

Tenants in Touch



www.oxford.gov.uk



Information, advice and support for tenants and leaseholders

SUMMER 2022



**Summer Sun,
Community
and Participation**

Building a world-class city for everyone



Welcome to the summer edition of Tenants in Touch

The Jubilee celebrations have lifted our spirits and now summer is coming, hot days are arriving, and we can all get outside a little more and start recovering from a tough couple of years.

This magazine is for you and is designed with you in mind. We are always looking for tenants or leaseholders to join our editorial panel or one off community or useful informative articles to include. What is going on in your community: events, days to remember or photos welcomed.

We are looking to include our younger readers/ younger community groups. If there are events you'd like advertised or would be of use to our Oxford City tenants or leaseholders please let us know about them.

We have just completed our Annual Review of the existing Ambassadors and I'm pleased to

say we currently have 30 names on our books. Of those, 75% responded to the survey and have reassured me we are heading in the right direction, but there is always more to do.

My target is to reach 100 by March 2023. Groups to look forward to include: New Homes and Community Design group, a Leaseholders Panel and a Tenant and Leaseholder Board who will be involved at the highest level of City Council accountability structure.

Wendy Hind

Tenant Involvement Manager

If you would like to apply

You can complete an application form by visiting:

✉ <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/tiopportunities>

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CONGRATULATIONS!

STEVE'S QUIZ WINNER

Sandra Bailey, *Headington*.

Answer: 1897

A £10 shopping voucher is on its way to you!



Other formats...

If you require this publication in large format, braille or translated, or if you could offer your services as a translator, please contact:

☎ **01865 249811**

✉ tenantinvolvement@oxford.gov.uk

How to contact our Housing Service teams

You can contact any of these specialist teams through the Customer Services Contact Team on **01865 249811**



To use our online services visit www.oxford.gov.uk



To talk to our Customer Services Team: **01865 249811** from 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Social Housing White Paper

Project Planning



By Simon Warde
SHWP Project Lead

I have been the Tenant Involvement Manager for a number of years, helping empower you as tenants and leaseholders to be able to monitor, scrutinise and develop the services provided by us as your landlord which are funded by your rents and services charges.

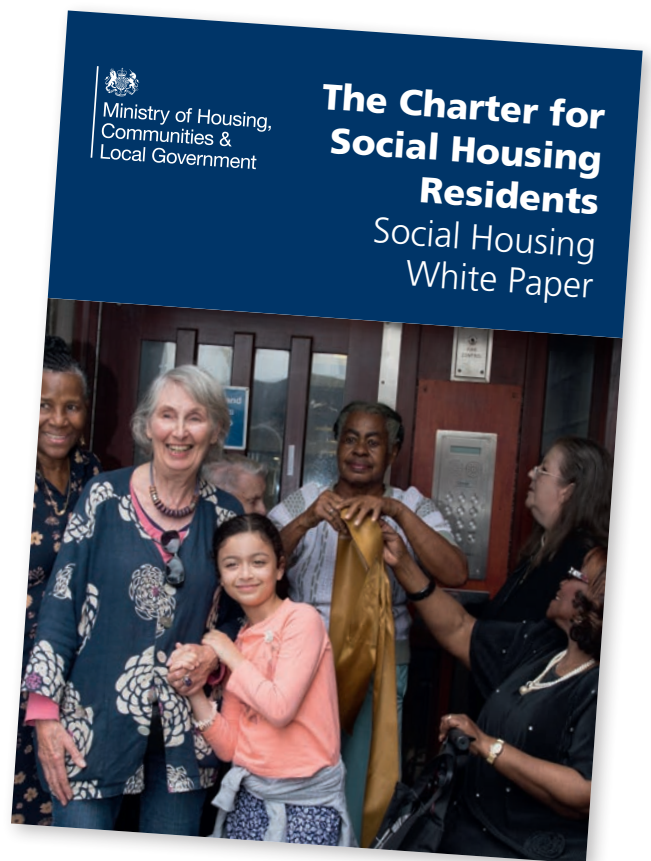
As a result of the 2017 Grenfell Tower tragedy and subsequent resident workshops held across the country (including Oxford) by the then Housing Minister; the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government who then published the SHWP (Social Housing White Paper) November 2020.

The paper is very welcome - it focuses on your voice and influence, aligning with the work the housing sector has been doing to achieve greater accountability.

The paper contains seven key chapters:

- 1 To be safe in your home.
- 2 To know how your landlord is performing.
- 3 To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly.
- 4 To be treated with respect.
- 5 To have your voice heard by your landlord.
- 6 To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in.
- 7 To be supported to take your first step to ownership.

I am seconded as the SHWP Project Lead, I am tasked with ensuring Oxford City Council are



compliant. A specific Project Plan has been created for each of the seven chapters, with clear objectives, timelines and intended outcomes. I have been working directly with multiple teams and services including my home team – Tenant Involvement.

Your involvement forms a very significant part of the SHWP project success. The opportunities for you to have a real influence over the quality and transparency of services we deliver is greatly expanding.

I will keep you updated on how we are progressing with the SHWP in future editions of Tenants in Touch.

Finally, Wendy Hind has been appointed as my backfill during my secondment. Wendy has already spent three very successful years as a Tenant Involvement Officer and is now acting as the Tenant Involvement Manager.

Get involved...

