



The Gateshead Housing Company

# Leasehold news

Bringing you housing news

August 2007



## Coming soon – PayPoint

In the near future you will be able to pay your service charges wherever you see the PayPoint sign.

All leaseholders should receive a PayPoint card specifically for their account in August, giving the option to pay charges weekly, monthly, quarterly

or as often as they like.

There are over 200 shops, garages and other locations across Gateshead and Newcastle city centre where the cards can be used.

A guide to PayPoint locations will be sent with the cards.

# Not too late for gas views

Leaseholders were recently asked to give their views about the options for the future of gas servicing.

The questionnaire asked respondents to consider a change to their lease, which would formally recognise their responsibility to ensure gas appliances are serviced annually.

As part of the change, leaseholders would be required to provide a copy of their gas safety certificate to the housing company.

This change would ensure all residents within your block feel safe in the knowledge that leaseholders, as well as tenants, have safeguarded against accidents by having their gas appliances serviced.

In addition to this, leaseholders were also asked to review the gas service currently provided by the company.

It is very important that everyone expresses an opinion with regard to this change as it may affect your lease.

If you would like us to contact you to clarify the proposed changes please contact Leasehold Services on 0191 433 5395.

## Join our Board and have *YOUR* say...

Leaseholders are being invited to join the housing company's Board, to have their voice heard and improve the services thousands of leaseholders and tenants receive.

The company's Board has already played a major part in the past three years, including agreeing the £1m a week Decent Homes programme and improving the HomeRepairs service.

There is currently a vacancy for a tenant/leaseholder as well as an independent member of the Board.

To find out more call 0191 433 5308 or complete the enclosed form and return it to us freepost to: The Gateshead Housing Company, FREEPOST NAT16761, Gateshead, NE3 3ZY. (no stamp needed).



## Leaseholders are winners

Three leaseholders have been celebrating recently - with all three off on mini-shopping sprees.

Phyllis Campbell of Willerby Court in Harlow Green was presented with £100 of shopping vouchers after taking part in last year's annual Leaseholder Survey.

Lois Young of Rowlands Gill and Matthew Scandrett of Springwell each won £50 of shopping vouchers by paying their services charges by Direct Debit.



It's easy to set up a Direct Debit - simply fill in the enclosed form and we do the rest.

## Win £100 by giving us your views

With this newsletter you will find a survey asking for your views on the services we provide.

Last year's survey didn't attract many responses but this year we hope more leaseholders will give us their views.

However, results from the survey showed that those who had taken part thought the services offered to them had improved.

Due to the low number of leaseholders responding, it was felt that the performance information gained from the survey needed qualification.

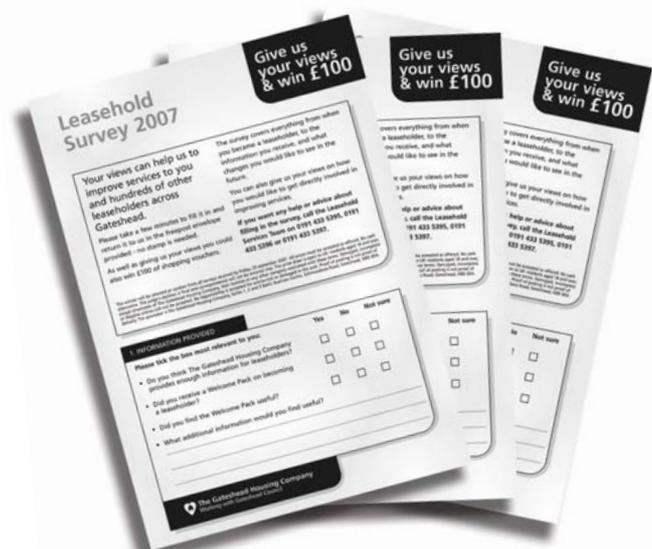
In order to do this the results were discussed at five local forums in February and March.

The conclusions reached at local forums were discussed at main forums in April, and a number of actions were agreed to improve opportunities for involvement, information and future surveys.

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey and return it to us in the freepost envelope provided.

As well as making services better by giving your views, you could also win £100 of shopping vouchers by taking part.

If you would like any help with the survey please contact our Leasehold Services Team - see page 6 for their details.



## Buildings' Insurance **UPDATE**

Following decisions made by the Insurance Ombudsman on the interpretation of policy wording, the buildings' insurance policy now covers the cost of clearing drain pipes where the blockage is sudden.

It has been agreed with the insurer that future claims resulting from sudden blockages will be referred directly by the housing company to the insurer for recovery of costs incurred.

Costs resulting from clearing gradually blocked pipes are not covered by the leaseholder's policy, and will continue to be charged to individual leaseholders through the service charge account.

The insurer is willing to give consideration to claims submitted directly by those leaseholders who have been billed for the cost of clearing sudden blockages within the past year.

Insurance claims forms can be obtained by contacting Gateshead Council, Insurance and Risk Section, Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead, NE8 3DA, or by calling 0191 433 3714.

