

# Leaseholder news

July 2005

## Leaseholders' guide will be an essential read

The Gateshead Housing Company is producing an essential guide for Leaseholders - to give more information about the services the company offers.

The handy guide will be useful for the company's existing 700 Leaseholders, as well as tenants thinking of buying their flat, or for anyone buying a flat from a Leaseholder.

It will help to explain both Leaseholders' and The Gateshead Housing Company's rights and responsibilities.

There will also be useful information on:

- Buying and selling a property
- Service charges
- Repairs
- Alterations, improvements and major works
- Caretaking and Concierge services
- Neighbourhood nuisance
- And much, much more ...

Janice Adams, Acting Leasehold Services Manager said: "A lot of Leaseholders contacted us - both individually and through our forums - to tell us that they would like an overall guide to being a Leaseholder.

"And I would like to thank the Leaseholders who helped to produce the guide - their input was very helpful and much appreciated.

"I am sure this guide will be very useful, both for current and future Leaseholders, for many years to come."

The guide will be sent to Leaseholders in July, and will also be available online at [www.gatesheadhousing.co.uk](http://www.gatesheadhousing.co.uk)



**Give us your views and get the chance to win £100 - see inside for details**

# Your home, Your voice Your Forum

Hundreds of Leaseholders were given a chance to have their say at April's borough-wide forums.

Agendas were mainly set by the Leaseholders themselves, enabling them to tell the company their priorities for discussion, and to hear about planned improvements to services.

Gerry Alexander lives in Wellington Court, Felling and has been a Leaseholder since 1989. He was pleased that the company had provided him with more information, but had some concerns about service charges.



"I'm retired and on a fixed pension and I don't like owing money," said Gerry. "So it is very difficult when a service bill drops through your door for work you didn't expect and the costs are expensive. "Hopefully we can talk about this today."

"We have issues with the number of times people are called out to replace bulbs or repair fittings," he said. "The costs can really mount up, even when they are divided between a number of people. It will be good to be able to discuss these problems."



His neighbour Ivan Lavender had similar concerns, which he was hoping to have discussed.

Philip Lawrie of Chilside Road, Felling has been a Leaseholder for six years and was attending the meeting to discuss concerns over repairs.



"Being a Leaseholder is a good thing because you get a lot of backing from the company, "These meetings are excellent because they're an education in their own right. "You find out lots of things you didn't know and people are there with advice and help."

"We do get a lot of support from The Gateshead Housing Company.

"Being a Leaseholder is better because everything is more stable: you feel as though you know where you are and the council is still there for you."



Valerie Hardy of Regent Court has been a Leaseholder for seven years, and comes along to the meetings to keep up to date with the company's latest plans.

Margaret Bullock, also of Regent Court, became a Leaseholder four years ago.



She said: "These meetings make you feel more involved. It's useful to have the company support - if we need any advice we just ring up and they give us lots of help.

"The quarterly statement is a good thing: you feel as though you're being taken more notice of:"

## We've got your number

Leaseholders are being reminded that because of recent improvements to the company's computer systems, that you can use your unique 'Payment Reference' when making any payments or setting up standing orders.