If you would like get involved, then you can contact the Tenant Involvement team:

☎ 01865 529906

✉ tenantinvolvement@oxford.gov.uk

MEET YOUR TMO

Tony Nanton

✉ tnanton@oxford.gov.uk

Littlemore, Pound House, Hockmore Tower, Cardinal House

Nicky Griffiths

✉ ngriffiths@oxford.gov.uk

Marston, Northway, East Oxford, Plowman Tower

Bren O'Leary

✉ boleary@oxford.gov.uk

Barton West, Barton Park, Kidlington

Rhiannon Jones

✉ rjones@oxford.gov.uk

Blackbird Leys, Northbrook House, Windrush Tower

Merita Xibri

✉ mxibri@oxford.gov.uk

Jericho, Grandpont, Central, Osney, New Hinksey (part)

Jeannie Sheridan

✉ jsheridan@oxford.gov.uk

Templar Road, Old Marston, Wolvercote, Cutteslowe, Botley, South Hinksey, Bradlands, Headley House, Sherriffs Drive

Joyce Buckingham

✉ jbuckingham@oxford.gov.uk

Lye Valley, Horspath Rd, Boundary Brook, Donnington Bridge, Cowley, New Hinksey (part), George Moore Close

Paul Wilson

✉ pwilson@oxford.gov.uk

Rose Hill Estate, Abingdon, Didcot, Azors Court, Singletree

Clare Webb

✉ clwebb@oxford.gov.uk

Wood Farm, Quarry, Town Furze, Atkyns Court, Foresters Tower

Dawn Nash

✉ dnash@oxford.gov.uk

Barton East, Risinghurst, Headington, Gipsy Lane, North Place, Birch Court, Knights House.

Ian Preedy

✉ ipreedy@oxford.gov.uk

Blackbird Leys, Cowley Airfield, Windale House, Evenlode Tower

These details are correct at time of print. There may be some changes from time to time, so please check by entering your postcode at the address below or just call us:

🌐 www.oxford.gov.uk/homepage/210/tenancy_management_officers

☎ 01865 252372

TMO CHECKLIST

Here are some of the things your TMO can help you with

- 👍 Your Sign-up
- 👍 Your Welcome Visit
- 👍 Tenancy Update Visits
- 👍 Pet Permission
- 👍 Mutual Exchanges
- 👍 Transfers
- 👍 Health and Housing Assessments (unless a referral is made to Tenancy Sustainment on your behalf)
- 👍 Death and Succession
- 👍 Dog Nuisance
- 👍 Breaches of Tenancy Conditions

The Tenancy Management Team general office number is **01865 252372**

FOR EVERYTHING ELSE...

For help in these areas please contact the departments shown

Repairs	Oxford Direct Services
Rent Issues	Incomes & Collections
Building Adaptations	Oxford Direct Services
Anti-Social Behaviour (except dog issues)	Anti-Social Behaviour Team
Waste and Recycling	Street Scene

All council departments can be contacted through our Contact Centre on **01865 249811**



CALLING ALL LEASEHOLDERS

Christopher Benjamin
Home Ownership Officer

Alterations

We receive a number of requests for alterations from leaseholders, this typically includes replacing bathrooms or kitchens, electrical work, plumbing, or replacing flooring.

Please remember that it is a condition of your lease that you obtain consent under the lease before carrying out alterations. We aim to turn around requests within 10 working days, however if the request is complex or the request is for retrospective consent then it may take longer.

You may also need planning permission and building consent before starting work. We will normally make it a condition that you do this when permission is given under the lease.

Unauthorised alterations may cause problems when you try to sell your home. For example, if you have altered the internal walls, the layout of your home will no longer match the lease plan which forms an important part of your lease and this will delay your sale.

Please remember these important points:

- You are not allowed to make any structural alterations to your home.
- The window frames are our responsibility and you are not allowed to change them.



- You are not allowed to fix anything to the roof or external walls (for example satellite dishes and awnings) without our permission.

Further information:

🌐 www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20225/leaseholders/901/house_alterations_for_leaseholders

If in doubt, please contact me:

Christopher Benjamin, Home Ownership Officer:

☎ 01865 252936

✉ cbenjamin@oxford.gov.uk



SCAN ME



Oxford Rent

Guarantee

- 3 months rent in advance
- £1,000 thank you
- No fees
- Tenancy support

Landlords:

Scan the QR code to find out more

www.oxford.gov.uk



SCAN ME

Support for young carers

BFYC is a local Oxfordshire charity that works with young carers aged 8 - 17 across the South Oxfordshire and Vale area. BFYC is the only specialist organisation supporting young carers in Oxfordshire and receives no statutory funding.



We have been supporting young carers with the emotional and practical advice they need to manage the stresses and responsibilities of being a young carer, balancing their caring role with school and with the developmental needs of a child. Young carers often describe their lives as isolated, alone, with few or no friends. They are more likely to be bullied, suffer from depression, be at risk of self-harming, and vulnerable to substance abuse, grooming and sexual exploitation. Many fail to achieve academically, struggling to balance school work and their caring responsibilities. Respite, relaxation and social interaction are vital for young carers to improve their self-esteem and confidence.

How does Be Free Young Carers help?

We provide young carers with:

- Mental Health support - we offer 1 to 1 emotional support for our most vulnerable young carers. We've also developed a mindfulness movement and wellbeing programme to teach our young carers preventative measures and how to deal with their mental health concerns.
- Respite activities - time for themselves away from their caring roles, to make friends, and have fun, these are run in the school holidays. They consist of theme park visits, trips to the beach and other experiences that they would not otherwise get due to their caring role.
- Training - in key skills such as first aid, relaxation and cookery/nutrition to improve their self-confidence and ability to cope in their caring roles.
- 13+ Group – bespoke group for young carers aged 13 years and older. This group engages an age group that is usually hard to engage with and is user led.
- Youth Panel – group of proactive young carers that engage with BFYC to help form our policies, agenda and activities. Their feedback is crucial to developing BFYC as a charity.
- Young carers leisure card - discounted pay and play activities at local leisure centres.
- Quarterly newsletter from BFYC.



