

# Leasehold *news*

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*and more...*

News that matters to you

Spring 2008



Your Homes  
Newcastle

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 spring edition of Leasehold News.

## Major Work and access to Project Officer

Your Homes Newcastle is currently undertaking the biggest ever investment programme to Newcastle's Council properties to meet the Decent Homes Standards set by the Government by 2010.

The Government provided £348 million extra funding to Your Homes Newcastle to improve our Council houses. This money can not be used towards improving the properties of Leaseholders. This means that leaseholders may be re-charged for major works where applicable.

Work that could be carried out can include window replacement, door replacement, roof repairs, painting, decoration, brickwork repairs.

Surveys are carried out on all properties by an independent surveyor to assess the work that is required for each property. We will then consult you on the scope of the work and the estimated cost; we will also tell you who is going to be doing the work.



You will only receive your invoice once the work has been complete and the final costs have been calculated. We now provide you with different payment options to help you pay for the work. Details of the payment options will be issued along with your invoice.

We have split the City up into three different areas and set up a project team for each area who are responsible for overseeing the work. Each scheme that is carried out has a Project Manager and Project Officer who you can contact if you have any issues with the work on the freephone numbers below.

• East – 0800 091 1255 • West – 0800 091 1256 • Outer West and North – 0800 091 1257

## Too Much Information?

As you know a Leasehold Management fee was introduced to cover the cost of running and administering the leasehold service. Many of you have since commented that you feel you get too much information from us.

Following comments from leaseholders we will be sending out a survey within the next few weeks asking you which publications you would like to receive in future. This means if you are not happy receiving things like

this newsletter, or satisfaction surveys you will be taken off the mailing list.

Remember there are certain things that we must still send out by law such as consultation letters over major work.

# Have you rented out your leasehold property?

As a Newcastle City Council leaseholder you are allowed to rent out your leasehold flat or maisonette.

You do not need our permission to do so, however there are certain things that you should know about before you do. **They are:**

- The property must not be used for anything other than a single private dwelling
- The property can only be occupied by one family at a time
- You must give us your correspondence address
- You must give us your sub tenants contact details
- You must give us the details of your managing agent if you use one
- You must inform your mortgage lender
- You must ensure that your tenant abides by the covenants within the lease

## Once you provide this information the Leasehold Team will:

- Update our leasehold records
- Inform the councils insurers as failure to do so will invalidate your Buildings Insurance cover in the event of a claim

Even though you are not living in the property, you are still responsible for making sure that the conditions of the lease are followed. You must make sure that the tenancy agreement covers all the obligations in the lease. If your tenant or tenants do not follow the conditions of the lease, you will be responsible. We cannot get involved in any difficulties you may have with your tenant.

## Yearly gas checks - If you are subletting your home

If you sublet your home, you are responsible for the landlord's duties arising under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998. This means that you are legally responsible for making sure your gas appliances, pipework, and flues are safe and well maintained.

You must also arrange for an annual gas safety check to be carried out by a CORGI registered gas engineer and ensure your tenant is given a copy of the annual gas safety check record (Form CP12).

**Failure to meet these regulations may lead to a criminal prosecution.**

You can find more information about Gas Safety at the Health and Safety Executive's website, [www.hse.gov.uk/gas](http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas)

## New Leasehold Handbook

**All leaseholders of Newcastle City Council flats and maisonettes will shortly be receiving a copy of our revised Leasehold Handbook.**

The handbook was produced by YHN's Leasehold Team with the help of the Leasehold Steering Group.

The handbook has been introduced to give all leaseholders comprehensive information about their rights and responsibilities as leaseholders and also the rights and responsibilities of Newcastle City Council (the Landlord).

It explains the conditions of your lease and gives information about the services that YHN provides to leaseholders and the issues that affect leaseholders. We hope that you find it useful.

# Concierge

The Concierge Service is part of Tenancy Services and has around 160 staff working from 57 sites delivering a service to approximately 5,800 tenants and leaseholders living in flats across the city as and when required.

## There are two types of Concierge:

- 24 hour sites that have lodges where staff are on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with over two thirds of our residents benefiting from this type of service.
- Resident sites that have staff who work 37 hours per week Monday to Saturday.

All sites are supported by day shift staff who provide a responsive service. There is also 24 hour access to the Concierge Service on freephone 0800 0731 389.

## The Concierge Service includes:

**Safety and Security:** monitoring of a citywide CCTV system that helps to make our communities safer places to live, door access, monitoring of alarms, daily building inspections of shared areas, receptions duties

**Building Cleaning:** providing cleaning services or monitoring of building cleaning services

**Good Neighbour Role:** accepting parcels, retaining keys, reporting repairs, changing light bulbs, general assistance, help with furniture, bulky rubbish collection.

## The aim of the service is to:

- Provide safer homes for residents
- Protect properties from loss and damage
- Maintain high standards of property care
- Maintain the demand for properties and the stability of the local neighbourhoods
- Provide customers with easy access to staff
- Be a 'good neighbour' to council tenants and leaseholders

## There are two levels of charge with a lower rate being charged for the resident concierge service.

Following a review of the concierge it was recognised that Leaseholders were not paying enough per year to cover the cost of their use of the Concierge Service. The decision was taken to introduce a staged increase in service charges over a three year period for the concierge service. You were informed of the charges applicable to you in a letter dated 8 March 2006.

