

Leasehold *news*

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and more...

News that matters to you



Your Homes
Newcastle

Autumn/Winter 2008

This information is about Your Homes Newcastle, who are responsible for managing council homes on behalf of Newcastle City Council, and how we are doing. If you need this in your language or a different language phone 0191 278 8633. This information is also available in large print, Braille and audio tape. We can also arrange for you to see a British Sign Language interpreter.

Bengali

এই তথ্য হল ইউর হোমস নিউক্যাসল সমন্ধে। এবং আমরা কিভাবে দায়িত্ব পালন করছি সে সমন্ধে। ইউর হোমস নিউক্যাসল, নিউক্যাসল সিটি কাউন্সিলের পক্ষে কাউন্সিলের ঘর বাড়ী ব্যবস্থাপনার দায়িত্বপ্রাপ্ত। এই তথ্য যদি <বাংলায়> অথবা অন্য কোন ভাষায় প্রয়োজন হয় তাহলে এই নাম্বারে ফোন করুন- ০১৯১ ২৭৮ ৮৬৩৩

Chinese

这是有关代表纽卡斯尔市政府（Newcastle City Council）负责管理市政房屋的 Your Homes Newcastle（您的纽卡斯尔住房）组织的信息，内容解释了我们是如何运作。如果您需要此信息的普通话版本或其它语言版本，请致电 0191 278 8633 索取。

Farsi

این اطلاعات درباره سازمان «خانه‌های شما در نیوکاسل» و عملکرد آن است. این سازمان از سوی شهرداری نیوکاسل، مسئولیت اداره خانه‌های دولتی را به عهده دارد. در صورت نیاز به این اطلاعات به زبان فارسی یا زبان‌های دیگر با شماره تلفن ۰۱۹۱۲۷۸۸۶۳۳ تماس بگیرید.

French

Ces informations concernent Your Homes Newcastle : qui est chargé de gérer les logements sociaux au nom de la municipalité de Newcastle et comment nous procédons. Si vous avez besoin de ces informations en français ou dans une autre langue, téléphonez au : 0191 278 8633.

Kurdish

ئەم زانیاریانە سەبارەت بە Your Homes Newcastle و چۆنیەتی کارکردنەکیە که له لایەن شوێرای شاری نیوکاسیلەوه ئەرکی ئەوهی پێدراوه که خانووەکانی شوێرای شار بەرپۆه‌بەرایەتی بکات. ئەگەرچەزتان له وه‌رگرتنی ئەم زانیاریانە بە زمانی کوردی یا هەر زمانیکی دیکە هەیه بە ژمارە تیلیفۆنی 0191 278 8633 پێوه‌ندی بگرن.

Portuguese

Esta informação refere-se à *Your Homes Newcastle*, a organização responsável pela gestão da habitação social em nome do Município de Newcastle, e a nossa situação actual. Se precisar desta informação em <português> ou noutra língua, queira ligar para o 0191 278 8633.

Russian

Информация о Your Homes Newcastle, которая отвечает за управление делами муниципального жилья от имени Муниципалитета г. Ньюкасла и об общем состоянии дел.

Spanish

Esta es información sobre Your Homes de Newcastle, que es la responsable de gestionar las viviendas municipales en nombre del Ayuntamiento de Newcastle, y sobre nuestra manera de hacerlo. Si necesita esta información en español o en otro idioma, llame al 0191 278 8633.

Welcome to the latest edition of Leasehold News.

A 'Big Thank You' to the Leasehold Steering Group

By now you will have received a copy of the brand new Leasehold Handbook.

There were several meetings held throughout 2007 and 2008 with the leasehold steering group to produce this handbook.

We wanted to ensure that the information we provided was relevant and answered queries you may have as leaseholders.

A lot of hard work was put in to developing the handbook and we had some delays



beyond our control but we got there in the end. I personally wanted to say well done and thank you to the group for all of their help and ongoing commitment!

If anyone is interested in joining the group please contact Heather Nixon on (0191) 278 8723



Jeanette Johnson - Manager, Leasehold Team

Co-Ordinating Planned Maintenance and Modern Homes Programmes

Before the creation of YHN in April 2004, a 10% stock survey was carried out to identify priorities for Decent Homes Work. This information was expanded across the whole of the Council Owned stock and an initial programme of works was developed.

