

Our Homes Newsletter

A newsletter for Chesterfield Borough Council tenants and leaseholders

Spring 2018



**New garden competition
for tenants**

**New tenant obligations
for repairs**

**Mobile office 2018
schedule**



CHESTERFIELD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Tenant satisfaction survey results

Every two years, we carry out a survey with tenants to measure how satisfied you are with the service we provide as your landlord.

The latest survey took place in November and December last year. The overall results are positive and have generally improved on the figures from the last time the survey was carried out in 2015.

The results for the main questions in the survey are set out in the table below. Almost nine out of ten tenants are satisfied with the service provided by our housing teams.

We asked how satisfied or dissatisfied you were



We are currently analysing the results of the full survey and identifying any areas for improvement, where we can better focus our resources in the future. Thank you to each of you who returned a survey as the information collected is vitally important and will influence us as we seek to improve our service to you.

Tenants' annual report 2016/2017

The annual report to tenants is now available to view online.

Each year we produce an annual report for our tenants. We produce this to let you know how we are performing against some key indicators, set out the work we have done and the work we are proposing to do in the year ahead. The full detailed report is available on our website at www.chesterfield.gov.uk putting 'housing annual report' in the search box. Alternatively you can request a printed version by calling 01246 345142.

Changes to housing tenancy agreement

In February we wrote to every tenant to inform them of the changes to their tenancy agreement from April 2018. This letter also included the details of the changes to repair obligations for tenants (see article on page 3) and about you paying your rent over 52 weeks a year rather than 48 weeks as you did previously.

The process to make changes to the tenancy agreement, rent year and repair obligations was a joint effort between council staff, local councillors and tenant representatives. The work began last spring with working groups being asked to identify where changes to the service could be made help meet the financial challenges of the housing service.

In total 1,079 tenants responded to the consultation and just under 250 attended the roadshows giving us plenty of support and feedback on the changes proposed.

The outcomes of the consultation and recommendations to amend the tenancy agreement were agreed by the council's cabinet in January and came into force in April.



We consulted on the proposals developed by the group with all tenants last autumn. The consultation process included:

- An information pack sent to all tenants of the proposed changes
- Articles in Our Homes
- 23 roadshows at venues across the borough
- Promotion on the council's website, Facebook and Twitter accounts

New repair obligations for tenants

Following extensive consultation with tenants in October and November last year, 23 drop in sessions and a questionnaire to all tenants, the council has taken into account the feedback from you which has resulted in some changes to repair obligations in your council homes. There has been a new document regarding the new obligations sent to tenants with their new tenancy agreement in February. A number of DIY repairs have become the responsibility of the tenant and it is expected that you would look to resolve these issues in the first instance before contacting the council.



Tenant Repair



Council Repair



Council Repair,
recharged to tenant

Any repair to an item which is a fixture or fitting installed by the tenant themselves, including those with formal permission, is still the responsibility of the tenant.

Infestations, of any kind including mice, cockroaches and bed bugs	£
TV outlet damaged / not working (not communal aerial systems)	Key
Clear blocked bath, basin, sink, toilet, shower or drain using plunger or cleaning agent. If unsuccessful call the council	Key
Waste to sink or basin is blocked – clear using plunger or cleaning agent. If unsuccessful call the council	Key
Toilet pan blocked – including taking action to ensure pan does not become blocked	Key
Trap to sink or basin damaged	£
Keeping waste pipes clear and removing any blockages that happen	Key
Shower head blocked. If unsuccessful call the council	Key
Shower head or shower holder damaged	£
Shower tray or waste damaged	£
Shower curtain damaged or missing	Key
Replacing lost or stolen keys or fobs to common entrance doors	£
Replacing keys or locks when keys lost, stolen or tenant gets locked out	Key
Providing / replacing security chains, letter plates or numbers to external doors	Sailboat
Providing / replacing door knockers and bells	Key
Oiling hinges and locks to internal doors	Key
Adjusting doors for new carpets	Sailboat
Resetting electrical trip switches and if necessary turning off the main supply. If unsuccessful call the council	Key
Resetting circuit breakers in the electrical consumer unit. If unsuccessful call the council	Key
Replacing light bulbs (bayonet and screw fit), plugs and fuses	Key
Telephone points – tenant should contact their telephone provider	Key

