



MY TENANCY

The online way to check your rent account. Log onto www.rfha.org.uk and enter your password

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WANTED -

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RFHA needs residents who want to work with to improve their local area. Is that you?

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Introducing

Your Local Offers:

Our Promises To You For The Year Ahead

In November's newsletter, we outlined a number of service promises that you told us that you wanted us to introduce. These are called Local Offers. Local, because these are service improvements that mean something to our residents because they are suggested by our residents.

Since then, we have been discussing how we can meet these promises and have consulted with you about any other offers you would like us to make. We have asked residents on the Freedom Friday coach trips, the Challenge Group, residents at the Tenant Talkback event and residents visiting reception. Each promise is intended to improve the service that we offer to our residents.

We are now pleased to be able to publish these Local Offers and they are all ideas are from you! We will keep you informed in the newsletter about how we are doing...



You Said - The Challenge Group asked for RFHA to check that the Out of Hours service provider was still the best value for money service to use.

We Did - We are in the process of obtaining quotes for alternative suppliers. Once we have these, we will compare the results and decide upon the one that can offer the best value for money and service.

You Said - The Challenge Group asked for us to find a way to reduce the number of satisfaction surveys that have to be completed by post and for us to introduce text appointment reminders.

We Did - We are in the process of setting up a texting service which will send out automatic reminders and also offer a way for residents to complete surveys by text. We hope to have this up and running by the end of May.

You Said - You would like to see a notice board in communal areas of flats so that we can promote events, publish service charge agreements and display any other key information.

We Did - Over the next few months an appropriate notice board will be put up in all communal areas.

You Said - You would like us to provide information about government changes to residents and offer support for these changes.

We Did - We hosted the Tenant Talkback at The Needle and Awl pub in Rushden to discuss these matters, produced a leaflet that was sent out with your rent statement and held a Making Sense of Money workshop for residents.

You Said - You wanted increased penalties for poor performance from contractors.

We Did - We have issued contractors with a new Contractor Code that has strict rules for missed appointments and penalties for poor performance.

You Said - You would like to have greater influence over your neighbourhood.

We Did - We are introducing a new resident involvement activity called Estate Champions. Please see the advert on page 2 for more information.

You Said - You would like RFHA to provide information about the Aids and Adaptations service so that residents with a disability are better informed about the service that we provide.

We Did - RFHA is in the process of producing a leaflet on this subject that is due for publication this year with the new Residents' Handbook and will be offered to all residents who need their home adapted.



Just some of the events held where RFHA has learned from the feedback gained from our residents

Spot the Crown!

Can you find the hidden crown in this month's edition of Your News



How will the changes to Housing Benefit affect your pocket?

Log onto the Housing Benefit self-assessment calculator on our website www.rfha.org.uk to see how your weekly income could be affected



Your News

The Newsletter for Rockingham Forest Housing Association residents



IS YOUR HOUSE TOO BIG FOR YOU?

Have the kids flown the nest and now you find that your home is too big?

Families are always in need of larger properties, with either 3 or 4 bedrooms. Would you consider downsizing to a smaller property?

We have a number of residents who have 3 or 4 children who are living in 2 bedroom houses and are desperately looking for someone like you to exchange with.

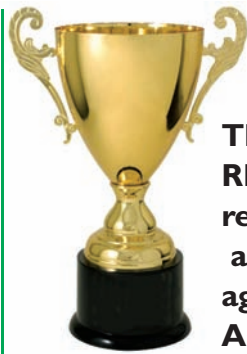
House Exchange is an on-line service where you can advertise your home and make contact with other people who want to do a mutual exchange. Log onto www.RFHA.houseexchange.co.uk to register.

Thank you

End of Tenancy Reward Scheme

This scheme was set up to reward residents who leave their properties in a good condition at the end of their tenancy with £200.

In previous years it has worked really well in keeping down the costs of repairs work to empty properties. Unfortunately, it is no longer working well as an incentive- we have seen the cost in repairs to empty properties soar to an average of £3741 per property. It is with regret that we have had to cancel this scheme.