## Task Team offers helping hand for over 50s

The housing company's 'Small Task Team' is now carrying out hundreds of small tasks and repairs each month for leaseholders aged over 50.

This includes unblocking sinks, putting up shelves or larger tasks, such as creating a low maintenance garden as part of the 'Link up in Gateshead' scheme.

To be eligible you must be aged 50 or over, and unable to carry out tasks because of your health and well-being, with no one to assist you.

Call your housing office or log onto [www.gatesheadhousing.co.uk/yourhome/repairs\\_tasks.htm](http://www.gatesheadhousing.co.uk/yourhome/repairs_tasks.htm) to find out more.

'Link up in Gateshead' is supported by The Gateshead Housing Company, Age Concern Gateshead, Anchor Staying Put, Gateshead Forum for Older People, Gateshead Council, The Pensions Service, Rowlands Gill Live at Home Scheme and the Tyne and Wear Fire Authority.

## Value for money group

The company is implementing a Value for Money (VFM) steering group and we would like a leaseholder to be a member of the group.

Areas that the group will look at include the benchmarking of costs with similar organisations to compare costs of services, and looking at what we do to ensure we can be economical, efficient and best meet customers' needs.

The group will meet once a month to review progress and consider a specific topic or initiative for further investigation by the company and its partners.



If you are interested in being part of this exciting new project contact Graham Priestley on 0191 433 5350 or e-mail [grahampriestley@gatesheadhousing.co.uk](mailto:grahampriestley@gatesheadhousing.co.uk)

## Don't miss out!

Free help and advice on benefits is on offer to people who may be missing out on the financial assistance they are entitled to.

Regular Benefits surgeries are held at housing offices, with employees on hand to offer practical help and advice to those who may be missing out.

To find out more about the weekly surgeries, contact your housing office or Gateshead Council's Benefits Team on 0191 433 4646.

## Changes in Leasehold Team

The company's Leasehold Services Team has changed a little recently - and all for the best possible reasons.

Carole Burns, Clerical Assistant, is currently on maternity leave after recently giving birth to a baby girl, and Helen Craig, Leasehold Officer, has just left to start her maternity leave too!

In the meantime, Laura Chapman, Leasehold Officer has joined the team to work alongside Leasehold Services Manager, Janice Adams.

## Your forums - your views

If you have something you want to make better about the services we provide to you and other leaseholders then why not come to one of our local or main forums?

The next forums are in September and October at:

### LOCAL FORUMS

- Monday, 3 September at 10am - *Felling Library*
- Tuesday, 4 September at 5pm - *Gateshead Council @ Birtley*
- Wednesday, 12 September at 7pm - *Dunston Community Centre*
- Thursday, 13 September at 2pm - *St James Village Hall, Sunderland Road*
- Tuesday, 18 September at 10am - *Whinney Close sheltered accommodation unit, Winlaton*

### MAIN FORUMS

- Monday, 22 October at 2pm - *Gateshead Central Library*
- Thursday, 25 October at 7pm - *Wrekenton Community Centre*



To find out more contact the Leasehold Services Team. See page 6 for their details.

# Your Service Charge Statements explained

One of the most commonly asked questions to our Leasehold Services Team is about Service Charge Statements and what they mean.

Below you can see a typical statement explained. Next time you get your statement it might be useful to use this to help understand it more. But in the meantime, if you want any help or advice about statements contact our Leasehold Services Team. See page 6 for their details.



The Gateshead Housing Company  
 Suites 1, 2, 4 and 5 Baltic Business Centre  
 Saltmeadows Road Gateshead NE8 3DA  
 Tel: 0191 433 5353 Fax: 0191 433 5354  
 www.gatesheadhousing.co.uk

My Ref: SERVICE\_STAT  
 Your Ref:  
 Date:

Date payment made or invoice raised

Period statement covers

Charges and credits applied to your account

**Service Charge Statement:**

This is a statement of your service charge account as at 31st March 2007 showing all payments received and charges made to your account from 1st April 2006 to 31st March 2007. Credit balances are marked cr, outstanding balances are marked dr.

Amount outstanding

Please have a close look at it to make sure that you agree with it.

Trans Date	Transaction Type	Description	Credit	Debit	Balance
				214.68	214.68 DR
01 Apr 2006	DEBIT	Estimated Invoice Charge 2006_07	21.54		193.14 DR
01 Apr 2006	PAYMENT	Direct Debit	21.46		171.68 DR
01 May 2006	PAYMENT	Direct Debit	21.46		150.22 DR
01 Jun 2006	PAYMENT	Direct Debit	21.46		128.76 DR
01 Jul 2006	PAYMENT	Direct Debit	21.46	-100.00	28.76 DR
27 Jul 2006	DEBIT	Actual Invoice Charge 2005_06	21.46		7.30 DR
01 Aug 2006	PAYMENT	Direct Debit		100.00	107.30 DR
23 Aug 2006	ADJUSTMENT	Refund	21.46		85.84 DR
01 Sep 2006	PAYMENT	Direct Debit	21.46		64.38 DR
01 Oct 2006	PAYMENT	Direct Debit	21.46		42.92 DR
01 Nov 2006	PAYMENT	Direct Debit	21.46		21.46 DR
01 Dec 2006	PAYMENT	Direct Debit	21.46		0.00 CR
01 Jan 2007	PAYMENT	Direct Debit	21.46		0.00 CR
<b>BALANCE at 31st March 2007:</b>					<b>0.00 CR</b>

