

WINTER 2017

# Word *on the street*

NEWS & INFO FOR CO-OP HOMES' CUSTOMERS

# co-op

H O M E S





## Welcome to your customer newsletter

In this edition we'll be telling you what's happening in the team, saying a fond farewell to one of the founder members of Co-op Homes, and presenting our plans for the future.

We'll also be highlighting the changes that form part of our digital enhancement programme: designed to help you access our services at any time and place on any device.

In this mailing, you'll also find a personalised letter. It gives you your unique customer number which you need to access My Tenancy online. You'll also find your Tenant X-Ref number. This links to your rent account: please make a note of this and make sure it's quoted on all future rent payments and references.

We won't be sending out paper rent statements any more as often the information is out of date by the time you receive it. We'd also like to do our bit to minimise waste and save the planet. But don't forget your rent statements are always available 24 hours a day, seven days a week through MyTenancy at [www.coophomes.coop](http://www.coophomes.coop).

We hope you find this newsletter interesting. Some of the content has been suggested by members of our Customer Focus Group, made up of residents and co-op representatives who comment, monitor and suggest improvements to our services for the benefit of all. We're really grateful for their input. If you'd like to get involved with us at Co-op Homes, please email [customer.services@coophomes.coop](mailto:customer.services@coophomes.coop).

Happy Christmas, Neil Tryner



## Say hello and welcome to

### Jay-Dee Albert

Jay-Dee joined us in September this year as a Governance Assistant. Her focus is on administration for our client co-ops Management Committee meetings. Jay-Dee also manages our complaints process.



### Katharine Lewis

Katharine joined us earlier in the year as a temp, and loved it so much she applied for a permanent job! Katharine splits her time between repairs, finance, general enquiries as well as managing our approved contractors list. Katharine is the named contact for housing management enquiries from Chippenham, Dawley and Old Isleworth Housing co-ops.



### Laura Johnson

Laura is an apprentice who joined us through the Way to Work Scheme. Laura is keen to learn about housing and business administration. She joined us in the summer and is already accomplished in lots of new skills. Laura is working across our Finance, Operations and Repairs team.



### Amanda Corp

Amanda is a Senior Community Housing Officer with special responsibility for housing management at Deptford Housing Co-op. She joined us in August this year and is based at the Deptford office three days a week. She works the rest of the week at our head office in Teddington. Amanda would like to take this opportunity to remind Deptford residents that repairs should be reported to head office via email to [CHSRepairs@coophomes.coop](mailto:CHSRepairs@coophomes.coop); through the website at [www.coophomes.coop](http://www.coophomes.coop); or by texting 'REPAIR' to **07398 377388**. If none of these options are suitable, you can still phone on **020 3166 2608**. Please do not report repairs to staff at the office at Rochdale Way.

## And we say a fond thank you and farewell to Pete Dodkins, Governance Adviser

Pete retired at the end of November. We will all miss his humour, his love of cricket and QPR and his stories about how Co-op Homes was founded. Pete was a key player in the creation of the company which was set up at the request of Middlesex Housing Co-operative to provide housing and management services to small co-ops back in 1986 and has worked tirelessly advocating the role of co-ops across the sector ever since, both professionally and in his own time. Pete was the first Chair of Co-op Homes and the Mayor of Hounslow from 1997-1998. He is a current trustee of a west London charity. We're sure we haven't seen the last of Pete at Co-op Homes, but for now he passes over the mantle of Governance Adviser to Lucy Warwick. We're sure many of our current and past customers join us in thanking him for all the work he has done to get Co-op Homes where it is today.



## Text to connect

Earlier this year we sent you a green card to let you know about our new texting service – and we've included another with this mailing. Our texting service has been a really popular addition to our services. The card gives you a handy wallet-sized reminder of our email and website addresses and the phone number you can text to:

- Report a repair
- Check your rent balance
- Request a call back from your housing officer
- Report a complaint

Sonia, one of our residents from Reading is our top texter this month. Sonia told us the texting service is perfect for her because it suits her lifestyle and is so convenient. She doesn't have to wait to call in and ask for information about her rent account. She just texts "BAL" to **07398 377388** whenever she wants to check her rent balance, 24/7. She loves the way it's quick to access and gets an instant automatic reply.