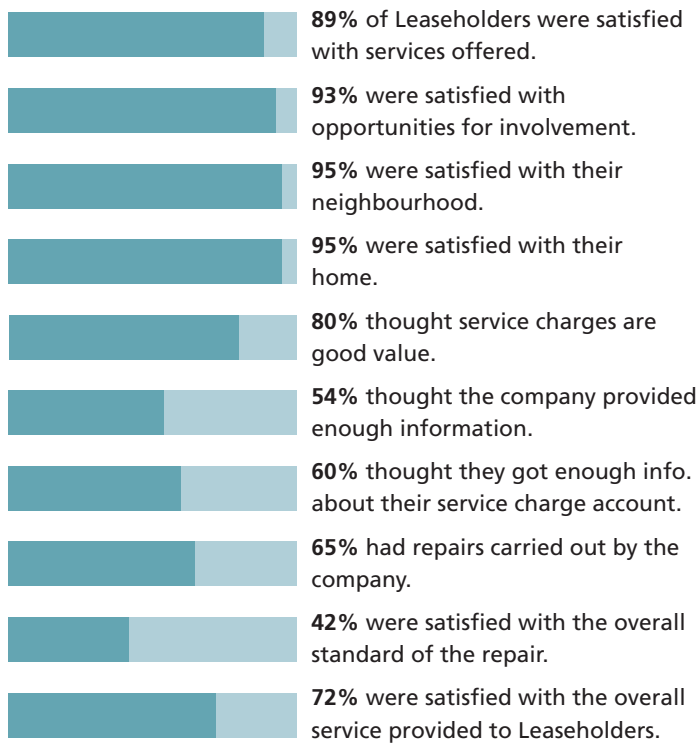
The eight-digit code, which appears on your statements and correspondence starts with a '7'.

If you want any help or advice on your payment number call the Leasehold Services team. See page 4 for details.

## Your views count

### Survey gets Leaseholders' views

The results of the Leaseholders' survey in January's issue of The Gateshead Housing Company News, produced the following results:



The survey results, along with those from tenants, will help the company to improve its services over the coming year and beyond.

## HomeRepairs - coming soon!

The Gateshead Housing Company has listened to the views of its Leaseholders about how we could improve our Repair Reporting Service.

From July, we will have more ways to report repairs, more employees to take calls, and more appointments. We will be writing to all Leaseholders in the next few weeks, to tell them more about our plans for the new 'HomeRepairs' service.

In the meantime, if you want to report a repair please continue to call 0191 433 7777 up to 8pm during the week, and until noon on Saturdays.

## 'A to Z' is bound to be useful

The Gateshead Housing Company recently produced a guide to its services in a useful 'A to Z' magazine format.

Copies of the magazine were sent to all Leaseholders in early May, along with the latest issue of The Gateshead Housing Company News.

The guide, which will be updated at least once a year, has a wealth of information about the many services the company offers local people every day.

If you want an extra copies of the guide, then call into your local office or contact the Leasehold Services Team on 0191 433 5397.



## Extra, extra!

The first issue of The Gateshead Housing Company News 'extra' was published recently, after surveys showed us thousands of tenants and Leaseholders enjoy reading our quarterly newspaper every time it is printed.

This mini version of the newspaper will be produced a further four times a year, and costs less than 12p to print and post.

The magazine will be posted with repairs letters and other letters going out to Leaseholders and tenants every week. Copies will also be available to pick up at local offices, at events or meetings we hold, or online at [www.gatesheadhousing.co.uk](http://www.gatesheadhousing.co.uk)

To contact The Gateshead Housing Company News extra team call: 0191 433 5382 or e-mail [ianclarkin@gatesheadhousing.co.uk](mailto:ianclarkin@gatesheadhousing.co.uk)



## Postcards help set agenda

The postcards which are being included with information from the company, helped to identify the topics Leaseholders would like to discuss at future fourms.

The top five were:

- Repairs and Maintenance
- Legal Rights and Responsibilities
- Major works
- Service Charges Billing and Paying
- Painting

If you want to set the agenda for future meetings then post us your card back today.

No stamp is needed, and you could help us to improve our services to both you and to hundreds of other Leaseholders.







## Changes to Leasehold team

The dedicated team of employees who look after Leaseholder homes across the borough has recently seen a couple of changes.



