

Keeping *in* Touch



BUCKS HOUSING GOES 'MODULAR'

Bucks Housing will shortly take possession of a new 'modular' construction scheme in Taplow in South Bucks. The scheme, named Walters Court, off Bath Road, will provide much-needed, temporary homes for families who are either currently or potentially homeless.

Built by South Bucks District Council, in conjunction with Kier Construction, the innovative scheme comprises 12 one and two bedroom apartments which Bucks Housing will manage on a lease basis for the next four years.

This is the first modular scheme to be built in the District. The individual apartments are built in a factory to a specified design and are then transported to the site in their finished state. They are then slotted into place and connected up to all of the usual services.

The families housed at Walters Court will usually move on to more permanent, secure homes as soon as suitable accommodation becomes available and once the Council is satisfied that they have a legal duty to rehouse them.

For as long as they are living at Walters Court, the residents will have the benefit of living in bright, modern, well-equipped homes, providing a much needed alternative to the sometimes poor standard of accommodation in the private sector or in Bed & Breakfasts. Bucks Housing will be providing the residents with a comprehensive housing management and maintenance service.

PLEASE JOIN US IN CELEBRATING OUR ANNIVERSARY

Bucks Housing was founded in 1944 and celebrates its 75th Anniversary this year.

We are planning a tea party at St Hugh's Close, Stokenchurch, on **Friday 30th August** to help mark this important milestone.

Please find further information enclosed with this newsletter. For catering purposes, please let us know if you are planning to come along:

Email: info@bucksha.co.uk

Telephone: 01494 480340



Residents' Panel

Please note that we have cancelled the August Residents' Panel meeting.

The next meeting of the Panel will therefore be:

10.30am on Thursday 31 October at our Stokenchurch office.

Do let us know if you are planning to come and we will send you more details.

STAFFING CHANGES

Some new faces...

We are very pleased to welcome the following members of staff to Bucks Housing:



Margaret Lord (Mags) joined us as Housing Manager, in December 2018.



Melissa Sullivan, Customer Services Advisor, joined us in February 2019.



James Devlin joined us in July 2019, as Asset Management & Maintenance Manager.

A change of role for Sarah



Congratulations to Sarah Dossett who has moved from Customer Services Advisor to Maintenance Assistant (Planned Maintenance & Compliance).

And goodbye to...

We have also said goodbye recently to the following members of staff:

Tahli Lisowski, Maintenance Assistant
Ian Harwood, Asset Management & Maintenance Manager.

Gas and Electrical Safety Audits

You may get a call from a company called Phoenix Compliancy Management (PCM) who we have asked to carry out gas and electrical safety audits on our behalf. They will be looking to see that the annual gas checks and five yearly electrical checks have been carried out to the required standard.

As with all contractors, please ask them to show you their identification before allowing them into your property.

A great response to our Stock Condition Survey

You will be aware that we have recently carried out a survey of all our properties. We asked Rand Associates to undertake the survey on our behalf.

Firstly, a big thank you to all residents who provided access to their property to allow the survey to go ahead. Rand Associates were able to do a complete internal survey in 91% of our houses and bungalows and in 82% of our flats and maisonettes, which was a great response. The figures for the external surveys they undertook are, of course, higher.

The survey data of similar properties has been cloned to those properties which were not surveyed and so the survey findings reflect our total housing stock.

The survey has provided accurate and reliable information concerning the condition of our properties. This will be used to improve our existing records and, most importantly, to provide planning data for future repairs, maintenance and improvement programmes.

Over the next few months, we will be analysing the survey results in fine detail. This will enable us to work out our spending priorities in the short, medium and longer term to ensure that we are making the biggest impact on the overall standard and quality of your homes.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY CHECKS

All landlords, including Bucks Housing, carry out regular inspections of the electrical installations in their properties. Unlike gas safety inspections, there is no legal requirement to carry out electrical inspections every year. However, it is good practice to carry them out every 5 years and whenever there is a change of tenancy.

Every Bucks Housing property should have received an electrical inspection in the last 5 years. If you have been a tenant for 5 years or more, and you don't think you've had an inspection, please call our Maintenance Team.