Paul from Isleworth has also given us some positive feedback, saying he gets a confirmation about a repair request straightaway as well as a text confirmation. He added that he loves doing business with us interactively using his mobile phone. Save **07398 377388** in your mobile as 'Co-op Homes' so you know the messages are from us.



## Has your mobile number changed?

If you've changed your mobile number in the last few months, let us know what it is so we can keep your contact details up to date and keep you posted about our services.



## Do you have the X-Ref factor?

We've included a letter with this mailing which gives your unique **'TENANT X-REF'** number. This number is unique to the rent account for your property and should be quoted to us in all financial transactions - whether you pay by online banking, through the allpay website, by cheque or by credit or debit card. It's important you quote this number as your reference as otherwise your payment might not end up in the correct rent account. In the New Year you will see your X-Ref number on your rent statements, which you can access through MyTenancy at [www.coophomes.coop](http://www.coophomes.coop).

# A web of opportunity

Earlier this year we launched our new-look website, after getting your feedback about wanting quicker access to the pages that were most important to you. If you haven't seen it yet, visit [www.coophomes.coop](http://www.coophomes.coop). We'd love to know what you think: please share your comments on the online form that will flash across the banner on the home page. We'll take everyone's comments on board – good and bad – and use them to shape what we do.

## My Tenancy – your account, online

Current users of My Tenancy tell us how great it is to have free, convenient access to their account information and our services without leaving the comfort of their own home or picking up the phone. All you need is internet access and to go through a simple registration process. You can:

- Pay your rent online with allpay
- View your rent statement and payment history
- See a breakdown of your rent charges
- See your repair order history
- Report a repair online
- View the personal information we have about you
- View the details we have of your household occupancy

You'll need to register first - visit [www.coophomes.com](http://www.coophomes.com) to sign up. You'll need your unique customer number, which you'll find in the letter we've included with this newsletter.