Further information:

🌐 www.befreyc.org.uk

☎ 01235 838 554

✉ yc@befreyc.org.uk

Opening hours: 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday

New affordable homes for Oxford

Over the last year, Oxford City Council, alongside partners, have delivered 187 affordable homes with the majority of these being at the most affordable tenure of Social Rent. We are proud to be exceeding our targets under the *Oxford Needs Homes* banner to create more much needed homes in the city.



Alice Hemming
Affordable Housing
Supply Officer

Of these homes, 64 were part of new developments by Oxford City Housing Ltd. Highlights in the last 6 months include the 9 new houses in Cumberlege Close, Marston and 7 houses in Edgcombe Road, Barton. Not only are these homes attractive, they also meet high environmental building standards and use solar panels. All of these homes were available at either social rent or affordable rent and are already being let to people on the housing waiting list.



Oxford City Council's Affordable Housing Supply Programme team was also able to purchase 12 properties off the market or via sell backs of Right to Buy properties, to turn back into social housing. To support people who have been rough sleeping, they have also acquired a further 12 single bedroom flats for move on accommodation.



We intend to keep up this progress and are on track to deliver a further 422 affordable homes over the coming year.

Shared ownership

Over the last year 25 Shared Ownership homes have been made available, with another 199 high quality 1, 2 and 3 bedroom flats and houses due to be finished over the next year. Shared ownership enables you to buy a 25%-75% share in your home at a level you can afford.

Find out more:

By searching "homes" at:

www.sharetobuy.com

Who are Oxford City Housing Ltd?

The council set up OCHL as a wholly-owned company in response to Oxford's need for homes. The main aims of the housing company are to increase the supply of new housing and council homes, and to provide a financial return to the council to help protect frontline services.

Find out more:

www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20010/housing/1449/oxford_needs_homes/3

OCHL
Oxford City Housing Limited



Escape to the country

Are you looking for a transfer to a new home or are your family on the housing list, but still waiting?

If you'd consider living outside but close to the city, our neighbouring councils may be able to help.

We've reached an agreement with Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire which means that people on our waiting list can now apply for social housing in their areas.

Over the next 9 years, more than 7,150 new homes will be set aside on new developments near Oxford or with good connection to the city. The first of these are expected this year in Kennington, Eynsham and Abingdon. Later developments will include new homes in Kidlington, Radley, Begbroke and south of Grenoble Road.

If you're interested in a new home in Cherwell, you'll be able to see and bid for properties through our choice based letting scheme. For South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West



Oxfordshire, you'll need to make an application to their waiting list and bid through their letting schemes.

⋮ **Further information:**

To find out more, please visit:

ⓧ www.oxford.gov.uk/dtc

Looking to sell your home?

Are you a leaseholder who bought your home through the Right to Buy Scheme? We'd be interested in hearing from you if you're thinking about selling.



Oxford City Council hold some funds to purchase a number of properties every year to turn back into affordable social rented homes. We are particularly interested in buying back leasehold properties with 3+ bedrooms and / or that are located in Evenlode, Foresters, Hockmore, Plowman or Windrush Towers.

If your home meets our requirements, the process for selling is very similar to selling on the open market.

There are many benefits to you as a seller in selling to Oxford City Council, including no estate agent fees, avoiding being in a chain and the purchase being on a "cash" basis so you do not have to wait for a mortgage approval from a potential purchaser.

⋮ **Further information:**

To find out more, please contact the Affordable Housing Supply Programme Team:

✉ affordablehousingsupply@oxford.gov.uk

Redevelopment at East Oxford Community Centre

The redevelopment of East Oxford Community Centre will provide more flexible space behind the familiar frontage on the Cowley Road, and will also create a new, highly energy efficient extension. A key aim of the redevelopment is to create a sustainable, cultural hub that is used by a broader range of the community, helping celebrate local diversity, heritage and cultural identity.

East Oxford Community Centre needs to be redeveloped because aging buildings on the site are no longer usable; other buildings in the redevelopment plan are towards the end of their life and in need of significant repair works. Part of the Oxfordshire Chinese Community & Advice Centre has been condemned and is no longer open to the public, and the old 'B Block' has already been demolished.

The project will see the Oxfordshire Chinese Community & Advice Centre (OCCAC) and the

Fusion Arts buildings demolished and replaced with a new three-storey building featuring purpose-built flexible community space and office space.

The Old School building will be refurbished to create a new kitchen, new toilets and more flexible community spaces.

The redevelopment plans follow from a public consultation which showed that the community wanted a fully redeveloped centre. This will be partly funded by housing development on the current Film Oxford (Catherine Street) site and East Oxford Games Hall (Collins Street) and in the current East Oxford Community Centre (Princes Street) grounds.



Struggling to park or store items? Rent an Oxford City Council garage!

We have garages available to let across Oxford. Areas include:

BLACKBIRD LEYS

COWLEY

HEADINGTON

JERICHO

MARSTON / NORTHWAY

NORTH OXFORD

ROSEHILL

SOUTHFIELD PARK

ST CLEMENTS

WOODFARM

FROM
ONLY
£16*
PER WEEK

For more information or to apply visit

www.oxford.gov.uk/rentgarage or call **01865 252372**

*Plus VAT for non-council tenants



GRANTS OF UP TO £5000

ROUND 2

9 May - 17 June

ROUND 3

12 September - 17 October

By James Baughan

Policy and Partnerships Officer

Grants available to bring local communities together

Oxford City Council is urging community-focused individuals and groups to apply for grants of up to £5000 in the latest round of its Community Impact Fund. This might be a group wanting to hold a special event or to run activities aimed at people with particular needs.