Electric light batten holder or lampholder damaged	£
Ceiling pull switch or cord to ceiling pull switch damaged	£
Ceiling pull switch is faulty or cord to ceiling pull switch is broken (through fair wear and tear)	Sailboat
Electrical switch (single, double, triple) is damaged	£
Electrical switch (single, double, triple) is faulty	Sailboat
Quarry tiles are loose (the council will only match as near as possible to existing)	Sailboat
Vinyl tiles are loose (the council will only match as near as possible to existing)	Sailboat
Tiles to fire surround are loose (the council will only match as near as possible to existing)	Sailboat
Tiles to fire surround are damaged or missing (the council will only match as near as possible to existing)	£
Wall tiles are loose (the council will only match as near as possible to existing)	Sailboat
Wall tiles are damaged (the council will only match as near as possible to existing)	£
Skirting board is damaged	£
Floorboards or floor panels are damaged	£
Surface mould to wall (not caused by disrepair issues)	Key
Treating walls for mould caused by condensation	Key
Minor cracks in ceilings	Key
Cracks in ceilings (NOT minor cracks)	Sailboat
PVC air vent grill is damaged	£
Re-pressurising combi-boiler, if unsuccessful call the council	Key
Relighting pilot light on boilers	Sailboat
No heating – tenant needs to check thermostat is set correctly first	Sailboat
Bleeding radiators	Key
Setting heating controls, including timed programmes	Key
Renewing batteries to heating controls	Key
Kitchen unit repairs (the council will only repair / replace with as near as possible to match the existing)	Sailboat
Maintaining paths to an individual property - e.g. uneven paths. NOTE: The council will continue to maintain the main path from the boundary to the front and back doors	Key
Turning the water supply off at the stop tap if a water pipe bursts or if you go away	Key
External taps	Key
Garage lock is damaged	£
Clearing an overgrown garden	£

Repairs that are not listed in the information above remain unchanged.

Fencing

As well as the above the council will now only carry out repairs to fencing, gates and walls where it is a very minor repair. Where a repair can no longer be carried out, the council may remove the fence, gate or wall and mark the boundary line with a 'post and wire' fence. If as part of a planned programme of works on your estate you get a new fence provided – the new fence will become your responsibility to maintain.

Helpful YouTube DIY videos

To assist with some of the repairs that tenants will now carry out themselves, we plan to issue a series of YouTube videos to demonstrate how these minor DIY repairs can be carried out and we also aim to introduce a series of DIY classes that tenants can attend.



New repair targets

As well as the changes to the repairing responsibilities there have also been some changes to the times within which repairs will be carried out by the Council. The new four response time categories are as below:

Right to Repair - 1 day within 24 hours

Examples of these include:

- Complete loss of power or heating
- Flood or seriously leaking pipe

Right to Repair - 3 working days within 72 hours

These are urgent repairs but not immediate emergencies. Examples include:

- Partial loss of power or water supply
- Heating or hot water not working between May & October
- Loose or detached banister or handrail

Right to Repair - 7 days within 168 hours

Urgent repairs but not immediate emergencies. Examples are:

- Extractor fan not working
- Door entry phone not working

All other repairs

All other repairs will be carried out within 30 days by an appointment that we pre-arrange with you.



Tenants get replacement porches to make homes warmer

We have replaced some old draughty timber porches with new double glazed porches to help improve the warmth in tenants' homes on Danby Avenue.

This has significantly improved the warmth of homes especially in the coldest weather as well as improving the look of the properties too. The old timber porches were not only letting in a lot of cold but they were starting to need a lot of repair.

We start building new council homes

The council is building its first new council homes in a generation.

Although we have employed contractors to build some properties such as Parkside, our older persons' complex at Stand Road, it has been many years since we designed and built our own new council houses.

The first scheme will see two pairs of two bedroom semi-detached houses built on Rufford Close, Boythorpe. Once this is completed work will start to build three houses and one adapted bungalow on Manor Drive, Brimington.

Building work started this winter and the houses at Rufford Close should be completed this summer.

It is expected that demand for the properties will be from the housing register as smaller family accommodation.

You said, we did

Tenants at flats in Littlemoor asked if their shared garden could have some seating so tenants could enjoy the area in the summer months.

They also wanted more usable areas with more visibility down the garden as the bushes were making the space unusable. After carrying out consultation with tenants in the flats, we removed some bushes and installed some seating and picnic benches so that families could enjoy some time in the garden in good weather. If you want us to consider an environmental improvement in a communal area near you, please contact the tenant participation team on [01246 345147](tel:01246345147) or email tpenquiries@chesterfield.gov.uk



Before



After



Chesterfield in Bloom – new categories for council tenants

This year we are launching three new categories especially for council tenants.