YHN Board also recognised that ground floor flats do not receive the same level of service from the Concierge. The decision was taken to reduce the charge paid by ground floor leaseholders to 25% of the overall charge.

Leaseholders are governed by the terms of the Lease and can not opt out of paying for the Concierge. The Lease states that if the service is available then the Leaseholder has to pay for it even if they do not choose to use it.

## For more information please contact the service

- 0191 278 8688 or
- freephone 0800 0731 389 or
- check out the Concierge Service on the YHN Website at **[www.yhn.org.uk](http://www.yhn.org.uk)**

The site has recently been updated to display the blocks covered, safety and security performance, cleaning standards and cleaning schedules.

If you would like to get involved with the cleaning standards inspections either in your own or other blocks, contact us for dates or check out the notice boards in your block.

# Service Charge Billing Cycle

For 2007/08 we introduced a new service charge billing cycle. The service charge period is based on our financial year, which runs from 1 April to 31 March.

You need to pay your service charge in advance on an estimated basis which covers what we think your share of the cost of the services will be. At the end of each financial year we will work out your share of the actual costs and compare the difference between the estimated charge and the actual charge, and adjust your service charge account around July.

We have to charge an estimate because we do not know in advance how much the cost of providing the services will be. Some charges, for example, block repairs, are difficult to predict

because we do not know what repairs will need to be carried out, how many or how often.

If the estimated charge is more than the actual charge, we will put a credit on your service charge account but if the estimated charge is less than the actual charge, we will put a debit on your account.

We ask for payment to be made on your estimated Service Charge invoice within 14 days of issue but we do realise that this could be quite hard for some customers so we do offer several different payment options. If you would like to pay your invoice in instalments please contact the Income Team as soon as possible to set up a payment plan on 0191 278 8757.

**The diagram below shows how the billing cycle works using the financial year 2008/09 as an example.**

**April 2008**

You will receive your **Estimated** Invoice for the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009

**You will need to make payment on this Invoice**

**July 2008**

You will receive your **Actual** Invoice for the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008

**Your account will be adjusted to reflect any over or under payments you made on your 2007/08 estimated account**

**April 2009**

You will receive your **Estimated** account invoice for the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010

**You will need to make payment on this Invoice**



## Individual Rechargeable Repairs

YHN as managing agents acting on behalf of your landlord Newcastle City Council are responsible for repairs and maintenance to the structure of your home.

This includes the roof, walls, chimney stacks, windows and shared areas, shared services and so on.

We will charge you for any repairs we carry out to your home during the year, together with a percentage of the cost of repairs to the structure and shared areas.

As your lease states that we should invoice you in advance of

the financial year we introduced a new way of charging for these repairs in 2007 to coincide with the introduction of our new Estimated and Actual Service Charge billing system.

Throughout the year YHN have received a number of enquiries from leaseholders about this new way of charging for repairs.

We have listened to your comments and with effect

from 2008 we will start to charge leaseholders on an 'as and when' basis for individual rechargeable repairs.

This will ensure that charging will be timely and any enquiries about the completion of the repairs or standard of workmanship can be investigated and resolved more easily.

## New Leaseholder Welcome Pack

When you purchase a Newcastle City Council leasehold flat or maisonette either directly through the 'Right to Buy' or from the open market YHN Leasehold Team will send you a Leaseholder Welcome Pack.

The welcome pack provides new leaseholders with comprehensive information about:

- Newcastle City Council (your landlord and freeholder)
- YHN (managing agent)
- The Lease
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Service Charges
- Buildings Insurance
- Contact details for enquiries

The information is designed to give you comprehensive information regarding your responsibilities and those of Newcastle City Council as Landlord.

YHN advises that all leaseholders make themselves familiar with the Lease document and the covenants within it. You should have been given a copy of your lease by your solicitor on completion of your purchase.



## Feedback from the Leasehold Steering Group

The Leasehold Steering Group is a group of Leaseholders who give up some of their free time to give their views on the Leasehold Service.

They meet at least 3 times a year and discuss things that affect Leaseholders across the City.

There is now a work plan in place for the Steering Group outlining areas of discussion and expected outcomes and impacts on the service.

The Steering Group have helped us to produce the new Leasehold Handbook which every

Leaseholder will receive a copy of. The Steering Group felt that the old Handbook did not have enough detail in it and a more comprehensive Handbook was required.

The Steering Group have agreed that the Leasehold newsletter should be published twice a year and that the format is good. They agree that it is a good way of providing important information to all Leaseholders.

**If you would like to become a member of the Leasehold Steering Group please ring Heather Nixon, Tenant Involvement Officer on 0191 278 8723.**

## Introduction of Leasehold Management Fee

Your property was sold to you on a leasehold basis and the lease that you have signed is a legally binding contract.

The lease states that it is reasonable to charge an amount to cover the running costs of the leasehold service. All leaseholders have equal access to the service.

The Leasehold Management Fee was introduced in 2007 and before its introduction we obtained professional advice which recommended that it is

good practice to charge the management fee in this way rather than on a percentage basis.

We were recently challenged at the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal following the introduction of the Management Fee.

The LVT informed us on 27 February 2008 that they felt it fair for us to charge the fee and that the fee is within the lower range of what they would expect an organisation such as ours to charge.

**The Management Fee for 2008-09 has been set at £135.22.**



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](http://www.yhn.org.uk)