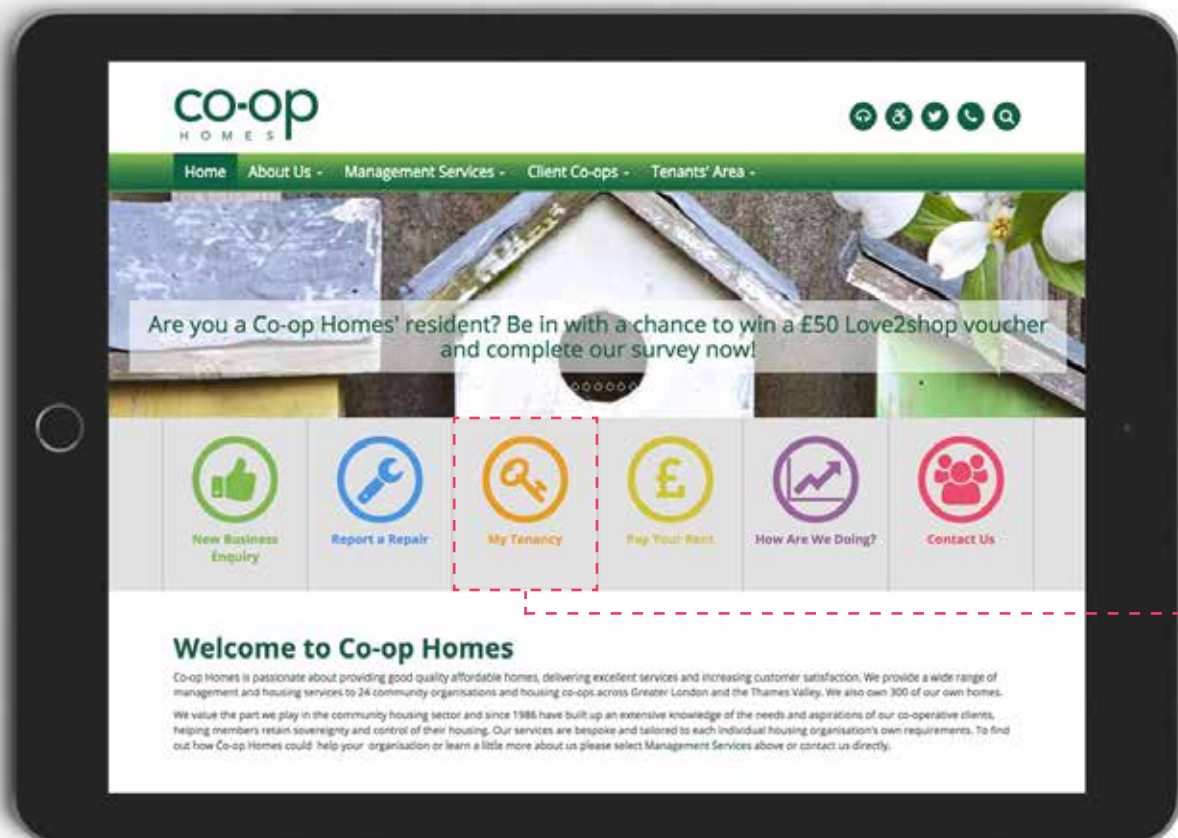


My Tenancy

### My Tenancy Registration

On the front page of our website you'll see this tab. Click on it and you'll be redirected to the My Tenancy log-in and registration page. Once you've registered you'll have secure access to lots of useful information.

There will be some security changes to the sign-in process in the New Year but in the meantime, it's service as usual!



## Reduce, reuse and recycle

Did you know, some supermarkets, including M&S and Sainsbury's, will have Christmas card recycling bins at their stores this year? In partnership with the Woodland Trust, for every 1,000 cards collected, M&S will plant a tree. Similar schemes are in place across south east England. Your local authority also collects cards (without glitter) in your paper and card recycling waste bags and bins.



## Have a neighbourly Christmas

For some people Christmas is a time for lots of visitors – which might mean some extra noise and disturbance for a while. As always we're asking people to be tolerant of other people's lifestyles and understand that a jolly time for one might feel like a nightmare to a neighbour who is unwell, alone and just wants peace and quiet. So, if you plan to have a get together with your family and friends, it would be considerate



to let your neighbours know in advance, or even invite them along! And remember: if noise is bothering you, normally if you speak face-to-face to the person causing the issue, the problem will be resolved - they may not be aware they're causing a problem.

## Christmas opening hours

Friday 22nd December	Open 9am-12pm
Monday 25th December	Closed
Tuesday 26th December	Closed
Wednesday 27th December	Closed
Thursday 28th December	Closed
Friday 29th December	Closed
Monday 1st January	Closed
Tuesday 2nd January	Open

## Christmas repairs arrangements

No routine repairs will be carried out between Monday 25 December and Monday 1 January. If you need an emergency repair during this time and Co-op Homes normally organises your repairs, please call the usual number:

**020 3166 2608.**

Your call will be transferred to Pinnacle, our out-of-hours emergency contractor. If an operative attends they may only make a situation safe until a routine repair can be arranged from 2 January.



You can still report a routine repair while we're closed. Visit [www.coophomes.coop](http://www.coophomes.coop) and complete the repair reporting form or email [CHSrepairs@coophomes.coop](mailto:CHSrepairs@coophomes.coop). We'll be happy to deal with your request when our offices re-open on Tuesday 2 January.

Residents of Bramleys co-op should call their out-of-hours service on **0845 603 0714** or **020 8357 5000** for emergency repairs service over the holiday period.

Longlife residents use Home from Home housing association for repairs. We've enclosed a flyer for these residents.

Chippenham, Ealing, Flame and Nimbus residents should let a member of their committees know if they have repairs requests.

