

TownTalk

News and updates for Catalyst's leaseholders

- Going for gold
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Welcome to the September 2012 issue of *Town Talk*

With the Olympics and Paralympics gripping the nation recently, we've given this issue a sporting theme.

You can find out how to buy more shares in your home through staircasing (see right). Unlike the heptathlon, which takes years to master, this process takes just eight weeks. You'll also reap the benefits because the more shares you own the less rent you pay.

Keeping the crowd (in our case you, our residents) pleased is extremely important to us. So we've been asking those who have bought a home from us in the last 18 months what they think of our customer service. On page 2 we tell you about the areas where you are most happy with our services as well as what we can do to improve.

Many sporting activities wouldn't be complete without great teamwork. So on page 3 we highlight how important it is for you to tell us when things aren't going right. We can then work with you to put things right.

Finally, on page 4 we tell you about the work we do to the outside of your homes and the communal areas. Like the marathon this process is often long and takes several months to finish. But once it's over our residents can enjoy the results.

Best wishes,
Steve Chapman, *Editor*



Staircase to home ownership

Heptathlete Jessica Ennis endured seven different events to take home gold this summer. But buying additional shares in your home won't be so strenuous.

As a shared owner you will already own part of your home and pay Catalyst rent on the part you don't own. By staircasing you can buy more shares in your home, until you own it fully.

If you would like to staircase you should firstly get in touch with us so we can give you guidance on the process.

Assuming you decide to go ahead, you will need to get your home valued by a chartered surveyor. Once we receive this valuation we can then tell you how much it will cost to buy additional shares in the property.

When you decide how much you want to buy we will let you know what effect this has on your rent. Your rent will reduce proportionately to the amount of shares you purchase. So the more shares you own, the less rent you pay.

From the time we get the valuation the staircasing process usually takes eight weeks.

To find out how you can buy more shares in your home, please call us or speak to your neighbourhood manager



Catalyst
Housing



Going for gold

Like the athletes who took part in the Olympics and Paralympics we're always striving for gold and aiming to deliver a first class service.

We can only do this if we know what you think of our existing service. So we've started asking residents who have bought a home from us in the last 18 months to review the services we provide.

87 people took part in the survey and told us they are most satisfied with how easy it is for them to contact our homeownership team (90%) and with how polite and helpful our staff are (83%).

They also told us we should provide more information about our services. So we have come up with a plan to review different parts of our service and the information we give residents.

As a result now:

- We have set up a service charge review group that looks at how we set service charges and will also help us consult with residents
- We have created a section on our website that provides information just for leaseholders
- We have started sending leaseholders *Catalyst 4 You* (our quarterly customer magazine) as well as *Town Talk* (every six months)
- We have set up a residents' group specifically for leaseholders (see opposite page)

Please remember that if you need information on any of our services, please contact your local office or visit our website at www.chg.org.uk

Ready, set, checked

There were three joint winners in our February gas safety competition. Two winners from London and one from Aylesbury. They all won a free gas safety check from Catalyst.

Please remember that as a homeowner it is your responsibility to make sure your gas appliances are safe. Faulty gas fires, boilers and cookers can be deadly. They can cause gas leaks, fires, explosions and carbon monoxide poisoning.

You should get your gas appliances checked every year. We recommend you use an engineer listed on the Gas Safe Register.

To find a qualified engineer near you call **0800 408 5500** or visit www.gassaferegister.co.uk

Putting things right

We aim to provide an excellent service to all our customers. But we know that sometimes we get things wrong. So if you are unhappy with our service, please tell us. That's exactly what resident Ian Ross did!

Ian, from Page Road in Feltham, noticed the communal lights on the ground floor of his building weren't working. As this was dangerous, Ian immediately contacted his neighbourhood manager, Kuldip Padan.

Kuldip then sprung to action by reporting this to our repairs team. When our repairs team visited the block they discovered an additional two communal lights weren't working. In fact the communal lights on the top floor hadn't been working for a month!

Ian says: 'The problem with the lights hadn't been reported because, in fairness, I think we all thought that someone else had probably reported it, which they hadn't. Reporting maintenance problems is in every resident's interest – it's what we pay our service charges for!'

So if there is a part of our service you are not happy with, please tell us. We can then work with you to put things right.



Join the leaseholders' group

We manage thousands of leasehold and shared ownership homes across London and the south east. Improving services is a key priority for us and we need your help to get it right.

So to help improve the service you get from us we're setting up a special group for leaseholders. The group will talk about the things that you tell us are important to you. We will then use your feedback to tailor our service to you.

To join the group or to find out about the many ways you can get involved at Catalyst call our resident involvement team on **0300 456 2099** or email getinvolved@chg.org.uk

A marathon of works



Out of all the events we enjoyed during the Olympics and Paralympics, external decoration works are most like the marathon as they are carried out in cycles.

These are the works we do to the outside of your homes and the buildings you live in to keep them in good condition. Where the Olympics and Paralympics happen every four years, these works usually happen every five to seven years as necessary. To deliver value for money we usually carry out the works on a group of properties or an estate at the same time.

Like the marathon, there's a lot of preparation required before we can start the work. Firstly we will consult you if the estimated cost is over £250 per leaseholder. This is called a Section 20 Consultation, and it includes an estimate of the cost of the works and how much you are expected to pay towards it.

To find out what work needs doing we'll take a look around your area and come up with a list of essential things that need fixing. Sometimes when we start the work we may find something else that is not working. We'll fix this at the same time as it's more cost effective.

During the consultation we'll also ask you if you are happy with our proposals and you will have at least 30 days to get back to us. We will only start the work once consultation ends.

All leaseholders must pay towards the cost of major repairs, and the cost of external and communal area decorations and improvements. If there is a reserve fund for external decoration works, this fund will be used to pay towards the cost of the work.

Sometimes the final cost may be more than what's in the reserve fund. If this happens you will have to pay the shortfall. But we will work with you to come up with a payment plan so you can spread the payments over time.

For more details on the improvements we make to the outside of your homes, please contact us (see left).

Contact us



By phone

London customers:
0300 456 2099

South East customers:
0300 456 2090



By email / online

Via our website at
www.chg.org.uk



By post

London customers:
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South East customers:
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