



# Yes Minister!

Housing Minister opens  
new development

## Plus...

Works to your homes,  
page 3

Helping young people  
into work, page 4

Help us set our Local  
Offer, page 8

# Welcome

to the winter issue  
of *Housing Matters*



This issue is packed with great news. We got the go-ahead for the regeneration of Worrington Green in north Kensington and opened a new, much-needed housing scheme in Slough.

This edition also features information on our services: the training and employment opportunities available, our new website, home insurance and how you can complain.

We also let you know that we have created a New South East office and how residents of Windmill Park will be transforming the community centre on their estate.

Read on to find out more.

Best wishes,

**John Foxall**  
Managing director

## Changes to Locata Home

The Locata Home printed magazine is being phased out and the 21 May edition will be the last one that is printed.

But don't worry, you can still view the magazine online at Locata website. As an alternative, you will also be able to view a more personalised version of the freesheet when you log in to the Locata website using your LIN number.

For more details, visit the Locata website at [www.locata.org](http://www.locata.org)



**Catalyst**  
Communities

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## Housing Minister opens Pippin Close



*Saima Arshad presented Mr Healey with a cake she baked for the opening, after waiting 12 years for a new home*

Housing Minister John Healey officially opened Pippin Close, in Slough, in March and was greeted by residents who were looking forward to moving into their new homes.

Pippin Close comprises 11 new family homes for rent, which were created with £1.2m government investment. The new homes each have between three and five bedrooms plus a private garden. All homes also boast eco-friendly credentials, with solar panels on every roof. The derelict garages site was previously a black-spot for crime and anti-social behaviour, and has now been transformed into much-needed homes.

## It's a bug's life



We know that household pests can be a real nuisance. So here's a quick reminder on how we will deal with pests that are found in or around your home.

If you experience pests in the communal areas around your home, please call our customer services team in either London or the South East – contact details are on the back page. Communal areas include lobbies, corridors, staircases, refuse enclosures, roof spaces, car parks and shared gardens. The types of pests we deal with are mice, rats, ants, cockroaches, pigeons, squirrels and wasp nests.

Under the terms of your tenancy, we are not responsible for the treatment of household pests that might be present in your home and it is your responsibility to deal with them. Should you need the services of a pest control company you can find local firms on the internet or in Yellow Pages.

# Wornington Green gets go-ahead



*Kensington staff sign a pledge to the residents of Wornington Green*

Kensington and Chelsea Council granted planning permission for the proposed regeneration of the Wornington Green estate in March. This was after more than four years of consultation, discussions, resident involvement and planning.

Situated at the top end of Portobello Road, West London, the redevelopment of 538 1970's style residencies into community friendly and stylish homes will help turn the local area into a thriving community where people want to live, work and visit. The regeneration will also address the high level of overcrowding and lack of local employment opportunities across the estate.

This regeneration project will comprise five phases with the first phase beginning at the Munro Mews end. We have already started temporarily re-housing residents in this area and once their new homes are complete, they will be able to move into their brand-new homes!

# Works to your homes

In the coming financial year, our group asset management team will oversee the investment of over £16.5 million in your homes. All works will start in April 2010 and run until March 2011.



The works will include fitting over 275 kitchens and bathrooms, and 400 new central heating boilers as well as rewiring 350 homes. We will also carry out cyclical maintenance on 1,000 homes that will include painting and minor repairs to windows and guttering. About 350 homes will have their existing windows replaced.

For residents affected by works to the interior of their home, we will send you an initial letter explaining that our contractors will be in touch to arrange an appointment. During the first appointment, the contractor will explain what works will be done and let you know if you can choose anything, such as colour of paint or type of worktop. Where work will be done to the outside of your home, we will send you a letter detailing the works, their start date and when we will be holding consultation meetings.

In all cases, the letter will give the names and telephone numbers of our staff who will be managing the works. You can then contact them if you have any queries.

Please note that not all of the works will be carried out in every home; the process will involve us or our contractor visiting you and then determining with you the scope of the works. Also in some cases, it may not be possible to complete the works by March 2011. Sometimes things may arise that take priority and this may mean some works are delayed. However, we will do our utmost to ensure that the works are complete on time and are of high quality.

# Helping young people into work



Resident involvement officer  
Katerina Getsevich

We've been offering local young people employment opportunities over the past few months through the government's Future Jobs Fund. The programme supports the creation of jobs for long term unemployed young people and others who face significant disadvantage in the labour market.

