

SOUTH LAKES HOUSING NEWS

AUGUST 2008



Tenants' Committee Newsletter

SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS GETTING A GOOD SERVICE – With More To Come

SLH received high recognition for its continued improvement according to an independent report published by the Audit Commission in June. Awarding a 2 stars with excellent prospects of improvement rating, Paul Clarke, Lead Inspector with the Audit Commission said:

“South Lakes Housing is delivering good quality housing management services, whilst carrying out large scale improvements to its homes. Its governing body, managers and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to service improvement and customers can have confidence that services will continue to improve”.

The inspectors found SLH involves customers well in decision making, has a strong emphasis on value for money and works well with the Council to deliver its objectives.

Peter Thomas, Chief Executive of SLH commented “Our tenants and other service users want a service which is customer friendly and cost effective and it's great to hear that the Audit Commission has assessed that this is exactly what they get.

But what is especially important for us is that our customers can have confidence that their services will continue to get better”.

The personal touch

South Lakes Housing's success is not just about implementing successful multi-million pound projects like the Decent Homes improvement scheme, it is about the service delivered every day of the week to tenants and prospective tenants of council homes. We recently called in to see Mrs Mary Housley of 1 Greengate Lane, who is transferring from the 3 bed family home that she has occupied for over 30 years to a comfortable sheltered flat at the much sought after Edgcombe Court in Kendal's town centre. Mrs Housley's home will be freed up for a family on the waiting list with a need for an affordable 3 bedroomed home. South Lakes Housing has a supportive team who will look after Mrs Housley's move and get the newly vacated home ready for its new occupant, all in a matter of a few weeks.

Mrs Housley, 78, said, I'm really looking forward to getting settled into my new flat. The Housing Officers were ever so helpful, and showed me round - it is lovely'.



Celebrating South Lakes Housing's Two Star success are l to r: Peter Thomas, Chief Executive, Lynne Huxley, Senior Housing Officer, Joan Chadwick, Tenant Board Director, Lucy Reynolds, Strategy Officer, Kim Ball, Scheme Manager and Simon Leder, Handyman, and seated, Mary Housley.

Florence is 100 years old – Congratulations! Little Moss resident reaches 100!

Florence Fleet, who lives at Little Moss, Coniston, celebrated her 100th birthday on 8 June 2008.

Mrs Fleet was born in Buxton, Derbyshire in 1908 and later moved to Barrow with her parents. Her father was a local tailor.

At the start of the World War II she moved to Torver and then eventually on to Coniston. She has lived at her current home for almost 40 years.

Florence was widowed early in life but her daughter Margaret and son-in-law Graham have three sons and she is now also a very proud great-grandma to four children.

Mrs Fleet enjoys crosswords and puzzles and also loves to read. A keen birdwatcher she loves nothing more than feeding the birds.

Mrs Fleet is pictured with a wonderful card made by the children from Coniston Primary School, held by Housing Officer Pam Wilson.

Many residents from Coniston came to join in with the celebrations and with perfect weather a party was held on the green outside her home. Even her daughter's six Burmese cats visited for the occasion!



YOUNGER TENANTS NEEDED

Tenants' Committee is looking for new members and younger tenants and people from ethnic minorities are currently under-represented. **Come on, give it a try** – you can come along to a Committee to see what it's like, or just give Margaret Pritchard, our current Chairman a call to find out more. Margaret's number is 01539 717717. If you can't commit to Tenants' Committee but would like to help in some other way, or join TIC Club, call the Tenant Participation team on 01539 717717.

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GOT A QUESTION FOR THE BOARD?

South Lakes Housing's Board has a special item on every agenda for 'Residents' Questions'. Just call Sue Boulton on 01539 717717 if you have a poser for the Board.

DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO MIGHT NEED THIS NEWSLETTER ON TAPE?