WANTED Estate Champions!

This is a new initiative that RFHA would like to offer to residents. Estate Champions are residents who have agreed to work with the Association to give them more input in improving their local estate.

Estate Champions would be the eyes and ears of RFHA, allowing us to react much faster to any reported issues. The Champion can also work with us to arrange events such as clear up days. We are particularly looking for residents who

live in Trafford Road in Rushden, Balmoral Avenue in Rushden, Highfield Road in Rushden and the Hayway area in Irthlingborough.

Estate Champions will receive full training and will be in post for 12 months at a time. They are also rewarded with high street shopping vouchers at their end of year review meeting.

If you would like more information please contact Caroline, our Resident Involvement Coordinator, on 01933 415156 or email her at czm@rfha.org.uk.

FREE Skills For Life Training

Last year we ran a series of 'Skills for Life' workshops, open to all RFHA residents which proved to be such a huge success that we are running more courses this year.

Would you like to learn or brush up your skills in:

- **Cooking**
- **DIY**
- **Preparing for Work??**

If so, you might be interested in some training that we will be doing over the summer.

All the sessions will be in small groups and be fun and relaxed. You do not need any experience to join us and we will provide all the materials and tools that you might need. We will cover expenses and provide lunch.

We ran these sessions as part of a longer course last year and it was so successful that we have been awarded a grant to run it again. Feedback from those who came along was excellent:

"This is the thing that I look forward to most in my week" said one resident.

"I enjoyed it all, the people are nice and friendly" said another.

At the end of the training session we will



Cooking and decorating are just two of the Skills For Life courses we will run this year

provide you with some vouchers or materials to help you make the most of your new skills when you get home.

SOOO, what are you waiting for????

if you are interested or would like more information please contact Trish McCourt on 01933 354904 or email me on tm@rfha.org.uk. I'd love to see you there!!!!



Low Cost Energy



Hi. I thought you may find this useful... Ebico are a not-for-profit energy company whose prices compare favourably with other suppliers and whose tariffs are more simple to understand.

They do not have different tariffs between those who pay by direct debit and those who don't, so people without a bank account do not lose out on the cheaper tariffs

Les

Les Rolfe- Board Member, RFHA
For more information, log onto www.ebico.org.uk

May
2011



Spotlight on... Disabled Adaptations



Thank you very much to all of the residents that spared the time for me to visit them to talk about the adaptation to their home. It was really insightful to talk to you to find out how you felt about the process.

As a direct outcome of these visits, RFHA is producing an information leaflet about Aids and Adaptations which lets you know which adaptations we can provide, how long it takes to get the work completed and the different stages in the process. We hope that this will help people to understand more about their options when making an enquiry. Please see our Local Offers on the front page for more information.

Thank you again to the residents!
Caroline
Resident Involvement Coordinator

Flash
point

Don't get recharged!!!

As RFHA now agree appointments with you on all repairs, if you miss an appointment you will be recharged for the cost of the call out. This is usually about £40.

If you find that you cannot make that appointment then PLEASE call the office on 01933 411400 and the Customer Service Team will cancel that appointment and make an alternative one for you.

'Getting To Know You'

Over the past year our residents have received a profiling survey titled 'Getting to Know You'. This survey asks for information about who is living in the property, contact details, gender, age and other diversity questions, including disability.

We recently spoke to Mr & Mrs Wilkinson of Rushden who agreed to help us with this article and they were thrilled with the help they received from RFHA which came about because of the profiling survey they completed. One section requested the resident to indicate if they had any disabilities and if they required an adaptation to their home i.e. over bath shower, ramp access, lever taps, grab rails etc.

Mr & Mrs Wilkinson had already had their bathroom converted into a wet room: this would have been classed as a major adaptation (because of the cost). This was inspected and agreed by an occupational therapist and paid for via grant funding before works began. However, Mr & Mrs Wilkinson required further help with some minor adaptations and had ticked the section for grab rails as well as lever taps. An RFHA member of staff visited their home, it was agreed they required three grab rails and lever taps to the bathroom and wheels were set in motion for these adaptations to be undertaken.