So far Catalyst Housing Group and its member companies have helped 20 people through this initiative. One of them is Katerina Getsevich, 22, who joined CCHA in January as a resident involvement officer. Katerina found herself unemployed after working for Ealing Council as a youth offending officer. She then saw an advert for this scheme and contacted us. Her time

with CCHA has involved consulting with residents to ensure they get a good service and she has used her previous experience of working with young people to set up a youth forum.

We are now sponsoring Katerina to do a one-year level 4 CIH in housing certificate, which she will start later on in the year. Katerina said: 'Doing this course will hopefully allow me to get a career in housing. I will be able to use my knowledge of working with young people to engage them in initiatives that Catalyst is doing.'

**For more details, contact our training and employment team on 020 8832 3366.**

## Future training sessions:

**Mystery shopping:** 14 April or 9 June

**The development of effective scrutiny:** 12 April

**Resident Inspector:** 10 or 14 May

**Board member skills:** 18 May

**Customer service:** 9 July

**CIH Certificate in Housing (level 2):** 28 April to 21 July (12-week course)

## New look, new feel, same website

Our new look website is now live. We've refreshed the design so the site looks more dynamic and we've also added some new content.

The new website should be easier for you to navigate around and find exactly what you are looking for. But don't worry, we'll still be offering the same online services including reporting repairs or anti-social behaviour, making suggestions or complaints.

Before launching the new website, we carried out extensive testing that involved our residents. The residents who tested the new site said they liked the look and feel of it and also found it clearer and easier to get to different sections.

Now that we've created a new website, the process doesn't stop there. Our website is a key part of our customer service to you. We want to keep improving the site so that it better meets your needs. That's why we would now we appreciate your feedback as to what you think of the new site. So have a look at [www.chg.org.uk](http://www.chg.org.uk) and send us your feedback through the online feedback form.

## Complaining

We aim to provide excellent services to our customers at all times. But sometimes things can go wrong. When they do, we want you to tell us so we can make sure we don't make the same mistakes again.

You can complain to us in many ways: through our website, in writing, by calling us or by visiting us. The best way to complain is in writing, either by filling in an online complaints form or by writing us a letter. We'll then have your views in writing and we can get back to you with our resolution.

Once we receive your complaint in writing, we will respond to you in ten working days and take action according to our three complaints stages.

**For more information on our complaints procedure, please download a copy of our complaints leaflet from our website at [www.chg.org.uk](http://www.chg.org.uk)**

## Gas safety inspections

Every year many people die and suffer serious effects from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by faulty gas fires, boilers, cookers and other gas appliances. It is our responsibility as your landlord to ensure that all gas appliances that we have installed are serviced and that a gas safety check is carried out every year.

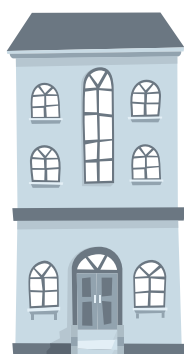
You must allow our engineer access into your home to carry out a gas inspection as part of your tenancy agreement. We will try to carry out the service visit at the same time each year. Before the inspection, our engineers will write to you to let you know the date and time of the inspection. If this is not convenient for you, you must let us know.

Remember that a gas safety inspection may save your life and the lives of your family and neighbours.

## Home insurance

Your home is your castle and everything inside it, your jewels. We, as your landlord, will insure the structure of your home, but you are responsible for insuring the contents. That's why we strongly recommend you take out home-contents insurance. This will insure you against loss of personal belongings, as well as damage caused by fire, theft and water.

You can insure your belongings under a special household-contents insurance scheme available only to our tenants. This scheme is arranged with Royal and Sun Alliance Insurance plc and offers special rates to our residents. To find out more, pick up a leaflet from your local office or call the customer services team.



## KHT goes from strength to strength

**Audit Commission comments favourably on Kensington Housing Trust's services to its residents.**



The Audit Commission inspected Kensington Housing Trust (KHT), part of the Catalyst Housing Group, in mid-January in regards to the services it provides for its residents and found that KHT is performing well in most areas. The inspection involved inspectors spending three days quizzing staff, talking to residents and looking at management information.

The inspection focused on the service areas of responsive repairs, gas servicing and resident involvement. It also included an assessment of how KHT is doing on the issues of access and customer care, diversity, and value for money within those services.

In their report, the inspectors highlighted many strengths at KHT in the inspected areas – especially in relation to responsive repairs, gas servicing, and equalities and diversity. They also provided some welcome feedback on how we can further improve our services.

KHT is now putting together an action plan based on the recommendations made by the Audit Commission. They are doing this by talking to their residents and involving them in drawing up this action plan to ensure it meets residents' expectations.

