

# Newsletter

All at Teachers' Housing Association wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Welcome to the 2018 Christmas Newsletter. In this festive edition of our regular publication we can update on some of the major works that have been undertaken at our schemes, let you know where we are with future development plans, and hear from our schemes around the country as they head into their Christmas celebrations.

## Street Safety Awareness at Verona Drive

A *Street Safety* event was held at our Verona Drive, Surbiton location this summer. In collaboration with the Police, this was arranged to promote awareness around street safety for the children living on the estate. This was in response to incidents where a child was known to have brought knives on to the estate and was asking residents' children to look after them.

Two local Police Officers attended the event; PC Ben Styles and PC 'Smudge' Smith, a school safety awareness officer. Talks were given to three age groups; 5-7 years, 8-11 years and 11-15 years. In total 12 children attended with their parents.

The Officers spoke with each age group and discussed the dangers of handling knives. They also spoke about 'stranger danger' and encouraged the children to ask questions if they had any concerns about contacting an adult or the Police if they felt they needed help. After the talks the Officers kindly let the children explore the Police van and try on the riot equipment.

Feedback from the parents and children was very positive and we thank the Police for their commitment to assist our estate.

Rapinder Sangha - **Housing Manager**



## Development Update

We continue to work with various consultants to try and secure more homes. In the summer we reported that we have been looking at our existing property portfolio to see if we can maximise development potential. This work continues.



We are pleased to report that we completed work at one of our properties in Brent this autumn.

This project was a loft conversion resulting in an additional flat and included conversion of 2 existing flats on the 1st floor to create more attractive homes.

We have been able to house 3 people working in education in these properties and are very pleased with the resulting flats.

## Christmas Closure

Teachers' Housing Association Head Office in London will close for the holiday period at 5pm on Friday 21 December 2018, and will re-open at 9am on Wednesday 2 January 2019. Emergency contact details are set out on the back cover of this Newsletter.



## Staff and Board News

We are pleased to welcome Armin Diamond who joined as the Handyperson at The Anchorage, Christchurch. Assisting us at Head Office on a temporary basis are Liz Curran in the Finance Director role, and former staff member Allan Fuller in the Finance Manager role.

Leaving us for pastures new were Pam Walker from Queen Mother Court, John Thickpenny from The Anchorage and David McDermott from Romaleyn Gardens, Paignton. We wish them well in their new endeavours.

## Stick to your Christmas budget

Managing your money during the festive season can seem like a challenge with the temptation and pressure to spend on presents and entertaining.

At Teachers' Housing Association we want to help you enjoy Christmas without having to worry about getting yourselves into debt. Please ensure that rent is paid before and after the festive period to avoid tenancy enforcement action that may result in you losing your home. We have carried out seven evictions across our stock in the past two years for non payment of rent so please make sure you don't start the New Year in debt.

We are a charity and rely on the income generated by rental payments in order to continue to improve our services to you. If you have any concerns about your rent and payments during this period then please contact your Housing Manager to discuss this as soon as you can.

## Gas Safety

Earlier in the year amendments were made to the Gas Safety Regulations which introduced, what is known as, 'MOT Style' certification. These regulations apply to any property which has an individual boiler.

Under the previous rules the gas certificate had to be dated on the day that the gas checks were undertaken. With the new regulations the checks can be undertaken up to 2 months before the expiry date of the certificate and still retain the same renewal date. This will give tenants a longer time period to have the check completed which will hopefully assist in arranging access.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank tenants for working with us to ensure that their gas check is completed before the certificate expiry date – we appreciate it can be inconvenient to provide access. Gas Safety is very important to THA and it is one of the Performance Indicators reported to the Board and also published in our Annual Report.

## Enjoy your party

Christmas and New Year is a perfect time for catching up with family and friends and some of you may be planning parties and get-togethers over the festive period.

If you are planning on having a party at your home please consider your neighbours and take steps to ensure you do not disturb those who live around you.

