

FIGHTING THE CRUNCH

There has been a lot about the credit crunch and recession in the media recently, but what does it mean for LHA-ASRA and you?

Like many other housing associations, we have been affected by the credit crunch, which is a reduction in the amount of money banks are willing to lend, and we are not immune from the wider economic circumstances.

Also, the housing market downturn means that our new homes for sale or shared ownership are not selling as quickly as expected because many customers can't get mortgages. Therefore, we have been taking early steps to shield the Group and customers from worsening market conditions.

We have been proactive by assessing the risks quickly, reducing expenditure where we can do so safely and taking other appropriate action.

This means we will have to make difficult decisions about staffing levels but in a way that protects front line services as much as possible.

If, during the course of the year we have to take further action affecting service delivery, we will inform, involve and consult with residents as normal.

It will not affect your rent, which will be reviewed through the normal process in April, and kept in line with the Government's target rent levels.

Despite the general doom and gloom, we came incredibly close to being selected as one of the Sunday Times Best Companies To Work For. As a result, the Group will be awarded the special status of 'Ones To Watch' at a ceremony at the end of January.

Brian Benneworth, Group Director of HR said, "This demonstrates that even in difficult times, there is a strong focus by all staff on providing good value for money, and we have the ability to continue improving the services that our customers receive."

speaking UP

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is the new regulator for homes owned by housing associations and co-ops.

The first thing the TSA needs to do is draw up a brand new set of standards for all social landlords, including LHA-ASRA. The Tenant Services Authority is going to listen to tenants across England to help them understand what you want to see in the new standards. It is calling this the National Conversation.

There are lots of ways tenants can take part: there will be a series of regional events organised for tenants to



as well as Local Conversations, arranged by tenants themselves. If you'd like to organise your own event, you can order a resource pack on 0845 230 7000 or find out more at www.nationalconversation.co.uk

TENANTS SET REPAIRS AGENDA!

As part of our drive to improve services, a group of tenants, assisted by our staff, have carried out a process to put in place new contracts covering:

- responsive repairs (that is, repairs made in response to a request by a customer) and
- the repair and refurbishment of empty homes (so they are ready for letting to new tenants)

These contracts are substantial and at the heart of our service as your landlord. They are paid for using your rent money so it's vital what is put in place is right.

In light of the credit crunch and other developments, it has been decided that there is a better way to award these contracts to best serve you.

As a result, day to day responsive repairs and out of hours emergency services will now be separated out from empty homes work, and we will ask companies to bid for the work under two separate contracts.

This will ensure resident focused services are at the core of the agreement with our contractors and will make customer care, performance and tenant satisfaction the top priority.

Another factor in our decision is that, since we started planning the process of selecting contractors in May last year, we received a legal challenge from a contractor, following court decisions on the awarding of public sector contracts part way through the tendering process.



Our aim was to put the new arrangements in place this month, but this will now have to be delayed to July whilst we re-tender. Until then, a temporary contract has been put in place, which we believe will deliver a better repairs service.

However, there is no change to the way in which tenants can report repairs, nor to service levels.

Kevin Hazlewood, Group Director of Property Services and Asset Management, said: "We want to thank the residents who took part in the original tendering process - their input has been invaluable. We will continue to work with them to complete this important work and deliver the best possible outcome for all our customers."

SEG INSPECTS

The Service Evaluation Group is a team of residents who carry out assessments on aspects of our services and suggest improvements.

The next Service Evaluation Group will look at how we collect rent. To get involved, please call Natalie Robertson on 0116 257 6716.

STARTER FOR 10

LHA and Family First are launching 'starter tenancies' for new tenants to help tackle nuisance and antisocial behaviour.

From April, we will have the right to end the tenancy during the first year if they fail to look after their home or uphold appropriate standards of behaviour.

All new tenants will receive a clear explanation of our antisocial behaviour policies, how we address problems, what they can expect from us, and what we expect from them.

A starter tenancy has certain restrictions such as:

- No security of tenure
- No right to assign (pass on)
- No right to transfer
- No right to take in lodgers
- No right to make improvements

CAP rep chair for the north, Lois Bodle, took part in the consultation: "They are a really good idea. LHA-ASRA has a duty to protect tenants and they should not have to suffer when their neighbours are causing a nuisance."

BREAKING THE CYCLE

Domestic violence may not always be about hitting and punching: it can also include constant breaking of trust, isolation, psychological games, sexual assault, verbal threats and harassment.