**Details of the full report are available on the KHT website. It is also available on the Audit Commission website at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/housing](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/housing)**

# Help us set our Local Offer



In late 2008 the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) was created to regulate housing associations. It is the first time that a housing 'watch dog' has been set up to put residents at the heart of regulating their landlords. The TSA have spent the last year consulting residents on what their priorities are and then drafting the six 'standards' which housing associations have to meet.

The standards are:

- Tenant involvement and empowerment
- Home, including repairs and improvement works
- Tenancy, including allocations
- Neighbourhood and community, including anti-social behaviour
- Value for money
- Governance and financial viability

The TSA have set housing associations with the challenge of ensuring they have a Local Offer which meets the needs of their own residents, recognising that a one-size-fits-all approach will not always work when residents may live in different geographical areas, different types of homes and have different personal circumstances. This is a fantastic opportunity for Catalyst to work closely with our residents to help us identify our Local Offer and we want to make sure that as many of you as possible have the chance to give us your views.

To give you an example of what a Local Offer might be, let's look at grounds maintenance or the upkeep of communal garden areas. Residents living on an estate with lots of hedges might want a Local

Offer on how often these would be pruned and what they can expect to ensure the areas looked presentable. However, residents living in a block of flats that has no hedges or planting, might want a Local Offer which sets out how often weedkiller is sprayed to ensure the gravel looks presentable. These would be examples of Local Offers to meet local circumstances.

We will be consulting all of our residents later this year to find out priorities for Local Offers, which will then shape the way we deliver our services to you.

**If you would like to get involved or find out more about please contact Hannah Weight on 020 8832 3467 or [hannah.weight@chg.org.uk](mailto:hannah.weight@chg.org.uk)**

## Helping you keep your home

At Catalyst, we are not just about housing people and collecting rent. If any of our residents are having problems paying their mortgage, we want to help them so they will not lose their home.

One way in which we do this is through the government's £200m Mortgage Rescue scheme and so far we've helped some 50 families through this scheme. Mortgage Rescue is designed to prevent some of the most vulnerable families from losing their homes and experiencing the trauma of repossession.

One couple which this initiative has enabled to stay in their home is Mr and Mrs Smith from Newton Longville, Milton Keynes. The couple first contacted Aylesbury Council when they were having difficulty

with their mortgage and the council put them in touch with us. Our staff then told the couple about Mortgage Rescue and what it would involve. Mr and Mrs Smith then realised that this scheme would be perfect for them.

Mrs Smith said: 'Mortgage Rescue was the best thing that could have happened to us. Staff at Catalyst were very helpful and kept us fully informed throughout the process. The scheme has allowed us to keep our home so it really was the answer to our prayers.'

**For more information on Mortgage Rescue, please call us on 0845 601 7729 or visit our website at [www.catalysthomebuy.org.uk](http://www.catalysthomebuy.org.uk)**

*Please note the names of the couple have been changed.*

## Windmill Park takes the power



*Windmill Park residents come together to discuss revamping the community centre on their estate*

Residents of Windmill Park joined forces in February during the Take the Power event, where they came up with ideas to transform the community centre on the estate. This was following on from the successful People's Millions bid, where we were awarded £50,000 to revamp the community centre so it will include a media and arts room with an IT suite and recording studio.

During the event, we discussed different ideas and asked local people to fill in a questionnaire. This was done so that we could capture everyone's views. We also laid on a whole host of fun activities including music and web designing classes.

The new facilities in the community centre should help combat the problems of unemployment and anti-social behaviour by opening up new training opportunities to get people back into work and be a space for young people to spend their time.

## Illegal subletting

Our tenants are allowed to sublet part of their homes but they must be living there and have our permission. Over the past few months, we have discovered that people have been illegally subletting our properties. As a response, we have now started checking tenancies, asking for identification and inspecting properties.

Since April 2009, we have recovered ten properties, where tenants have had to give up their tenancies. We have also obtained a court order against another tenant and they will be evicted.

Illegal subletting deprives other households of much needed accommodation and exploits people as the rent charged is often much more than we would charge. If you know of someone who is illegally subletting, please report this in confidence to our customer services team.

## Become a resident board member

We continuously work to improve the quality of the services we provide to you. One way in which this is done is by working with our resident board members. They help us to develop and review our policies and procedures, which then enables us to shape our services and priorities around the needs of our residents.