If the electrician carrying out the inspection identifies any urgent repair work, they will carry out this work before leaving the property if at all possible or will make arrangements to return very soon afterwards. If it is not urgent, the electrician will report this back to us.

It is worth remembering that Bucks Housing is **not responsible** for carrying out safety checks of electrical appliances which we haven't provided, such as kettles, toasters, irons, electric cookers, fridges and freezers (unless they were already installed in your property). Most deaths from electric shocks and fires in homes in the UK are caused by the misuse of, or faulty, plugs, leads and appliances. It is therefore really important for you to ensure that these appliances are used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions and that you check them regularly.

Reducing the risk of Legionnaires' disease

There is a very low risk that Legionella bacteria can develop in stored or stagnant water. Legionella bacteria can cause Legionnaires' disease, a serious lung infection.

We advise you to follow these simple steps to keep your water supply clean and healthy. Each week you should:

- run your taps for three to five minutes
- run any showers for three to five minutes
- flush the toilet twice with the lid down so that fresh water is circulated through the system and that the cistern is regularly emptied.

In addition, you should clean showers / spray taps of scale and debris every three to six months, or earlier if scaling is evident.



Some simple steps to help reduce the risk of fire

- keep exits from your home clear and keys to windows and doors in easy reach.
- keep communal areas, corridors and staircases clear of items such as prams and bikes as these could get in the way of people evacuating, and could also fuel a fire.
- accidents while cooking account for over half of fires at home. Don't leave children alone in the kitchen.
- don't leave candles unattended when lit and never smoke in bed.
- don't overload electrical sockets.
- switch off and unplug your TV and other electrical items – don't leave on standby.
- never put water on a chip pan or oil fire. Instead turn off the cooker and cover the pan with a damp tea towel.
- never put water on an electrical fire as this could result in a fatal electric shock.
- if any electrical items are faulty do not use them.
- keep fire doors closed.
- close all doors at night to help prevent spread of fire.

Please remember - we install smoke alarms in all of our properties but where these are battery-operated, it is your responsibility to ensure that the batteries are changed regularly. If you are not sure what type of smoke alarm you have, please contact our Maintenance team.

A reminder that there's lots of useful information on our website



It's been a year since we launched our new website and we have been making some improvements and adding more useful information.

Our aim is for the website to be your first port of call for information about the Association and the services we provide. Do take a look at www.buckshousing.co.uk

Reporting emergency repairs

If you have an emergency repair, and our office is closed, please telephone **07900 916874** and your call will be diverted to our emergency contractor.

This process should only be used if you have a genuine emergency outside office hours and there is a danger to your health or wellbeing and/or there is a risk of serious damage to the property.

Genuine emergencies include:

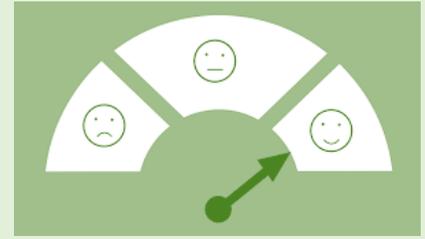
- Serious flooding
- Total electrical failure
- Loss of mains water
- Property no longer secure / water tight
- Health and safety risk
- No heating and / or hot water during the winter months

The emergency service is a 'make safe' service, unless the contractor is able to resolve the fault there and then.

Please be aware that if one of our contractors attends your property, and it is not a genuine emergency, you may be recharged. A copy of our Recharge Policy is available on our website www.buckshousing.co.uk .

If you suspect a gas leak, please ring the National Gas Emergency Service immediately on 0800 111 999.

YOUR CHANCE TO HAVE YOUR SAY!



Your views are really important to us. We are keen to understand what you think about your home and the services we provide.

We have asked a company called Acuity to carry out an independent survey, on our behalf, in the autumn. You will have the choice of filling out a postal survey form or completing the survey on line. Help will be available if you need it.

Please do look out for the survey and take a few minutes to give us your views. Everyone who takes part will be entered into a cash prize draw.

And lastly, a request about use of toilet fresheners

Please do not use the 'hook over rim' type fresheners, in your toilet. These can be flushed down the toilet pan, leading to expensive blockages. Please remember we will recharge you if we are called out to a blockage which is due to tenant misuse, damage or neglect.

