

teachers' housing association

Newsletter

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

Welcome to our 2019 Christmas Newsletter. There is a real mix of articles in this edition. The Newsletter gives us an opportunity to keep you informed of important aspects of life as a THA tenant, as well as updating on the many and varied activities at our schemes and sites around the country. We hope you will take the time to read and enjoy this publication.

Starts at Home



On Friday 30 August, we joined in celebrating the fourth Starts at Home Day. This National Housing Federation event sees hundreds of housing association staff and tenants from across the country showcase the value of supported housing.

This year, THA had a number of events of varying sizes running across its sheltered housing schemes with the largest taking place at Peter Kennedy Court, Croydon. This well attended event saw tenants coming together to enjoy each other's company and refreshments whilst sharing their stories of why sheltered housing mattered to them.



Kevin Turner, Housing Services Director, who attended the event and shared in the tenants' stories said, "The Starts at Home event is a great reminder of the excellent work and support offered by supported housing such as this. It's been humbling to hear of the difference that we have been able to make to some people's lives by offering them a home and it is inspiring to see the positive changes this type of housing can and does have on people."

Some tenants from the scheme who shared their stories are featured on the Starts at Home website and their stories can be found by visiting:

- startsathome.org.uk/stories/mrs-howards-story/
- startsathome.org.uk/stories/bella-and-magdalenes-story/

We're already looking forward to Starts at Home Day next year, which will take place on 29 August 2020. For more information, please speak to your Housing Manager.



Development Update

We continue to explore opportunities to fulfil our mission of providing more homes, particularly for people working in education in London.

We still await the outcome of our application for planning permission for our project to provide more homes at Peter Kennedy Court in Croydon and hope to secure this before the end of the year. We have also purchased another flat from a leaseholder at Verona Drive in Surbiton which has increased the number of homes we can offer for rent in the Kingston area.

We are working closely with our consultants to secure other opportunities and have submitted several offers for projects which are either stand alone small sites or in partnership with other housing providers on larger developments. A number of these are in boroughs where we do not currently operate which will widen our provision across London.



Christmas Closure

Teachers' Housing Association Head Office in London
will close for the holiday period
at 5pm on Friday 20th December 2019, and will re-open
at 9am on Thursday 2nd January 2020.

Emergency contact details are set out on the back cover of this Newsletter.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Tenants are expected to behave respectfully and responsibly under the terms of their Tenancy Agreements. Anti-social behaviour can lead to tenants being evicted from their homes. Whilst eviction is always the last course of action, THA can and will take this action where necessary and we have evicted a number of tenants for anti-social behaviour in recent years.

Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour

Talk to the person involved

If you feel safe and comfortable, talk to the person or people involved about how their behaviour is affecting you and what would improve the situation. Listen to their views and try to reach a compromise.

Keep records

Because anti-social behaviour usually relates to repeat problems, it's a good idea to write notes each time it happens. Record as much detail as possible: who was involved, the time and date, what happened, how long the problem lasted, how it affected you and if there were other witnesses. Take photos to support your notes, but only if you feel safe doing so and are not going to make the situation worse.

Report it to Teachers' Housing Association

We will deal with your concerns in a timely and sensitive manner and deal with the nuisance appropriately by conducting a thorough investigation and taking action according to our findings.

Always call 999 in an emergency, such as if there is danger to life, if violence is being used or threatened, if a crime is in progress, or if someone suspected of a crime is nearby. Call 101 to speak to your local police to report crime and other concerns that do not require an emergency response: for example, if your property has been damaged, or if you suspect drug use or drug dealing in your neighbourhood.

You should also contact the police if you think the problem is domestic violence or abuse or harassment or hate crime relating to disability, gender identity, race, religion or sexual orientation.

Be Considerate to Your Neighbour

At this time of year everyone likes to have a party. If you don't know your neighbour too well then why not invite them to your party or at least tell them you are having one, whilst ensuring it finishes at a reasonable time. Showing consideration may prevent any issues developing as a result of your festivities.

