

WORD
ON THE STREET

30 YEARS

- of Co-op Homes -

Satisfaction at all-time high

Your responses to our survey

Repairs and finance

Universal credit, asset management & much more

Co-op Homes reaches the big 3-0

Celebrating 30 years of housing management

A message from Sue



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Welcome to the Summer 2016 edition of Word on the Street
Bringing you the latest updates about what's happening at Co-op Homes and in your local area.

After six interesting and enjoyable years, I will be leaving Co-op Homes at the end of July to join another community-based housing association. The Managing Director post has been advertised and we have consultants supporting us to ensure that we get the very best replacement. We aim to have someone appointed by the end of June and in post by September.

In addition, James Glass, our Head of Operations, has moved on to take up a senior post at Peabody Housing Association. James has worked closely with our co-op customers and our own residents over the last few years and we all wish him well in his new role. Our new Head of Operations is Sophia Howells, an experienced and successful manager who joined us at the beginning of May from RHP. Sophia is committed to continuing to provide the highest levels of customer satisfaction and service delivery.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our customers for your continued confidence in Co-op Homes. I think it's fair to say that we have gone through a huge change over the last six years which has led to much improved services, greater satisfaction and better value for money for Co-op Homes' residents and co-op members. This could not have been achieved without our customers' support and the hard work of my fantastic, dedicated team and I know that they will continue to build on this work in partnership with you.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to have worked at Co-op Homes and I wish them and you the very best for the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Sue Philpott'.

Sue Philpott | Managing Director

A Co-op welcome

We're pleased to welcome Emily Marshman to our team. Emily is an Apprentice who joined us in January on a 12-month placement through the Way to Work scheme. Emily will gain valuable experience while she studies for her NVQ Level 2 qualification in Business Administration.



Customer satisfaction reaches an all time high!

Thank you to all those Co-op Homes' residents who responded to the tenant survey carried out by the Leadership Factor in February. You gave us honest and really valuable feedback which helps us build our services and put right matters that are causing concern. Our headline figures show that overall satisfaction is still 88% but those very satisfied has increased by 6% to 60% since September 2015. This is a fantastic result for us and we are delighted that so many of our residents are so pleased with what we are trying to do for you.

In your opinion, we are a little more 'honest' and 'helpful', which is great news for our employees.

Whilst 86% of customers are satisfied with repairs and maintenance, there has been an increase in

those very dissatisfied to 6%. We hope we have addressed this with the appointment of our new contractors, Vista Maintenance, from whom we have received 100% satisfaction since their contract began earlier this year. We understand that some of those dissatisfied are concerned about the wait to receive major works to their homes like new kitchens, bathrooms and windows. We will be contacting all those who left their details to discuss their concerns.

The CFG asked Co-op Homes to find out whether living in a flat or a house had any impact on the residents' level of satisfaction, so we added this question into the survey this time. The answer to that and to some other demographic information is shown below:

Gender		
Males and females are equally satisfied overall, however, females are slightly more satisfied with repairs	Overall	Repairs
Female	81%	80%
Male	81%	78%
Ethnicity		
Ethnic minority (BME) customers are more satisfied overall, whilst non BME are more satisfied with repairs	Overall	Repairs
Non BME	79%	89%
BME	82%	81%
Property type		
Those living in a house are more satisfied both overall and with repairs compared to those living in a flat	Overall	Repairs
Flat	80%	79%
House	82%	94%
Disability/long term health problems		
Those without health or disability problems in their household are more satisfied overall, whereas those with disability or long term health problems are more satisfied with repairs	Overall	Repairs
Yes - health issues	80%	88%
No - health issues	82%	83%

Our next tenant survey is due to take place in September and we thank you in advance for your co-operation. If you are part of the sample group selected by the Leadership Factor, it always helps us to help you if you give your name and address so we may contact you to resolve any issues you report. However, please remember that this is an anonymous survey so you don't have to do this if you choose not to.

Repairs & finance

Managing your home

Asset management programme

Planning for major improvements to our customers' homes is a priority for us. We take information gathered from our responsive repairs service, inspections carried out by our community housing advisors, our surveyors and our contractors and combine this with available financial resources to help us draw up a three-year plan which is reviewed every six months.