★★★ CONTACT JOHN STIRLING ON 01539 717717 ★★★



ART IN MOTION

Pictured, bottom, are members of Swarthmoor Youth Group, receiving a cheque for £1000 from the Community Fund Group, this was to help the youngsters to turn a blank wall into a work of art, (with the help of Swarthmoor Art Club) at the Swarthmoor Football Club overlooking the play park area. The children lay down on cardboard, drew around each other, the silhouettes were cut out, transferred to the wall and painted on, the Brownies also drew and painted flowers on the mural.

The Community Fund Group has money to give to the community, so if you have any ideas for improvements in your little area, please contact Bev Townley at SLH for an application form.
M. Akrigg, Tenants' Committee



The completed mural at Swarthmoor



Swarthmoor residents receiving their cheque

How we're doing April – June 2008

Anti-Social Behaviour

New cases reported	38
Cases resolved and closed	22
Cases ongoing	47

Positive Action Against Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Referred to Mediation	2
Referred to Multi Agency ASB Group	1
Acceptable Behaviour Contracts Signed	2
ASB Injunctions	1
Demoted Tenancies	0
Anti Social Behaviour Orders	0
Notice of Seeking Possession Served	1
Evicted	0

Injunction secured against tenant in Grange

On Tuesday 24th June 2008, South Lakes Housing in partnership with local residents was successful in securing an Anti Social Behaviour Injunction (ASBI) with the power of arrest against a troublemaker from Grange over Sands. South Lakes Housing submitted evidence to Barrow County Court showing that the tenant from Grange, had acted in a threatening and abusive manner towards his neighbours.

This is the first injunction secured against a tenant in the Grange area by South Lakes Housing.

Peter Thomas, Chief Executive, South Lakes Housing said: "This kind of threatening and abusive behaviour will not be tolerated, we will take strong action against this unacceptable behaviour. Everyone deserves the right to be able to live in their homes without fear of abuse and at South Lakes Housing we will work with our partners to ensure that this happens."

Reporting Anti Social Behaviour

You can contact us in a number of ways:

- In person
- By telephone
- By email
- By letter
- Anonymously

South Lakes Housing
Little Aynam, Little Aynam House
Kendal, Cumbria LA9 7AH

Tel 0845 057 0080 or 01539 717717
or email us at: info@southlakeshousing.co.uk

South Lakes Housing
Town Hall, Queen Street
Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 7AR

Tel: 01229 584424

SITES SAFE FOR KIDS

Schools get talks from Bramall

Bramall Construction, our construction partners, visited Windermere C of E School during Child Safety Week to warn youngsters about the hazards of building sites. Bramall are currently carrying out improvement works to homes around the Lakes area.

The presentation was aimed at seven to eleven year-olds and involved the children watching a video called "Game Over" which follows three children on a building site and the dangers that they encounter. The children were encouraged

to try on hard hats and high visibility clothing and after the video they took part in an art competition to draw a picture of an unsafe site. Goodie bags filled with hard hats, pencils, sharpeners, rulers and high visibility vests were given as prizes.

The work carried out by Child Safety Week, which ran from 23 to 29 June, helps people understand the risks building sites pose to children and how construction companies can make simple changes to help reduce the number of accidents.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Decent Homes money runs out next year

Regular readers of South Lakes Housing News will have followed the progress of the setting up of the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), which tenants voted for in 2004. The ALMO had to be set up so that we could get £21million in extra funding, to do a major home improvements programme, Decent Homes. The last of the money will be spent in 2009/10, mainly on estate improvements and going back to homes missed earlier on.

What happens once the money has run out? Will the rent money be enough to keep your homes up to a decent standard? Should South Lakes Housing continue to manage the homes? All these questions and many more will have to be asked over the next 12 months as SLDC carries out the 'future options' for housing. Tenants' Committee is already receiving regular updates on how things are going, so watch this space.

YOUR LAST CHANCE TO GET MONEY FOR YOUR AREA!

Tell us what you'd like to see in your neighbourhood

South Lakes Housing is still looking for YOUR ideas about how we can improve your village, street, or estate. Complete and return the form below and tell us your idea - you could get up to £1000 worth of improvements!

