

# Keeping *in* Touch



## INTRODUCING MCP - OUR NEW REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR

We are pleased to announce that we have appointed MCP Property Services to provide repairs and maintenance services to all Bucks Housing residents. We are planning to start the contract, on a phased basis, from April 2020.

Under the new contract, MCP will cover the day to day maintenance service, void works, non-specialist planned works and cyclical painting and repairs. The contract **will not** cover gas servicing and repairs, boiler replacements or other servicing and maintenance of specialist equipment within our properties. MCP will also be responsible for our out of hours call handling but will refer gas/heating/plumbing jobs on to our current specialist contractors as appropriate.

We are delighted to welcome MCP and look forward to working in partnership with them to make sure all our customers receive a great service. As with any new service, there are bound to be some initial teething problems in the early weeks. We are also aware that these new arrangements are being introduced in the midst of the Coronavirus crisis, at a time when we are able to respond to emergency repair requests only. Please rest assured that we will be working closely with MCP to resolve any issues as quickly as we can.

You can report your repairs (emergency only for the time being please) in the following ways:

- by telephoning 01494 480340
- by emailing [maintenance@bucksha.co.uk](mailto:maintenance@bucksha.co.uk)
- or using the repair report form on our website.

We look forward to working in partnership with MCP and delivering an excellent repairs and maintenance service to our residents.

### Coronavirus update

The well-being, health and safety of all our customers, contractors and staff is our first priority. We are making a number of changes to help limit the spread of the virus.

At the time of going to print, the main changes are as follows:

- we will only be responding to emergency repairs, so that fewer home visits need to be made. Please make a note of any non-emergency repairs for when the situation improves.
- we are suspending all non-urgent home visits by our staff.
- our office is closed, with staff covering the phones and emails from home.

If you have concerns about your ability to pay your rent during the current crisis, please contact us for advice - we're here to help.

As you will know, the Government guidance is changing all the time. For up to date information on how we are responding to the virus, please go to our website

[www.buckshousing.co.uk](http://www.buckshousing.co.uk) and follow the links.

## KEEPING YOU SAFE – ASBESTOS

### What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral which was used in the building industry in over 3,000 products. Materials containing asbestos were installed in many homes across the UK up to the end of 1999. Properties constructed since 2000 should be asbestos free.

### Isn't asbestos dangerous?

Yes, it can be. Breathing asbestos fibres can cause respiratory problems and can lead to death. However, if asbestos containing materials are in a good condition and not abrasively disturbed then there are **no health risks**. If you encounter damaged asbestos, this does not mean you have been exposed to levels that may cause you harm.

The asbestos containing materials that have been generally identified in our properties are deemed low risk as the asbestos fibres are held firmly within the material it is mixed with, reducing the chances of fibres being released into the air if slight damage occurs. However, it is important that you notify us whenever you find damaged materials which you suspect might contain asbestos.

### Asbestos surveys

To ensure that we understand where asbestos is located within our properties, we have a programme to carry out asbestos management surveys to all properties built prior to 2000. These inspections are being undertaken by appointed asbestos specialists and the programme will have been completed by the end of 2020. Until a property has been surveyed, as a precautionary measure, we will assume that asbestos exists.

### Our asbestos policy and management strategy

It is our policy to leave asbestos in place, as long as it is in a good condition and is unlikely to be disturbed during normal occupancy. We will remove all high-risk asbestos containing materials and any material that may become damaged during planned works. All asbestos removal works will be carried out by approved asbestos contractors. We will review all asbestos containing materials within our communal areas annually.

### What you can do to help us keep you safe

Please provide access, if requested, to enable a property inspection to take place. If you are planning any DIY which involves drilling, cutting or sanding materials in any of the locations mentioned, or if you are in any doubt, please contact us. You **must** contact us if you are planning to carry out work that affects the internal layout or structure of the property – both to obtain our permission and to find out whether the work is likely to disturb any asbestos containing materials. If we do not hold the required asbestos information, we will instruct one of our asbestos consultants to visit your home and collect the information required.

## Where might asbestos be found in the home?

Areas where asbestos containing materials might be found include:

- external fascia and soffit boards
- roof felt or lining panels
- roof cement
- cold water tanks
- textured coatings to ceilings and walls (eg Artex)
- ceiling panels
- garage roofs
- bath panels
- panels behind fires, heaters or boilers
- service ducting
- boiler flues
- rainwater downpipes
- panels beneath window frames
- roof sheets or tiles
- old ventilation pipes
- hot pipe insulation
- garage fascia boards
- garage window lining
- fire door panels
- partition walls
- vinyl floor tiles and linoleum products.