Here are a few suggestions to help prevent your party becoming a nuisance:

- Invite your neighbours. If you don't know them very well it could be a good opportunity to get to know them better.
- Tell your neighbours you are having a party either in person or by putting a notice on the notice boards, telling them what time it will start and what time you expect it to end.
- Have an end time in mind and be mindful of noise as the evening progresses. You should also be aware that your Tenancy Agreement states noise should not be heard from your property between 11pm and 7am.
- Consider if your property is suitable and if not, hold your party somewhere else. If your flat isn't particularly large than maybe have it at a friend's or family member's place or another venue.

If any parties become a nuisance, and you have tried to tell your neighbour the noise is too much and the music goes on beyond a reasonable hour, then we would recommend calling the Police on 101.

Also, you can report it to Teachers' Housing Association when our offices open again on 2 January 2019.

Hopefully by following these tips everyone can enjoy a peaceful and relaxing Christmas break.



## Our Complaints Policy is changing

Under the current policy there are four Stages of review for a complaint:

- Stage One: The complaint is reviewed by the Housing Services Director
- Stage Two: The complaint is reviewed by the Chief Executive
- Stage Three: The complaint is reviewed by a Panel made up of Members of THA's Board

The fourth and final Stage is external to THA where the complaint is reviewed by the independent Housing Ombudsman. Under the current policy, it can take some time for a complaint to progress through the various Stages and we are keen to streamline and simplify the process for complainants.

Following a Benchmarking exercise with other similar sized Housing Associations and advice from the Housing Ombudsman, we have taken the decision to remove the current Stage 3 (review by Panel) from the process. The revised Stages will be as follows:

- Stage One: The complaint is reviewed by the Housing Services Director
- Stage Two: The complaint is reviewed by the Chief Executive
- Stage Three: The complaint is reviewed by the Housing Ombudsman

As part of this review we have also taken the opportunity to expand on the things we will *not* consider as a complaint. These are:

- First requests for a service such as the first report of a repair
- Requests for information or explanation of THA policy or practice
- Any matter which is already being (or has been) dealt with by a solicitor
- Complaints that have already been through the complaints process or which, in THA's opinion, are being pursued in an unreasonable manner (e.g. multiple complaints from tenants about the same matter when only one person has been directly affected)
- Matters that are being (or have been) dealt with by our insurer
- Complaints that fall outside our jurisdiction (e.g. complaints about utilities)
- Complaints being made about a service failure that should have been reported earlier (e.g. a repair was not reported until it was in a serious condition)

We hope that this change makes our policy and process easier to understand for those who may be dissatisfied with our services. Plus, it reduces the time a complainant waits to have their complaint reviewed.

If you have any questions regarding this policy change or you would like to receive a copy of the policy, please contact Head Office where someone will assist you. The policy will also be available on our website.

## Right to Buy

Understandably, a number of tenants have asked if there is an update on the Government's Right to Buy initiative. The Government has not yet issued guidance on their proposal to extend the Right to Buy to housing association tenants. When we have this information the Management Board will agree a policy for implementation and we will issue an update.

## Phone a Manager Day

This year we held our annual Phone a Manager Day earlier than usual on 26th September. All tenants are invited to call Head Office on this day when they can then speak to a member of the Senior Team to offer feedback or ask specific questions about their home or scheme.

This year 24 calls were received with eight calls coming from our general needs tenants and 16 from our sheltered tenants. The majority of the calls were complimentary about THA's services and staff while others raised concerns specific to their area or provided useful suggestions about how our services could be improved. There were no specific trends identified and follow up action was taken where necessary. A full report of issues and outcomes was presented to the Operations Committee in November.

Whilst this is an annual event, we welcome feedback from tenants at any time of the year, so please do not feel you have to wait until the next Phone a Manager Day to contact us. A number of callers used the day to report repairs to their home and we would like to remind tenants that repairs should be reported as soon as you are aware of the issue and you should not wait to notify us.

## Reading Panel

The Reading Panel is a valuable part of our Tenant Involvement Strategy. The role of the Panel is to comment on policies or strategies which affect tenant services, both when they are being established and when they are reviewed.

During the past year the Panel have commented on reviews of both our Allocations and Complaints Policies with their views being passed to our Management Board who ultimately sign off on THA policy.

We value the contribution the Panel makes. If you would like more information, or are keen to join the Panel, please contact Kevin Turner, Housing Services Director, for more information.



