September 2009 Issue No.3

NEWSletter

GLASGOW WEST HOUSING ASSOCIATION

COMMON AREAS..... common sense!!

By definition, areas such as common backcourts, drying greens, and closes are used and shared by all residents of a particular building. It is important to consider, and consult others when you plan to make changes to these areas. This can mean finding out if everyone is in agreement with play equipment being erected, a table and chairs being placed in the garden area or if anyone has any objections to you storing a bike in the basement of your close.

Recent complaints regarding the use of washing lines in a particular backcourt has highlighted the limitations of our role as Landlord when it comes to the micro-management of the common areas.

Backcourt areas have a multi- purpose use eg outside space for – young children to play, washing to be dried, area to grow plants/shrubs, gardening works, sitting and enjoying good weather - and these different, and at times, conflicting uses, need to be agreed between neighbours in an atmosphere of social maturity and mutual respect.

We are here to assist, and play a part, in resolving more serious neighbour disputes, minor disagreements between residents are often better dealt with by neighbours talking to each other personally. By discussing issues in a calm, reasonable way, most problems can be amicably resolved to the satisfaction of all parties.

TOP TIPS

1. Always securely bag any domestic rubbish and take it to your bin store, do not leave it in the close.
2. Try to avoid leaving personal items, such as bicycles, prams, etc, which might hamper other neighbours' access, or cleaning, in the common close.
3. Always lock any back or front door to keep the close secure.
4. Discuss any plans to use the garden, for example for a barbeque or children's party, with other neighbours to ensure this will not cause disagreement.
5. Treat the common areas as an extension of your home, albeit shared with others, and contribute to their upkeep.
6. Encourage all residents to play their part in keeping the common areas clean, clear, safe and secure.

4 FRONT LEARNING INITIATIVE – VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT

GW is actively exploring participation in the 2nd year of this Initiative, which would be held in our offices (in the Meeting Place) from late January 2010. The initiative is aimed at building confidence and self-esteem amongst participants, as well as self reliance, and aims to help participants maintain successful tenancies through the provision of life skills, social networks, employability training, advice and information.

If you are interested in finding out a bit more about this initiative, or if you know of a friend, neighbour or household member who may benefit, please let your Tenancy Services Officer know as soon as possible.

The initiative will run 3 days per week (Tues-Thurs) from 10am – 2pm for a period of 12-16 weeks and is linked to appropriate qualifications.

ARGYLE ADVICE PROJECT

After a period of uncertainty, we are delighted to confirm receipt of funding from the Scottish Government which will contribute towards securing the future of the Project until at least March 2011.

Since the launch of this service in October 2006, the Project Officers have been instrumental in helping local residents access an additional £1.7m in benefits to which they were entitled, but often unaware of.

If you have not met with the Project Officers, we would encourage you to contact Jamie Simpson on 0141 331 6678 to arrange an appointment for a free and confidential benefits check-up. Alternatively, you may prefer to call in to the Avalon Community Resource Centre at 48 Cleveland Street on the first Thursday of the month (01/10/09, 05/11/09, 03/12/09) where our Officers will be pleased to meet with you.

Arrangements for a monthly service for Hyndland residents will be confirmed shortly.

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BRECHIN STREET "NEW SUPPLY SHARED EQUITY" – REGISTER AN INTEREST NOW!

Artists Impression

If you are interested in applying to purchase one of the 15 shared equity flats please contact our offices by the end of September to register an interest in receiving an Application Pack which will be available shortly. The 2 and 3- apartment flats are scheduled for completion around July/August 2010 and will be sold from plans. First priority will be given to GW tenants and thereafter to local residents who are first time buyers and who are unable to afford to purchase a property on the open market in the local area. The property values range from £137,000 to £169,000 and will be sold on 60-80% shares.

HYNDLAND 2ND STAGE TRANSFER

Linda Reid with John Banks, Elizabeth Reilly and GW Chairperson Dave Sim

We are delighted to report the successful transfer of the 127 GHA properties on 27/07/09 and welcome the Hyndland Residents to Glasgow West Housing Association. Thank you to all Glasgow West and Hyndland Residents for their support and we look forward to continuing our successful partnerships in the future.