Whilst a party itself isn't anti-social behaviour, it could be considered a breach of tenancy if the party were to spill out into a communal area or into the street and cause a nuisance in the neighbourhood, or if the noise was excessive and went on throughout the night. Also, have a think about where you are having the party. If you are expecting a large number of guests then consider having the party elsewhere.

Respect



We endeavour to always treat our tenants in a respectful manner and we are keen to have positive relationships with the people living in our homes. However, we accept that at times we can get things wrong and that this may cause you to feel frustrated towards THA and the services we provide. This frustration is not an excuse to verbally abuse staff or to send letters / emails that are aggressive in tone.

We ask that when you feel frustrated with the service you have received from the Association, you speak to us about this in a calm and polite way and allow us to assist you and put right what has gone wrong. We will always attempt to find a positive outcome but we will not respond to personally offensive comments and / or abusive or threatening language.

Where tenants use such language, it may become necessary to terminate the call. However, we will endeavour to contact you again the next day in an attempt to resolve your problem. Please remember that abuse or harassment of staff is a breach of your tenancy and in extreme circumstances, we may take enforcement action against your tenancy.

Also bear in mind that the person on the other end of the phone / email is a person who is there to assist you. Please speak to and treat THA staff as you would wish to be spoken to / treated yourself.

Plan to avoid Arrears

The festive period can be a busy and expensive time for many of us, with people preparing early to ensure they have enough money to pay for the presents and festivities.

However, it is just as important to ensure that you continue to keep up with rent payments to avoid falling into arrears. Putting a plan in place can help relieve some of the stress associated with the Christmas and New Year period and will help you to manage your budget accordingly. This plan should include funds to cover direct debit payments for rent – if this is your chosen method.

Contact your Housing Manager if you are experiencing genuine difficulties with payments. Plan now to ensure Christmas remains the most wonderful time of year and to avoid arrears coming down the chimney this festive season.

What is and isn't Anti Social Behaviour?

Complaints about noise are not normally considered anti-social behaviour and some noise is an unavoidable part of life, especially if you live in a property which shares facilities or if you live close to your neighbours. However, if noise is excessive (outside acceptable hours) then further investigations may be warranted. Drug misuse, physical violence, harassment and hate related crimes are some of the actions we would consider anti-social behaviour, but should you feel you are suffering nuisance then contact your Housing Manager who will be able to support you where appropriate.

Phone a Manager Day 2019

Our annual Phone a Manager Day took place on 8 October. During the day tenants are able to call Head Office where they can then speak to a member of the Senior Management Team to offer feedback or ask specific questions about their home or scheme.

This year 28 calls were received with eight calls coming from our teacher and general housing tenants and 20 from our sheltered tenants. The majority of the calls were complimentary about THA's services and staff whilst others raised concerns specific to their area or provided useful suggestions about how our services could be improved. This year we also saw more topical queries raised regarding climate change.

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.

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 THA Reading Panel forms part of our Tenant Involvement Strategy. The Panel is made up of tenant volunteers from across both our teacher and general housing and sheltered housing stock and they periodically review policy and strategy documents for THA and suggest where improvements can be made. The documents reviewed vary but will usually have a tenant focus / impact. Some recent examples of policy reviews include:

- Anti-social Behaviour Policy
- Complaints and Appeals Policy
- Allocations Policy



Where appropriate, the comments received regarding the above have been fed in to the policy reviews being conducted and have helped to shape the services THA provide.

We are keen to recruit more members to the Panel, particularly from our teacher tenants who are underrepresented. For more information regarding the Reading Panel, please contact your Housing Manager or Head Office. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the existing Reading Panel members for their much valued input in recent years.



HomeSwapper

A home swap or mutual exchange gives social housing tenants the option to swap properties with other social housing tenants, particularly those looking to move to a different area, either locally or somewhere else in the UK.