If your garden is brimming with plants and colour, you grow your own vegetables, or if it is beautifully landscaped or full of wildlife, we would love to see it. You don't have to be green fingered to enter the competition. We would encourage anyone to enter as showcasing what you do in your garden to other people can be really rewarding.

The closing date to enter the competition is 15 June 2018 and the judging will take place in July. If you are interested in entering a category or categories please contact Lynn Hind on 01246 345399 or by email at lynn.hind@chesterfield.gov.uk and we will send you an entry form.

The new categories are:

- Best garden – this can be either front, side, back or all three
- Best hanging basket or container garden
- Best estate champion(s) – we are looking for an individual or groups of people who take an active role in keeping their local area or environment clean and tidy. This could include taking part in litter picks or activities to improve the appearance of an area such as a community garden or bulb planting

Prizes for each category are as follows:

- First prize – £100
- Second prize – £75
- Third prize – £50

All entrants will be invited to an awards ceremony in September at Ringwood Hall Hotel where refreshments will be provided and you will be presented with your certificate and winners the prize money.

Letting our properties

We are currently trying a different way to advertise and market some of our properties. We have a number of properties that can be difficult to let. These are mainly one and two bedroom flats.

A recent consultation with tenants and councillors about the way we let our properties found that some people find our 'On The Move' website difficult to use and that the property information and photographs were not attracting people to want to bid on the flats.



In order to overcome this, we are trialling marketing some of our properties on the RightMove website. We have taken more recent photographs and written more descriptive property information pages to hopefully make the whole process easier to use and encourage applicants to contact us to apply for the properties.

In the short time that we have been using the RightMove website we have had our webpages viewed more than 3,000 times and received numerous enquiries from people wanting to rent the properties. This is proving to be a very successful trial and has encouraged us to review our own website and identify necessary improvements to be implemented over the next 12 months.

To view our adverts please visit www.rightmove.co.uk and search for flats/apartments in the "To Rent" section.

It's your neighbourhood

The 'Royal Horticultural Society's (RHS) It's Your Neighbourhood' is the non-competitive category of the East Midlands in Bloom campaign.

If you are a group of people who are keen to improve your local surroundings, whether a street, or part of one, or you are involved in/starting a community project, then this is the ideal way to get practical advice and recognition for your efforts.

The Chesterfield RHS It's Your Neighbourhood welcomes groups taking the first steps towards community regeneration through all year round events and activities. Entries are not judged against each other but assessed by environmental and horticultural 'In Bloom' experts during July who then provide valuable feedback and helpful advice on how to develop current activities and encourage on-going improvements.

By participating, there is also the opportunity to draw on the experiences of other local communities through a strong 'In Bloom' network.



There are many benefits to your local community to becoming involved in the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' scheme; a few of them are listed below:

- Building communities by working towards a common goal, creating opportunities for increasing understanding and neighbourliness
- Improving surroundings through planting, clean-up and maintenance
- Encouraging horticulture, from hanging baskets to community gardens
- Bringing in environmentally conscious practices such as composting, recycling and biodiversity projects
- Transforming disused space both through changing the way the land is used, and in the community spirit it brings

If you have any ideas on an area where you live that you would like to improve, please give us a call or email to discuss your ideas further at the details 01246 345097 or email john.ramsey@chesterfield.gov.uk

Do you want to downsize, find a larger home, move closer to family or move for a new job?

A home swap can be a quicker way of getting the home you need.

HomeSwapper is a home swap service that helps council and housing association tenants to exchange their homes. A home swap is also called a mutual exchange.

HomeSwapper is free for Chesterfield Borough Council tenants.

Simply go to www.homeswapper.co.uk and click on the 'Register' link. Enter some simple details about you, your home and where you want to move to.

HomeSwapper automatically matches you to other tenants who you may be able to swap with. The matches you see are based on the information you have saved in your account.

You can also download the free HomeSwapper app from the Apple and Android app store or Google play. The app enables you to:

- View and manage property matches
- See more detailed information regarding possible properties
- View local area information
- Message potential swappers
- Upload photos directly from your smart phone
- Manage your account settings
- Receive push notifications when you have new matches and messages

Find them on Facebook [@HomeSwapperOfficial](https://www.facebook.com/HomeSwapperOfficial) and Twitter [@HomeSwapperteam](https://twitter.com/HomeSwapperteam)



Council evicts tenants to stop drug dealing in Inkersall

The council has ended eight tenancies in the last eight months due to anti-social behaviour relating to drugs.

