



# Leaseholders News



December 2009

## Welcome

Welcome to the Leaseholders Newsletter. In this edition we will be providing you with information to keep you up-to-date with relevant Leaseholder news, issues and topics. Following suggestions from those of you who completed the readership survey in the last edition and attend Forum meetings, we have included information you would like to feature, such as useful telephone numbers and a hints and tips section. We have also included feedback from the Tenants and Leaseholders Conference held in August. The feedback from the Conference will be useful as a comparison against the Satisfaction Survey which will be sent to you in the next few weeks. The results from these do help us to shape the services we provide so please take a few minutes of your time to complete the survey when you receive it and let us know your views.

## Your News...Your Views

Further to the Readership Survey included with the last edition of this newsletter, the responses have been collated and a report has been completed. The results show that the majority of people who completed the survey read the newsletter every time they receive it and find it beneficial and informative. Respondents stated that they would like to see a variety of articles, both on leasehold specific information and general advice so from now on we will try to include a variety of articles in all future editions. We are also sending this newsletter to all addresses of Leasehold flats we are aware are being sub-let and look forward to any feedback or comments from new readers.



The newsletter is now discussed at Forum meetings for any ideas/comments from Forum members: if you have any suggestions for future editions, please contact us with your ideas.

For a copy of the survey results, please contact Jen Ellis, Customer Involvement and Projects Officer on 01253 477947

## Did you know?

You can ask BCH Repairs to undertake repairs to the internal parts of your flat. The cost will be charged to your account and be included in your next Leasehold Service Charge invoice.



## Date for your Diary!

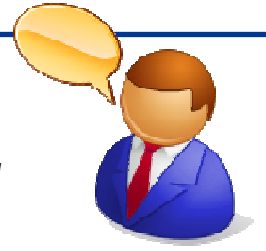
The next Leaseholders Forum has been organised to take place on Thursday 21st January at 4pm and will be held at Spencer Court Community Centre, off Talbot Road, FY1 3TR. If you would like to attend please contact the Home Ownership Team on 01253 477984 or the Customer Involvement and Projects Team on 01253 477947. Transport can also be provided upon request. We hope to see you there!



**To ensure our services are accessible to all, documents are available in large print, Braille, on audio-cassette or computer disk upon request. We can also provide help for British Sign Language users and provide information in other languages.**

**For more information please contact 477900.**

## Have your Say...



As you may know, the results of the last Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey were published in 2008 in the Leasehold Newsletter and also presented at the 2008 Leasehold Conference. A copy can be sent to you upon request, or you can find the report in the *Right to Buy and Leaseholders* section of our website [www.bch.co.uk](http://www.bch.co.uk). The report identified a number of areas for improvement and, as a result of the findings, we now:

- Monitor Gas Safety Certificates on a monthly basis and write to leaseholders who have not supplied us with a current certificate. This is especially important as leaseholders who sub-let have a legal responsibility to provide an annual Gas Safety Certificate. We also remind leaseholders when their Certificates are due to be renewed.
- Have Leaseholder representatives who are involved with the Green Warden Scheme and monitor and report on the Block Cleaning & Grounds Maintenance services, undertaken by Connaught Environmental since June 2009.
- Benchmark with other Homeownership Teams to ensure Service Charges are fair and reasonable. The Management Administration Costs element has been discussed at the October 2009 Leasehold Forum and a report is currently being prepared on the benchmarking results—further information will be provided in the next issue.

A new satisfaction survey is now due. To ensure the anonymity of survey respondents we have undertaken a tendering exercise to select an independent agency to carry out the survey. The agency that was selected from the tender process is BMG and they will carry out the survey, analyse the data and produce a report. We will not be able to connect responses to individuals so the survey will be completely anonymous.

The questions in the survey will be based on those recommended by Government. There will also be some questions which are the same as those asked in previous surveys so we will be able to compare your responses with that of your neighbours who may be tenants. We will also be able to compare our results with other housing organisations.

Your responses to these surveys are important to us as they help us to identify those areas that we need to improve in order to more effectively meet your needs. We very much hope that you take the opportunity to give us your feedback by taking time to complete and return the survey. We anticipate the survey will be sent out in the next few weeks.