There are two remaining opportunities to apply for Small and Medium Grants this year: Round 2 opens 9 May - deadline 17 June; and Round 3 opens 12 September - deadline 17 October.

Bids must show how they support Council objectives: support thriving communities; pursue a zero carbon Oxford; enable an inclusive economy and deliver more, affordable housing (helping those at risk of homelessness and in unsuitable housing).

Further information:

More information is available at:

🌐 www.oxford.gov.uk/grants

For additional help and advice tenants can also email:

✉ grants@oxford.gov.uk



WHAT MAKES A COMMUNITY?

Ambassador
Article



Community life has changed a lot over the years what with people working longer hours or more than one job, it can be understandable when people say they do not even know their neighbours. Life and keeping heads above water for most these days can take over getting to know their neighbours beyond just a nod or a quick hello when passing each other on the street or when getting in and out of the car.

So, what makes a community these days? Do you know your neighbours and street residents?

Our understanding of the word 'community' can vary from place to place, but here is a brief idea of how we maintain a thriving little community in our part of the city.

We are a mix of Council housing, housing associations and then privately owned homes of all ages from young families through to older folk who have now potentially raised their families and

are enjoying a quieter life of sorts to students from overseas. We can say that 90% of us know each other by first name and will stop to chat, come visit for a cuppa and bit of cake or meet in a local pub.

A group of us also get together for a game of Bingo, the prizes are good and can range from biscuits and chocolates to fresh meats and much more. Additionally, we have a little raffle and prizes are donated sometimes as proceeds which are often given to a local cause after the event. The same happens with our street party, which we generally have each year apart from when we were all under lockdown of course during the Covid pandemic.

Our street parties started a few years back and a handful of us thought what fun it may be and given that we had also had new people move into the street, what a good way to engage with each other. There was plenty of food and an amusing quiz was held which brought out a lot of laughter.



Our local businesses were also very generous and donated things such as cases or bottles of drinks, chocolates and meals.

The same is happening this year and has been timed for the Jubilee lunch weekend. Fancy dress is optional with the theme of Queens and Kings or anything relating to royalty. A quiz has also been put together with the same theme for some of the questions along with the usual mix of top-notch questions and some more general knowledge type stuff.

So, what has made our community?

- A friendly face and sometimes a cheery 'Hi, how are you?'
- Looking out for each other without living in each other's pockets, being there through the good and not so good times that life throws at us sometimes.
- Recognising that we are all different and respecting each other, our beliefs and differences that makes up the rich tapestry of our area. During Ramadan, a welcome gift from our local Mosque of a piping hot Biryani and rice (or in the past chocolates) are given to help share the joys and good spirits that comes with events such as Ramadan or Christmas.



So, does this make you think how much you know of each other perhaps? Do you know your neighbours and local area? Do you engage in such events or promote things within your area?

We are a great bunch where we live and I am very glad to be able to say that we are always there for each other. I think during the pandemic it cemented that feeling of community even more as we ensured the older folk or less mobile were all looked out for by offering to do their shopping for them or whatever was needed.

Our lives are still busy within our own homes and families, but we also have that extended family feel in many ways knowing we have such a great community we live and share within.

Get in touch:

Please write in and share some stories about your community and what happens within it. I am sure many would be pleased to read, share and see what good communities we have thriving around the city.

✉ tenantinvolvement@oxford.gov.uk





2021 Star Survey and Fencing

In the 2021 tenants' satisfaction survey, many tenants reported that they were unhappy with the delays around fencing repairs and lack of communication about the length of time that work would take.

We are all aware that the cost of living is rising sharply and this also has an impact on the cost of materials and labour. We also already have a significant backlog of fencing repairs. This has proved particularly challenging to the Council and ODS who carry out the fencing work and the substantial budget that is available for fencing no longer meets the cost of the materials and work involved and we are at risk of significantly overspending.

The current specification for fencing repairs and replacement is to provide full height 1,800 mm larchlap panel fencing with concrete panels and with concrete gravel boards in rear gardens and 900 mm fences in front gardens.

We therefore would like your views on each of the following options.

- 1 To continue as we are with the same specification and continue to overspend. This will have an impact on our ability to carry out other repairs and fencing work will continue in a worsening backlog situation with repairs taking much longer.
- 2 To change the specification from the standard we provide now and move to chainlink fencing in both front and rear gardens, the same size as it is now. Where a boundary backs on to the public realm i.e. onto a footpath or estate green space, we would still continue to provide timber fencing. This would reduce our backlog and enable us to improve response times.
- 3 To change the specification from the standard we provide now and move to chainlink fencing in both front and rear gardens, reducing the height of the fence in the rear garden to 900 mm. Where a boundary backs on to the public realm i.e. onto a footpath or estate green space, we would still continue to provide timber fencing. This would reduce our backlog and enable us to improve response times.

- 3 To change the specification from the standard we provide now and move to chainlink fencing in both front and rear gardens, reducing the height of the fence in the rear garden to 900 mm. Where a boundary backs on to the public realm i.e. onto a footpath or estate green space, we would still continue to provide timber fencing. This would reduce our backlog and enable us to improve response times.

Please note that if we do change the specification of fencing works, we would continue to make exceptions in certain circumstances, for example to comply with our duty of care in regards to those who are experiencing anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse or health considerations

We are planning to move to a planned maintenance programme of fencing replacement which will reduce the need for as many day to day repairs being requested in the future.

