

The magazine 4 Catalyst Housing residents

Catalyst 4 You

Issue 2
January 2012

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Meet your

neighbourhood
managers



Catalyst
Housing

4 + **5**

Welcome to the January issue of *Catalyst 4 You*

2011 was a very busy year for us. We became Catalyst Housing in October. And we told you we are doing this because we want to provide better homes, better service and a better future for our residents. So what have we done so far?

Better homes: I'm delighted to let you know that our new board has signed off £29 million of investment in your homes (page 11). And, despite the government's cut in funding for home building, we're still building more new affordable homes for rent and sale (page 7).



John Foxall
Director of
customer services

Better service: we created the new role of head of customer services and Lesley Maslem joined us in October 2011 (page 11). She'll now be working on a customer experience strategy. We're also offering more resident involvement opportunities, so you can have a bigger say in how we run our organisation (page 9).

Better future: from our survey last year, we know that you would like more opportunities to move home. So we're signing up to the new HomeSwap Direct scheme in April (see below). And as part of our efforts to deliver more training and employment opportunities, our community charity, Catalyst Gateway, is now providing the biggest housing apprenticeship scheme in the UK (page 10).

Finally, I would like to wish you all a happy new year!

Coming soon... HomeSwap Direct

From April we'll be part of the government's new online HomeSwap Direct scheme.

If you want to move home – for a job, to be nearer to family or to be in a home that better suits your needs – the HomeSwap Direct website will show you all available properties across the UK.

For more details, please visit the '**Rent a home**' section of our website

Keep it switched on

Television across the UK is going digital and the existing analogue TV signal is being steadily switched off. For the majority of our homes, the new signals will switch on by April.

Most existing rooftop aerials are already able to receive digital services and won't need replacing.

If you live in one of our blocks and your aerial does need replacing, we'll do the work by April. If you live in a street property, it's your responsibility to replace the aerial if you need to.



For more information, visit www.digitaluk.co.uk or call **0845 50 50 50**

Affordable rent

We're now going ahead with our plans to let some of our rented homes at the new affordable rent

We consulted with you about affordable rent in late 2011, and received over 1,000 responses. We've listened to you and used your views to form our policy.

Questions and answers

Why are you doing this?

Government funding for building new homes has been drastically cut. So, in order for us to build more homes and maintain our existing homes, we need to charge a higher rent on new homes.

What's the difference between social rent and affordable rent?

Market rent is the rent that private landlords charge in your area. Social rent is set at about 40% of

market rent levels and residents have a lifetime tenancy. That means they can stay in their home for as long as they want, providing they don't break the terms of their tenancy agreement, which could lead to them being evicted.

Affordable rent is set according to market conditions – up to 80% of market rent levels. Most new residents will also have a fixed term tenancy, usually for five years. In most cases it will be renewed. All residents in sheltered and supported homes will still have lifetime tenancies.

How will the rents be calculated?

We will charge affordable rents on our one and two bedroom homes.

We will continue to charge social rents on our larger homes. This is because the government will not pay enough housing benefit to cover higher rents for larger homes.

I'm moving into a rented home on a regeneration scheme. How will I be affected?

You won't. Your rent and tenancy will be the same as if you were a social housing tenant.

I'm an existing tenant. If I move home, will I be affected?

If you choose to move to one of our social rent homes then you will not be affected. If you choose to move to an affordable rent home, you will be charged up to 80% of market rent.

When we advertise our rented homes, we will specify whether they are social rent or affordable rent.

I'm not planning on moving. What will happen to me?

Nothing. If you choose to stay in your existing home your tenancy, rights and rents remain unaffected.



twitter time

Valentine's special



Chris Harris, London area director, will be holding a live session on twitter on Valentine's Day. That's **Tuesday 14 February from 12 noon to 2pm**

You can ask Chris anything you want – from how he's managing our communities to how he's improving services.

For every resident who tweets us, we'll donate £1 to the British Heart Foundation. Visit www.bhf.org.uk to see all the good work it does.

To send us a tweet, just:

■ Go to www.twitter.com

■ Type in 'Catalyst4You' in the search

■ When you have found us, just click on 'follow' and start tweeting



Meet your neighbourhood managers

We pride ourselves on providing excellent customer service and no one does it better than our neighbourhood managers

We have over 30 neighbourhood managers across London and the South East. They can give you advice on things like your tenancy, lease, rent, and how you can get involved to improve our services.