Janice Adams is now acting Leasehold Services Manager, after the recent departure of Brett Nicholson. Her role now sees her managing the Leasehold Services team, and making sure a good quality service is provided.  
T: 0191 433 5396 F: 0191 433 5354  
E: janiceadams@gatesheadhousing.co.uk



Helen Craig has joined the team from within the company, and has taken over Janice's previous role in helping to provide good quality Leasehold services.  
T: 0191 433 5395 F: 0191 433 5354  
E: helencraig@gatesheadhousing.co.uk



Helen McDermott continues as the team's Clerical Assistant, helping to support the rest of the team.  
T: 0191 433 5397 F: 0191 433 5354  
E: helenmcdermott@gatesheadhousing.co.uk

## HomeSkills courses

- reduce DIY disasters

The Gateshead Housing Company and B&Q are offering 'HomeSkills' courses to give Leaseholders the chance to pick up basic do it yourself skills.

The free courses, which were given national praise after a recent Government inspection, are being held on Mondays on:

- 25 July - 'Summer Gardening'
- 22 August - 'Basic Plumbing'
- 26 September - 'Basic Joinery'
- 24 October - 'Decorating'

To find out more, or to book a free place on any of the courses, call **Victoria Champion** on 0191 433 5385.



## Got an account query?

If you have any queries over service charges or any arrears on accounts then simply call the Leasehold Services team. See left for details.

In the past Leaseholders may have had to speak to Gateshead Council's Finance Team, as well as the company.

But, recent improvements to the company's computers systems, means that the Leasehold team should be able to answer any queries.

## Your home, Your voice Your Forum



Are you a Leaseholder of The Gateshead Housing Company?



Do you want to make the services even better?

If you do, then come along to any of our regular forums.

### Local Forums

<b>Tuesday 6 Sept</b>	5pm	Gateshead Council @ Birtley (the community room), 16 Durham Road, Birtley
<b>Thursday 8 Sept</b>	2pm	West Park Sheltered Housing Scheme, Dunston
<b>Friday 9 Sept</b>	3pm	Joseph Hopper Memorial Homes, Windy Nook
<b>Monday 12 Sept</b>	11am	Felling Community Centre, Crowhall Towers, Crowhall Lane, Felling
<b>Tuesday 13 Sept</b>	2pm	43 Greenfields Bungalows, Ryton

### Main Forum

<b>Tuesday 25 Oct</b>	7pm	Wrekenton Community Centre, High Street, Wrekenton
<b>Wednesday 26 Oct</b>	2pm	Gateshead Civic Centre, the Lamesley Room, Regent Street, Gateshead Town Centre

Contact The Gateshead Housing Company  
on 0191 433 5395 to find out more.

# Leasehold Service Questionnaire

**The Gateshead Housing Company is always looking to get the views of its Leaseholders, in order to help make services even better.**

You can help us to improve our services by taking a few minutes to fill in this survey. Your views will be taken notice of – and the next issue of this newsletter will have the results of the survey.

And if you fill in the survey and return it to us, then you go into a draw to win £100 of shopping vouchers for use in any of the major supermarkets in the borough.

The prize will be awarded to the first fully completed survey, drawn at random from all received by July.

And you don't even need to pay for the postage, with a pre-paid envelope also enclosed - it couldn't be simpler!

Please note there is no cash alternative, the judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.

If you need any help with filling in the survey, or have any questions, please call the Leasehold Services Team on 0191 433 5397.

**Please remember to fill in your details on the last page of the questionnaire - if you don't do that, then we can't contact you if you are the winner!**

**Please circle one option only**

1	When you first became a Leaseholder, were you given enough information?	Yes	No
2	Did you seek information about the Leasehold Service at Gateshead Civic Centre?	Yes	No
	If YES, were your queries answered satisfactorily?	Yes	No
	If NO, please give details:		