Please let us have your views on each of the three options above by visiting:

🌐 www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RVK92D7



Would you like to understand how budgets/spending decisions are made?

We are offering a series of training sessions and an opportunity to join a group to help us shape our budget planning programme.

If you'd like to apply to join our Budget Review Group please visit:

🌐 www.oxford.gov.uk/tiopportunities



Simply SAFER



WHICH IS MOST
IMPORTANT TO
YOU?

- ✓ BETTER HOME SECURITY?
- ✓ IMPROVED COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND NEIGHBOURLINESS?
- ✓ HELPING THE POLICE TO REDUCE LOCAL CRIME?

HOWEVER YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPROVED, THERE'S ONE SIMPLE SOLUTION.

Starting up a Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) Scheme in your road is easy, and it's free.

Police statistics indicate that a NHW Scheme reduces the probability of your house suffering a burglary quite significantly. So join us!

But NHW is about a lot more than watching out to deter burglaries – important though that is.

We are about neighbourliness. We aim to help our communities to be safer, as well as our own homes. It's about being friendly, and caring, and watching out for the elderly and vulnerable too.

But perhaps most of all NHW is about helping the police keep us safe. They need the support of people who care. If that's you – join us now!

WWW.OURWATCH.ORG

www.tvnhwa.org.uk | info@tvnhwa.org.uk



THAMES VALLEY
POLICE

Shadowing the Anti-social Behaviour Team

We are delighted to welcome Lee Clayson and Abigail Orona as new members of the team. They're both looking forward to getting stuck in and meeting you all, but here they are in their own words...



Lee Clayson,
Tenancy Involvement Team

I am delighted to join the Tenancy Involvement Team, who have made me feel very welcome. I wanted to join to further my knowledge and interest around supporting our

residents. They have a right to best value from the Council and to understand what their rights and responsibilities are. They are also empowered to shape their own journey through our team being the bridge to that conversation.

In my previous role as Deputy Co-Ordinator of the East Oxford Hub I gained residents' trust and developed a network across under-represented groups. I look forward to bringing them with me and increasing the numbers of Ambassadors. My first project is to re-invigorate our recruitment and retention campaign.

The work we do ensures the tenants and leaseholders can get the services they deserve. I care about the tenants, residents and communities. I live and work within these areas and have settled with a family around here. I hope to meet as many of you as possible soon.

My first project is to reinvigorate our recruitment and retention campaign and I would like to invite you all to get in contact with me.

Get in touch with Lee...

✉ lclayson@oxford.gov.uk
☎ 01865 335432 or 07485 311333



Abigail Orona,
Tenant Involvement Apprentice

I have been a part of the Tenant Involvement Team for roughly nine months now and I have enjoyed everything from working with my colleagues and delving into new experiences or projects to overcoming tough obstacles and being more independent.

To further my learning and for my qualification's case study, I recently moved over to the Anti-Social Behaviour Investigations Team for three weeks to take a look at the effectiveness of their current processes and methods of communication.

During these three weeks I was able to do many new things such as attending court to get an insight in to a particular case and see how it is progressing, go on visits alongside members of Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Response Team to see first-hand how cases or complaints are dealt with and sit in on a patch meeting to gain an understanding of what a patch meeting is or consists of and how it benefits the different

teams involved and the cases mentioned.

Furthermore, I was also able to learn about modern slavery and licensing, which I knew very little about and how cases are distributed between different teams.

I will soon be writing a report to explore all of my findings and begin to come up with potential suggestions for improvement. I extend my thanks to the ASBIT team for their time and support.

My next challenge will be working alongside my colleagues in the Tenancy Management Team in July and handing back the design and planning of this magazine to my colleague Justine Nunn.

Cost of Living Advice

By Sara Scott
Tenant Ambassador

On the 17th of May there was a City Council cost of living advice morning at the town hall. There were some talks, followed by an opportunity to visit stalls, run by some local organisations and charities, followed by some focus groups on topics such as inclusion.

There were some useful information groups present that gave advice on how to reduce living costs and the support that is available locally. Examples of these were:



Oxford City Council are the first people any council tenant should go to if they have any repairs that need doing, also give advice on how to reduce heating and electricity costs. Additionally, they may be able to carry out work that could save you energy such as loft insulation.



Age UK have a useful helpline and community links in Oxfordshire. Although a lot of the events and courses are aimed at people who are 50+ and 60+, the Community Link Workers support people who are aged 18+.



Better Housing Better Health are an organisation that can help with home energy advice and financial support such as applying for grants and funding schemes like the Warm Home Discount.



The Community Larder will supply surplus food from wholesalers and supermarkets, access to discounts and information on healthy eating. You can sign up at www.sofea.uk.com. There is an individual and family membership fee of £3.50 or £7 per week. Good Food Oxfordshire fund emergency food services amongst other things related to food insecurity.



As tenants, you may qualify for help with work that is not the responsibility of the landlord; like general household repairs, putting up curtains, shelves and pictures and flat pack assembly through this scheme. The cost is charged at a subsidised rate for labour only, but if you are unable to shop, the handyperson may be able to purchase these for you and add the cost to your bill.



If you want to do a course apart from a second-degree or school fees, you may be able to apply for funding through the parish charities of St Mary Magdalen's Oxford. For more information, please email: admin@marymagdalen.org.uk or send a postal application to: c/o **15 Beaumont Street, Oxford, OX1 2NA.**



A new guide for tenants



By Brenda Walton
Tenant Ambassador

As Tenant Ambassadors we have been asked for our opinions on what should be included in the new Repair and Maintenance handbook. We want to ensure the content makes it clear who is responsible for what repairs and which maintenance can be done in the property.