## Fire Safety

Blackpool Coastal Housing Homeownership now have an agreement with the Lancashire Fire & Rescue Service that we can refer any Leaseholder who wants a home fire safety check. This service is free with no costs going onto your Leasehold account; a representative from the Fire Service will visit you and they will:



- Provide and install free smoke alarms where necessary.
- Give life saving advice in the event of a fire in your home.
- Provide practical advice on identifying fire hazards in the home.

This service is available to all Leaseholders including the tenants of those Leaseholders who sub-let. The advice will be based on your own home, not the communal areas of the block of flats which is your Landlords responsibility, and is designed to ensure your own safety and that of your neighbours.

This is a service being rolled out to tenants and is now freely available to all Leaseholders and will automatically be offered to all new Leaseholders in the Welcome Pack. If you want to make use of this service please contact Homeownership.

In addition to this service available to you Blackpool Coastal Housing in partnership with the Fire Service are undertaking fire risk assessments to blocks of flats which will identify any work required to the external and communal areas.

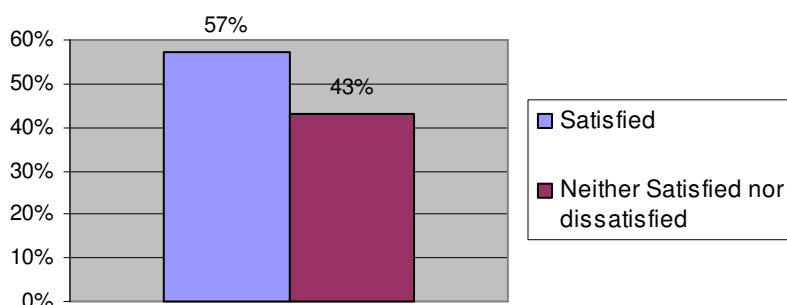
## Leaseholders Annual Conference 2009

This year a joint Tenant and Leaseholders Conference was organised at the Winter Gardens so that everyone could have access to the range of services BCH provides, as well as being able to talk to our partnering contractors and a variety of different agencies within the popular market stall format.

The BCH Customer Involvement Team used the event to consult with you and our tenants and the popular “Who wants to be a millionaire” format was used to ask a range of questions. There were specific Leasehold themed questions in time slots allocated for Leaseholders to attend so they could take part and their views and opinions be recorded.

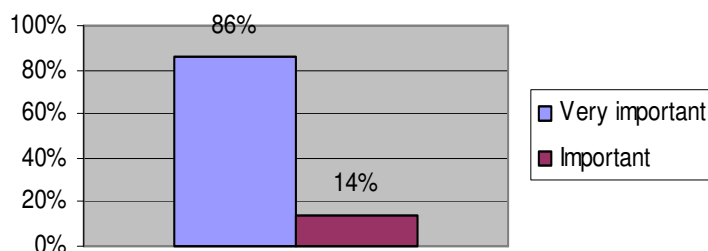
Some of the results were presented to the October 2009 Leaseholder Forum and a selection of these are reproduced here. If you want more information or copies of the graphs that have been produced please contact Homeownership.

**How satisfied are you with the Leaseholders Newsletter?**



The results from this question match those of the survey which was in the last issue of the Newsletter which showed that the Newsletter is popular and well read. The survey indicated that a quarterly Newsletter would be welcome, and although the introduction of this would depend on costs and resources, this is currently being investigated.

**How important is it that Leaseholders are involved in decisions that effect your home and services we provide?**



Leaseholders quite rightly think that it is important they are involved in decisions that affect the block in which their flat is located. Leaseholders are consulted before major works start on their block which will result in costs to them in their invoices. If internal improvements, such as upgrading central heating or installing new kitchens or bathrooms to tenanted flats in their block are going to take place, Leaseholders are informed and if they too want to be included in the improvement programme they are put in touch with the contractors. If you want to become involved in monitoring services or contractors you can do so through the various methods our Customer Involvement Team support—please contact Customer Involvement on 01253 477947.