This has been a priority for the neighbourhoods team whose officers are trained to deal with housing law around anti-social behaviour.

Tenants may become aware of the problem by smelling cannabis, people having lots of visitors who only stay for a short time, unknown cars pulling up, or by people making noise at anti-social hours.

We deal with reports of drug use by trying to get tenants to stop their behaviour. If they continue to use drugs in council homes, we try to collect information about how this affects other people living around them. We rely on neighbours around the tenant to keep telling us what they see and how this is affecting them.

This information is used in court to get an eviction order allowing us to end a tenancy. Unfortunately, it can take a very long time to get a court order, especially if a tenant has mental health problems.

If we do not have reports from people who are affected, or if the police have not prosecuted the tenant or a member of the tenant's household for drug dealing at their home, we cannot evict the tenant if we know what is going on.

Recently a group of residents in Inkersall reported that a young man in a flat was having up to 100 young people and children coming to his flat at weekends and having parties where drugs and alcohol were available.

This led to a large number of youths coming out onto the street making lots of noise, fights breaking out, and residents being intimidated. Ten local people gave us statements about what they had seen and how this had affected them. This enabled us to get an eviction order in court. We would like to thank everyone who has provided us with information to enable us to take action to help make our neighbourhoods a better place to live.

If you are concerned that your neighbour is using or dealing drugs, please phone us on [01246 345071](tel:01246345071) or phone the police on the non-emergency number, [101](tel:101). We will deal confidentially with any information that you give us and support you in the best way we can.



Recycling electricals

Most electrical items that have a plug or are powered by batteries must not be disposed of in with household waste.

They can contain a range of materials – Including precious metals – that can be separated for recycling and used in new products. When you want to get rid of broken or unwanted electrical goods from your home, large or small, there are different ways you can recycle them.

Donate to local charities - Check with local charities they may be able to use your working but unwanted electrical items. Alternatively, you may wish to sell them or give them away for free.

Retailer take back scheme - When buying a new electrical item, the retailer may take back your old appliance in store, or give advice on alternative options for disposal. Some stores will take away your old item for free, or for a small charge.

Households with own blue recycling bin - If you have your own blue bin for recycling, small electrical items can be placed on the lid on collection day – you can place them in a carrier bag if you like.

Don't forget to remove personal data from items such as laptops, mobile phones, tablets or sat navs. Please note we cannot collect microwaves, TVs, computer screens, accessories or attachments or any loose parts.

Household waste recycling centres - You can also recycle electrical items free of charge at Derbyshire County Council's household waste recycling centres on Stonegravels Lane off Sheffield Road, Chesterfield, S41 7LF and Buttermilk Lane, Bolsover, S44 6AE.

Bulky waste collection service - Our bulky waste collection service can collect large domestic appliances and electrical items. Please note there is a charge for this service. Call us on (01246) 345734 for more information or to arrange a bulky waste collection.

We will collect items including:

- Alarm clocks
- Blenders
- CD players
- Christmas lights
- Coffee makers
- Docking stations
- Electric toothbrushes
- Fans
- Games consoles
- Hairdryers and straighteners
- Hedge cutters
- Irons
- Kettles
- Lamps
- Laptops
- Liquidisers
- Mixers
- Phones
- Power tools
- Printers
- Radios
- Sat navs
- Shavers
- Slow cookers
- Straighteners
- Tablets
- Toasters

Working with Universal Credit

Our tenancy sustainment officers work with vulnerable tenants who are at risk of losing their homes. Many of our new tenants now claim Universal Credit to cover their housing costs.

This, as well as other changes to welfare benefits, has made it more difficult for tenants to stay out of arrears. The tenancy sustainment officers have been helping tenants to work their way through the requirements of Universal Credit.

Sarah, a tenant, is supported by our tenancy sustainment team. She claimed Universal Credit after splitting up from her boyfriend who was a joint tenant with her. Her boyfriend left leaving her responsible for all the rent. Universal Credit would not pay all the rent because she was a joint tenant, she is under 21, and had a bedroom more than the government said she needed.

Her tenancy sustainment officer helped her contact the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to explain that she was responsible for all the rent as a joint tenant, and that she did qualify for housing costs. She was unable to move to her parents' home, so the tenancy sustainment officers helped her move to a one bedroom flat to overcome the bedroom tax problems. This allowed her to keep a tenancy and stopped her becoming homeless.