Estate Improvement Application Form

- Your name and contact details including telephone number and email. (I agree to your using my email address)
- What would you like South Lakes Housing Grant Approval Group to fund?
- Tell us how this will improve your area?

The process for spending Estate Improvement Grants was reviewed in 2007/08 to make it clearer, more transparent and open to all. Any group of Council tenants and leaseholders is eligible to apply.

The Grant Approval Group, made up of tenants and Board members and South Lakes Housing staff, will decide which applications will be funded.

Assessment Criteria

Each application will be considered solely on its merits, however the following factors will be taken into account. The suggestions for improvement should, in some way:

- Enhance the neighbourhood and environment
- Enhance the safety and well-being of the community
- Address a need in your community
- Benefit people in your community
- Have a level of support in your community
- Have considered the needs and access requirements of all members of the community
- Not entail significant on-going maintenance costs
- Include young people, older people and other local people. It could cover sport, a better environment, getting people together, learning etc
- Improve access to community activities and/or facilities

Please return this form to Suzy Duffy in the Freepost envelope provided.

LEASEHOLDER NEWS

LEASE LATEST

What do you think?

We told you in the March edition of South Lakes Housing news that your landlord, SLDC, has introduced a new lease for people exercising the right to buy. The Audit Commission have now looked at this new lease as part of the recent Inspection and have suggested that changes need to be made to incorporate clauses which will determine how anti social behaviour (ASB) is dealt with.

The Audit Commission also said that SLDC should contact all existing leaseholders to discuss the possibility of

varying existing leases to match the new ones.

The new lease (for people becoming leaseholders after January 2008) is very clear and contains clauses and covenants relating to matters such as gas safety.

If you have any comments or are interested in varying your existing lease to bring it into line with the new one, contact Matthew Neal, SLDC Legal Services on 01539 733333.

DID YOU KNOW???

Leasehold Induction Pack

All new applicants to buy their flat or maisonette under the right to buy will receive an induction pack containing information about:

- Insurance
- Service charges
- Other leaseholder concerns
- Subletting
- Gas servicing

The pack will be provided in response to the initial enquiry and is designed to help tenants to make an informed decision about whether becoming a leaseholder is right for them. At the same time an interview with their Housing Officer will be offered in case there are any issues that the tenant needs further help with.

Repairs go electronic

Tradesmen get mobile computers

South Lakes Housing is introducing a revolutionary new mobile computer to tradestaff such as electricians and plumbers. The neat units, called PDAs (personal digital assistant) look a bit like mobile phones, but have very special qualities. The phones are linked to a computer programme back at base, which emails work orders straight through to the tradesmen. This means they do not have to go back to base to get the information they need for their next job. When the tradesman turns the PDA on at home in the morning, the computer sends details of their first job, including whether the tenant has any special requirements. The clever computer programme, called 'Optitime', tracks where the tradesmen are and can redirect an urgent order to the nearest operative, saving time and travelling. The clever PDAs can also take

photos, receive emails, phone calls and text messages.

In the future, the PDAs will be introduced throughout the area, and tenants will be able to sign off their job as completed satisfactorily there and then. The computer will also eventually be able to remind you about your repair appointment, and let you know the tradesman is on their way from their last job. Tenants will still report repairs in the normal way, by phone, email, text message, website, or in person.

All in all the PDAs are proving a great success because they:

- reduce travelling time between jobs
- provide better flexibility for tenants booking appointments
- help with stock control
- enable tradestaff to start work from home instead of travelling into a base



Pictured is Simon Athersmith and Nick Shepherd with their new PDAs

Changes to Billing

At the moment leaseholders are billed for their proportion of the **ACTUAL** known costs of any external repairs that have been carried out to their block, 6 monthly in arrears.

However, both the old and the new lease provide for the bills to be issued on 1st of April of each year for the following 12 months. (in advance)

The only way that we can do this is to estimate the charge for the following 12 months based on the costs for the previous 12 months. As this 'forward' estimate may differ from the actual costs, we would then either issue a further bill for the shortfall or a refund.