**If you are interested in becoming or understanding the role of a resident board member, contact Michael Simms on 020 8832 3111 or [michael.simms@chg.org.uk](mailto:michael.simms@chg.org.uk)**

## New South East Region

On 4 January 2010 our Reading and Oxford offices joined forces to become Catalyst's South East Region, providing services to all our residents outside Greater London in the counties of Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

South East Region headquarters and customer services centre is now based in Oxford at The Farmhouse. Customer services staff previously based at Enterprise House in Reading have

transferred to Oxford. There is no longer a public reception at Enterprise House, and all calls are automatically routed to Oxford. If you live in Reading, Slough and Wycombe, please note that your neighbourhood managers and surveying staff are still based at Enterprise House, and are available by appointment by calling customer services.

**Wherever you live in our South East Region, you can contact our customer services team on 01865 712244 or [southeast.enquiries@chg.org.uk](mailto:southeast.enquiries@chg.org.uk)**

# Youth Involvement Forum

We believe that young people are our future and their input is vital in shaping the services we provide for our residents – they of course are our residents of the future.

That's why we've set up a Youth Involvement Forum (YIF) for young people aged 17 to 25. The YIF will empower young people to have a direct influence on

the services we provide for our residents. Benefits for young people to join include: a better understanding of housing, being able to positively influence the community, personal development and being involved in social activities.

For more details, contact Katerina Getsevich on 020 8832 3204 or katerina.getsevich@chg.org.uk

If you need any part of this information in large print, Braille, on CD or explained in your own language please contact us the numbers below.

Ky dokument ju jep informacione në lidhje me të rejtat për strehim, ngjarjet dhe informacionet locale, nëse ju duhet ndonjë pjesë e këtij informacioni në Braille, në CD, në kasetë ose të shpjegohet në gjuhën tuaj, ju lutemi kontaktoni në numrin poshtë.

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本文档提供关于住房新闻、事件和当地信息方面的信息。如果您需要将这些信息的任何部分以大字印刷形式、盲文形式，或通过 CD、磁带，或以您的本国语言的形式提供给您，请通过以下号码与我们联系。

Niniejszy dokument zawiera nowości z rynku mieszkaniowego, informacje o wydarzeniach społecznych oraz doniesienia miejscowe. Jeżeli potrzebujesz aby całość lub część tego tekstu były przedstawione większą czcionką, w języku Braille'a, na nośniku CD, na kasecie audio lub zostały przetłumaczone na Twój język ojczysty, prosimy o kontakt pod numerem podanym niżej.

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یہ دستاویز اقامت گاہوں کی خبریں، واقعات اور مقامی معلومات کے بارے میں جانکاری دیتا ہے۔ ان معلومات کے کسی حصہ کی اگر آپ کو بریل، سی ڈی، آڈیو ٹیپ یا اپنی زبان میں وضاحت کی ضرورت ہو تو، براہ کرم ہم سے نیچے دیے نمبر پر رابطہ کریں۔

यह दस्तावेज़ आवासीय खबरों, आयोजनों और स्थानीय सूचना के बारे में जानकारी देता है। अगर आप इस जानकारी के किसी भी हिस्से को ब्रेल, सीडी, ऑडियो टेप में चाहते हैं या अपनी भाषा में समझना चाहते हैं, तो कृपया नीचे दिए गए नम्बर पर हमसे सम्पर्क करें।

आ दस्तावेज़ घरना समाचारो, प्रसंगो अने स्थानिक माहिती विशे माहिती आपे छे। जे तमारे छेठ पछा भागनी आ माहिती छेठल, सीडी उपर, ऑडियो टेप अथवा तमारी पोतानी भाषामां समझ शको तेनी जरूर छेय तो नीचे ज़ावेव नंबर उपर अमारो संपर्क करो.

## How to contact us

### London

Ealing Gateway  
26-30 Uxbridge Road  
London W5 2AU

Monday to Friday, 8am-5pm.  
Translation services are available if you visit in person or call.

Telephone: 020 8832 3298

Gas heating & hot water: Call Mears Group Plc 01707 290562

Emergency repairs: Call Mears Group Plc 01707 290561

### South East (Bedfordshire, Berkshire, buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire)

The Farmhouse  
Nightingale Avenue  
Blackbird Leys  
Oxford OX4 7BU

Monday to Friday 9am-5pm except the first Wednesday every month when an answerphone service is available and checked during the day.  
Translation services are available if you visit in person or call.

Telephone: 01865 712244

Gas heating & hot water: Call Robert Heath Heating Ltd 0800 783 0833

Emergency repairs: Call Mears Group Plc 01707 290563

### Website

You can contact us on the web by visiting [www.chg.org.uk/catalystcommunities](http://www.chg.org.uk/catalystcommunities)



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