HomeSwapper is the online mutual exchange scheme that THA offers to its tenants free of charge, and is the platform that tenants who are looking to move should use in order to search for properties. Only tenants who hold an assured or secure tenancy are able to utilise this service.

Tenants are required to set up their own profile via the HomeSwapper website which will go live once approved by THA. Once approved, tenants will then be able to start searching for properties and possible matches.

HomeSwapper will also generate and send out possible matches based on the specifications provided by users. By adding pictures and a detailed description of your property, matches are far more likely to be found.

Once a match is found, tenants will need to contact THA in order to proceed with any swap as both landlords will need to approve it before it can go ahead.

THA will not approve any HomeSwapper profile, or any subsequent match/swap if;

- There are rent arrears on your account.
- There is a court order against you for any breaches of tenancy.
- There are outstanding recharges for maintenance works, or any damage in your property that needs to be made good.
- Tenancy held is an Assured Shorthold Tenancy.
- The tenant you are swapping with does not meet the necessary criteria for your property.

Note, THA tenants who have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy are not able to use *HomeSwapper* as these tenancies are fixed term and subject to certain criteria being met and therefore cannot be swapped via mutual exchange.

For more information please either visit the *HomeSwapper* website at <https://www.homeswapper.co.uk/> or contact Head Office on 020 7440 9440.

Queen Mother Court

In August this year, I was welcomed with open arms by THA staff and the residents at Queen Mother Court. I am happy to be part of this prestigious organisation.

The residents at Queen Mother Court engage in a wide range of social activities. . . .from Coffee Mornings on Wednesdays, Fish and Chip Lunch on the last Friday of each month, Relaxation Therapy to Music fortnightly - co-ordinated by one of our residents- and Bingo on Friday afternoons, again with residents involved in the organisation.

In September, we held the Macmillan coffee morning for residents. They participated in games like "A Berry Good Guess", where they looked at a large poster with of a berry pie and they had to guess how many berries were in the pie. The residents at flats 1 and 21 won the competition – only 7 berries from the correct answer. Another competition was "Dunk the Biscuit in the cuppa". The resident in Flat 10 got her biscuit close to the cuppa, so she won this competition. All winners were awarded a prize. Residents and family members drank tea/coffee, ate homemade cakes and contributed towards the Macmillan fund. For the finale, a homemade chocolate cake was raffled at 50pence a strip. . . .the winner of the raffle was flat 20. We were successful in raising £116 for Macmillan.



Also in November, Queen Mother Court presented Lizzy Bean, a professional musician from the local community, who played music and sang along with our residents. This included hearty renditions of "We'll meet again", "They can't take that away from me" and "Wouldn't it be lovely". These songs were music to the residents' ears and the session was really enjoyed by all who attended. We're now looking forward to Lizzy returning in December for a festive sing-a-long around the piano.

As we approach the Christmas season, we have planned a Christmas lunch at the Old House at Home Restaurant in Birmingham. Around 20 people are going and after their lunch, I plan to have mince pies, teas and coffee ready for them when they return to Queen Mother Court. Hopefully there will be some carol singing with the local church choir, and the residents may well be involved with the entertainment.

Plus, residents have set up their own lottery syndicate and from their small winnings each week they have a pot of money with which they plan to throw a Christmas party. I'm so looking forward to my first Christmas at Queen Mother Court.

Beverley Ramhi - Scheme Manager

Festive Wordsearch. Find the 20 festive words hidden in the grid plus one special addition.

PUDDING
CRACKER
PRESENTS
CAROLS
MINCEPIE
SHERRY
FROST
REINDEER
SLEIGH
TREE
TURKEY
SNOW
SNOWING
ELF
JINGLE
CHRISTMAS
WINTER
SPROUT
MERRY
NEWYEAR



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Romaleyn Gardens

It's been another lovely summer here on the English Riviera, which meant a lot of watering of the gardens and, most importantly, keeping the duck pond filled.