Last year we spent £583,000 on 40 new kitchens, 19 new bathrooms and 24 new central heating boilers. Externally, we upgraded 60 doors and 16 homes had their windows replaced. Two roofs were fully replaced and 6 schemes had cyclical decorations carried out. Our plans for 2016 – 2017 include:

Item	Number of units planned	To be installed in selected properties in the following locations
Central heating boilers	49	Harlington Road, Hillingdon Rowdell Drive, Reading Thorndike, Slough
External doors and/or windows renewal or refurbishment	42	Barncroft Close, Hillingdon Palmerstone Rd, Haringey, Twickenham Rd, Isleworth Van Gogh Close, Isleworth Zinzan St, Reading
Kitchens	11	Neville Close, Hounslow Wheatley Crescent, Hayes Chiswick Common Road Clarence Road, Wood Green Palmerstone Road, Haringey
Bathrooms	14	Barrow Lodge, Slough Russell Street, Reading
Electrical upgrades	38	Ferneymeade Way, Isleworth
Re-roof	1	Zinzan Street, Reading
Internal / external painting communal flooring	5	Zinzan Street, Reading Twickenham Rd, Isleworth Van Gogh Close, Isleworth Wheatley Crescent, Hayes

If you have any questions about our plans for 2016-17 or to find out when your home is going to be subject to major works, please call **020 3166 2608** or email homes@coophomes.coop.

Get an advance payment of Universal Credit



Do you claim benefits? If so, you'll know that Universal Credit is being rolled out nationally, replacing most existing benefits. Universal Credit is paid monthly in arrears but it can take up to five or six weeks to receive your first payment. If you don't think you'll have enough money to live on between when you apply and when you get your first payment, you can ask for an advance payment. This will be a loan that you will have to pay back. Repayments will be automatically deducted from your Universal Credit benefits until the advance is paid back.

If you need an advance payment you should ask for this at your first Universal Credit interview which will be booked in when you complete your online application. If you've already had your interview you can call the Universal Credit helpline on 0345 600 7273 to ask for one.

You can only get one advance payment so you will need to make sure you ask for enough to see you through until when you receive your first Universal Credit monthly payment. You will have to tell them how much you need and give a breakdown for what it's for. For example, how much you need for five-six weeks' rent, food and bills. You'll also need to explain how an advance payment will prevent damage to you or your family's health and safety, for example, not being able to eat, pay your rent or your bills.

The Citizens Advice Bureau has more information about this at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/universal-credit/apply/get-advance-payment



Update on voluntary Right to Buy for housing association tenants

Further to the changes announced by the Government in the 2015 budget, the Housing and Planning Act 2016 has now become law. The current pilot schemes will determine how the Government sees this applying to housing associations like Co-op Homes. We will keep you informed of the outcome of the pilot schemes and how these may affect your rights through our website at www.coophomes.coop

It's better online



Have you signed up for "My Tenancy" yet? My Tenancy gives you access to services at a time that suits you, without you having to leave the comfort of your own home. All you need is access to the internet and to complete a simple registration process.

Having an online account with Co-op Homes also gives you real time access to your rent accounts, the ability to check the personal details we hold about you and see your repairs history. You can also order repairs and log a complaint or compliment. For an online account registration (or for details of a lost password) please email homes@coophomes.coop or call **020 3166 2608**.

Your shared spaces

Keeping safe and saving our environment



Keep communal areas clear

We are concerned about the amount of personal goods (bikes, pushchairs, plants and discarded items) left in hallways, corridors, under stairs and other communal areas. Co-op Homes has a zero tolerance towards this as it causes obstruction to other users of the block which could prove fatal in the event of an emergency. Our community housing workers regularly visit our schemes to carry out health and safety checks and will give warning by placing stickers on all offending items advising that they need to be removed. If these items are not removed by the date shown on the sticker, they will be removed for disposal. The cost of this clearance is charged back to all the occupants of a block resulting in an increase in service charges.

So please help keep your environment safe and minimise the chance of additional charges by removing any items you have left outside or reporting abandoned items to us on **020 3166 2608**.

Recycle, reuse, reduce

We know that a trip to the local civic amenity tip can cause problems for some residents, whether that's because you have no transport, have a disability or have no family or friends who can take the items for disposal for you. However, clearing dumped or unwanted items around the communal bin storage areas creates an increase in service charges for all residents. Dumped items are also unsightly and potentially a health and safety hazard.

Please dispose of all unwanted items responsibly. Your local authority will have details of their re-cycling centres on their website and may operate a local pick-up service. In addition, many supermarkets have mini-recycling facilities. Please be mindful that sometimes someone's unwanted item is useful to another - for example, a children's bike that has been outgrown, or a piece of furniture still in a fair condition.

If you have good quality furniture or electrical goods in working order why not donate to local furniture projects or to other organisations run by people ready to give and collect free and unwanted useable items which keep them out of landfill? You might not need that old sofa or table any more – but there will be local people in need who will be very grateful. Similarly, you might find something that you need for free! Search for local groups on Facebook looking to give away or swap items or visit www.ilovefreegle.org and www.freecycle.org



News for you

Co-op Homes celebrates its 30th birthday!