RENT REVIEW 2010/11 – YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO INFLUENCE THE AMOUNT YOU PAY

Over the next few months our rent review process will begin, with a view to formal consultation at the ATC. This Conference provides the best opportunity for you to have your say on the rent review and we would strongly recommend you come along to ensure you influence this very important decision.

SERVICE CHARGES REVIEW

Following the successful implementation in March 2009 of the first phase of the review (staircleaning), it is our intention, with your support, to further streamline the service charges from March 2010. Work in this area is now underway and more details will follow in the next Newsletter and at the ATC. Please contact Elaine Travers if you have any comments that you wish to input to the review.

ANNUAL TENANTS CONFERENCE – SATURDAY, 23/01/10

We will soon be agreeing the format of the ATC, therefore if you have any ideas or suggestions for this Event, please contact Elaine Travers at the office.

OFFICE CLOSURE DATES

Please remember that our offices will be closed on the following date: Friday 25 Sept 2009 • Monday 28 Sept 2009
Refer to the GW calendar and/or office answerphone in the event of an emergency repair arising out with our office hours.

RENT REWARD SCHEME

Welcome to the 25 Hyndland residents who have recently qualified for membership of this Scheme.

The next draw will take place on 15/12/09 and the annual bonus cheques will be issued around the same time. If you're not already a Member of the Rent Reward Scheme, just think about what you're missing. Application Forms are available from the office.

RECYCLING UNWANTED HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

If you have good quality furniture or other household items that you no longer need, please consider passing these items on for recycling. The following charitable organisations offer a home uplift service for bulk items and electrical goods:

Salvation Army, 91 Dumbarton Road, Glasgow
0141 334 7253

British Heart Foundation, 467 Dumbarton Road, Glasgow
0844 4994 151

Prince & Princess of Wales Hospice, 349 Dumbarton Road, Glasgow
0141 357 2863

VACATING YOUR FLAT AT THE END OF YOUR TENANCY

At the end of your Tenancy your flat must be cleared of all household furnishings, carpets, white goods and all household rubbish. Sanitary ware and kitchen fittings should be cleaned and left in a hygienic condition.

This is a condition of your Tenancy.

If your home is not returned in good condition we have to pay contractors to clean and clear it before it can be let to someone else. The cost of this will be passed on to you.

FANCY A CHANGE?

A Mutual Exchange may be right up your Street!

We currently operate a Mutual Exchange Scheme. This is a Scheme that allows tenants to "swap" houses if certain criteria are met, for example:

- both parties would benefit from the exchange
- overcrowding or underoccupancy would not occur
- GW Tenants have lived in their present accommodation for at least one year
- both parties intend to permanently reside at the new accommodation
- both parties are fully compliant with their present tenancy agreements
- the property is not part of a future improvement project

A register containing details of people who have already expressed a wish to participate in this scheme is available at our offices and includes the following. Further information is available from Lauren Connolly on 0141 331 6651

REF	ACCOMMODATION	EXCHANGE FOR
821HA	2apt Princes Place, Hyndland	3apt All areas considered (any)
785HA	4apt Burnbank Terrace (1st)	5apt All areas considered (any))
804 HA	3apt Dover Street (3rd)	4apt West End, Charing Cross (Grd, 1st, 2nd, 3rd)
810 HA	3apt Derby Street (3rd Floor)	3apt Woodlands, Byres Road, Charing Cross (Any)

TRANSFERRING TENANTS PRESERVED RIGHTS!

If you are one of the few tenants who have a preserved right to buy and a preserved right to a registered rent, you will lose these rights if you transfer to another GW property.

BENEFIT UPDATES

60 years and over?

From 2nd November 2009 the Government has announced that the pension credit threshold will increase to £10,000. This means that previously for those who had capital (i.e. savings, stocks/share) over £6,000 the pension service would have reduced your entitlement by £1 for every £500 or part thereof above this level. For those on guaranteed pension credit who have capital above £6,000 you should receive additional monies in your payments from pension service in November.

Winter fuel payments have been increased; 60-79 years old will receive £250, single/couple 80 years and over will receive £400 single/couple.