It can affect anyone. If you are in an abusive relationship, there are three important steps you can take:

- recognise that it is happening to you
- accept that you are not to blame
- get help and support

You can speak to your Neighbourhood Officer in complete confidence, or contact the National Domestic Violence helpline on **0808 2000 247**.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Through Newbuild HomeBuy you can buy a share of a newly built LHA-ASRA home and pay rent on the remainder.

Alternatively, 'intermediate rent' allows you to rent a new home while saving a deposit. We can match your savings to put towards buying a home.

For more information contact Amy Mackay on **07808 060686** or **0116 257 6709** or visit www.newlifeliving.co.uk



energy BOOST

With energy prices soaring, we all need to try to minimise our gas and electricity bills.

LHA and Family First tenants who receive benefits should contact their energy supplier and ask about social tariffs. Most of the leading companies now offer price reductions for customers who are on benefits.

You can also visit www.uswitch.com and www.moneysupermarket.com to see if you may be able to save money by switching supplier.

YOU'VE GOT TO BE IN IT TO WIN IT!

Your opinion is very important to us. Let us know what you think about Streetwise, or any of the services we provide by 30 January, and you will be entered into a prize draw to win £50 of shopping vouchers.

Send this form back to:

FREEPOST RRRK-TZBY-USZS, 3 BEDE ISLAND ROAD, LEICESTER LE2 7EA

Congratulations to Mary Defontaine in Loughborough who won the competition in our last issue. We promise to respond to every piece of feedback we receive.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Comments: _____

If you would prefer to give feedback anonymously leave the name, address and phone number sections blank.

(If you do this, please be aware that although we will try to take your comments on board, we will not be able to respond.)

ARE YOU COVERED?

Did you know that your possessions are not covered under our buildings insurance?

To ensure peace of mind, we strongly recommend you take out home contents insurance too.

LHA has worked with the National Housing Federation to arrange an affordable insurance scheme for tenants called 'MyHome' which offers premiums from just a few pounds a month.

For more information call
0845 337 2463.

CONTACT US

All enquiries:

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or

0845 389 1777

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तथा प्राणिते न्याय सुयोग प्रदान करते आमरा अङ्गीकारावम् । एसव तथा यदि आपनि अन्य कोनो भाषाम् वा फरमेटे, येमन, बड़ छापाम्, अडिउते वा ब्रेइलिते चान, ताहले आमादेरके बलून ।

માગત મનાક્લિની સુચના આકાશવાણી સિવાય ત્રણ ગૂંથી આશરણે મનાક્લિ બેચા-ગણેશ ડી.સ. ગણેશ ત્રણેશ ત્ર મનાક્લિની બેચા ક્રમકે મનાક્લિઆમણે મનાક્લિ બિચાગણે ડાગણે, ત્રણેશગણે ક્રમ ગણેશગણે લેખિઆમણે મનાક્લિઆમણે-ગુ આકાશ કથ-ગણે ક્રમકે, ત્રણેશ કથ-ગણે કરી-ગણે મનાક્લિ ક્રમકે.

हम सूचनाएं प्रदान करने के प्रति समर्पित हैं। यदि आप सूचना किसी अन्य भाषा में चाहें अथवा किसी अन्य प्रारूप में, जैसे बड़े अक्षरों में, ऑडियो के रूप में, या ब्रेल लिपि में, तो कृपया हमसे संपर्क करें।

Jesteśmy oddani zapewnieniu równych szans w dostępie do informacji. Prosimy o kontakt jeżeli pragną Państwo otrzymać dokument z informacjami w innym języku lub formacie, tj. wydrukowany dużym drukiem, w formie nagrania dźwiękowego lub pisany alfabetem Braila.

Waxaan ballanqaadeynaa in macluumaadka ku bixinno munaasabad habboon. Haddii aad macluumaadka ku rabto luqad kale ama hab kale sida daabacad waa-weyn, maqal ama farta indhoolaha Braille, fadlan naqaa soo codso.

ہم نے برابری کی بنیادوں پر معلومات تک رسائی مہیا کرنے کا عہد کر رکھا ہے۔ اگر آپ یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان یا ساخت جیسا کہ بڑی چھپائی، صوتی ٹیپ یا بریل کی صورت میں لینا چاہیں تو براہ کرم ہمیں کہیں۔

We are committed to providing fair opportunity to access information. If you would like information in another language or format such as large print, audio or Braille, please ask us.