Any final bill will be accompanied by a statement of costs on a job by job basis. This is similar to the breakdown that already appears on your service charge bill.

As you will have very recently received your invoice for service charges due for the period ending 31 March 2008 we do not propose to send the estimated bill for 2008/09 until September 2008. As always the bill will be payable in instalments.

This change has been agreed by the Leasehold Service improvement Group (LESIG). If you have any comments or observations please contact Pauline Keeley on 0845 057 0080 or email Pauline on p.keeley@southlakeshousing.co.uk

Don't forget ...

The Leasehold Service Improvement Group (formerly the Leasehold Club) meets quarterly. The Group makes decisions on service provision, for example the billing changes and setting the administration charge that forms part of your service charge bill. If you would like to receive the minutes or find out more about joining the Group please contact Suzy Duffy on 01539 717717

Lettings standard puts tenants in the picture

New tenants know what they are getting

The new pictorial lettings standard proposed by tenants on the Repairs Service Improvement Group (SIG) has been printed and is now being used by new tenants to understand what to expect in their new home. The new standard also has a version which is specially designed to be easily viewed by people who have difficulties with their eyesight; South Lakes Society for the Blind (SLSB) have made sure the standard is easy to use.



Pictured above is tenant Joan Chadwick from the Repairs SIG with the new standard.

WHAT! ANOTHER GOVERNMENT SURVEY?

STATUS is back

The STATUS survey is the way that the Government checks that South Lakes Housing is doing a good job. The survey has to be finished by November, so it won't be too long before around half of all tenants get that all important envelope. This year's survey doesn't include sheltered housing tenants or leaseholders, who will be asked to do their own survey.

Why is it important? The important thing is that once the results are in, South Lakes Housing use them to improve things. So, please do fill in the survey; you never know, you might win one of the cash prizes for everyone who returns their form. Thanks very much!



NEW! Tenant Participation Strategy

What is a strategy? It is really just a plan! The newly published Tenant Participation Strategy shows what South Lakes Housing is planning to put in place to achieve the aims listed in the District-wide Tenant Participation Agreement. What are the aims? Well, we want to make sure all our decisions are made in partnership with you, our tenants and leaseholders. Tenants' Committee have worked hard to make sure the Strategy does what it says, which is to:

- Set out how our priorities, such as achieving equality, are to be approached
- Summarise resources for participation
- Explain how things work
- Say how Agreements are to be evaluated and reviewed

If you are interested in having a look at our Strategy, give the Tenant Participation Team a call on 01539 717717 to get your copy or you can view it on our website at www.southlakeshousing.co.uk

- Describe how we will achieve our objectives

TENANT BOARD MEMBERS

If you are interested in finding out more about being a Board Member contact the Tenant Participation Team or Sue Boulton on 01539 717717.

Lakes Area Surgeries

Just a note to remind those living in the Lakes area who struggle to get to our head office in Kendal, that a housing surgery operates at Langstone House, Broad Street, Windermere every 1st and 3rd Tuesday and at Ambleside Library every 2nd Tuesday. Each surgery runs from 10.30am til 12.30pm. An appointment is necessary to see an officer

We offer our tenants and leaseholders, as well as the general public, the opportunity to see an officer from South Lakes Housing to discuss any housing matters. Topics can include waiting list enquiries rents and rent arrears queries, breach of tenancy conditions including anti-social behaviour, estate issues and so on. You can also report any sort of harassment at the surgeries. For an appointment please telephone **0845 057 0080** or e-mail f.harrison@southlakeshousing.co.uk

TOP OF THE POPS

Audit Commission praises Tenant Participation

The Inspectors were very pleased with the quality of our Compact (agreement) and said 'there is a wide range of options for customer participation' and '...customers are kept informed about how their suggestions have improved services.'

Value for money

We have saved £11,000 on the electricity supply to our offices by switching suppliers



COME ON YOU GARDENERS!