**Remember: a gas leak is an emergency in all cases and you should call the National Grid on 0800 111 999.**

Weekly surgeries will be closed on the following dates for co-ops where we normally provide this service:

- **Deptford:** Tuesday 26th, Wednesday 27th, Thursday 28th December and Tuesday 2nd January
- **Longlife:** Tuesday 26th December and Tuesday 2nd January
- **Mulberry:** Wednesday 27th December
- **Palm:** Wednesday 27th December
- **QBTC:** Tuesday 26th December, Tuesday 2nd January
- **Redwood:** Wednesday 27th December

## Word on your street

We're always delighted to hear about events our resident organise. Barbara from Chiswick told us about Halloween happenings on her estate - which is shared with another housing association. She says:

"About a week before Halloween we made sure all our neighbours from Co-op Homes and Shepherds Bush HA, knew the 'trick or treat' code, i.e. leave your door light on



if you welcome trick or treaters or put a few small decorations in the windows to help reassure parents that their children are welcome at that address. We assured those who did not want to participate that they would be left alone if their porch light was off. We passed along safety guidelines for what to offer as treats so parents could feel comfortable and decided to have a special 'no nuts' supply too. We asked parents to make sure all

children were chaperoned, understood that they stay outside the door to chant 'trick or treat' and reminded everyone that 'thank you' are still the magic words!

When the day came we were pleasantly surprised by a steady stream of intricately costumed and excitedly happy little trick or treaters escorted to our doors by their watchful families. My partner had carved a huge pumpkin, placed a tea light inside, and carefully set it on the front windowsill of our home. Our cat Rosie kept a vigil on the window as well. Our porch light was turned on at about 4 pm in anticipation of the flood of costumed characters we were expecting. For the next three hours we had a stream of happy monsters and princes,

nurses and space cadets, farmers and ghosts. While the kids were excited to get to choose their candy bar from a mixed basket, the real hit of our evening was Rosie the cat who the children begged to see each time. She regally sauntered to the front door each time to accept their oohs and ahhs and gentle head pats! Within the gates sheltering our little shared-estate, more lit doorways sent out continuous warm welcomes and we could hear happy children stopping by at neighbours long after we ran out of treats, had retired Rosie from her royal duties and closed up for the night.

Of course, trick or treat isn't exclusive to my area but I wanted to share our experiences as these small community events are great fun and help build real threads of friendship between our Co-op Homes neighbours and residents of a different housing association on our road. The costs are next to nothing but these small warm gestures help us little by little build a community that people feel proud of and pleased to be part of. Our next residents' event will be 'Christmas Carolling for All' and I plan to have a glorious wreath on my front door and in the front window shall display a large lit Hanukah Menorah. Mulled cider and mulled apple juice will be on offer – so I shall raise a glass to one and all wherever you are!"



It's truly wonderful to hear about these community events that help bring neighbours together. Have you got a story to share or would you like help or advice to do something in your area? Contact us at [customer.services@coophomes.coop](mailto:customer.services@coophomes.coop) and we'd be glad to talk to you further.

## Where are we going?

Our Board has agreed the strategy for Co-op Homes over the next five years. We'll keep you posted about our progress in our annual newsletter and annual report, but we can let you into a secret now...

1. Modernise our business to free up time, deliver our core services more efficiently and develop more digital self-services.
2. Develop new homes for groups currently excluded from more traditional housing routes.
3. Provide services and solutions to a wider range of organisations.

These are exciting times for us and all our residents as the changes we hope to put into place will benefit us all. To see our financial statement and Annual Report for 2016-17 go to our website at [www.coophomes.coop](http://www.coophomes.coop) for the download.



## Parking consultation feedback

Some of our Co-op Homes residents were recently consulted about introducing a residents' parking scheme. Kathy McNulty, Community Housing Adviser explains: "We've had several comments from tenants saying that non-residents are parking in designated spaces on some of our own estates. At the same time, other tenants were not happy about introducing residents' parking schemes. To be fair to everyone and to let everyone have a say I contacted all residents who lived in these Co-op Homes' properties for their opinion. Where more than 50% were in favour, Co-op Homes would take the next steps to implement it." Here are the final results:

Area	No. of Residents	% in favour	Approved
Barrow Lodge, Slough	7	28.6%	No
Carnwath Road, Fulham	16	25%	No
Ferney Meade Way, Isleworth	24	25%	No
Furnival Avenue, Slough	18	33.3%	No
<b>North Road, Brentford</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>57.1%</b>	<b>YES</b>
Turnpike Way, Isleworth	13	38.5%	No