Type of adjustment

Full description of adjustment

Payment received

Summary of service charge account  
 Your annual account is in arrears/credit of £ 0.00 CR

Should you wish to discuss your service charge account further, or make an arrangement to pay, please contact leasehold services team on telephone number 0191 433 5395/5397 by fax on 0191 433 5354 or by e-mail at leasehold@gatesheadhousing.co.uk

Chief Executive: Bill Fullen. Registered Office: The Gateshead Housing Company  
 Suites 1, 2 and 5 Baltic Business Centre Saltmeadows Road Gateshead NE8 3DA.  
 Registered in England and Wales No. 4944719.





# Company brushes up on paintwork

As part of its major revamp of homes across the borough, the housing company has been doing external improvements to a number of properties with leaseholders in them.

The company's external painting programme for the year is well under way - with painting set to be completed at a number of multi-storey and maisonettes this year.

The painting programme for 2007 includes:

- Town Centre - Adelaide and Melbourne Courts; Abbott Court; Cathedral, Lancet, Lychgate, Minster and Trinity Courts
- Harlow Green - Acomb, Bedale, Ripley and Willerby Courts
- Wrekenton - Beacon Court (see below).



## Useful contacts

### Leasehold Services Team

#### **Write:**

Leasehold Services Team, The Gateshead Housing Company, Suites 1, 2, 4 and 5, Baltic Business Centre, Saltmeadows Road, Gateshead, NE8 3DA.  
E-mail: [leasehold@gatesheadhousing.co.uk](mailto:leasehold@gatesheadhousing.co.uk)  
Text: 0762 4804167 (keyword LEASE)

**Web:** [www.gatesheadhousing.co.uk/yourhome/leaseholder.htm](http://www.gatesheadhousing.co.uk/yourhome/leaseholder.htm)

#### **Janice Adams, Leasehold Services Manager**

Tel: 0191 433 5396 Fax: 0191 433 5354  
E-mail: [janiceadams@gatesheadhousing.co.uk](mailto:janiceadams@gatesheadhousing.co.uk)

#### **Laura Chapman, Leasehold Officer**

Tel: 0191 433 5397 Fax: 0191 433 5354  
E-mail: [laurachapman@gatesheadhousing.co.uk](mailto:laurachapman@gatesheadhousing.co.uk)

### HomeRepairs -

Open till 8pm weekdays, till noon on Saturdays and 24-hours a day, seven days a week, for genuine emergencies.

Call: 0800 408 6008 Fax: 0191 433 5496

Text: 0762 480 4167 (keyword REPAIR)

E-mail: [repairs@gatesheadhousing.co.uk](mailto:repairs@gatesheadhousing.co.uk)

Click: [www.gatesheadhousing.co.uk](http://www.gatesheadhousing.co.uk)

### Neighbourhood Nuisance

Call: 07799 583197

### Gateshead Police

Call: 0191 454 7555

### Gateshead Council Waste Collection Service

Call: 0191 433 7000 Fax: 0191 478 1138

E-mail: [enquiries.localenvservices@gateshead.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries.localenvservices@gateshead.gov.uk)

### Customer Involvement Team

Call: 0191 433 5380 Text: 0762 480 4167

E-mail: [involve@gatesheadhousing.co.uk](mailto:involve@gatesheadhousing.co.uk)

# Leasehold Management

## Want to make a difference?

**The Gateshead Housing Company is setting up Service Improvement Groups to make things better for you and thousands of other customers.**

These groups will cover:

- Leasehold Management
- Anti-social Behaviour
- Customer Service
- Decent Homes
- Estate Management
- Getting Involved
- Home**Choice** and Voids
- Home**Repairs**
- Rent and Income
- Tenancy Management

If you want to see improvements in any of these areas then get in touch - you can help us to make improvements by joining a group.

To find out more call our Customer Involvement Team on **0191 433 5380** for an informal chat. You can also:

E-mail: [involve@gatesheadhousing.co.uk](mailto:involve@gatesheadhousing.co.uk)

Text: **0762 480 4167** (keyword 'INVOLVE')

Minicom: **0191 433 5349**



**The Gateshead Housing Company**  
Working with Gateshead Council



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# What's on your mind?

**Anti-social  
behaviour**

**Repairs and  
maintenance**

**How you  
would respond to  
my queries**

**Can I  
give my  
views?**

**Major  
works**

**What are  
my rights and  
responsibilities?**

**Service  
charges, billing  
and payment**