In July we helped Brian and Maggie Jones celebrate their 65th Wedding Anniversary. The theme was Devon cream teas, and Brian received many condolences, sorry congratulations, from the chaps together with a well done medal. Fortunately Maggie has a wonderful sense of humour. When asked for their secret to a long, happy marriage, they both replied, "keeping out of each other's way". Later, in November, William and Maureen Galt celebrated their Diamond Wedding anniversary with a lot of family, friends and residents joining the celebrations.

Tea, coffee and biscuits followed where residents enjoyed a relaxed and informal chat with Kevin and Rapinder.

Romaleyn Gardens was pleased to join in the NHF nationwide Starts at Home coffee morning. We took a photo of the tenants who had written a statement about living in Sheltered Housing, and this now takes pride of place in reception.

Then of course it was the time of year for the Macmillan Coffee Morning, I was in Benidorm so Sherrel and plenty of volunteers stepped in and raised a wonderful £550. There were delicious home made cakes from tenants and families and delicious pasties from Carole Horler. There were knitted soft toys from Jean Jones, and lavender bags from Valerie Tunstall to buy, and a table top sale for the public. Oh, plus the odd cup of coffee.

So we're now fully involved in Christmas again. We have all the regular activities, including Xmas Lunch, Christmas Bizarre - with lots of hand made goods for sale - Christmas Fun

Quiz Night, and a Christmas Eve afternoon get together with wine and nibbles and a grand prize raffle. So from all of us here at Romaleyn Gardens here's wishing you all a lovely Christmas and New Year 2020.

Ruby Brown - Scheme Manager



August saw our annual walkabout. This year Kevin Turner joined Rapinder Sangha, myself, and many tenants. Some residents just joined in where they could. Our Contract Gardener's representative came along as well as many of the queries and observations are often about our gardens.

Staff Moves

There have been a few personnel changes at our offices this past six months and we are pleased to welcome some new faces. Cheryl Cooke joins as a Cleaner and John Spendlow as Handyperson / Gardener, both at Dunham Gardens, Hull. Beverley Ramhi started in August as the Scheme Manager at Queen Mother Court, Bournville.

We also say farewell to three staff. Susan Clayton from The Anchorage, Christchurch, Shaughn Hall from Dunham Gardens and Sharmila Antao from Head Office in London. We wish them all every success for the future.

The Anchorage

We had major roof works completed at the Scheme this year and unfortunately it took longer than planned. I would like to say a big 'thank you' to everyone here for their patience while the works took place.

We continue to have a weekly coffee morning and enjoy fish and chips monthly. These occasions are popular with the residents and give us a great opportunity to catch up and chat. Our garden has been made beautiful by both our contractors and Michael Hawkes who has made so many beautiful arrangements and has made the garden here a joy to look at. The resident gardening group have organised donations toward plants this year and have regular get-togethers. They do a wonderful job - thank you all. We also now have a regular fortnightly poetry group which is really enjoyed by all that attend, and when I have time I love to pop in and listen.

Resident Olivia Totts was 103 this year and did not want a big deal made of it. However, on the day myself and the carers surprised Olivia with a lovely cake and we had a small celebration in her flat.

I would like to thank Armin our Handyperson who has been here a year now and works so hard, going above and beyond to meet the needs of the scheme and our residents. Susan our lovely cleaner left us this year and we wish her well for the future.



We have started making our preparations for Christmas. Sadly we no longer have our resident artist Brian Davies who would do the Christmas decorations single-handedly and make everywhere look so beautiful at this time of year. Myself, Armin and our residents will be putting up the decorations this year and we'll do our very best to match Brian's high standards.

We will have our usual round of festive events, teas, meals etc. which I really look forward to. A very merry Christmas and happy New Year to everybody from all of here on the south coast.