The day-to-day role of a neighbourhood manager includes:

- meeting and greeting new tenants and homeowners to explain the terms of their tenancies and leases
- giving advice on rents and service charges, and what to do if you are in arrears
- carrying out estate inspections to make sure our neighbourhoods are safe, clean and tidy
- working with our resident involvement team so you can give your views on how we manage your homes and communities
- dealing with complaints and reports of anti-social behaviour
- managing empty homes, so they are quickly re-let and accompanying new residents when they view homes
- working with support agencies, so our elderly and vulnerable residents get the help they need to stay in their homes

We've produced a short video on the types of things our neighbourhood managers do. To see the video, visit our website or scan this code if you have a smart phone.



▼ From left to right: Victor (South East),
Charmaine (Kensington and Chelsea),
Jonathan (West London) and Lilah (Brent)

Say hello to Lilah

Lilah is one of three neighbourhood managers in Brent. She manages 500 new homes in Church End

When asked what her typical day involves, Lilah says she's there to 'simply help people'. When she first gets to work, Lilah checks her emails, telephone messages and goes through her in tray. If something is urgent, like reports of domestic violence, she'll treat it as a priority.

One incident that really sticks in Lilah's mind is when she dealt with a case of ongoing anti-social behaviour. Last summer, some residents were being constantly harassed by young people who were breaking into their block to smoke cannabis.

'Local people were very upset and scared, especially some of our elderly residents', says Lilah. So she spoke to residents in the building to agree what to do.

Residents asked us to install secure block entrance doors. So Lilah looked into it, and worked with our asset management team to make this happen. And the new doors have worked! There's now much less anti-social behaviour in the block as people can't just push the doors open anymore.

Even though getting the doors installed took several months, Lilah says it was well worth it. 'People just want to be safe and helping them feel safe is the part of my job I love the most.'

Anti-social behaviour ruins lives. Work with us to stop it by reporting it.

To find out who your neighbourhood manager is and how they can help you, please call us

“ I'm simply there to help people ”

Contact us

- General enquiries:
(Monday to Friday, 8am – 5pm)
0300 456 2099
- Email us via our website:
www.chg.org.uk

- Repairs, pest control and gas heating:
(Monday to Friday, 8am – 5pm)
0800 731 5282 or
0300 456 2482
- All other emergency repairs:
(5pm onwards and all day on weekends)
020 8937 1234

- Visit us:
223 Church Road
London NW10 9EP
(see page 6 for opening times)
- Write to us:
Ealing Gateway
26-30 Uxbridge Road
London W5 2AU

Church Road office

Opening times

More than 85% of residents are in favour of our plans to open our Church Road office at set times

When will we be open?

From February 2012 our office will be open:

- Monday: 9.30am – 4pm
- Tuesday to Friday: 9.30am – 1pm

Outside opening times

You can still see us outside these times as we're introducing:

- **an office appointment system:** you will be able to visit the office at a day and time you prefer

- **home visits:** our staff can visit you 9am – 5pm during the week (except on Wednesdays when they will be available from 9am – 1pm).

To ask for an office appointment or home visit, just call **0300 456 2099**

Problems with our phones

Some of you who called our London customer services centre recently may not have got through.

We're very sorry for the inconvenience this caused and we're happy to report that our phone systems are now up and running again.

So, please do continue to call us during our usual opening hours – Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm. If you have an out of hours emergency repair, please call our contractors directly. Our full contact details are on page 5.

The Unity Centre

Often described as the 'beating heart of the Harlesden community', the Unity Centre is the perfect venue to host your event

Facilities at the centre include the:

- **main hall:** seats up to 150 people, and is ideal for events like meetings, art performances, exercise classes and exhibitions
- **meeting room:** holds up to 50 people
- **fitness studio:** you can practice your dance moves or have a tranquil yoga session
- **IT suite:** with 12 computers, you can run workshops or seminars
- **multi-sports pitch:** want to hold a football tournament or netball classes? Then our outdoor sports pitch is ideal

To book an event at the Unity Centre or to find out about the events we're holding there, call **020 8955 1780** or email unitycentre@chg.org.uk



Being a good neighbour

You and your neighbours have the right to live in a safe and peaceful community.