Tenancy sustainment officers can help tenants get the right benefits and can help tenants challenge sanctions where the DWP think someone has not met all the requirements of their Universal Credit claim. You can also get advice on Universal Credit from our customer service centre, rents management team and other advice centres. If you are having problems with your claim it is in your own interest to get help as soon as possible as doing nothing can put you at risk of losing your home. The sooner you get help, the more of your circumstances and rights we can help you preserve.

To contact the council's tenancy sustainment officers please phone **01246 345354**.



Mobile office visiting your area

Look out for the mobile office visiting your area. The mobile office is used when we are doing specific consultation in an area and this year we are putting out a programme for the good weather months for you to visit us with any housing issue you wish to discuss with us. On Tuesday mornings every month between 1st May and 31st October, we will be visiting the following areas:

First Tuesday of every month

- 10.30am *Eventide Restroom, Mastin Moor/**Markham Road shop, Duckmanton
- 11.30am *Tasty Bites, Chesterfield Road/**Edensor Court Community Room, Middlecroft
- 12.30pm *Neale Bank shops, Brimington/Chantrey Avenue, Peveril

Second Tuesday of every month

- 10.30am *Churston Road, Brampton/**Top of Bacons Lane, St Augustines
- 11.30am *Green Farm Close/**St Francis Community Centre, Hunloke Avenue, Boythorpe
- 12.30pm Cauldon Drive, Holme Hall (every month)

Third Tuesday of every month

- 10.30am *Annesley Close/**Talbot Crescent, Hasland
- 11.30am Opposite Co-op, Grangewood Road (every month)
- 12.30pm *Cuttholme Rd Shops/**Winnats Close, Loundsley Green

Fourth Tuesday of every month

- 10.30am *Monkwood road Community Room, Dunston/**Wordsworth Road, Newbold Moor
- 11.30am *Nisa Store, Station Lane, Old Whittington/**Redhouse Close, New Whittington
- 12.30pm - *Duewell Court, Barrow Hill/**Devonshire Close, Staveley

(*June/Aug/Oct - **May/July/Sept)

Come to discuss how we can improve your area. We have an estate improvement budget which is available to improve communal areas that the council owns and we want your ideas. Tell us about any housing issue you have such as anti-social behaviour, support needs for older people including assistive technology, access to benefit advice, access to maintaining your tenancy if you have rent arrears, and general council issues such as dog fouling etc.

Come and chat with us, we would love to see you. For more information, contact us on **(01246) 345147** or email: tpenquiries@chesterfield.gov.uk

Get in touch

Council contacts

Careline (including support service)

T: 0300 323 0076

Customer services contact centre

T: 01246 345 345

Environmental services (bins and recycling)

T: 01246 345 345

Home improvement agency (minor improvements)

T: 01246 345 748 / 345 701

Homelessness prevention team

T: 01246 345 825

E: homelessness.prevention@chesterfield.gov.uk

Homelessness (out of hours)

T: 08456 058 058 or 01629 532 600

Housing option team (housing waiting list and allocations of council housing)

T: 01246 345 700

E: onthemove@chesterfield.gov.uk

Housing Benefit and Council Tax support

T: 01246 345 345

Minicom: 01246 345 285

Neighbourhoods team

T: 01246 345 071

E: neighbourhoods.team@chesterfield.gov.uk

Rents and rent recovery

T: 01246 345 501 / 345 510

Reporting repairs during office hours

T: (Freephone) 0800 5875 659

E: repair.requests@chesterfield.gov.uk

Repairs - emergency only (out of hours)

T: 01246 345 041

Text / voice messages

T: 07960 910 264

ARE WE ACCESSIBLE TO YOU? IF NOT ASK US!

کیا ہم تک آپ کی رسائی ہے؟ اگر نہیں تو ہمیں بتائیے!

你可覺得易於與我們接觸？若不同的話，請提出要求。

Czy łatwo jest skontaktować się z nami? Jeżeli nie, powiedz nam o tym!

Siamo accessibili nei vostri riguardi? In caso contrario rivolgetevi a noi!

Smart phone app

Get our free smart phone app. Just type Chesterfield Council into your app store.



Our Homes is changing

The 'Our Homes' magazine will be changing from being a single magazine sent to council tenants and will become an insert in 'Your Chesterfield' magazine.

This will be the last Our Homes newsletter in this format however it is an exciting opportunity to share the council's housing service news with a wider audience across Chesterfield. This will spread information about our excellent housing services and should attract new tenants to our services. This opportunity also allows the council to make some efficiency saving in producing both magazines so it will be a win win situation in many ways.

Look out for our next edition as an insert in Your Chesterfield which will be delivered to all residents in July this year.