**Give us your views and get the chance to win £100**



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

**Please circle one option only**

3	Do you find the information you receive with your service charge account is satisfactory?	Yes	No
4	Are you satisfied with the information given to you before any repair work is carried out?	Yes	No
5	Were you satisfied with the standard of repairs carried out?	Yes	No
6	Were you satisfied with the attitudes of the persons who did repair works?	Yes	No
7	Would you be interested in having works done by Gateshead Council inside your flat, for example, kitchen replacement?	Yes	No
8	Would you use the internet for:		
	• Payment of service charge	Yes	No
	• A Service charge balance enquiry	Yes	No
	• Queries about the service	Yes	No
9	Would you pay your service charge using any of the following payment options, if they were made available in the future?		
	• AllPay card (can be used at Post Offices, and many local supermarkets, newsagents, petrol stations etc)	Yes	No
	• Direct Debit (a regular payment directly from your bank account)	Yes	No
	• The Gateshead Housing Company Payment Card (can be used at Post Offices and our ten payment offices)	Yes	No
10	Do you think there is enough opportunity for Leaseholders to become involved in improving the Leasehold service?	Yes	No
11	Would you be interested in joining a focus group to help produce a major works compact for all Leaseholders?	Yes	No
12	We will be producing a Plain English version of the Lease, would you be interested in helping us make sure it is easy to read and understand?	Yes	No
13	Do you find the Leaseholders' Forum effective?	Yes	No
14	Would you like to see more local Forums in your area?	Yes	No
15	Are you planning to attend a Leaseholders' Forum this year?	Yes	No
If NO, why not?			

<b>16</b>	<p>What issues would you like to have discussed at the Leaseholders' Forum? Tick up to five items you feel are your priorities for discussion.</p>		
	• Repair and maintenance		
	• Painting		
	• Service charges, billing and paying		
	• Anti-social behaviour		
	• Major Works		
	• How we respond to your queries		
	• The information you receive		
	• Accessing the services we provide		
	• Your legal rights and responsibilities		
	• The format of the Leaseholders' Forum		
	• Insurance		
	<p>Are there any other issues you think we should include in Forums: If so, add them below,</p>		
<b>17</b>	<p>Would you like to help improve the services we provide. If so, please tick any of the ways to get involved below, and we will contact you as soon as possible.</p>		
	• The Leaseholders' newsletter and or/The Gateshead Housing Company news		
	• Taking part in surveys		
	• Taking part in focus groups		
	• Estate Tours		
	• Mystery shopping		
	<p>Other (please specify)</p>		
<b>18</b>	Overall, are you happy with the service provided?	Yes	No
	<p>If NO, what can we improve?</p>		

# Leaseholder Profile

## Leasehold address

				Post code	
Tel:		Mob:		E-mail:	

**Members of Household** - Please give details of all persons living together at the address.  
Attach a second sheet if needed.

Name <small>put main Leaseholder first, then other household members</small>	Male or Female	Relationship to main Leaseholder	Date of birth	Ethnic origin <small>(code below)</small>	Any disability? <small>(code below)</small>	Office use only <small>(Person ref)</small>

## Additional household information requirements

Large print <input type="checkbox"/>	Braille <input type="checkbox"/>	Audio Tape <input type="checkbox"/>	Other language (specify)	
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If you would like information about your Leasehold to be sent to a carer or a family member,  
**instead of being sent to you**, then please provide their details below:

Name						
Address					Post code	
Tel:		Mob:		E-mail:		
Please state what relation this person is to you (eg carer, daughter etc)						

**Ethnic origin** please circle the appropriate number.

White		Asian or Asian British		Chinese or Other Ethnic Group		Mixed		Black or Black British	
01	British	04	Indian	08	Chinese	10	White and Black Caribbean	14	Black Caribbean
02	Irish	05	Pakistani	09	Other ethnic group	11	White and Black African	15	Black African
03	Other White	06	Bangladeshi			12	White and Asian	16	Black British
		07	Other Asian			13	Other Mixed	17	Other

**Disability** please circle the appropriate number.

01	Blind or partially sighted	04	Deaf or hearing impairment	07	Other disability (please specify)
02	Wheelchair user	05	Mental health disability		
03	Other mobility difficulties	06	Learning disability		

**If you have any further queries please contact The Gateshead Housing Company on Tel: 0191 433 5397.**

The Gateshead Housing Company, Suites 1, 2 and 5 Baltic Business Centre, Saltmeadows Road, Gateshead, NE8 3DA.