With repairs, clear timelines need to be given as to how long the repair will take to be fixed. The handbook will also explain the role of ODS and more about its departments and services. We additionally hope to add tips on how to deal with common faults.

The recent Star Survey that was carried out showed that many tenants were unhappy with the service given in regards to repairs. The handbook will be just one part of ensuring that the repairs system improves.

I also spent time working with Oxford Direct Services finishing filming "How to...." Series of videos which enable us to communicate with tenants and leaseholders and allow our residents to undertake things for themselves, as independently as possible.

These videos will be uploaded onto the website shortly and are also part of the information you will find in your ODS handbook

If you would like an opportunity to complete another round of videos you would be helping out a wide range of people with various needs and languages to understand how to keep their homes well doing the smaller jobs.



Involvement is Evolving!



Wendy Hind
Interim Tenant
Involvement
Manager

Having now been Interim Manager for three months, I'd like to clarify the direction for the Tenant Involvement Team: Staff and Ambassadors.

We have a full team – congratulations to Lee Clayson who has just joined us as a Tenant Involvement Officer, Abigail Orona, our Apprentice, Justine Nunn – our Marketing and Communications Lead and Scott Wilson – our amazing assistant and admin support. Not forgetting Simon Warde who has been seconded over to a specific project. We are still getting used to working without him.

The formal review, scrutiny and oversight remit is fundamental to how Oxford City Council works with its customers. Our Ambassador led groups hold our Housing Services areas to account, make recommendations for change and work with council teams and departments to ensure recommendations and improvements are achieved. The Tenant Involvement Team advise, facilitate and check the direction, pace and timetables.

The Ambassadors train with the staff, learn about policies and procedures and then look at the comments received from the annual STAR satisfaction survey to recommend practical changes.

We currently have 3 groups; repairs and maintenance, anti-social behaviour and building safety. They are all at different stages in the process. New members are always welcomed.

Our ASB group and Staff have completed their training and are just about to start working on their initial recommendation report. Do ask if you'd like to chat with any of the Ambassadors.

New Homes and Design Group

This is a shout out for new Ambassadors – help us to shape how our planning and design policies and processes can be improved.

We will look at the planning process, the benefits and drawbacks of standard modular new build



homes, green spaces, inclusivity and accessibility in design guides and safety for communities, to name but a few things covered in the plans.

You need 3 things: - curiosity about how we as a council work, a desire to listen, share and learn and basic computer skills. The rest we teach, support and advocate with you.

You will truly be shaping the future direction of the council and the amount of hours you volunteer is your choice. We will have an initial meeting with you to help explain what we do, who we are and what this group will be working on.

Find out more...

If you are interested and would like to know more, please get in touch by emailing

✉ tenantinvolvement@oxford.gov.uk

and ask for the Job Description and Terms of Reference.

If you would like to apply

You can complete an application form by visiting:

✉ <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/tiopportunities>

How much energy could **you** save at home?



Switching supplier

Switching your supplier is usually a good way to save on your energy bills, most energy suppliers are currently charging around the same as each other due to high gas prices and the price cap, so there are no savings to be made through switching at the moment.

The roof represents 25% of a home's heat loss: by insulating with 270mm of loft insulation you can improve your home's heat retention and save on your energy bills.

It is now more efficient to only heat a hot water tank as and when it's needed. Also, the thermostat only needs to be set to 60°C to keep your water clean and safe, any higher and it is just wasting the energy.

Turning off lights when they're not needed is a simple way to save yourself **£20** a year.

A typical household could save **£70** per year by limiting showers to 4 minutes.

Replacing older incandescent and halogen bulbs with modern LEDs can save you **£55** per year.

Washing clothes at 30°C can save **£28** per year on your electricity bill, whilst avoiding using the tumble dryer whenever you can could save **£60** per year.

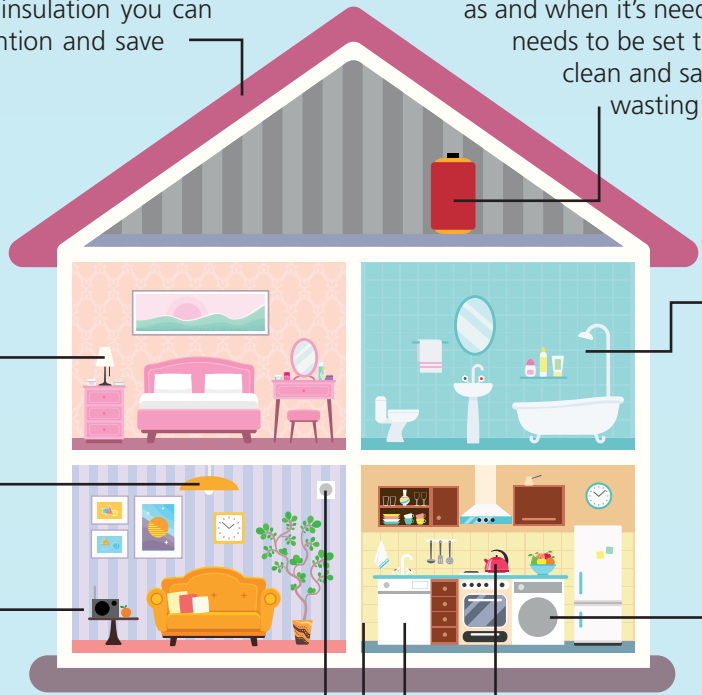
Switching off electronics instead of leaving them on standby saves an additional **£55** a year.

Avoid over-filling your kettle to save **£11** per year.

Turning your thermostat down by a single degree can save you **£105** per year.