Each year the capital and revenue programmes are reviewed to ensure that the works that are required are co-ordinated. The Health and Safety of our tenants and leaseholders properties is of vital importance to us, and unfortunately sometime programmes have to be changed when certain issues arise.

We have a 30 year general

programme, a 5 year rolling programme and annual programmes – these include specifics for Lifts Replacement, Sheltered Housing, Boiler Servicing and Responsive Repairs provision.

The various teams meet regularly to ensure major works are done correctly and a co-ordinated approach taken to keep costs and overheads to a minimum.

The Investment and Technical teams review work requests and programmes to ensure unnecessary works do not happen unless it is unavoidable.

Regular review meetings are held to identify priorities and any works are undertaken with as much forward programming notice as possible.

Painting Fund

It is common practice for Leaseholders to pay an amount per annum towards the cost of painting and pre-painting to the exterior and communal areas of their building.

All amounts are held in a fund specific to each property and interest is added on 1 April each year. When painting is completed on a cyclical basis the funds held can be used towards the total cost of works.

Under the terms of your lease painting is completed on a cyclical basis. When the painting programme is due in your area we will write to you giving you an estimated cost of the work and a schedule of the work to be undertaken.

Any money in your painting fund can then be used to pay towards the cost of this work.

All Leaseholders have the option of opting out of the painting fund at any time and have all the money held, plus interest, refunded to them as long as all service charges are paid up to date.

If you have opted out of the painting fund, under the terms of your lease if any future painting work is identified to the block you will have to pay for your proportion of the cost of the work in full. You are not allowed to opt-out of painting work to the structure of your building.

If you are still contributing to the painting fund and would like to have your contributions refunded to you please contact the Leasehold Team.



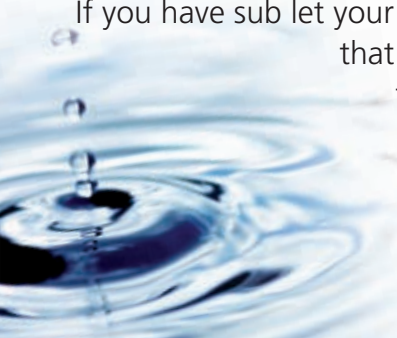
Leaks

Leaks from one property to another are a common occurrence for people living in flats and the Leasehold Team deal with many of these on a weekly basis.

You must not allow any water or liquid to soak through your floors or allow dirt, rubbish, moss or any corrosive or harmful substance to be thrown into the sinks, baths, lavatories, cisterns or soil pipes that are in or serve your flat/maisonette. If this does happen you must immediately repair all damage caused at your own expense.

If you are continually causing leaks, or refusing to have the leak repaired you are in breach of your lease and we can take further action against you. We can also charge you for any damage caused to our tenanted properties.

If you have sub let your property you must ensure that your tenants abide by the terms of your lease otherwise any action we take will be against you, the Leaseholder.



You must also ensure that we have your correct and up to date contact details at all times in case we need to contact you in cases of emergencies or in case a leak occurs and we need to contact you to have this rectified quickly to avoid unnecessary damage being caused to your property and your neighbours.

Website

We have recently updated the Leasehold pages on Your Homes Newcastle's website to include much more information on the Leasehold service and the services that we provide.

The website now has information available on the following: Service Charges, Major Work, Buildings Insurance, Your Rights and Responsibilities, the Leasehold Handbook and Service Standards.

To check out the website visit www.yhn.org.uk and click on 'Leasehold Service'



Making improvements to your leasehold property

As a leaseholder you have the right to improve your home, but for some improvements you will need written permission from Newcastle City Council (the freeholder). This is called 'Landlords Permission'.

You need permission because, as landlord, Newcastle City Council owns the building in which your leasehold flat or maisonette is located and also has a responsibility to the other residents.