Enter our gardening competition

- ☘ best hanging basket
- ☘ most improved garden
- ☘ young gardener

In the last issue of South Lakes Housing News we told you about our gardening competition. A lot of tenants have already said they would like to enter. It's not too late for you to enter, but hurry, judging is going to start in the middle of August. Phone Simon Hughes on 01229 584424 for an entry form today!

SOUTH LAKES HOUSING BOARD NEWS

Key issues for the Board April to July 2008

The Board has agreed to set up a working group of tenants, staff and board directors to look at future office accommodation options for South Lakes Housing. Look out for further news on this important topic, and the customer access survey in your newsletter envelope, to be returned in the pre-paid envelope to us by the 20th August.

Tenants decide future of Void Incentive Scheme Service Improvement Group steps up a gear

Tenants on the Repairs SIG had a lot to talk about at their meeting in June. Tenants had to:

- Decide how homes not improved through Decent Homes first time around are to be included in the final year's works programme
- Make sure tenants' priorities had been included in the repairs and maintenance improvements policy
- Decide how to target the Void Incentive Scheme, which pays a £50 bonus to tenants who leave their homes in good condition

Tom Lynch, Repairs Operations Manager, who supports the SIG, commented, 'the tenants always have some really good suggestions about how we can improve things'.

If you would like to be on this or any other Service Improvement Group, contact the tenant participation team on 01539 717717.



Brian Lloyd from Ulverston recently retired from Tenants' Committee after nearly a decade of service. Pictured above is Brian, from Lund Terrace, with Chairman of Tenants' Committee Margaret Pritchard.

TERRY'S TIP

Terry O'Malley is a Repairs Supervisor for South Lakes Housing and has lots of tips to help you sort out problems in your home. 'Problems of the repairs kind!' exclaims Terry.

'Your electricity supply may have a trip switch, which will turn off the electricity if you have an appliance which is dangerous. If your electricity fails, you can try to find out what is causing it by unplugging your appliances, resetting the trip switch, then plugging in and turning on your appliances one by one. When you find the appliance that is causing your supply to fail by tripping the switch, you should no longer use the appliance.'



You can call Terry if you have any queries about this on 0845 057 0080.

DID YOU KNOW?

You do need permission if you want to put up a satellite dish!

This is to make sure the fitting of the dish doesn't damage the fabric of your home, or create an eyesore, especially on blocks of flats.

If you want to find out more we will be pleased to advise you - call us on 0845 057 0080.



HOW TO CONTACT US

24 Hour repairs hotline number 0845 057 0080
You can text us your repairs on 0792059 3487
All day-to-day repairs & Estate Improvements: 0845 057 0080

TENANCY ENFORCEMENT, NEIGHBOUR NUISANCE, HOUSING ADVICE AND ALLOCATIONS:

Lynne Huxley	01539 717718
Fiona Harrison (part time)	01539 717704
Bev Townley (part time)	01539 717720
Simon Hughes	01229 584424

RENT COLLECTION, ARREARS RECOVERY, TENANCY ENFORCEMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD NUISANCE:

Lindsay Moorhouse (part time)	01539 717708
Vince Carter (part time)	01539 717708
Stephen Roe	01539 717710
Pam Wilson	01539 717711
Louise North	01539 717719
Katrina Bell	01229 584424

SHELTERED HOUSING, CARELINE AND SUPPORTED HOUSING

Gordon Aitken	01539 717725
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TENANT AND RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT AND TRAINING

Suzy Duffy	01539 717714
John Stirling	01539 717715

Our Website: www.southlakeshousing.co.uk
 Email: info@southlakeshousing.co.uk

DECENT HOMES

Bramall Construction	0845 389 0690
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YOU SAID – WE DID

- You said:** 'When the Roadshow visits, tell tenants what times it will be there'
We did: 'Arrange to publicise the Roadshow times locally'
You said: 'Serve food and refreshments at Area Discussion Groups to attract tenants and promote a relaxed atmosphere'
We did: Arrange for food and refreshments to be served at Area Discussion Groups