

Our Homes Newsletter

A newsletter for Chesterfield Borough Council tenants and leaseholders

Summer 2016



CHESTERFIELD
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Changes to your housing services

From April this year, we made some major changes to our neighbourhoods and housing options services.

We did this without increasing their cost and we are now offering a service that more adequately meets your needs.

Many people that we accepted as tenants could not afford to live independently. After their rent was paid, they did not have enough money to pay for food, gas electricity and other essentials. They had to give up their tenancies or we had to take legal action against them for rent arrears. Also, we had to accept many people as tenants who were a high risk of being unable to manage some of their responsibilities.

We therefore changed our policy so that we only offer people a tenancy if they have the minimum income that will enable them to live independently. We carried out a major change to our allocations/housing options team so that we have specialist staff carrying out financial assessments and providing advice on affordability. We also carry out more detailed checks to reduce the risk of offering tenancies to people who are unlikely to be able to manage their tenancies properly, such as by causing nuisance.

At the same time, we changed our neighbourhoods team to provide better specialist management and supervision of things such as anti-social behaviour and to provide more support for our more vulnerable tenants. We also increased the number of neighbourhood rangers to improve how we manage our estates.

The neighbourhoods team now comprises the following:

Tenancy management

Six tenancy management officers and a team leader

T: 01246 345 071

Tenancy sustainment

Six tenancy sustainment officers and a team leader

T: 01246 345 142

Estate management

Eight neighbourhood rangers and a team leader

T: 01246 345354

Tenant participation

Three tenant participation officers sharing team leader with estate management

T: 01246 345430

E: neighbourhoods.team@chesterfield.gov.uk

The housing options team comprises the following:

Housing options

Four housing options officers, one assistant and a team leader

Housing allocations

6.5 housing allocations officers, 4.5 assistants and a team leader

T: 01246 345700

E: onthemove@chesterfield.gov.uk



Dogs

Dog ownership events in your neighbourhood

Recent surveys indicate that dog related issues are the main concern to Chesterfield tenants. The Council's housing and environmental health teams are tackling this by visiting a number of neighbourhoods over the summer to meet tenants and advise them on how to own a dog responsibly.

The first event was held on 22 June at Wardgate Way shops, Holme Hall. Further events will take place around the borough until October.

Amanda Davies and partner Jason O'Hara from Holme Hall attended the event with their dog Cleo (pictured with the dog warden on the front cover). Miss Davies said they really enjoyed the event and had a really good chat with the dog warden. They received some free dog poo bags and were told how to report people who did not clean up after their dog.

How to be a responsible dog owner

The council has a range of powers to take action to deal with irresponsible dog owners and guidance on how to be a responsible dog owner:

- Dogs need to be exercised regularly and in all weathers. You should carry dog poo bags (or nappy sacks) to clean up after your dog. You can dispose of your dog poo bag in any of the designated red bins, a street bin or in your wheelie bin. Leaving your dog poo bag in a hedge is littering, which can result in a fine, it is unsightly and can attract vermin to the area. If you don't clear up after a dog, this is an offence and you can be fined or prosecuted. It could also break your tenancy agreement. This applies to any land which is open to the air and to which the public have access.
- Plenty of fresh water with both tinned and dried pet food can provide a balanced and nutritious diet. Feeding animals human food is not recommended. Chocolate is poisonous to dogs and can kill them!
- Register your dog with a vet to get its annual vaccinations and a complete health check. Both you and your dog will be happier if it is socialised with people and other animals. If you are planning a trip away, make arrangements for your dog with someone that will take care of it properly.
- Dogs that are bored, neglected, hungry or lonely can bark and whine and this can disturb and upset neighbours. Don't leave your dog alone for prolonged periods. Allowing your dog to bark or whine for continued periods can constitute a statutory noise nuisance. You could be served with a formal notice and break your tenancy agreement.
- When in public it is generally a good idea to keep dogs on leads. There are several dog control orders (DCOs) in place around the borough, where dogs are either excluded or must be kept on leads either by request or at all times. Failure to comply with a dog control order can result in you being given a fixed penalty notice of up to £80 or a fine in court of up to £1,000.

To find out more information visit www.chesterfield.gov.uk and put 'dog control orders' in the search box.

Environmental matters



You could pay the price for fly tipping

Summer is a popular time for home improvements or clearing out your garden or shed, but where does the waste you pay a contractor to move end up?