Stephanie Chester - Scheme Manager

Peter Kennedy Court

Autumn is well and truly here with the trees starting to look rather forlorn and the ground covered in leaves. Generally it's been a good year here at Peter Kennedy Court with lots of people participating and supporting our events and occasions.

The lunch club continues to be popular with traditional dishes like a good old fashioned roast always welcome. Fish and Chips on Friday is also appreciated and both days are now seen as an opportunity for those attending to sit after lunch and spend some time over a coffee chatting about things that may be happening in the local area or further afield in world news. The discussions can be quite lively at times but always with good humour, well nearly always!

It was a very exciting morning when the Fire Brigade arrived in their Fire Engine to give the tenants a talk on Fire Safety in the home.

Following the tragedy at Grenfell there had been a lot of discussion amongst tenants about the Stay Put policy that we have at Peter Kennedy Court. The Fire Officers were reassuring in



their response that safety is of paramount importance and the Stay Put policy was the most effective way to keep safe should a fire ever break out in a building like Peter Kennedy Court. There were lots of useful hints about extension leads and appliances. The event was well attended by about 30 tenants.

At the end of August Peter Kennedy Court joined in with the "Starts at Home Day" by holding a buffet lunch for all tenants. The event was very well supported and we now have two case studies included on the Starts at Home website.

The Knit and Natter group have continued to produce lots of baby



wear over the year which was donated to Kings College Hospital where it was sold in the Friends of Kings shop to raise funds for the hospital. Biddy Howard leads the group, organises the ladies and makes the cake each week for the tea that is served after. The Gents that join the Ladies for tea will be found later clearing away and this is their contribution to the afternoon.

Following last year's successful sale Biddy has been very busy knitting Teddies and Animals for this year's "Biddy's Bear Sale" which will be held early in December. This will be a stand alone event to generate as much as we can with the sale of her beautiful creations together with cakes and savouries, teas and coffees. Last year the proceeds were donated to Macmillan but this year Biddy has requested that the money goes to The Alzheimer's Society, she like many others has been affected by someone they love suffering from this terrible disease.

The Christmas decorations will go up early in December getting ready for the festive season which includes the Church Choir and the Brownies sharing an evening of carols with us. This is a much loved tradition here and no doubt I'll be making mince pies for all. Christmas lunch will be held on 18th December and hopefully I will have my usual team of helpers to make the day go as smoothly as in previous years. It's lovely to see tenants with their family and friends enjoying the day.

While we enjoy celebrating with family and friends, Christmas is also a time for many to reflect and think of those less fortunate than ourselves, so this year we will again be supporting the homeless charity "Crisis at Christmas" and the proceeds from our Raffle will go to them.

So from all of us here at Peter Kennedy Court, "Peace, Goodwill and Happiness for you at Christmas and always"

Lynne Sales - Scheme Manager



Universal Credit has now rolled out across the UK. This means that in every area, almost all new claims for benefit

will now be for Universal Credit instead of tax credits, Housing Benefit or out-of-work benefits like Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance.

Migration onto Universal Credit

Natural migration

As well as all new benefit claimants, people already on benefits that have a change of circumstance such as starting or leaving a job or a



partner leaving or joining the household, will have to claim Universal Credit.



This is known as 'natural migration' and will occur once you notify the relevant benefits department of your updated circumstances.

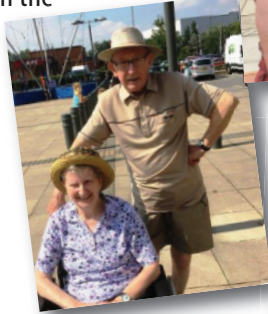
Managed migration

Existing benefits and tax credits claimants who do not have a change of circumstance will start to be asked to claim Universal Credit through a process known as 'managed migration'. A small number started to move to Universal Credit in January 2019 but the majority of claimants won't start to be migrated until 2020 at the earliest. The government expects to finish moving existing benefit and tax credit claimants onto Universal Credit by March 2023.