Draught-proofing any gaps around doors, windows, skirting boards etc can save around **£45** per year.

Fill your dishwasher before running it to reduce water and energy wastage. If you reduce your dishwasher use by one run per week, you could save **£14**.



Get a free Energy Advice Visit

For more advice on getting the best from your home's heating, contact our energy advice team

✉ energyadvice@oxford.gov.uk

☎ **01865 252372**

For **leaseholders** seeking further support with energy efficiency and tariff advice you can access the Oxfordshire wide Better Housing Better Health

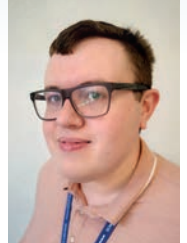
☎ **0800 107 0044**

✉ bhbh@nef.org.uk



Energy

JARGON BUSTER



Energy Advice Officer,
Sean Tirgu, helps decode some
of the confusing language...

Over the last 6 months the gas and electric market has undergone massive change and we've seen the cost of home energy supplies increase dramatically.

At the same time the competitiveness of the energy market has all but stopped with the best offerings from energy companies being set at Ofgem's Tariff Cap. As such, it's a confusing time to be making decisions about your home energy, which can have costly implications, so we hope to help explain some of the more confusing industry terms that are being used in the energy market by the energy companies and the media.

"Fixed Tariff"

Fixed Tariffs are form of energy deal where your supplier will commit to a specific price for each unit of gas and electric you use for a specific length of time, for example 1 year. What this doesn't do is fix your direct debit or your bill as those are based on the cost of the fuel multiplied by how much you've used.

One of the big problems with Fixed Tariffs currently, is that whilst in the past Fixed Tariffs were often the best deals you could get, often being much cheaper than a standard tariff that is no longer the case. The situation has been reversed and the Fixed Tariffs currently being offered by energy companies are significantly more expensive per unit of gas and electric than a standard tariff, so for now Standard Variable Tariffs offer better value for money.

"Standard Variable Tariffs"

Standard Variable or Standard Tariffs are the default tariffs, which you'll be on if you've never swapped suppliers, never agreed to a new fixed tariff, or your supplier went bust and you were automatically moved to another firm.

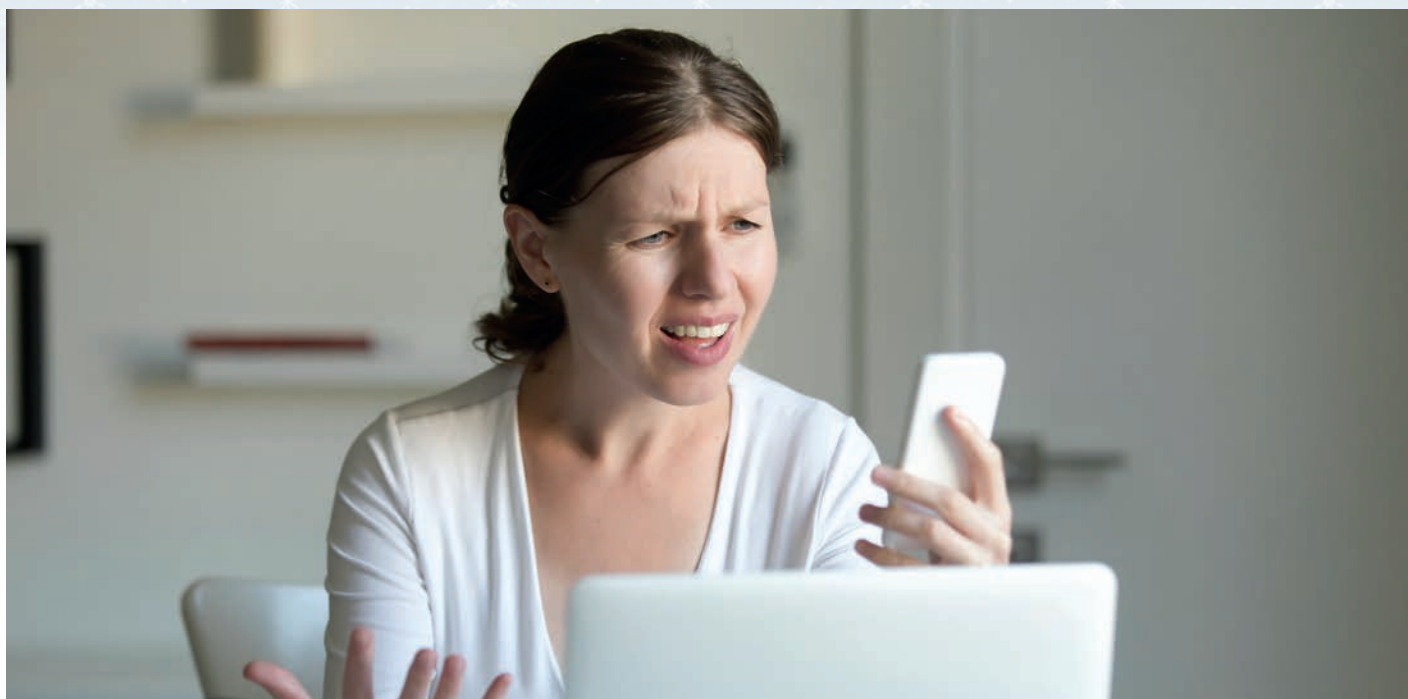
A Standard Tariff is the energy firm's basic pricing that you will be on unless you agree to something else, such as a fixed tariff. Up until late last year, Standard Tariffs were often considered poor value for money. However with the changes to energy prices in the last 6 months the Standard Tariffs now offer the best value as the Ofgem Tariff Cap limits how much energy firms can charge per unit on a Standard Tariff, whereas there are no limits to what they can charge for Fixed Tariffs.