## Important Information – Assured Shorthold Tenancy Renewals

If you are housed by THA as a teacher or working in education, you will hold an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST). These are issued for a period of 12 months and therefore an annual renewal is required.

In order to qualify for a tenancy renewal we require confirmation from the tenant(s) that those named on the agreement are still working within education in a qualifying borough for a minimum of 16 hours per week.

A renewal form will be sent to tenants approximately 3 months before their tenancy is due to expire and this needs to be completed and sent back to Head Office within 14 days of receipt, either via email or post. This form will confirm that the tenant(s) wishes to renew the tenancy for a further 12 months, and it also confirms current employment details.

THA will use these details to obtain a written employment reference to verify the information provided.

Please note that this renewal form is NOT your new tenancy agreement. We can only start the process of issuing new tenancy paperwork once this form and the employment confirmation have been received.

Renewal of a tenancy is also subject to other qualifying criteria and we will be unable to renew a tenancy that:

- Is in rent arrears and has no repayment plan in place
- Has an active anti social behaviour (ASB) case linked to their address
- Has allowed their Gas Safety Certificate (CP12) to expire
- Has breached any other term of their tenancy agreement

When new tenancy agreements are issued, tenants MUST sign and return BOTH copies to Head Office, again within 14 days of receipt - post only. Once endorsed by the Association a copy will be returned to tenants for their records.

Please note that until all paperwork including tenancy agreements are received by THA, your renewal is not complete and failure to return forms in a timely manner may result in us taking steps to end your tenancy.

Please ensure you return all paperwork within the timeframes set out above to prevent any impact on your tenancy.

## Don't forget our Website

Information and updates about Teachers' Housing Association are always available via our website [www.teachershousing.org.uk](http://www.teachershousing.org.uk).

Key areas included on the site are:

- Teacher and General Housing, and Sheltered Housing. Information on the areas we cover and how to apply for accommodation, or for a transfer
- Areas where we have vacancies
- Our range of tenant services – including *Rents; How to report a repair; Gas servicing; Tenant Service Charter; How to make a complaint; Data Protection / GDPR.*
- Maintenance programmes
- Contact numbers and details of key staff and Board Members
- Links to Housing Advice Agencies; Teachers and Government Organisations; Teacher Recruitment Organisations

We also look to post current news items such as Consultation Meeting schedules, and will always advertise current THA job vacancies. Our Home Page currently has a short video highlighting the Association's aims and the work we do.

We hope you will take the opportunity to view the site. We welcome any feedback on the current content, or suggestions of what you would like to see included in the future.

## Queen Mother Court – Consultation Meeting

We were delighted that so many people attended our consultation meeting held at Queen Mother Court in November. This was the first of the annual meetings we hold at each sheltered housing scheme. Tom Casey (Board Member) chaired the meeting on his first visit to the scheme. In addition to hearing updates on policy reviews, our performance and the proposed service charge budget, the meeting was an opportunity for people to give us feedback on the services we provide within the scheme and how we can improve.

We also asked for suggestions on how tenants would like to be more involved in the Association. Discussions continued after the meeting while we were treated to delicious cup cakes baked by Scheme Manager, Annette Price.



## Romaleyn Gardens

Because of certain circumstances I must admit we have had a reduced programme of events this year, but we all enjoyed our 'Race Night' in August, where we cheered on our chosen pig or horse. The bottle of champagne will have to be held over to the next event as we had so many people on the same amount of 'wins' we couldn't separate them.

The Macmillan Biggest Coffee Morning event is held around the Country in September, and as usual Romaleyn Gardens did its bit to help out. Floggit and Scarper held their annual auction; there were cakes galore for sale and we held our Great Romaleyn Bake Off with some delicious entries, all of which had to be tasted. The proud winner was Carole Horler with her magnificent Coffee and Walnut gateau. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped us to raise a magnificent £577 for Macmillan Cancer Support.

One of our new tenants, Valerie Tunstall, gave us dozens of home knitted items to sell to raise money for the Children's Hospice, South West Little Bridge House. There was everything from the most imaginative hats, scarves, dolls outfits, keyrings, premature baby outfits, phone holders and of course wonderful poppies which sold out on the first two days. We managed to raise just over £175 and I would like to extend a great big thank you to Valerie for all the goods she donated.