If you've hired builders, tradesmen, landscape gardeners, house clearers or scrap metal merchants who are removing waste items from your property, these people will normally need a waste carrier registration with the Environment Agency.

Ask your contractor for their waste carrier's registration number. If they are not registered you should refuse their services as you cannot be sure where they will dispose of the waste. You can check by contacting them on 03708 506506 and requesting an instant waste carrier check or by checking online through their website www.environment-agency.gov.uk.

If fly tipped waste is traced back to you, you can be fined up to £5,000 in a magistrates court.

For further information or to report fly tipping contact:

Environmental protection team

T: 01246 345 345

E: pollution@chesterfield.gov.uk



Stereo equipment confiscated from noisy neighbour

A noisy neighbour was serviced with a noise abatement notice after continually playing loud music from his council home. The tenant continued to play his music, which resulted in the equipment being taken from the property. The equipment was then confiscated by court order and the tenant fined.

If you are suffering from noise nuisance, contact your tenancy management officer:

T: 01246 345 071

E: neighbourhoods.team@chesterfield.gov.uk



Health and wellbeing

Gussie's Kitchen

Gussie's Kitchen, based at St Augustine's Church is the latest Super Kitchen to open in Chesterfield. The grand opening was held on the 24 May where volunteers produced a three course meal with a menu including soup, fish cakes, vegetable curry, bubble and squeak cakes and tikka masala as well as a cold buffet. A selection of deserts including cakes was also available.

Nearly 50 adults had a meal for the bargain price of £2.50 and over 50 children enjoyed the superhero themed games that went on throughout the afternoon. Under five's eat for free at Gussies and meals for children, aged from five to 15, cost 50p.

Super Kitchens provide people with hot nutritious meals cooked by local volunteers, using food that would have been thrown away by supermarkets. None of the food is out of date and is perfectly good to eat but, to prevent it being wasted, it is redistributed by the charities FareShare and Eudaimonia.

Gussie's Kitchen enables people to come together socially, just as they could at a café, and provide healthy food at a fraction of the cost. FareShare food isn't 'waste food for poor people', it's 'surplus food for all'. Gussie's Kitchen is open every Tuesday from 4.00pm to 6.30pm. Everyone is welcome to go along and enjoy a meal in a friendly and relaxed environment.

Universal Credit explained

Universal Credit is a new type of benefit designed to support people who are on a low income or out of work.

It is being rolled out across the country. In Chesterfield, you may be asked to claim Universal Credit instead of Jobseekers Allowance. Universal Credit is paid monthly in arrears into a bank account of your choice and includes payments towards your housing costs instead of claiming Housing Benefit. It will eventually replace Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit.

You will need to claim Council Tax Benefit separately from Chesterfield Borough Council.

To apply for Universal Credit or for more information visit www.gov.uk/universal-credit or visit our customer service centre where staff can help you make an online claim.

Universal Credit and your rent account - what you must do and how we can help.

Your rent is payable to Chesterfield Borough Council, in the past, if you were entitled to Housing Benefit this was paid directly to your rent account. Universal Credit will now pay this part of the benefit directly to you each month and you are responsible for paying all of your rent that is due.

When you make your claim for Universal Credit you will see an advisor, if you are in rent arrears or feel that you can't manage your finances, ask whether the housing part of your Universal Credit can be paid directly to the council. This is called a managed payment.

You can still apply for Discretionary Housing Payments from the council benefits service as long as housing costs are included in your Universal Credit calculation.

Please take the following steps if you are receiving or will be receiving Universal Credit in the future:

- Contact the rent department to advise of a possible delay in your rent payment or if you are having difficulty paying your rent on 01246 345345. This could prevent action being taken against your tenancy.
- Rent payments are a priority debt and should be paid before most other debts
- If we try to contact you, get back in touch with us as soon as you can because we can help you.

We will work with you to help reduce your arrears and can refer you for budgeting advice and to independent advisory services.

Your home is at risk if you fail to pay your rent. We have supported many tenants to find affordable ways to address their rent arrears. You can ask us for help by phoning 01246 345345 or call in at the customer service centre at New Square.