"Ofgem Tariff Cap"

The Tariff Cap is the limit Ofgem places on the standard tariff, currently these are adjusted twice a year in April and October. The most recent Tariff Cap is the one you are likely to be most familiar with, when Ofgem raised the Tariff Cap by 54% in April 2022.

The Tariff Cap is based on the changes in the wholesale gas market which is where your energy company buys the gas that they sell onto you, or use in a power station to generate electricity.

matters



This places an upper limit on the unit price of gas, electric and daily standing charges that can be charged on a standard variable tariff.

A common misunderstanding with the Tariff Cap is that it is often presented as an increase in yearly cost. For example the April 2022 Tariff Cap increase was presented as a £693 increase from £1,277 to £1,971 per year. However this price is actually for a hypothetical household using an 'average' amount of energy. What the Tariff Cap actually represents is a new price for gas, electric and standing charges, and it will be these new prices and your usage which will produce your new cost rather than the hypothetical averages. As demonstrated by the Scottish Power price increases from the most recent tariff cap change shown in the table.

Scottish Power price increases with the April 2022 Tariff Cap increase:

	March	April
Gas		
Unit Price (p)	4.047	7.367
Daily Standing Charge (p)	26.11	27.22
Electric		
Unit Price (p)	20.592	27.865
Daily Standing Charge (p)	25.08	48.12

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☎ 0800 107 0044

✉ bhbh@nef.org.uk



ODS Electrical Team surpasses safety testing targets

The ODS Electrical Team have done some outstanding work in the last few months for tenants in Oxford. In spite of Covid-related access issues, the Electrical Team surpassed its 2021/2022 safety testing target of 1200 electrical tests by 503, totalling 1703 tests, helping to create safer homes for tenants.

The Electrical Team has also been repairing and improving electrical fixtures at local places. Backed by government funding to the public sector to improve energy efficiency, the team recently modernised the lighting at Oxford Ice Rink. Working out of hours to minimise disruption to rink users, the team replaced the old lights for new discrete and more efficient LEDs. The upgrade will not only reduce the carbon footprint at the centre, it will also improve aesthetics and help cut costs.

To report a repair contact us on: **01865 249811**

1,703 TESTS
OVER TARGET BY 503 TESTS



Apprenticeship Scheme

ODS are encouraging local talent from diverse backgrounds to join their business and find a career with them through their apprenticeship scheme.

Their scheme is now open for applications, and they have a wide range of apprenticeship roles across the business. This includes electricians to plumbers, accountants to ICT technicians and vehicle mechanics to grounds maintenance and lots more.

They currently have a range of Level 2, 3 and 4 apprenticeships, which all lead to nationally recognised qualifications.

Interested?

To find out more, and to apply, visit:

🌐 www.odsgroup.co.uk/apprenticeships

Repairs and Maintenance Appointment Times

Can we please remind tenants that current booking slots for inspections and repairs are as follows:

Morning Appointments:
8.00am – 12.30pm

Afternoon Appointments:
12.30pm – 5.00pm

Non School-run Appointments:
9.30am – 2.30pm

BIG SUMMER QUIZ

- 1 The TV Series Downton Abbey is set in which County?
- 2 If you were born between December 22nd and January 19th what star sign would you be?
- 3 Which American singer was known as 'The Queen of Soul'?
- 4 Titan is a moon of which planet?
- 5 What country was Prince Phillip born in?
- 6 What did the Queen work as while enlisted in the military during WW2?
- 7 What breed of dog is the Queen famously a fan of?
- 8 What is the name of the the Queens' Norfolk residence?
- 9 How old was the Queen when she first met Prince Phillip?
- 10 'Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn' is an iconic line from which classic film?
- 11 Which English Sir has had Number 1 hits in the 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s?
- 12 Reginald Kenneth Dwight is better known by what name?
- 13 The Los Angeles Lakers & New York Knicks play which sport?
- 14 Where is the next Olympic Games set to take place?
- 15 What element is derived by the chemical symbol SN in the periodic table?
- 16 In what US state is the city of Nashville?
- 17 What is the currency of Denmark?
- 18 What was the old name for a Snickers bar before it changed in 1990?
- 19 What is the smallest planet in the solar system?
- 20 What was the Turkish city of Istanbul called before 1930?
- 21 What country has the longest coastline in the world?
- 22 What is the oldest recorded town in the UK?
- 23 How many states are there in Australia?
- 24 Which London underground is represented as a green on the tube map?
- 25 How many in a Bakers' dozen?
- 26 Name the 1975 Steven Spielberg film about a shark?
- 27 H₂O is the chemical formula for what?
- 28 What colour is the Bullseye on a standard dartboard?
- 29 What side of a ship is starboard?

FOR THE BIG PRIZE...

Answer this question...

What is the capital of New Zealand?



Yorkshire, Capricorn, Aretha Franklin, Saturn, Greece, Mechanic, Corgi, Sandringham, 13, Gone With The Wind, Sir Cliff Richard, Elton John, Basketball, Paris, Tin, Tennessee, Krone, Marathon, Mercury, Constantinople, Canada, Colchester, 6, The District Line, 13, Jaws, Water, Red, Right



Has your
income
reduced?

Too many
debts
to handle?

Have your
circumstances
changed?

Lost your
job or
off work
sick?

Falling behind with your rent?

Our Incomes Team will be able to give you free and confidential advice to help you get back on track with your rent payments.

Don't risk losing your home, talk to us today.

Call us on 01865 252880

RentFirst: Talk to us today