Talking of Poppies we had a moving 11th November Remembrance Day. Because it was such a special event we went to great lengths to make it one to remember. We followed the 2 minutes silence, laid crosses and roses at our memorial sites, and then read poems from the trenches. Plus, a special ITMA version of how they may have looked at issues in 1918, very skilfully performed by some members of the R.A.T.S. November 27th saw Romaleyn House's 70th anniversary – having been first with The Teachers' Benevolent Fund. We felt we couldn't top our events of the 60th anniversary, so we decided to provide a very special lunch for everyone, with champagne and food of the day back in 1948.

Of course all this brings us to the Christmas period, where we will be partying the night away on the 11th December with a very special quiz night - who will win the cup this year? Also this month we have a special lunch to thank all the loyal Kitchen Club participants throughout the year.

So from all of us here in Devon have a lovely Christmas and New Year and here's to 2019.

**Ruby Brown**

– Scheme Manager

## Maintenance at The Anchorage

This is a Grade II Listed scheme where extensive roof covering repairs are needed. There are a variety of roof types - extensive flat roofs, original slate tiled pitched areas together with rolled lead roofs on the original building which dates back to the 1800s.

We are pleased to say that this project is now in progress and we have appointed Bayer Group plc following completion of the tender process. We had hoped to be on site sooner but were delayed by the need to have a bat survey undertaken – we think that's a first for THA. The bat survey team arrived on site with their listening equipment and took up positions around the scheme for several hours around dusk one evening.

## The Anchorage

We continue to hold a scheme coffee morning every Wednesday and have monthly fish and chips delivered to the scheme. I started a kitchen club in the summer and aim to keep this going and to hold it even more frequently next year. We have built a really nice community spirit with the local Colten Care Home in Mudeford. We have been invited to their events and, in turn, they receive invites to some of our events. This has helped introduce more variety to our social calendar.

The residents have organised a gardening club which is working well here at the scheme - further improving our community spirit - and the garden looks lovely. In November we were entertained by the Diamond Divas, and on a different note, also in November, we had a first aid session with the British Red Cross.

We are making plans for Christmas and resident artist Brian Davies is going to put our decorations up and will no doubt make the Anchorage look very festive for our various Christmas and New Year celebrations.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the south coast.

**Stephanie Chester**

– Scheme Manager



*Roofs in need of repair at The Anchorage*

We had to keep the building as dark as possible during this time and we thank

tenants for their co-operation in achieving this. Bats are a Protected Species and as a few bats were recorded and evidence of habitation found, we need to take special precautionary measures to prevent harm to these pipistrelle bats whilst works are undertaken.

Scaffold works are due in December with the main works following in the New Year. So we hope to be reporting on a successful completion of this project in the next Newsletter.

## Peter Kennedy Court

We continue to have a good social feeling here with people joining in with many of our activities. Monday afternoon now has a group that get together for a *Knit and Natter* session. The ladies meet at 2.30pm for some knitting and the gentlemen arrive about an hour later for afternoon tea. The knitters are making squares to stitch together with the intention to send the blankets to the local neo natal unit at Croydon University Hospital. A very worthy cause.

Despite losing some of our tenants this year we still have well attended events and Tuesday's lunch and Friday's fish and chips are always popular. There is something going on most days and hopefully with new tenants moving in they will come and join in. During the winter we hope to have some music events starting with an afternoon of songs from Jim, who sings songs from the fifties. Bidy Howard is the master baker at Peter Kennedy Court and always provides fabulous sausage rolls and cakes.

This year, as in previous years, we held our Macmillan Coffee morning and yet again we have surpassed all expectations and raised an amazing £443. We all did our bit, baking for the big day.



It was so pleasing to see so many family and friends come along to support this day. Bidy Howard has also been knitting Teddy Bears and funny little animals which we intend to have a sale for and Bidy wants to donate any money made to Macmillan Cancer Support.



With Christmas just around the corner our thoughts go to preparing for the Festive Season. We will be holding our Christmas Lunch on Wednesday 19th December and we will expect to feed about 40 people. I'm lucky; I have a team of volunteers who enjoy helping out on the day. Also, the local Church together with the Brownies will come around for an evening of Carols where my home made mince pies are always well received.