Free saving account worth £6 with this issue for the first 1,000 tenants

The homelessness prevention team, working in partnership with the Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Credit Union will pay your joining fee and first £1 deposit into your savings account, worth £6 in total. All you need to do is bring along this copy of this newsletter and three forms of ID and/or proof of address to 4-6 Soresby Street, Chesterfield, S40 1JN, or call:

T: 01246 278 833

www.cnedcu.co.uk

Insure your home and belongings

Chesterfield Borough Council urges all tenants to take out home contents insurance. Protect your furniture, belongings and decorations against fire, theft, water damage and other household risks. There's a special scheme available, underwritten by Allianz Insurance plc, where premiums can be paid weekly alongside your rent. We have had too many sad cases where tenants have suffered financial loss after an incident because they didn't have contents insurance. Don't be too late, for more information, contact the insurance team on:

T: 01246 345467

Get involved



New park for Edinburgh Road

The new park at Edinburgh Road has been hugely popular with local children since it was installed earlier in the summer.

Tenants and residents of Edinburgh Road recently proposed the refurbishment of the previously outdated play equipment under the Estate Improvement Budget. Following a consultation process, tenants were successful in getting the go ahead for this project.

Lorraine Warby, a local resident, said: "Thank you for improving our park. It's been a massive hit with the kids who get to enjoy the basket swing, saucer roundabout and the stand-up seesaw, with parents knowing they are safe. After seeing what a small group of tenants and residents can achieve, it has galvanised us into creating a new community group so we can look at improving the garden areas of the park too."



Holme Hall in bloom

Holme Hall Unite, a community group made up of council tenants and local residents, has been the driving force behind a project to plant 14,000 daffodil bulbs and 100 trees in the Holme Hall area, funded by the council and the Woodland Trust.

Tony Hedley, from Holme Hall Unite, said: "We have been inundated with positive comments and compliments about the spectacular display the daffodils made this spring. We are delighted with the results and what can be achieved by a few people coming together to better our community."



Estate improvements

Tenants across the borough are encouraged to let us know how they can improve their area through the estate improvement budget. For more details, contact the tenant participation team.

Communications group

This newsletter, as well as a number of other written and electronic communications has been produced with help from our tenant's communication group. For information on how to get involved, contact the tenant participation team on:

T: 01246 345 142

E: tpenquiries@chesterfield.gov.uk

Are you interested in improving your housing service?

We are looking for tenants to join our tenant challenge panel. As a panel member you will work with other tenants to review how services are performing and make recommendations about how the service can be improved. No experience is necessary as full training will be given. For more information, contact the tenant participation team on:

T: 01246 345430.

Estate management

Our neighbourhood rangers make sure the communal areas of your estate are safe, clean and well maintained.

After joining the neighbourhoods team in 2006, we asked John Allen, neighbourhood ranger, for his reflections after ten years managing estates in the borough.

What is your role?

My role is to improve the look of your estates and the environment. I am part of the neighbourhoods team in housing services and I cover Grangewood, Brampton and Whitecotes. I inspect all streets and blocks of flats on a regular basis. I look for untidy gardens or gardens with rubbish in them, and make sure blocks of flats are free from rubbish. I try to stop fire risks and accidents in flats. I can also issue fixed penalty notices to anyone I find dumping rubbish or allowing their dog to foul on open land and gardens.

What is a typical day for you?

I start around 7am in the morning in the office, checking emails and paperwork then I go out onto the estate and carry out my inspections and fire risk assessments. Residents often tell me about problems on the estate. I have 'hotspot' areas that I target where we have known problems such as dog fouling to try and catch the people responsible. No two days are ever the same as people can approach me with a whole range of issues.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

I like it when residents approach me to ask for help or advice. It's nice to know that I'm approachable at any time to offer help and advice.

How can tenants contact you?

There are eight neighbourhood rangers like me working across the borough; you can contact the estate management team on:

T: 01246 345 142

E: neighbourhoods.team@chesterfield.gov.uk

Bulk refuse charges 2016

One item: £14.60

Two to five items: £22.20

Six to ten items: £29.40

Fridges and freezers: £14.60 per unit

These charges are reduced by 20 per cent for residents who receive housing or council tax benefit.

If you have more than ten items or the waste cannot be quantified over the phone, we will arrange a visit and provide you with a price based on an hourly rate. Compared with hiring a skip for the waste, collections are good value for money.

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 345 345

Reporting repairs during office hours freephone

T: 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

Facebook:



Twitter:



Smart phone app

Take a look at our updated smart phone app. Just type Chesterfield Council into Google Play, Android Store or App Store

It's free to download and can be used to:

- Report repairs and neighbourhood issues
- Request a direct debit form
- Set rent reminders
- Calculate your living costs
- Calculate if you are under-occupying your home
- Keep up to date with our latest news and events
- Access useful contacts