Dunham Gardens

It feels like some time back, but when the sun was shining in July, 9 tenants joined me on a trip to the Lakeside Shopping Centre followed by Fish and Chips at the Whitby Restaurant. A lovely day of retail therapy and lunch was enjoyed. Our annual summer fair was held in August and it certainly did not disappoint - although the weather wasn't great. We still managed to have our BBQ and the gin stall went down a treat... of course it did. We made over £500 which was put aside for our many Christmas activities.

Resident, Jean Rose celebrated her 90th birthday this year with family and friends at Dunham Gardens by having a lovely afternoon tea.



And here we are again, in the festive season. Our tree went up on the 2nd December. Island Truffles and Treats are coming along this month to cook a four course meal for us to be followed by entertainment.



Avril Richardson raised over £600 when she 'braved the shave' for McMillan in September. I would personally like to thank all tenants, family and friends who supported her. I am sure you will agree it was a very brave thing to do but I must say she looks amazing and we are all very proud of her.

Handyman, Shaughn Hall has left us as he follows his dream to open a bar in Lanzarote. We had a lovely send off for Shaughn in the local pub and we wish him great success in his new venture.



A local pub has been sponsored by Heineken and has invited 20 of our residents along for a two course Christmas meal on Thursday 12th - what a lovely gesture. We will wear Christmas jumpers to raise funds for the Save the Children charity and then, if we've saved enough energy, Wednesday 18th will be our Christmas Party with plenty of food, drink and entertainment. I am exhausted already just thinking about it!

From all at Dunham Gardens, we wish you a wonderful Christmas and a very healthy and happy New Year.

Emma Pickering
- Scheme Manager



The Dene

Once again here in Rottingdean, the year has flown by and we find ourselves in the middle of our festive preparations and events.



There have been a number of significant birthdays celebrated recently at the scheme. Ken Stevens celebrated an amazing 102 years, Helena Dodds (above), 80 years and most recently Magz Kelly, 70 years.

Our list of Christmas events has been growing week by week and so far includes a Pop-up shop selling cards and gifts, a coffee morning with mince pies and bauble making, carols with mulled wine, Christmas tree decoration making and a raffle and Christmas buffet. We have placed a Christmas tree in the local church and a number of our residents will go there and decorate the tree with many other local residents doing the same.

Our main Christmas dinner is on the 19th December this year. We all join together at noon to start the celebration meal with a sherry... could be a long lunch. With

Christmas over we'll turn our attention to a New Year's Eve sing-a-long on the afternoon of 31st December.

The staff here at The Dene wish you all a very happy Christmas and a healthy New Year.

Kim Bennett
- Scheme Manager



OUT OF OFFICE HOURS EMERGENCY REPAIRS Contact Details



Fire Safety Product Recall Notice from Whirlpool

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

We want to bring to your attention a product recall affecting Whirlpool tumble dryers.

Why it's important?

The Government has estimated that the fault affecting these tumble dryers has caused up to 750 fires in the last 11 years. It's therefore essential that anyone with one of the affected products follows the steps below.

About the recall

The recall covers tumble dryers manufactured under the Whirlpool brands of Hotpoint, Indesit, Creda, Swan and Proline, made between 2004 and 2015.

If you are concerned about your tumble dryer you can check if your model is affected on the Whirlpool website or by phoning 0800 151 0905. If your product is affected, you will have the option to:

- have it replaced free of charge
- opt for an upgrade
- have it repaired by an engineer
- choose a refund (depending on the age of the product).

In the meantime, please unplug and do not use the tumble dryer until it has been replaced or repaired.

Taylor Heating Ltd. 01920 870658 / 07825 560187
Renford Services 020 8777 1674 / 07958 419591
Juniors Plumbing 07983 111091
MAC Services 020 7486 9075
Relative Group 0800 0235996
LG Heating 07837 473782



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.**