

Leasehold News

If you need this information in your own language we can arrange for an interpreter to help you.
We can also arrange Braille, audio and large print versions.
Please phone **0191 278 8633**.

إذا كنت تحتاج المعلومات الواردة في هذه النشرة بلغتك، فسنقوم بترتيب وجود مترجم فوري لك.

আপনি যদি এই বিষয়ে তথ্য নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান তবে আমরা আপনাকে সাহায্য করার জন্য একজন দোভাষীর ব্যবস্থা করে দেব।

如果您需要该信息的中文翻译，我们就安排给您一位翻译人。

اگر شما این اطلاعات را به زبان خود می خواهید ما می توانیم ترتیب حضور یک مترجم را برای شما بدهیم.

Si vous désirez ces informations dans votre langue, veuillez nous téléphoner pour que nous puissions vous trouver un interprète.

यदि आप यह जानकारी आपकी अपनी भाषा में चाहते हैं तो हम आपके लिये किसी दुभाषिये की व्यवस्था कर देंगे।

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦਾ ਇਤਜ਼ਾਮ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।

اگر آپ یہ معلومات اپنی زبان میں چاہتے ہیں تو ہم آپ کی مدد کیلئے ایک ترجمان کا انتظام کر دیں گے۔



Leasehold news

Spring 2007

Dear Leaseholder,

Hello and welcome to the spring edition of Leasehold News, your twice-yearly newsletter full of information on the issues which matter to you as leaseholders.

In this issue we'll be telling you all about the steps we're taking to make sure your homes are ready for the digital television switchover in 2012, the help on offer to you from our Advice and Support service, and the changes we've made to the way we consult with you about work being done on your home.

We'll also be telling you how you can save hundreds of pounds from your annual heating bills!

We also have the results of our most recent leaseholder satisfaction survey.

Surveys like this are a fantastic way of us of finding out what's important to you, and how we can improve the service we offer you, so I'd personally like to thank all of you to took the time to take part in the survey.

Best wishes,



Bill Midgley, Chair, Your Homes Newcastle.
tremendous way of bringing us together.



Meet the Leasehold Team

Your leasehold team is here to help you with every aspect of owning your leasehold property.

We now have five permanent members of staff, and they can all be reached on our freephone number

0800 091 0082

Jeanette Johnson Leasehold Manager

"We want to give you the best possible quality of service, and make sure you have all the help and support you need."

Lois Greathead and Kath Farrell Leasehold Service Officers

"We'll help with any problems or questions you have about things like service charges, insurance, invoices, the transfer of Leasehold properties and any other questions you might have. We also organise events like the Leaseholder's Forum and Leaseholder's Steering Group events."

Tom Rees Project Officer

"I'm here to deal with your questions about the Modern Homes programme. Contact me with your queries and I'll investigate them on your behalf. I can also arrange to visit you at home if you wish."

Sonia Tully Leasehold Administrative Assistant

"I make sure we respond to any letters you send us as quickly as possible. I am also responsible for maintaining our records, so get in touch with me if any of your details like your name or address change"

How does my lease work?

Some of you have been in touch to ask us to remind you how exactly owning a leasehold property works, and especially why we still manage your home even after you've bought it.

If you have bought your home on a Leasehold basis you do not actually own the building or the land around it – this is different from buying a property on a Freehold basis.

With leasehold purchases you buy the legal right to live in your property for a certain length of time – usually 125 years – but your home is still technically owned by Newcastle council and managed by Your Homes Newcastle.

This means the Freehold remains with us and, in this role and under the terms of your leasehold agreement, we have a responsibility to repair and maintain the outside of your property and any communal areas you share with other council tenants.

As you have a financial interest in your property under the terms of your lease you have to contribute towards our costs in carrying out this work.

You have some other responsibilities too - things like not causing a nuisance to other residents, making sure there aren't any leaks from your property into another, and getting our permission before changing the structure or outer appearance of your home.

Under the terms of your lease you also have to pay an Annual Service Charge which includes a £10 ground rent. The other elements of your service charge will depend on what services of ours you use, things like a door entry service or lifts.

As we told you in the last Leasehold News, you also have to pay a premium on our block insurance policy as part of your service charge.

We hope this clears everything up.

For any information about your leasehold agreement just call our freephone information line on 0800 091 0082.



