

TownTalk

News and updates for Catalyst's leaseholders

- AIRPM and MIRPM explained
- Buying a leasehold home
- Service charges

Welcome

This edition includes contributions from professionals who work with many shared ownership clients. They look at some of the key issues that affect our leaseholders.

On page 2 Aileen Hamilton-Farey (chairman of leasehold valuation tribunals in London) explains the role of tribunals, on page 3 Kerry Hicks from Prince Evans solicitors tells you what you need to do if you are looking to buy another leasehold property and the back page includes Emily Gasson, housing lawyer and trainer talking about service charges.

Your views are very important to us and we're always looking for ways to improve. So if you have ideas on how we can get better, please tell us. There are a range of ways you can contact us – see back page.

Best wishes,
Steve Chapman,
Editor



Don't kill your neighbours!

Faulty gas fires, boilers and cookers are deadly. They can cause gas leaks, fires and explosions.

Why risk your life or that of your family, friends or neighbours? Why risk your appliances breaking down? Make sure the gas appliances in your home are safe by getting them checked every year.

What is a gas check?

This involves a Gas Safe registered engineer inspecting your gas appliances. They'll make sure the appliances are working correctly and check:

- If they are on the right setting and burning correctly with the correct operating pressure
- Harmful gases are being removed from the appliance safely to the air outside
- Ventilation routes are clear and working properly
- All the safety devices are working

How do I arrange the check?

To arrange a gas safety check for your home, visit the Gas Safe Register website at www.gassaferegister.co.uk or call 0800 408 5500.

You'll be able to find a registered engineer who is legally qualified to work on gas appliances. Compare quotes from around three different engineers before hiring someone.



Catalyst
Housing

Leasehold valuation tribunals explained

Leasehold valuation tribunals (LVT) are five regional panels that form the Residential Property Tribunal Service. They deal with many landlord and tenant issues such as varying a lease.

When a tribunal is asked to vary a lease, it's usually because the existing one is defective. For example, if it doesn't let the landlord or the leaseholder make improvements. If this happens any party can ask the LVT to change the wording of the lease.

When someone puts in an application to vary a lease, the other involved party and the mortgage lender is always told.

Most applications are heard at a hearing, usually with three members of the LVT present. In some cases you may be able to submit paper applications. The LVT will also inform those involved.

For more details please visit www.justice.gov.uk



Aileen Hamilton-Farey,
Chairman of Leasehold
Valuation Tribunals in London

Why get a valuation from a chartered surveyor?

Our shared owners often ask us why they have to pay a chartered surveyor to value their property. Here's what Buntings, one of our approved valuers has to say.

Housing associations are not-for-profit organisations regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency, a government body overseeing housing and regeneration.

As Catalyst receives public funding, the government says they need to get accurate appraisals of properties. Estate agents will often give a broader valuation of a property as they are working in a highly competitive market where they want to impress the potential client.

On the other hand, we at Buntings always give valuations based on unbiased market analysis and

solid evidence as we are an independent company. We have considerable experience when it comes to different types of properties, locations and changing market conditions.

Our governing body, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) defines market value as:

"The estimated amount for which a property should exchange on the date of valuation between a willing buyer and a willing seller in an arm's-length transaction after proper marketing wherein the parties had each acted knowledgeably, prudently and without compulsion."

This definition helps protect the buyer and the seller. For example, if the valuation is too high, the shared owner will end up paying too much if they decide to buy more shares in their home.

Valuations from Buntings cover the cost of visiting, inspecting and measuring the property as well as post-site enquiries.

Buntings chartered surveyors



Buying and selling a leasehold home

You can't wait to move into your new home! Your buyer can't wait to move into their new home! It's leasehold and that's bound to mean delays right? Not necessarily, providing you plan.

The first thing you should do is contact Catalyst. If you're buying more shares or selling your home, your solicitor will draft the relevant documents. If you're moving to another leasehold property, your solicitor can instruct your new landlord to send you a leasehold information pack.

Leasehold information pack

This includes:

- Details of the landlord, managing agent or management company

- The amount of ground rent and service charge payable
- Who is responsible for maintenance

The pack enables the buyer to see how the building is maintained and who pays for the costs. It gives a snapshot of the payments so that your legal adviser can divide these up appropriately.



Kerry Hicks,
Affordable homeownership
department at Prince Evans
Solicitors LLP



What does AIRPM or MIRPM mean?

Catalyst aims to provide a first class service to our residents. To do this we train our teams to the highest standards. That's why some of the people in our homeownership team have the letters AIRPM or MIRPM after their names. We caught up with Jeff Platt, the chief executive of the Institute of Residential Property Management to explain what these terms mean.

The answer is simple: associate or member of the Institute of Residential Property Management (IRPM).

The IRPM was launched in 2002 to:

- Raise standards in the residential property management sector

- Provide people with independent accreditation leading to increased consumer confidence and career development opportunities
- Improve the standing of the sector in the eyes of the public

The IRPM has a close working relationship with other professional bodies. Being a member or associate of IRPM is a stepping stone towards becoming a chartered member of the Institute of Housing or Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

Membership of the IRPM is rapidly becoming an essential for everyone involved in the management of residential property including long leasehold and affordable housing.

Jeff Platt, CEO of the Institute of Residential Property Management



Service charges spelt out

When you buy the lease on your property, you also agree to pay your landlord ground rent and service charges every year. Emily Gasson, a housing lawyer and trainer with over 10 years' experience, explains what these mean and what happens if you don't pay.

What is service charge and why do I have to pay it?

Your service charge pays for the services your landlord provides. It pays for things like repairing, maintaining and improving the structure of your home and communal areas. It also includes the insurance of the building and covers your landlord's costs of managing the property. Full details are set out in your lease.

What is ground rent and why do I have to pay it?

Ground rent is the annual fee you pay for the land that is leased for the building. It's a fixed amount that you pay every year.

What happens if I don't pay?

Your landlord can take a number of actions:

- Take you to court and get an order made against you – this will affect your credit rating
- Put a charge over your property – when you sell the home you'll have to pay back debt, including interest, out of money from the sale
- Take possession of your home – you'll be evicted

What happens if I can't pay?

Please contact your landlord straightaway. Catalyst has a specialist income management team who can put you in contact with independent financial advisers. They'll work with you to come up with a repayment plan so you don't end up losing your home.

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:
Ealing Gateway
26–30 Uxbridge Road
London W5 2AU

South East customers:
The Farmhouse
Nightingale Avenue
Oxford OX4 7BU



Emily Gasson,
*Housing lawyer
and trainer*



**Catalyst
Housing**