## Winter safety tips

At the time of writing we're not sure what the weather will bring over the winter months. However, we would like to repeat the guidance given by our Customer Focus Group each year about 'being prepared'. Sometimes, inclement weather or power outages can affect our day-to-day activities so it's sensible to plan ahead. Keeping an emergency kit at home in a safe place that contains essential items could prove very handy. Items should be stored in a sealable, water-tight container (zip-up bag is ideal) and checked from time to time to make sure your information and phone numbers are up to date and torches and radios are working. Make sure all household members know what your escape route is in the event of an emergency.



### Your emergency kit could include:

- Wind up or battery-operated torch and radio and spare batteries
- Battery-operated LED night lights
- Personal emergency telephone numbers written on paper: GP, local chemist, local taxi, family and friends, Co-op Homes or your landlord's repairs team
- Phone number of electricity/gas/water/telephone/broadband companies
- Basic tool kit
- Home insurance policy number and contact details
- Passport numbers, NI number, Car registration and insurance details
- Telephone number of electricity, gas and water companies
- Basic first aid kit
- Tinned food you can eat cold (and can opener if not ring-pull cans)
- Small amount of cash
- List of prescription medication

It's also wise to check that you're aware of the main service intakes to your property so you can isolate them if you need to. Check that you know:

1. How to find and turn off your water stop cock
2. Where your main fuse board is
3. Where the main gas supply enters your property

## A year in summary

Since our last newsletter we've been pleased to welcome some new co-ops into the fold.

<p><b>Feb</b></p> <p><b>February 2017:</b> We welcomed residents of Palm Housing Co-op with 27 units on London's South Bank and also Flame Housing Co-op which has 12 homes in converted street properties in south London.</p>	<p><b>Mar</b></p> <p><b>March 2017:</b> We were chosen by a Registered Provider in north London to deliver a planned capital improvement programme to replace kitchens and bathrooms.</p>	<p><b>Apr</b></p> <p><b>April 2017:</b> We were chosen to deliver a £1 million capital improvement programme for an independent housing co-op in central London. The programme will renew doors, windows, kitchens, bathrooms as well as external painting and improvements.</p>
<p><b>May</b></p> <p><b>May 2017:</b> We were chosen to support Arundel Housing Cooperative following a competitive tender process to support the Co-operative manage its repairs and planned improvements to its homes.</p>	<p><b>Jul</b></p> <p><b>July 2017:</b> We were selected to work with a small housing association to carry out HR consultancy, advice and investigation. We will also be carrying value for money exercise for another area of their business.</p>	<p><b>Aug</b></p> <p><b>August 2017:</b> We were delighted to welcome Deptford Housing Co-op and its members as new customers of Co-op Homes. A full suite of management service started this month.</p>

## What are the principles of co-operative housing?

We thought we'd might remind everyone about the seven principles of co-operative housing:

### 1. Voluntary and open membership

Co-ops are voluntary organisations; open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

### 2. Democratic member control

Co-ops are democratic organisations controlled by their members who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-ops members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-ops at other levels are also organised in a democratic manner.

### 3. Member economic participation

Members contribute equally to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-op. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-op possibly by setting up reserves, part of which would at least be indivisible, benefitting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-op and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

### 4. Autonomy and independence

Co-operatives are autonomous, self help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

### 5. Education, training and information

Co-ops provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

### 6. Co-operation among co-operatives

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

### 7. Concern for community

Co-operatives work for the sustainable developments for their communication through policies approved by their members.

If your co-op needs help adopting any of these principles please email [homes@coophomes.coop](mailto:homes@coophomes.coop).

## Are you on a low income?

You could get **£140 off your gas or electricity bill** or a credit voucher under the Warm Home Discount Scheme if:

- You're on a low income
- You get certain means-tested benefits
- You get the guarantee credit element of pension credit
- Your supplier is part of the scheme

To find out more, contact your supplier.



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