Leasehold survey

Everyone needs a helping hand from time to time, and our Advice and Support Team is there for you.

For example, the survey showed around 40% of you don't know if you have a copy of your lease agreement at home.

The agreement is full of important information on our and your responsibilities to each other and, of course, the terms of your lease, so it's important that you have a copy close at hand.

If you'd like us to arrange for a new copy, just give us a call on our freephone helpline. There is a charge of £25 for each copy.

A significant percentage of you - almost a third in fact - also told us you'd like us to communicate with you using email and the internet more, so this is definitely something we're going to start to do more of, and we've already set up an email address for you to contact us at.

The address is leasehold@yhn.org.uk.

25% of you told us how you haven't been able to attend our leasehold forums because you've been at work when they've taken place.

From now on we're going to make sure the events are split between the day times and the evenings to make sure everyone has the opportunity to come along.

The survey told us the majority of those of you who have been able to get along to the events also told you've found them helpful.

We know you aren't always as satisfied as we aim for you to be with our service but surveys like this are a great way for you to tell us how we can improve our services.

The survey showed us how, when work is being done on your home, the thing you're most concerned about is the work being carried out quickly, and we'll certainly bear this in mind.

Many thanks to all 360 of you took the time to take the survey, including Mrs Rose of Gosforth who won herself £50 of Eldon Square vouchers in our prize draw.

Save £200 from your heating bill!

You can make your home warmer and more energy efficient - not to mention cutting hundreds of pounds from your bill - by getting your walls and loft insulated.

And because you're a council leaseholder, and you meet certain requirements or claim certain benefits you could get this work carried out for free!

Newcastle Warm Zone is a non-profit partnership between ourselves, the council and energy companies aimed at making homes across Newcastle warmer, cutting harmful carbon emissions and helping people cut their heating bills.

We've recently signed a pledge backing those aims.

There are other companies in Newcastle who offer a similar service to Warmzone but they will charge you for the work they do.

Don't miss out on getting your home insulated. It takes only five minutes to have your home assessed, and the work is carried out quickly and with minimum disruption. For more information, call 0191 277 7373.

Helping Hands

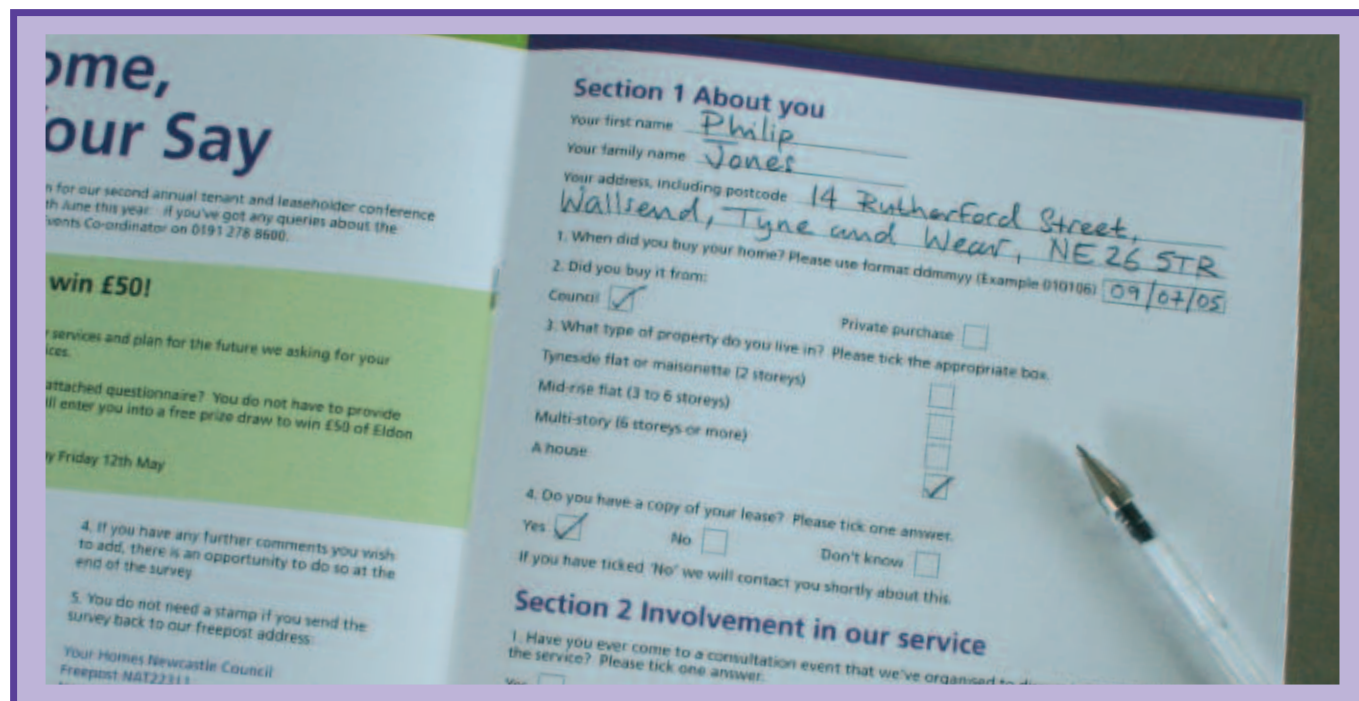
Everyone needs a helping hand from time to time, and our Advice and Support Team is there for you.