The team at Peter Kennedy Court wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

Lynne Sales  
- Scheme Manager

## Open Day at The Dene

In October, the Housing Management Team held an Open Day at sheltered housing scheme, The Dene, Rottingdean near Brighton. Members of the public from across the region were invited to the scheme to tour the facilities and view the available accommodation.

Four members of the Head Office team travelled to the scheme from London - Kevin Turner (Housing Services Director), Rapinder Sangha (Housing Manager), Ian Morrison (Housing Manager) and Sophia Greenberg (Housing Administrator). They joined local staff including Scheme Manager, Kim Bennett, for a successful day with people from the local area coming to the scheme for a chat with the team. The available rooms were viewed and some kind residents invited visitors to their rooms so people could get an idea of how they might look once furnished and homely.



We are pleased to say that, since the Open Day, we have successfully let one of the rooms. A big thank you to residents and staff at The Dene for their support and help.

## Maintenance at The Dene

We are pleased to confirm that we received Planning Approval to carry out works to stabilise the flint wall along part of the boundary at this scheme. We were fortunately able to find some contractors who specialise in work of this kind and the works were undertaken in late summer.

*A section of the boundary wall at The Dene which was replaced*



## Dunham Gardens

Here in Hull, we held our annual Summer Fair in August which raised a fantastic £503 for the tenants' funds. Each year it appears that the raffle, bottle stall and BBQ bring in the most money, but this year I added a prosecco stall which proved a huge success. Our local Sainsbury's, Fish and Chip shop, Cooplands and the barbers donated some lovely gifts which were used for the raffle and bottle stall.

In October, I joined a group of tenants to visit Lakeside Village shopping centre in Doncaster. It was a lovely place - a shopper's paradise. I don't think anyone came back empty handed. We then went on to Grimsby's Fish and Chip Restaurant in Doncaster. The whole day was a success - paid for from the tenants' funds.



Our kitchen club is still going strong and we continue to alternate from breakfast to lunch each month. On the first Thursday of each month, we hold a Songs of Praise morning which is delivered by the local vicar. Both tenants and visitors are welcome to come along to this event.

Tenants are visiting Sigglesthorpe Garden Centre, which has an amazing Christmas display, to be followed by lunch in the large conservatory. Island Truffles and Treats are then coming to the scheme to cook a 4 course Christmas meal, followed by an afternoon of entertainment from the 50's and 60's; we are also hoping for a visit from Santa himself.

Closer to Christmas, tenants and I have been invited along to the local senior school to watch a Christmas concert, as well as carol singing by the younger children, followed by Christmas lunch. Then to finish off the Christmas celebrations we shall have a good old knees up and buffet lunch on Wednesday 19th December.

Dunham Gardens would like to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Emma Pickering**  
- Scheme Manager



*We welcomed Chairperson, Chris Bright, when he attended our recent Consultation Meeting. The tenants enjoyed meeting and chatting with him.*

## Reindeer Crackers

This has to be the simplest festive snack to make at home and delight the family this Christmas.

And, if it's the grandchildren you're out to impress... why not swap tomatoes and olives for Haribo and M&M's!

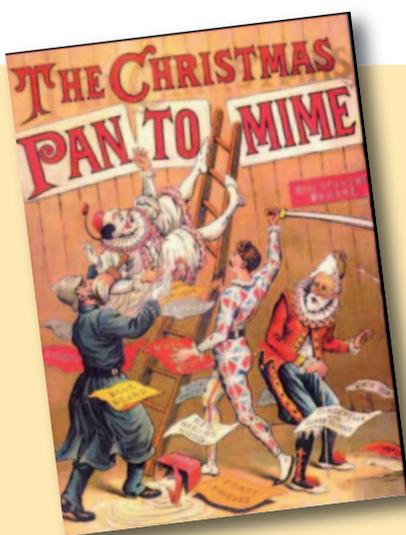


### Ingredients

- 10 oval crackers
- 20 sliced California Ripe Black Olives
- 10 grape tomatoes halves
- 20 broken pretzel pieces
- 1/2 cup whipped or regular cream cheese

### Instructions

1. Make five little plops of cream cheese on each oval cracker, one at the bottom, two in the middle and two at the top.
2. Add grape tomato halves to the cream cheese plop on the bottom of the cracker for the reindeer nose, sliced black olives to the middle cream cheese plops for the eyes and broken pretzel pieces to the top cream cheese plops for the antlers.
3. Or if it is easier for you, simply put the cream cheese on the olive slices, tomato halves, and broken pretzels before putting them on the crackers.



