

RESIDENT BROADCAST

Winter Edition

Welcome

Welcome to another edition of our Resident Broadcast.

Christmas is creeping upon us and colder weather has arrived. We all continue to face challenges - be it food shortages to materials for repairs, cost of energy and recruitment of skilled labour. At Black Country Housing Group (BCHG) we continue to remain optimistic with the development of much needed affordable housing and our teams remain committed in carrying out repairs and supporting you.

In this edition we discuss support available to you during winter. We encourage your involvement - by working together we'll not only overcome challenges but also improve services. We hope you enjoy the read and welcome your feedback. You can do this by leaving a comment on [BCHG Chat](#).

Resident Scrutiny Voice Panel (RSVP)

The RSVP was recruited in March 2021 following a review of Customer Engagement.

The RSVP consists of six members and is currently chaired by Kai Jackson. Its main role is to ensure the customer voice is heard at the highest level at BCHG (the Board and Executive team), so it directly influences decisions that impact you.

RSVP have just completed their first service review on non-emergency repairs. The review involved interviewing staff, receiving performance reports and customer feedback.

What did this review achieve?

It helped to identify what was working well and areas that need improvement. Overall, it was pleasing to hear about the positive performance and good work carried out by our repairs team, BCHG Homeforce. It also acknowledges some of the current difficulties faced in the housing sector:

- Material shortage to carry our repairs
- Recruiting Repair Operatives
- Leading to delays in repair times

There's room for improvement:

- Wider publicity of the new repair and maintenance policy



- Share more performance data
- Retain apprentices

The findings and recommendations were shared directly by the Panel with the Executive team and Board. All recommendations were accepted.

The full detail of the report is available on our website. You can leave feedback at BCHG Chat about the findings and recommendations.

If you're interested in helping, improving, meeting new people and developing new skills, we'd love to hear from you. The Panel are hoping to focus the next review on service charges.

Find more detail about how you can get involved on our [website](#). You can also contact Ramesh Malhan, Head of Customer Voice by email: Ramesh.malhan@bchg.co.uk or call 0121 561 7921 to find out more. **Closing date 15 January 2022.**

Focus Group Meeting Invite

The Focus is on Customer Service Standards and Influence Decision Making.

We're inviting customers to take part in a virtual focus group meeting in February 2022. The aim is to find out your thoughts.

This session will start at 10.00am and end at 11.30am and is open to all customers who are not involved in our Panels. You'll need a laptop or tablet device to join.

We're offering £20 voucher, but space is limited to 12. [Register your interest early](#) by emailing: Ramesh.Malhan@bchg.co.uk

Complaints

We've published a new Tenant Complaint Policy that was approved by the Board. The new policy has been set out with the input of the RSVP and takes good practice from the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and customer views into account. RSVP also had input. It proposes a flexible 3 tier approach to resolve complaints:

- Tier 1 - Fast Track looks at the health and safety risk of an issue, and if significant assigned to senior management.
- Tier 2 - Quick Fix encourages all staff to resolve an issue straight away - where this cannot be achieved understand the reason why, and learn to make sure it can in future.
- Tier 3 - General Complaints give an opportunity to raise any other issue of dissatisfaction and to learn what can be improved to make it into a Quick Fix.

The amendments requested by the Board and noted by the RSVP representatives will be made.

View the policy [here](#).

Over the Phone Surveys

One way we hear your views is through surveys. We use IFF, an independent survey company that carries out surveys on our behalf. They work from 9.00am to 8.00pm. The questions are set, they'll never ask you about your financial and bank details and they'll only contact you once a year.

Your data is protected and is not shared or given to anyone without your consent (see our Privacy Notice on our website). If you wish to opt out from any IFF contact, you can do so by [telling your Customer Relation Manager \(CRM\)](#).

Keeping Our Records Up To Date



We'll shortly be sending questionnaires for you to complete. It's important that you complete all of the questions so we can use the information to make sure we're providing the best service for you.

You can receive it by text, by email or post. We can also call you if you prefer us asking the questions over the phone or arrange for your CRM to visit you at your home.

Energy Saving Tips

As we approach the winter months and temperatures drop, most of us will want to spend more time indoors. There are several ways you can control your energy costs whilst keeping your home warm. This includes:

- Keeping your heating on at a low constant temperature, rather than short blast of heat that cools down again
- Setting the timer on your heating controls
- Turning off lights & appliances – devices left on standby can cost between £50 to £90 per year
- Keeping your blinds and curtains closed at night
- Installing low energy light bulbs – LED light bulbs will save you a lot of money
- Closing outside doors and draught proofed
- Not blocking your radiators with furniture
- Ensuring you have sufficient credit if you're using pre-payment meters



Remember gas & electricity and priority bills – if you don't pay them, you run the risk of being cut off by your supplier. We offer all our customers a free service that'll help you keep warm and reduce your energy bills. See how you can save by contacting us or logging on to applyforleap.org.uk