They're there to lend a hand if you need help claiming benefits or coping with debt, or even if you just need a little support learning the ropes if this is your first ever leasehold property.

Until recently they've only been able to help our tenants, but as of last November their service has been extended to council leaseholders too, you can get their support too.

"Whatever problems you're up against, we'll either be able to help you or direct you to someone else who can," says the Advice and Support Team's Suzanne Halliwell.

To speak to the Advice and Support Team contact Suzanne Halliwell on 0191 278 8621 or Steven Redpath on 0191 277 1312.



Liaising with leaseholders - keeping you informed about work on your home

Under the terms of your lease agreement we need to consult with you on any work we need to carry out on your property which costs you over £250.

There's a legal obligation for us to allow 30 days for these consultations, but we're committed to going further than that, and we've recently made some improvements to the way we do things.

At the moment most consultations are as a result of our Modern Homes scheme.

We're now two years into this programme of improving council tenanted and leasehold properties across our city to make sure they reach the government's Decent Homes standard.

As a leaseholder this means you may have had, or might be about to have, work done on the structure or communal areas of your block of flats (such as new roofing, guttering, windows and doors).

We want to make sure we give you all the help and information you need.

Our Leasehold Officer Tom is dedicated to dealing with Modern Homes work, and will deliver all the information on the works that need doing and the costs involved to your home personally at a time which suits you.

We'll also provide you with an independent report confirming the work needs to be done.

You can contact Tom, or anyone from the Leasehold team for that matter, at any time with any questions you have about the work being done on your home.

Just call 0800 091 0082. For more information on the Modern Homes programme you can also call our free helpline on 0800 091 1255



Getting ready for the digital switchover

You might have recently read about how Whitehaven in Cumbria will become the first town in the country to have its analogue television signal switched off this October.

At the moment both analogue and digital transmissions are broadcast across the country but after the switchover all television broadcasts will be digital and any household whose televisions don't have a digital decoder will no longer be able to receive programmes.

Here in the North East analogue transmission isn't scheduled to be switched off until 2012, but we're taking steps now to make sure that all the homes we look after are ready when that happens.

This work is going to affect you if your home is in one of the 85 blocks of flats we look after which are served by a communal TV aerial.

We're installing new satellite dishes, antennae and other equipment in each block, fitting new aerial outlet sockets and rewiring the blocks to cope with the new system.

It may be we've already carried out the work on your block, and if you're still waiting you'll be fully consulted before the work begins, as you will be required to pay a proportion of the cost of the work.

What is digital TV?

Digital is a way of transmitting TV pictures and sound as computerised bits of information which take up much less space in the airwaves than the old analogue broadcasts we've been using for over 75 years.

Digital allows room for more channels and features than the five channels available on analogue TV, as well as giving us much better sound and picture.

All TV in the UK is being switched over to digital in the next few years, so sooner or later you will need to go digital.

But what does digital TV give you?

- More channels (over 30!)
- Better quality pictures and sound (less interference, 'ghosting', hissing and crackling)
- Radio through your TV (over 20 radio stations)
- On-screen information about what's on
- Extra features

digital 