

Keeping *in* Touch



OUR CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR OPENING TIMES

Please note that our office will be closed from 12.30pm on Tuesday 24 December 2019 and will re-open on Thursday 2 January 2020 at 8.30am.

If you have an emergency repair during this period, please call the out of hours phone number: **07900 916874**, and you will be directed to one of our emergency contractors. You should only use this number to report a genuine emergency repair:

- serious flooding
- total electrical failure
- loss of mains water
- property no longer secure and/or water tight
- a health and safety risk
- no heating / hot water (between 1 Oct – 31 March).

Please note, you may be recharged if you call out a contractor and it is found not to be a genuine emergency.

If you smell gas, this should be reported immediately to the National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999.

Non-emergency repairs over this period may be reported by email to maintenance@bucksha.co.uk or via our web site www.buckshousing.co.uk and staff will attend to these once the office has reopened.

ARE YOU GOING AWAY OVER THE HOLIDAYS?

If you are going away for any length of time during the winter, you can avoid the risk of frozen or burst pipes by keeping the heating on at around 10°C for a few hours a day (or use the 'holiday' setting on a modern programmable thermostat).

If you're away for more than a few days, it might be a good idea to leave a key with a trusted neighbour so they can check on your home from time to time – make sure they know where your stop valve is in case of emergency (it is usually under the kitchen sink).



PREVENTING RENT ARREARS AT CHRISTMAS



We know that Christmas can be a busy and expensive time of year, and it is really important to budget ahead to make sure that you can pay your rent as normal. Missing rent payments in December, means that you will start the new year with rent arrears and we will be forced to take action to recover any money due to us.

Please remember that at Bucks Housing, we calculate our rents weekly and there are no 'rent free' weeks. It is also worth thinking about whether the way you usually make rent payments will be affected by our Christmas and New Year closure, as our offices will be shut from 12.30pm on Tuesday 24 December until 8.30am on Thursday 2 January 2019.

You could use your Allpay card in your usual location or alternatively payments can be made over the telephone, using a debit card - call Allpay on 08445 578321. There is also the option of paying us via the internet at www.allpay.net

If you have a smartphone you can download the Allpay App from the Apple App, Windows Phone Store and Google Play allowing you to pay your rent using your phone.

If it is easier for you to set up a direct debit, please contact us and we will be happy to assist you with this. Payments can be made on a weekly or monthly basis and on a day or date to suit you.

If you are experiencing difficulties with your rent payments, please contact our Housing Team on 01494 480340. If you have other debts that you are struggling to pay, it is important that you take action. Our website lists several sources of possible help and advice.

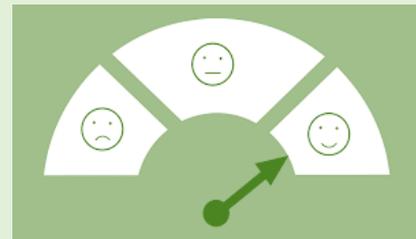
www.buckshousing.co.uk/sources-of-help/

RESIDENTS' SATISFACTION SURVEY

Thank you to all residents who took part in the recent residents' survey, undertaken by Acuity on our behalf.

The numbers are currently being crunched and we will have full findings to share with you in the new year.

Congratulations also to the prize draw winners who have been contacted separately.



Residents' Panel

The first meeting of our Residents' Panel in 2020 will be held on:

Thursday 20 February at 10.30am

The meeting will be held at the Stokenchurch office.

At this meeting we will be looking at the findings of the recent Residents' Satisfaction Survey, the performance of Bucks Housing, for example, in undertaking repairs, and other issues affecting residents.

All residents are welcome to attend Panel meetings. Do let us know if you are planning to come and we will send you the agenda and the papers.

New Panel Members

We are always looking for more people to join the Residents Panel, which meets four times per year. If you think you might be interested, and would like more information, please do contact us.

Contact info@bucksha.co.uk or telephone 01494 480340.

REDUCING RISK OF FIRE

We have had two fires recently in our properties – both caused by faulty household appliances. Thankfully no-one was hurt in either fire, but significant damage was caused.



Simple steps to help reduce the risk of fire

- accidents while cooking account for over half of fires at home. Do not leave children alone in the kitchen.
- do not use any faulty electrical items and do not overload electrical sockets.
- switch off and unplug your TV and other electrical items – don't leave them on standby.
- do not leave candles unattended when lit.
- do not smoke in bed.
- 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.
- keep fire doors closed at all times.
- close all internal doors at night to help prevent spread 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.

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 on 01494 480340.

Keeping our records up to date

Please remember to let us know if you change your mobile phone number, landline number or your email address so that we can update our records.

Similarly, please let us know if your household composition changes e.g. you have a new baby or someone leaves the household.

Make sure your home contents are covered

Bucks Housing has buildings insurance which covers the structure of your home, but this does not cover your furniture and personal belongings against fire, theft, vandalism, burst pipes and other household risks.

While events like these are quite rare, when they do occur, the damage, loss and distress can be huge. For this reason, we encourage all our residents to consider taking out home contents insurance.

The National Housing Federation, Thistle Tenant Risks and Allianz Insurance plc provide the My Home Contents Insurance Scheme, a specialist Tenants Contents Insurance policy. The scheme can offer residents the chance to insure the contents of their homes in an easy and affordable way.

The scheme can offer cover for items such as furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, bedding, electrical items, jewellery, pictures and ornaments. The insurance also covers replacement of external locks if your keys are lost or stolen and the contents of your freezer. There is cover for personal liability and also your decorations which you may be responsible for under your tenancy agreement.

For further information you can:

- ask for an application pack by phoning Bucks Housing on 01494 480340
- call Thistle Tenant Risks on 0345 450 7288
- visit www.thistlemyhome.co.uk for more information or to request a call back.

Celebrating 75 years of Bucks Housing

2019 marked the Association's 75th anniversary and we're delighted to share a few pictures from the tea party we held in August at St Hughs Close, our older persons scheme in Stokenchurch. The raffle raised an impressive £200 which has been split between the St Hughs Social Fund and the local MRI Scanner Appeal. Thank you to those contractors, staff and residents who generously donated raffle prizes.