Please be considerate to your neighbours by:

- keeping down the noise especially late at night. Loud parties, music, TV, shouting, and barking dogs disturb your neighbours
- not feeding the pigeons – they carry disease and their droppings can be toxic
- putting your rubbish in bins, and not throwing cigarette butts out of your windows or balconies. There are new black bins on our estates, so please use them

If you're having problems with your neighbours, we can offer free mediation from independent advisers. For more details, please call us or visit our website

Safer neighbourhoods

We work with the Harlesden Safer Neighbourhoods team to make sure our neighbourhoods are a safe place to live, work and visit.

You can report a range of things to the team including anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, abandoned cars and graffiti.

Concerned about crime?

From 3 February, the Harlesden Safer Neighbourhood team will visit our Church Road office every other Friday from 3.30pm – 4.30pm

Parking near your home

Many people have problems finding parking around their home. To help improve things we'll soon be issuing parking control notices to any illegally parked vehicle in our neighbourhoods.

From February our contractors (Wing Parking) will:

- take pictures of unauthorised parked vehicles on handheld computers and send their details to a central database
- issue on the spot parking tickets (£120 or £60 if you pay within 14 days)
- chase you for the debt if you don't pay.

For more details, please contact us (see page 5)

New homes

A warm welcome to the new residents who moved into St. Mary's Court last autumn.

The Harlesden development includes 38 new homes. Nine homes are part-buy / part-rent and 29 are for rent.

If you're interested in part-buying a Catalyst home, please call **0845 601 7729** or email newbuild@chg.org.uk



Brent local board

update

Your new local board met for the first time in November

The Brent local board includes resident reps and focuses on local issues. At their first meeting, your board decided to:

- look at how we perform in key areas such as voids (re-letting empty homes), rent arrears, complaints and gas appliance maintenance. This will help highlight the areas where we can do better
- map out local services for local people. So we'll start producing maps which show resident involvement opportunities, hotspots for anti-social behaviour and the delivery of local services by our housing team

- have more input around our major works programme (such as kitchen and bathroom renewals). They'll also be helping to prioritise the money spent in your area through the estate improvement budget

The board will meet again in February and we'll keep you updated on progress.

If you have a question for the local board, please email Catalyst4You@chg.org.uk and we'll ask it for you. We'll give £20 worth of shopping vouchers for the question we publish

Christmas cheer



Christmas carols and mince pies marked the beginning of the festive season for our older residents in Brent. Over 80 people enjoyed the elders forum's Christmas party at the Unity Centre.

Residents warmed themselves with a glass of mulled wine and sat down for a silver service meal. They were then treated to music and enjoyed a dance or two.

To join a residents' group in your area, please contact Wendy Bohan on 020 8955 1787 or wendy.bohan@chg.org.uk

Having money problems?

The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) can help if you are having money troubles.

They can work with you to draw up a household budget and tell you about the benefits you can claim.

CAB recently helped single mother, Ms Williams, increase her income by £4,000 a year after her council wrongly assessed her benefit claim. When Ms Williams told the council she had found a job, they reassessed her claim. But she didn't know to include her childcare costs on the form.

When CAB looked at Ms Williams' housing benefit calculations, it discovered she was getting less than £30 a week. In fact she was entitled to over £90 a week. CAB then helped Ms Williams write to her council to query her entitlement, and her appeal was successful.

CAB representatives visit our Brent office every Thursday from 9am – 4pm. To make an appointment to see them, please call us



Free training courses

We provide over 30 free courses on topics such as project management, report writing, health and safety, and assertiveness.

On our latest course, in December, residents found out about housing finance and budgeting.

The focus of the session was to show people how they can have their say alongside other stakeholders, and shape our spending priorities.

Want to get on a course?
Just download a training catalogue from our website or call your local office.



We've produced a video on the types of training we provide and how residents have used the skills they've learnt.

To see the video, please visit our website. If you have a smart phone, just scan this icon and it will take you straight there.



Be a catalyst for change

Are there things in your neighbourhood that you want to change or improve? Then become a Catalyst community champion!

Last year we won £30,000 to train residents so they can act as a voice for local people and make change happen. The training starts in February, and will help you develop the skills you need to support and build your community.

Don't worry if you don't have any experience. We're just looking for people with a commitment to improving their local area.