In April we celebrated our 30th birthday with an annual dinner for our clients. Past and present members of Co-op Homes, our Board, co-op committee members and members of the

Customer Focus Group got together to enjoy a celebratory dinner and fun-filled evening.

Co-op Homes was set up by Middlesex Housing Association in 1986 and registered with the then Housing Corporation to provide agency services to co-operative housing organisations and to source grant funding for further housing development. We now own and manage just over 300 of our own homes and manage another 850 for other housing co-operatives. Over the last 30 years we have built up a wealth of expertise and solid experience in providing services to housing co-ops, TMOs, small housing associations, almshouses and other community-led housing providers. Co-op Homes is still the managing agent of choice for our 20 clients. We pride ourselves on offering a flexible, tailored, high quality service ranging from one-off projects and interim support through to an all-inclusive suite of long term solutions.

Product recall

We've been made aware of a technical fault in a small number of fan heaters made by Wolseley (product code 105161).

The fault causes them to overheat – making them a fire hazard - so they're being recalled.

If you have one of these heaters in your home, please stop using it and dispose of it safely.

For more information, visit www.plumbcenter.co.uk/product-recall



Complaints procedure

We've changed the way we deal with complaints. We hope these changes (which have been approved by both the Customer Focus Group and the Co-op Homes' Board) will make the process more efficient and effective:

1. When you contact us with a complaint we will try to fix what's gone wrong by the end of that day. We'll do what we can to put things right, as well as give you an explanation and an apology for any problems we may have caused. If we don't resolve things that day, one of our community housing advisors will look into it further. They will discuss the issue with you and give you a written or emailed response within five working days.
2. If you're not happy with our response or how we've dealt with your complaint at Stage 1 you can ask for it to be reviewed by a senior manager. You will need to let us know that you are not satisfied with the outcome of the first stage complaint. We will follow the same process as your initial complaint: a senior manager will review the response to check that it was fair and set out any new actions that may be required. They will respond to you within five working days.
3. If you've gone through our complaints procedure but remain unhappy, you can ask a designated person to consider your complaint. A designated person can be an MP, councillor or residents' panel who will either try to resolve your complaint themselves, or refer you straight to the Housing Ombudsman Service. If you decide not to ask a designated person to consider your complaint you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service directly yourself. The Housing Ombudsman Service is an independent organisation that offers a free and fair way of dealing with complaints against housing organisations.

Each of our co-operative clients has their own complaints process which may be different. For a copy of Co-op Homes' or your co-op's complaints leaflet please contact **020 3166 2608** or email homes@coophomes.coop

Resident involvement

Get involved and have your say

Resident involvement at Co-op Homes

Co-op Homes' aims for the business are to provide good quality affordable homes, deliver excellent services and through involving customers in making the decisions that affect their quality of life, increase customer satisfaction – the Customer Focus Group (CFG) helps ensure that we do this.

The CFG therefore plays a key role in the resident involvement strategy at Co-op Homes. Made up of a small group of staff, and residents from both Co-op Homes and our co-ops, the CFG meets 4 times a year in Teddington to see how we're doing. Its members are the voice of our customers and we put this to good use! They scrutinise Co-op Homes' performance on complaints, customer satisfaction and approves. It also regularly reviews our contractors' performance. The CFG also has a budget to fund community initiatives that make such a difference.

Positions on the CFG are voluntary but we provide a small allowance to cover expenses and provide refreshments. We are always looking for suitable residents to join us, whether you are from Co-op Homes or a co-op.

Are you free once every 3 months on a Wednesday evening from 6pm? If not, would you be interested in being involved by email?

Would you like to find out more?

Contact Nikki Spenceley on **020 3166 2608** or **Nikki@coophomes.coop** for an informal chat.

National Citizens Scheme

Kathy McNulty, Community Housing Adviser, would like to remind all our residents, both Co-op Homes and those of our client co-ops, about the National Citizens Scheme or NCS. The NCS is a government funded social action project for young people aged 15-17 years that helps build skills for work and life while taking on new challenges and making new friends.



It runs in the spring, summer and autumn school holidays. There will be a short time away from home for participants to take part in a team project that will help their community. NCS brings together young people from different backgrounds and helps them develop greater confidence, self-awareness and responsibility. It encourages personal and social development by working on skills like leadership, teamwork and communication. Co-op Homes' Customer Focus Group is keen to sponsor young people living in our and our partner co-ops' households to help give them a valuable life affirming experience. If you are aged 15 to 17, or the parent or guardian of a young person and would like to find out more, please contact Kathy on **020 3166 2608** or email **kathy@coophomes.coop**.

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