RFHA is always trying to improve the service that they provide for their residents and the profiling information which was requested from our residents highlights the importance of completing this survey. Mr Wilkinson said 'it was very easy to make do and to just get on



Many thanks to Mr & Mrs Wilkinson, who completed our 'Getting to Know You' survey and provided valuable information that will enable RFHA with meeting the individual needs of its residents

with things' but with RFHA helping further with minor adaptations, this will make life a little easier on a day to day basis.

We would like to remind residents of the importance of completing the 'Getting to Know You' survey as this enables RFHA to understand residents' needs and improve services. If you have not had the time to complete the postal survey, we will be asking you over the telephone during the summer.

We would like to thank Mr & Wilkinson for their help with this article - it is very much appreciated.

Thank You



This Month at The Challenge Group....

We have been discussing anti-social behaviour and domestic violence. We have suggested that RFHA needs to provide more contact details on the website for organisations that can help, such as Womens Aid and also provide links for men who may need support too.

Why not come along to our next meeting in June? We will be considering whether RFHA is meeting the national standard for Tenancy - looking at rents, types of tenancy and how properties are allocated. Call Caroline, the Resident Involvement Coordinator on 01933 415156 if you can come along.



Guests are always welcome to attend Challenge Group meetings

May 2011

Faster Repairs- Your New Service Standards

We are delighted to be able to enclose with this newsletter a copy of the new Service Standards!



Over the past six months we have been consulting with you about the timescales we work to for repairs, the guidelines for our new texting service and the service you expect to receive from us every time you call!

We are very pleased to be able to reduce the timescales for repairs, the number of days we take to respond to emails and we now have a new contractors' promise.

Thank you to all the residents who took the time to answer the Question of the Week in reception and over the phone – you can see that your opinions really have shaped the services RFHA will offer.

If you are interested in testing us on our new Service Standards by becoming an RFHA Mystery Shopper – please contact Caroline, our Resident Involvement Coordinator, for more information on 01933 415156 or czm@rfha.org.uk.



Are you a bit of a reader??!



We are looking for residents to proof read the documents that we are planning to circulate to residents.

If you would be interested in reading through any letters, booklets or leaflets that the Association is looking to publish so that we can be sure that they are easy to understand – please get in touch.

There would only be a few documents each year, you will be given plenty of time to respond and all this can be done in the comfort of your own home.

Please contact Caroline on 01933 415156.

Communal Landscaping and Cleaning Services

You Said

We Did

Following the consultation on grounds maintenance and cleaning service in September 2010, you said that were dissatisfied with the standard of communal gardening and cleaning service provided on some estates. Where these services are provided, you had an opportunity to tell us how the contractors are performing.

You Said -

Occupation Road Corby – (Cleaning)

“Windows are not cleaned properly, rubbish left on post box, stairs not mopped”.

Westfield Court – (Gardening)

“I have only seen them once since I have been here and even then they did not seem to do much”.

Upper Queen Street, Rushden – (Gardening)

“Grass in communal area has not been cut for over a month” .

Ironwood Avenue, Desborough – (Gardening)

“Not seen the contractor in five months”.

We Did -

We informed the gardening and cleaning contractors that you are dissatisfied with their service. We are pleased to let you know that we have appointed a new gardening company on a 3 month trial.

Contact Us

You are able to contact us in the following ways:

By telephone: 01933 411400

We will ring you back within 24 hours if you leave a message (unless advised otherwise)

By post: RFHA, St. Peters House, 101 Wellingborough Road, Rushden, NN10 9YL

We will reply to you within 7 days if you write to us

By e-mail: info@rfha.org.uk

We will reply to you within 2 days if you email us

To register to use My Tenancy: tp@rfha.org.uk



The Government Standard



This document can be made available in other formats e.g. Braille, large print, CD and language translation.