A number of the questions asked were the same as those asked in the tenant sessions and a comparison can therefore be made between all responses— a selection are reproduced for your information:

Question	Leaseholders	Tenants
<b>How satisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live?</b>		
Satisfied	80%	55%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	20%	15%
Dissatisfied	0%	31%
Don't Know	0%	0%
<b>How satisfied are you that your rent /service charges represents value for money?</b>		
Satisfied	40%	71%
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	20%	14%
Dissatisfied	40%	14%
Don't Know	0%	2%
<b>How would you personally like to be consulted?</b>		
Postal Surveys	0%	16%
Telephone Surveys	0%	0%
Focus Group / Meetings	66.67%	21%
Face-to-face	16.67%	44%
Email	16.67%	8%
Newsletters	0%	10%
<b>Are there any reasons that would stop you getting involved with BCH?</b>		
Caring Responsibilities (Children or Adults)	0%	14%
Cannot Travel to Meetings	0%	25%
Work / Job Commitments	16.67%	8%
Just Not Interested	16.67%	2%
Don't think tenant/ leaseholders are listened to	66.67%	51%

The results of this consultation exercise together with the next Satisfaction Survey report will become the basis for the Homeownership next Action/Improvement plans and will also be fed into the wider BCH action plans.

## Useful Contact Numbers

For all Leasehold account queries and payments contact:

**Homeownership** 01253 477984 or email [homeownership@bch.co.uk](mailto:homeownership@bch.co.uk)

To report responsive repairs to your block contact:

**Repairs** (freephone) 0800 0730184 or email [repairs@bch.co.uk](mailto:repairs@bch.co.uk)

**Mereside Estate Office** 01253 477968

**Grange Park Estate Office** 01253 477969

**Queens Park Estate Office** 01253 477971

Or email [yourtenancy@bch.co.uk](mailto:yourtenancy@bch.co.uk)

If you have any comments about block cleaning or grounds maintenance please report this to your local Estate Office who will record your call and pass your comments to the contractors. If you have a garage or want to apply for a garage tenancy your local Estate Office will deal with these enquiries.

**Anti Social Behaviour** 01253 477968 or email [asb@bch.co.uk](mailto:asb@bch.co.uk)

For out of hours phone 0800 0730184

Blackpool Coastal Housing have a specialist team who deal with complaints of anti-social behaviour, they will listen to complaints and try to find a way to resolve issues.

**Customer Involvement** 01253 477947 or email [customerinvolvement@bch.co.uk](mailto:customerinvolvement@bch.co.uk)

If you wish to become more involved in improving the services we provide please contact Customer Involvement who have a wide range of opportunities available for everyone to get involved.

**BCH Board of Management & Senior Managers** 01253 477973 or 477988

Email [directors@bch.co.uk](mailto:directors@bch.co.uk)

Blackpool Coastal Housing Ltd have a board of 15 members, they and the BCH Senior Managers can be contacted through the Board Secretary or PA to the Chief Executive.

Further information about Blackpool Coastal Housing is available through our web site [www.bch.co.uk](http://www.bch.co.uk)

## Handy Hints

This section provides you with useful hints and tips. If you have a handy hint you would like to share, please write in to Homeownership at Progress House, Clifton Road, Blackpool. FY4 4US

**Water meters** – these can, in some circumstances, help you to reduce your Water Rates. If you do want one installed you should contact the Water supplier, but don't forget to ask Blackpool Coastal Housing Property Services for consent on freephone 0800 0730184.

**Pensioners Credit** – Pension Credit Guarantee is for people aged 60 or over and is a passport to full Council Tax Benefit. It is calculated by comparing your minimum guarantee with your income.

The minimum guarantee at the current rate is £130.00 per week for single claimants, £198.00 per week for couples and any additional amounts you may qualify for **PLUS certain Service Charges and Ground Rent. Please note Pension Credit can and does cover the cost of major works.**

Pension Credit threshold increased from £6,000 to £10,000 from 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2009. Savings Credit may be available for people aged over 65. **For free advice contact the Pension Service on 01772 234041**

There is further advice for the over 60s in a booklet called Real Help Now available online to download at [www.realhelpnow.gov.uk/pdf/over60s.pdf](http://www.realhelpnow.gov.uk/pdf/over60s.pdf) or a copy can be posted to you on request from the Homeownership Team