## Pantomime Quiz...Oh, yes it is!

1. What told Dick Whittington to 'turn again'?
2. In which pantomime does Maid Marian appear?
3. In Cinderella, what is the name of Prince Charming's friend?
4. In Jack and the Beanstalk, what does Jack get in exchange for his mother's cow?
5. What is the name of Aladdin's mother?
6. When Sleeping Beauty pricked her finger on a spindle, what happened to her?
7. What does Cinderella's Fairy Godmother turn into a coach?
8. Who is the sweetheart of Harlequin in English pantomime?
9. Who eat the Gingerbread House?
10. Which pantomime character marries Alice Fitzwarren?

1. The Bells Of London
2. Babes In The Wood
3. Dandin!
4. Magic Beans
5. Widow Twankey
6. She Fell Asleep
7. A Pumpkin
8. Columbine
9. Hansel And Gretel
10. Dick Whittington

## Answers to the Pantomime Quiz

# OUT OF OFFICE HOURS EMERGENCY REPAIRS Contact Details



	Plumbing Emergencies	Gas, Central Heating, Hot Water Emergencies	Electrical Emergencies
<b>Bexley</b>	Renford Services Relative Group	Taylor Heating Ltd Renford Services	Renford Services MAC Services Relative Group
<b>Brent</b>	Juniors Plumbing Relative Group	Taylor Heating Ltd	MAC Services Relative Group
<b>Firmans Court</b>	Juniors Plumbing Relative Group		MAC Services Relative Group
<b>Haringey</b>	Juniors Plumbing Relative Group	Taylor Heating Ltd	MAC Services Relative Group
<b>Verona Drive &amp; Sydney Court</b>	Renford Services Relative Group	Taylor Heating Ltd Renford Services	Renford Services MAC Services Relative Group
<b>Old Etonian Housing</b>	Juniors Plumbing Relative Group	Taylor Heating Ltd	MAC Services Relative Group
<b>Peter Kennedy Court</b>	Renford Services Relative Group	(Flats 22-82) LG Heating (Flats 1-21) Renford Services	Renford Services MAC Services Relative Group
<b>Queen Street &amp; Holmesdale Road</b>	Renford Services Relative Group	LG Heating Renford Services	Renford Services MAC Services Relative Group

Taylor Heating - 01920 870 658 or 07825 560 187  
 Renford Services - 07958 419 591 or 020 8777 1674  
 Juniors Plumbing - 07983 111 091  
 MAC Services - 0207 486 9075  
 Relative Group - 0800 023 5996  
 LG Heating - 07837 473 782

## For Clarification, we define emergency works as follows:

- Dangerous structures
- Gas Leaks
- Blocked/overflowing external drains
- Serious flooding or leaks
- Loss of water supply
- Complete failure of electricity supply
- Blocked WC (if there is only one WC)
- Total loss of space and water heating

**Please note that if you call out an emergency contractor for non-urgent work you may be charged by Teachers' Housing Association.**

We also ask that you report any emergency repairs, and details of any call-outs, to Teachers' Housing Head Office as soon as possible (0207 440 9440). **Please retain this information sheet for future reference.**

## Dermott Brennan - 'The Dene'

The place I live is The Dene  
 It is peaceful and serene.  
 It has a large garden  
 If I'm boasting, beg your pardon.

Sheltered accommodation  
 people around  
 Three meals a day are found  
 Washing machine and dryer too  
 If they break there's ballyhoo.

My window overlooks  
 the village green  
 Where three elm trees  
 can be seen  
 Kipling's house across the way  
 Kipling gardens too and you  
 don't have to pay.

Communal lounge where  
 we can meet  
 Tea or coffee if you want a treat.  
 If you want to be on your own  
 Go to your room and be alone.

Here I feel at home  
 Here I feel I'm not alone  
 Here I feel I have  
 friends who care  
 Even if I sit alone in a chair.