For more details,
please call us or email
getinvolved@chg.org.uk

Grants for you

Need help starting up a residents' group? We offer financial assistance to support you.

- **Start-up grants:** we give £200 to all new groups
- **Annual maintenance grants:** you can get £3.50 for every Catalyst home covered by your group (up to a maximum of £1,000)
- **Claiming your expenses:** You can claim back any money you spend while taking part in meetings or activities for us

For more details,
please call us or email
getinvolved@chg.org.uk

▼ Housing apprentice,
Rafael Alvarez

Apprentices: you're hired!

We've just kicked off the first phase of our apprenticeship programme, which is the largest of its kind in the UK. The scheme provides opportunities to work in different parts of housing, including finance, housing management, youth work and income management.

As well as contributing to an NVQ, we also provide:

- english and maths qualifications
- personal support packages including debt and housing advice
- confidence and motivational training

Catalyst Gateway is an accredited training provider, recognised by City and Guilds, the Open College Network and Matrix.

To find out more about our apprentice programmes call **0845 437 9705**, email enquiries@catalystgateway.org.uk or visit www.catalystgateway.org.uk

Need help finding a job?

If you've been unemployed on a long term basis* and are receiving benefits, we may be able to help you find your ideal job. We have various training centres where you can come and get support.

Our dedicated team provides free assistance with:

- job searches
- writing CVs
- filling in application forms
- preparing for interviews

To find out more call **020 8832 3377**. text 'Call me' to **07814 233863** or visit www.catalystgateway.org.uk

*Definition of 'long term unemployed' may vary depending on the benefits you're receiving

Are you the next Jamie Oliver?

If you're a young budding chef and aren't in education, employment or training, we've got an offer that's guaranteed to tickle your taste buds!

In March we're running a three week 'recipe for work' course. It is open to 18-24 year olds who are not in education, employment or training.

- **Week 1:** Food hygiene, first aid sessions and CV writing
- **Week 2:** You'll get a week's experience at Fifteen London, a restaurant set up by Jamie Oliver, where you'll learn butchery, fishmongery and bakery
- **Week 3:** Work experience with a local employer and signposting to a future career path

This opportunity will give you the tools you need to get into the catering industry.

Interested? Then come along to our open day on 16 February at John Astor House, 3 Foley St, London, W1W 6DN. To book a place or for more details call Deryl on **020 8832 3497** or text 'recipe for work' to **07814 233 863**



**Lesley
gives five!**

Lesley Maslen joined us late last year as our head of customer services and we caught up with her for five minutes

Why did you join Catalyst?

I heard about how Catalyst was changing to a customer focused organisation and I wanted to be a part of that change.

What does your role involve?

I manage the customer services, resident involvement and income teams. I'm also responsible for developing the customer experience strategy for the business.

What's the customer experience strategy?

We want our customers to receive an excellent level of service regardless of how they contact us. So the strategy is about coming up with a plan to improve our services through all our customer contact points.

How will you do this?

By understanding the needs of our residents and what information they want. With the right training and information, we anticipate that our customer services teams will be able to answer 80% of all queries first time around.

We are also reviewing how we staff our London contact centre so that we are able to offer a quick and efficient service when our customers call.

Get your gas checked

Have your gas appliances been checked this year? Faulty gas fires, boilers and cookers can kill. They cause gas leaks, fires, explosions, and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Checks for tenants

Gas checks are free for tenants and take just 40 minutes. We'll write to you to let you know when a qualified engineer is coming.

Please be at home. Remember it's part of your tenancy agreement to let them in.

Checks for leaseholders

As a homeowner, it's your responsibility to make sure your gas appliances are safe. To find a qualified gas engineer in your area, contact the Gas Safe Register on **0800 408 5500** or www.gassaferegister.co.uk

Visit our website, www.chg.org.uk, or pick up a leaflet from your local office



Congratulations to Asma from Reading who won £20 worth of shopping vouchers for submitting the winning question to Jim McFadden, our head of asset management.

Asma's question

Some time ago a very nice gentleman came around and told us we were due new kitchens. We were very excited about this. After several months passed, we were told Catalyst decided not to go ahead with the renovations and didn't tell us anything else. Can you tell us why this decision was made?

Jim's reply

I'm very sorry you've had problems. Except in very rare cases, we only replace kitchens as part of a larger renovations programme, as there are often other related works needed.