Health in pregnancy grant

From April 2009 pregnant women are entitled to claim a new health in pregnancy grant of £190. Please liaise with your midwife (or Doctor) for a claim form, a part of which must be completed by the midwife or Doctor (otherwise the claim is invalid). The completed form must be sent to the Inland Revenue, by you, within 31 days of the midwife (or Doctor's) signature.

All pregnant woman who are ordinarily resident in Britain, have a right to reside and, with some exceptions, are not persons subject to immigration control, are eligible. It is not means tested and there is no minimum age limit, so young person under 16yrs can claim.

RACIAL ABUSE, NO USE

We are very fortunate that our stock is situated within multi cultural areas. GW tenants, and residents, come from a wide variety of backgrounds, faiths and cultures. For the most part the community mixes very well. Everyone benefits from exposure to other lifestyles, and gains awareness from learning about different cultures.

Unfortunately there was a recent incident of alleged racist name calling, which occurred outside our offices, and involved young children as the victims of this alleged verbal abuse. This incident was dealt with swiftly by staff at the time, and further action has been taken to ensure this does not happen again.

We are sure this was an isolated incident, but would ask residents to be alert to this form of abuse and challenge it whenever possible.

CASH FOR KIDS

Last year 33 children benefitted from a total of £640 from Clyde Action, Cash For Kids.

Application Forms are available usually around the beginning/middle of October and require to be submitted shortly thereafter. If you missed out last year, please keep a watchful eye out for our Posters in your Close as these will provide further details on eligibility, and will also note the Day on which Staff will be available to help anyone who wishes to make an Application.

GW COMMUNITY FUND – FESTIVE GIFTS

Festive gifts will be issued again this year to our tenants who may be elderly, live alone and/or are vulnerable. If you missed out last year or if you know of someone else who missed out, please contact your Tenancy Services Officer – Elaine, Jennie or Tracy.

All gifts will be delivered, where possible, before the office closes for Festive period, and the cost will be met from our Community Fund, which was established from the proceeds of raffles and fun-days.

STAFF NEWS - 'SIOBHAN THE BUILDER'

Siobhan O'Connor a member of our Business Facilities team spent much of her annual leave in August in Malawi helping to build two houses as part of the 'Habitat For Humanity' charity scheme. To qualify Siobhan had to raise £2000 in sponsorship through whatever means possible which included a male friend having their chest waxed, OUCH!!!

We are very proud of Siobhan's achievements.

MONEY ADVICE SERVICE

A money advice service is now available from our offices on a Wednesday morning each week. The service Advisors will provide advice and assistance with debt management issues and will act on your behalf in negotiation with creditors. The DLMAC (Drumchapel Law and Money Advice Centre) and Drumchapel CAB were appointed by the Local Authority to provide this service in our area and appointments can be arranged by contacting the Argyle Advice Project on 0141 331 6678.

DIGITAL TV

Those residents who are unable to take advantage of "Freeview" may be interested in exploring the "Freesat" format for viewing Digital TV.

This system requires a one-off purchase of a Freesat box at an approximate cost of £150 (not to be confused with a Freeview box), with no on-going subscription charges. Currently, Freesat provides in the region of 30 channels including the 5 terrestrial channels (BB1, BBC2 etc).

Should you decide to consider this system, it will self-configure once connected to the aerial point in your property (unless you are an owner and you decided not to buy in to the digital system installed by GW in 2003). Please contact Neil McKenzie on 0141 331 6661 for further information.

ANNUAL GAS SERVICING

We are required by law to carry out an annual servicing of gas appliances in your home (e.g. boiler). This service is imperative to ensure your safety and that of your neighbours, and your co-operation in providing access for heating engineers from our appointed contractor, James Frew Ltd, is appreciated.

Although legal action is always a last resort for the Association, because of the importance of this matter, we will take steps to force access to your home where there are persistent difficulties in obtaining access. We will also seek to recover the full cost of this.

MAJOR REPAIRS

We are nearing the end of the contract and wish to thank all tenants who provided access. We have had very positive feedback from customers indicating high levels of satisfaction with the work carried out. If there are any outstanding matters you wish to discuss regarding the works, please contact the Property Services Team on 0141 331 6652