What sort of work is likely to need Landlords Permission

- Replacement of windows/doors
- Alterations to fixtures and fittings of your home including plumbing/heating/kitchen units
- Erection of aerials and satellite dishes
- Alterations to the layout of your property i.e. taking down a wall inside your flat

What you need to do

- Complete a 'Landlords Permission' application form (available from the Leasehold Team)
- Include a drawing or plan
- Ensure that your contractor is 'FENSA' registered if wishing to install new windows/doors
- Give us the name and Corgi registration number of your contractor if making alterations to or installing a gas cooking or heating appliances

What we will do

- We may arrange for one of our Surveyors to visit your home
- We will then forward your request and supporting information to Property Services, Newcastle City Council
- Property Services will tell you what permission you need to carry out the work. This will depend on the nature of the work that you wish to undertake
- In some cases you may need planning permission or approval from building control
- If your home is in a building that has a listed status then you will also require Listed Building Consent

What if permission is refused or not obtained but I have already done the work?

- You will be breaking the conditions of your lease
- YHN on behalf of Newcastle City Council has a legal right to reinstate the property and recharge you

Other things to consider

- Use an approved contractor or one that comes recommended
- Be considerate of your neighbours whilst carrying out works

Facts and Figures

Our Running Costs

Expense	Value
Employee Expenses	£131,420.00
Supplies and Services	£7,700.00
Office Accommodation	£10,300.00
Central Admin Support	£43,680.00
Total Cost of Service	£193,100.00
Total Leasehold Residents	1,428
Total cost per leasehold resident	135.22

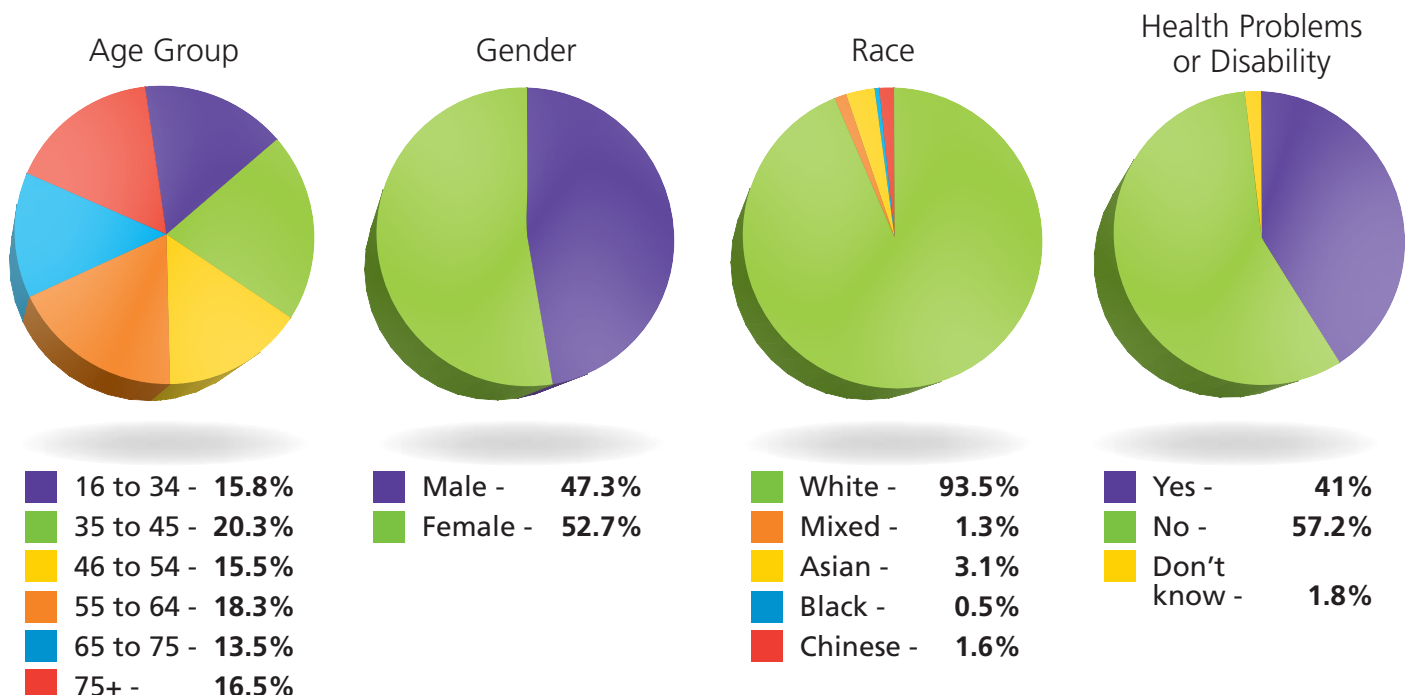
Right to Buy Sales

Number of Freehold and Leasehold sales for the past five years are:

Year	Applications	Freehold Sales	Leasehold Sales
07/04/03 – 29/03/04	1379	559	106
05/04/04 – 29/03/05	1209	683	184
04/04/05 – 27/03/06	1310	341	114
03/04/06 – 26/03/07	1561	241	69
02/04/07 – 28/03/08	507	178	64

Demographics

Number of Leaseholders: **1,428**



You said, we did

We always listen to our leaseholders views and wherever possible we will make changes so that the service runs the way you want it to.

Please remember though, there are certain things that we cannot change due to the lease terms.

- Over a third of you commented that you did not understand the information explaining your annual service charge. We updated our correspondence sent with this years service charge to make things clearer and easy to understand.
- 7.4% of you indicated that you would like to contact the service via the internet. Our website has now been revamped and there are a number of on line forms for you to use to make it easier for you to contact us.
- Can I opt out of the painting fund. Yes, please write to us or complete the online form 'Communal Painting Fund Opt-out' accessible via our website and we will refund your contributions. You will then be required to pay in full for any future painting work
- 80% of you felt that you needed more information about major work. We have issued a brand new handbook to all leaseholders written with the help of the leasehold steering group. This book has a full section about major works and how the process runs.
- 63% of you don't know how to claim on your buildings insurance. There is a new section in the leasehold handbook about insurance but do contact us on our freephone number if you need any help.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q/ Why are you charging a management fee when you don't do anything for me?

A/ The team has to exist to carry out general landlord duties to comply with the lease and certain legislation. These include:

- Calculating and Issuing Service charges
- Account adjustments
- Solicitors enquires
- Help and advice for leaseholders
- Repair Queries
- Emergency situations (i.e. leaks)
- Estate issues (noise nuisance, overgrown gardens etc.)
- Consultation that we have to carry out by law.

Unfortunately these costs have to be recharged to leaseholders. We do not have any control over this as we are not allowed to use other money to cover these costs.

Q/ I pay my service charge and insurance so this covers me for major work?

A/ Your service charge covers the cost of service only and the buildings insurance covers unforeseen circumstances such as fire, flood etc. This insurance does not cover work needed because of general wear and tear much the same as car insurance does not cover things like needing new tyres or exhausts.

Q/ Why are your costs for work so high?

A/ Our costs are sometimes higher than a small local builder. This is because we have to have certain insurances in place and have to use companies who are capable of taking on large refurbishment projects.

Q/ I do all my own repairs why do you keep trying to force me to have them done through YHN?

A/ We appreciate that you take the time and care to look after your home. The lease that you have signed states that we own your building and we are legally responsible for carrying out repairs.

We have to ensure that ensure that any repairs or major work complies with certain safety standards and building regulations. We therefore ask that if you do wish to carry out work to the exterior or structure of your home you write into us. Normal day to day repairs should be reported directly to Repaircall on **0845 113 8888**.

How to contact the Leasehold Team

There are a number of ways to contact your leasehold team:

- in person, we are based at YHN House. Please phone for an appointment
- in writing, we are based at YHN House (see address below)
- by phone on FREEPHONE 0800 091 0082
- by minicom (head office): 0191 278 7727
- by email leasehold@yhn.org.uk
- by completing a compliment, complaints and comments form online via our website yhn.org.uk

Contact us out of hours

We can now help you with any questions you have about Your Homes Newcastle's services during the evening or even at the weekend.

If you call your local housing office between 4.30pm and 9pm weekdays or Saturday between 9am and 2pm your call will be answered by our out of hours contact centre.

This service makes it easier to contact us at a time that is convenient for you.

Head Office Contact details

YHN House,
Benton Park Road,
Newcastle upon Tyne,
NE7 7LX

Opening times: 8.30am - 5.00pm, Monday to Friday



Your Homes
Newcastle

Your Homes Newcastle Limited. Registered in England and Wales. Registration number 5076256.

Registered office: Newcastle Civic Centre, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8PR.

A company controlled by Newcastle City Council.

www.yhn.org.uk