We're delighted to report that our board has now approved £29 million of investment to our properties. This includes redecorations and repairs, kitchen and bathroom replacements, electrical rewiring, heating systems upgrades and mechanical and electrical works. The work to your kitchen will start in the next financial year and we'll be in touch shortly with more information.



By phone

London customers:
0300 456 2099

South East customers:
0300 456 2090



By email / online

Via our website at
www.chg.org.uk



On twitter

Follow us @Catalyst4You



By post

London customers:
Ealing Gateway
26-30 Uxbridge Road
London W5 2AU

South East customers:
The Farmhouse
Nightingale Avenue
Oxford OX4 7BU

Help us improve

Our customer communications panel reviews all our corporate communications including this newsletter.

To join the panel, please email
Catalyst4You@chg.org.uk

We produce four local versions of *Catalyst 4 You*. To see them, visit
www.chg.org.uk

This magazine provides information about housing news and events in your local area. If you need any part of this information in large print, Braille, on CD or explained in your own language, please contact us.

Arabic

تمتلك هذه الوثيقة بالمعلومات اللازمة عن أخبار الإسكان والأحداث والأخبار المحلية. إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على أي جزء من هذه المعلومات مطبوعاً بأحرف كبيرة أو بطريقة برايل أو مسجلاً على أسطوانة مدمجة أو شريط صوتي أو مشروحاً باللغة التي تتحدثها، يرجى الاتصال بنا على الرقم الموضح أدناه.

Gujarati

આ દસ્તાવેજ ઘરના સમાચારો, પ્રસંગો અને સ્થાનિક માહિતી વિશે માહિતી આપે છે. જો તમારે કોઈ પણ ભાગની આ માહિતી બ્રેઇલ, સીડી ઉપર, ઑડિયો ટેપ અથવા તમારી પોતાની ભાષામાં સમજી શકો તેની જરૂર હોય તો નીચે જણાવેલ નંબર ઉપર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

Hindi

यह दस्तावेज़ आवासीय खबरों, आयोजनों और स्थानीय सूचना के बारे में जानकारी देता है। अगर आप इस जानकारी के किसी भी हिस्से को ब्रेल, सीडी, ऑडियो टेप में चाहते हैं या अपनी भाषा में समझना चाहते हैं, तो कृपया नीचे दिए गए नम्बर पर हमसे सम्पर्क करें।

Polish

Niniejszy dokument zawiera nowości z rynku mieszkaniowego, informacje o wydarzeniach społecznych oraz doniesienia miejscowe. Jeżeli potrzebujesz aby całość lub część tego tekstu były przedstawione większą czcionką, w języku Braille'a, na nośniku CD, na kasecie audio lub zostały przetłumaczone na Twój język ojczysty, prosimy o kontakt pod numerem podanym niżej.

Portuguese

Este documento proporciona-lhe informações sobre notícias sobre habitação, factos e informação local. Se necessitar de parte desta informação em caracteres aumentados, em Braille, em CD, cassete áudio ou apresentada no seu idioma, por favor contacte-nos, através do telefone abaixo indicado.

Punjabi

ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹਾਊਸਿੰਗ ਖਬਰਾਂ, ਪ੍ਰੋਗਰਾਮਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਥਾਨਕ ਸੂਚਨਾ ਬਾਰੇ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਹਿੱਸੇ ਨੂੰ ਬ੍ਰੇਲ, ਸੀਡੀ, ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ ਵਿੱਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਜਾਂ ਅਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਮਝਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Somali

Dokumentigan wuxuu ku saabsan yahay warka cusub oo guriyo, dhacdooyin iyo gobol ah. Haddaad u baahan tahay warkan afkaaga-hooyo, afka loogu talagalay dadka aan arki karaan - afka faraha ama CD-ga ama ajeladda rekorka nala xirir. Namberkan isticmaal.

Urdu

یہ دستاویز اقامت گاہوں کی خبریں، واقعات اور مقامی معلومات کے بارے میں جانکاری دیتا ہے۔ ان معلومات کے کسی حصہ کی اگر آپ کو بریل، سی ڈی، آڈیو ٹیپ یا اپنی زبان میں وضاحت کی ضرورت ہو تو، براہ کرم ہم سے نیچے دیے گئے نمبر پر رابطہ کریں۔



**Catalyst
Housing**

