.

This scheme provides 27 residential units comprising 20 x 1 bed units, 6 x 2 bed units plus a scheme manager's flat.

The building is set over three floors with a roof terrace to the third floor which has panoramic views across to Alexandra Palace.

Residents will be moving into these units over the next few weeks.

From left to right: Rita Lethbridge Scheme Manager, Councillor Ahmet Oykener, Mark Hayes, Chief Executive and Patricia Johnson, Head of Retirement.

PORTABLE ELECTRIC TESTING

If you have just moved into one of our newly built properties and the electricity keeps switching off, this could be due to faulty items of electrical equipment. The first indication you may find is that your electric equipment has stopped working.

You need to look at the fuse box to check which circuit breaker has tripped, reset this by flicking the switch that has tripped back to the ON position. If the circuit trips again, turn off all electrical equipment in the room you were just in and reset the circuit breaker. You should find it will reset this time. Now go back to the room which set off the breaker and turn on each appliance in turn, the faulty appliance should cause the circuit breaker to trip and lose power to that room. Unplug this item of equipment and do not use it again as it could be faulty.

If you call our repairs team to report that you have no electrics and the problem was caused by a faulty appliance more than twice we will pass on the cost of the electrician's attendance to you.

However, we offer to check free of charge all your electrical appliances - just call our repairs team to arrange a visit.

COMBATING TENANCY FRAUD

Christian Action was made aware of a possible sub-let of a property in Twist House following visits by staff and complaints from other residents.

Anti-Social Behaviour Officer, David Woodcock, worked closely with the local Council Fraud Officer to investigate this. Enquiries revealed that the property in question was being occupied by a succession of different people, none of whom was the tenant and that they had been paying rent to the tenant for living in his flat. After being confronted with the evidence that was gathered, the tenant decided to hand back the keys to his property which has now been re-let to another family.

If you suspect your neighbour is not a Christian Action Housing tenant and the property is being sublet to someone else, please report this to your Neighbourhood Officer or Anti-Social Behaviour Officer for inv estigation. All reports will be treated in the strictest confidence.

SPOT THE CHRISTMAS TREES!

There are 10 Christmas Trees hidden in this newsletter.

Keep In Touch...

Christian Action (Enfield) Housing Association Ltd, Benedict House, 61 Island Centre Way, Enfield EN3 6GS

Telephone: 01992 765900 Maintenance Repairs: 01992 765990 Facsimile: 01992 765999 Email info@christianaction.org.uk

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