A copy of our Asbestos Policy is available on our website – [www.buckshousing.co.uk](http://www.buckshousing.co.uk)

## Vacancies on the Bucks Housing Board

### Would you like to be at the centre of how Bucks Housing is run and our plans for the future?

We currently have two vacancies on our Board and will shortly be launching a Board Member recruitment campaign.

In particular, we are looking for people with skills, knowledge and experience in the following areas:

- Housing and social policy
- Strategic asset management (including health and safety compliance, planning and procurement)
- Human resources

If you think you have relevant skills and experience, and you can commit to attending six (evening) meetings a year at our offices in Stokenchurch, why not think about applying?

We can offer a proper induction, regular training opportunities and ongoing support. This will help ensure that you're able to make the most effective contribution and that you can get the most out of the experience too.

Unfortunately, there is no payment for this voluntary role, but we do pay travel costs and other reasonable expenses.

You will find further information about our Board on our website <http://www.buckshousing.co.uk/our-board/>. If you would like to speak to someone about what is involved in the role, we can also put you in touch with Ruth Samuel who is a current tenant Board Member.

If you think you may be interested, please contact us and we will send you further information and details of how to apply.

Contact us at Bucks Housing Association:

Telephone: 01494 480340

Email: [info@bucksha.co.uk](mailto:info@bucksha.co.uk)

Website: [www.buckshousing.co.uk](http://www.buckshousing.co.uk)

## Residents' Satisfaction Survey

Thank you again to all residents who took part in the residents' survey towards the end of last year. You will find enclosed with this newsletter a summary of the survey findings.

We were very pleased with the findings, with nine out of ten tenants saying they were happy with the overall services they receive from Bucks Housing.

Of course, not everyone was satisfied with what we do and many of you made comments about how our services could be improved. In the main, these comments concerned our repairs and maintenance service, customer service and customer communications.

We are confident that the new arrangements for repairs and maintenance (see front page) will bring significant improvements to the service.

We are currently working through your feedback and considering what other improvements we can make. Watch this space!

## Remember to check the ID of any callers

All our staff and contractors should carry identification.

If someone knocks on the door saying they are from Bucks Housing, or that they are one of our contractors, remember to ask to see their ID. If in doubt, ask them to wait outside and phone our office to check. Genuine callers will not mind you checking.

# PRODUCT RECALL

## Washing machine and tumble dryer product recalls

You may be aware that Whirlpool has recalled certain models of washing machine and tumble dryer. Customers with affected appliances are entitled to a free replacement or repair.

### Washing machines

This recall affects washing machines sold in the UK, under the Hotpoint and Indesit brands, between October 2014 and February 2018. Appliances under the Whirlpool brand are not affected. The issue is a fault with the door lock, which is a potential fire risk.

You can check if your washing machine is affected by visiting <https://washingmachinerecall.whirlpool.co.uk/>. Alternatively, you can call Whirlpool's freephone hotline – 0800 316 1442.

### Tumble dryers

More than 100 Creda, Hotpoint, Indesit, Proline and Swan tumble dryer models (all brands owned by Whirlpool) made between April 2004 and October 2015 could also pose a fire risk. A fault in the dryers could lead to fires if excess fluff comes into contact with the heating element. Again, appliances under the Whirlpool brand are not affected.

You can check if your tumble dryer is affected by visiting <https://www.whirlpoolservice.co.uk/safety-notice>. Alternatively, you can call Whirlpool's freephone hotline - 0800 151 0905.

*Important safety tip: for all makes of tumble dryer, you should make sure you clean the filters regularly to prevent an excessive build-up of fluff.*

### Register your products

Registering a product with its manufacturer is the easiest way to stay informed on any safety issues you should know about. To get a product registered, you can either:

- go to the manufacturer's website
- use the [Register My Appliance service](#)

### Residents' Panel

The next meeting of our Residents' Panel is scheduled for **10.30am on Thursday 28 May** at our Stokenchurch office. **However, in view of the coronavirus situation, this meeting may need to be cancelled - please check before attending.**

All residents are welcome to attend Panel meetings. Do let us know if you are planning to come along and we will send you the agenda and the papers. There is free parking and refreshments are served.

### A final word from our Chief Executive – on treating our staff and contractors with respect

I would like to remind all of our residents that it is a condition of your tenancy agreement that neither you, a member of your household nor any visitor to your property, will threaten, abuse, harass or assault any member of Bucks Housing's staff or any of our contractors.

We take this type of incident very seriously and will apply a 'zero tolerance' approach to unacceptable behaviour. We aim to treat all of our residents with dignity and respect and we expect the same in return. Thank you!

**Phil Green**  
Chief Executive