WARM HOME DISCOUNT	This is a credit of up to £140 added to your electricity bill account if you get pension credit or have a low income.
WINTER FUEL PAYMENT	If you were born on or before 26th September 1955 you could get between £100 and £300 to help you pay your heating bills.
COLD WEATHER PAYMENT	You may be entitled to get a cold weather payment if you're in receipt of certain benefits when the average temperature in your area is recorded as or forecast to be zero degrees Celsius or below for seven consecutive days.
HELP TOWARDS COST OF YOUR WATER BILL	Water companies have introduced social tariffs that can offer reduced bills to consumers on low income.
VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS SUPPORT FUND	The government have recently launched a new support fund offering vulnerable households up to £500 funding to help with essentials such as food, clothing, and utilities. For more information, please contact your local council.
FUEL VOUCHERS FOR PRE-PAYMENT METERS	Warmer Homes West Midlands have funding to top up pre-payment meters to the value of £28 for a single household or £49 for a multiple occupancy household. A household can receive up to three vouchers on separate months giving a total of up to £147 top up payments on their pre-payment meter. For more information, please contact your CRM.

If you're struggling to pay your bills including your rent please contact your CRM who will offer you support and assistance.

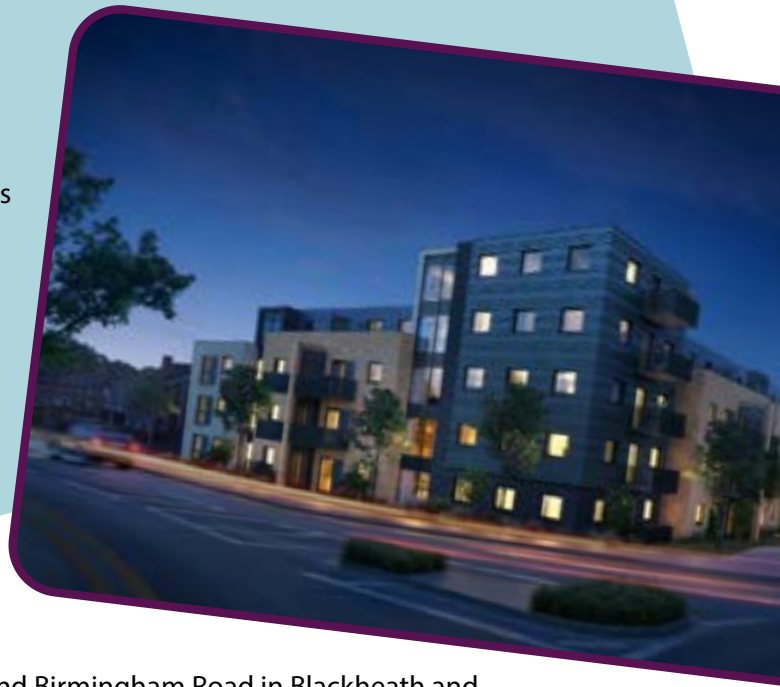
New Developments

BCHG continues its commitment to developing new homes in the Black Country. Our two current schemes at Meredith Street, Cradley Heath and St Peters Road in Netherton are progressing well and should be ready to let by next May. Like many developers, we're encountering problems with the supply chain in relation to materials and are working hard to manage this impact.

BCHG Board have agreed the new development at Regis Lodge, Blackheath and planning has been submitted for 42 flats on this important strategic site into the Town. We aim to be on site by March 2022 with a twelve month build.

We're also looking at options for the sites at Payne Street and Birmingham Road in Blackheath and are hoping to deliver new modular buildings on these sites starting in 2022.

Finally, we have had a brilliant response to the request to find new sites for development in our communities. We are investigating several suggestions and the offer of £250 for any of these, or new suggestions that become part of our programme remains.



Hearing your Voice

The Board of Management see the importance of hearing the customer voice as part of their decision making. It's important that you see the outcomes of this. We've presented our first Board to Tenant Feedback, which can be viewed [here](#).

Know More

- The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has set out their proposals of changes to the consumer standards. Those apply to all registered social landlords including BCHG and sets out requirements for how we manage your home and treat you fairly. Find further details [here](#).
- Regulator of Social Housing consults on tenant satisfaction measures (TSM): TSMs will provide data about the performance and the quality of services of all landlords including BCHG. This is intended to help tenants hold their landlords to account and help the RSH to implement changes to consumer regulation set out in the Social Housing White Paper. Consultation runs from 9 December 2021 to 3 March 2022. Learn more [here](#).
- Find further details of the Social Housing White Paper [here](#).



Contacting us during Christmas and New Year

Our phone line is open for you to report emergency repairs throughout this period on 0300 555 0302.

Report non – emergency repairs through the Portal: [myhome.bchg.co.uk/](#)

