

Customer Involvement Update

Free phone 0800 389 7652

March 2010



A Winning Partnership - Council and Wigan and Leigh Housing working well

Happier tenants, more decent homes, affordable Housing and fewer people without homes...

These are just some of the results of the successful partnership between Wigan Council and Wigan and Leigh Housing (WALH).

The current contract between the Council and WALH began in 2007 and runs for five years. And recently the Council's ruling Cabinet received a progress report into the performance of Wigan and Leigh Housing at the half-way stage.

The Cabinet heard the review findings hailed the performance of the Housing Company as 'good' overall and 'excellent' in places.

In terms of performance, the report noted that tenants were happy with the service they receive. Satisfaction rates currently run at 87 per cent – one of the highest such figures in the Country.

It also noted that the Company had achieved its target for the nationally set decent homes target – currently 95 per cent.

The report also highlights Wigan and Leigh Housing's commitment to building more affordable homes in the borough – currently 100 new properties are being developed and recognises the progress made in speeding up repair times so vacant houses can be re-let faster.

Finally the report identifies Wigan and Leigh Housing's contribution to reducing the number of homeless people or people in temporary Housing in the borough – which has fallen from 60 in 2007 to 20 as of last December.

The report recommended that the current contractual arrangements between the Council and Wigan and Leigh Housing should continue and based on its success, that the Company remains the preferred service provider.

The Cabinet agreed to accept the proposals and extend the contract with Wigan and Leigh Housing.

Wigan Council's Cabinet Champion for Housing, Councillor Fred Walker, says: "It is fair to say we are delighted with the performance of Wigan and Leigh Housing and are really grateful to everyone involved with the Organisation for the tremendous positive impact they are having on lives for ordinary people in our borough.

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A Winning Partnership - Council and Wigan and Leigh Housing working well

“The report paints a picture of consistently improving performance with many areas where we are amongst the best in the country.

“When we embarked on the challenge on creating the Organisation in 2002 we knew it would be a big task but we had the commitment to make it work.

“It is a great example of working together in partnership and I think it is fair to say the Company has surpassed our expectations.”

Marjorie Marsden, Tenant Board Member and Deputy Chair of Wigan and Leigh Housing adds: “We are delighted Wigan Council has agreed to our request to extend our contract for managing the Council's Housing stock.

“We have a strong relationship with the Council. They have kindly listened to our views as tenants and supported us in improving the Housing services our staff deliver for some 23,000 Council tenants. Over the past two years this relationship with the Council has really strengthened. Each year the Council consults us on the options for rent rises and what to spend the rent money on. The Council along with our local MPs supported us in persuading the government to reduce their planned rent rises. The lower rent rises, along with our careful budgeting, has enabled the Tenant Board Members to recommend the introduction of a multi-million pound-boiler replacement programme, which is helping our tenants save money on fuel bills.”

“The security this agreement gives us will allow us to plan ahead and do more on delivering our vision of better homes and brighter futures.”



Special offer for tenants!

Wigan Warriors are offering tenants of Wigan and Leigh Housing the opportunity to visit the DW Stadium on Friday 26th March (Wigan Warriors v Leeds Rhino's) using their special family voucher. The voucher entitles one adult and one child entrance for £10 (usual price £29)



Family vouchers are available on e-mail - enquiries@walh.co.uk or from Wigan and Leigh Housing's Customer Involvement Team on 0800 389 7652

The Peer Review Group

This group benchmarks against the 5 other Housing Organisations to help us to ensure we are providing a good service in line with our peers. The Housing Organisations involved are: Salix, Six Town Housing, Rochdale Borough Housing, Bolton at Home and Stockport Homes. We all share good practice and support to each other. Customers are involved with the group and carry out mystery shopping exercises and reality checking on each others' services making recommendations for improvements where needed and which are acted on by the Housing Organisations. This year the group has been reviewing the Customer Involvement process and the Sheltered Housing service.

Some mystery customer exercises have taken place during the year on Customer Involvement and we hope to complete the Sheltered Schemes review in the coming weeks.

All the information will be collated and fed back to the customers at the feedback day in Salford on Thursday the 25th March 2010.

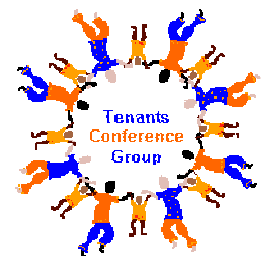
Last year's feedback day involved a speed dating format built around enabling customers to ask further questions on the services they have received. As this was such a popular and informative method the peer group has decided to go with the same format again for this latest review.



Anyone who would like to be considered for further involvement with this group can contact Frank May, Customer Involvement Officer, on 0800 389 7652 for further information.

Tenants Conference 2010

Following on from the success of last years conference the group supported by Wigan and Leigh Housings Customer Involvement Team held their Annual General Meeting on the 3rd February to select the new committee. The Customer Involvement Team has been working alongside this group to help plan and organise this year's event. As the results showed such high levels of satisfaction last year they have a hard act to follow but the new committee is aware of the task in hand and are up for the challenge. The Chair remains Pat Riley, Tenant Board Member for the Wigan area.



The team actively supports this group throughout the planning process. They assist with identifying funding and form filling and setting the action plan to enable the event to go off with out too much of a hitch. The team offers practical support in other ways as well. For example, last month Danny Dowd, Customer Involvement Officer, took a group of tenants from the committee around the borough looking at different venues. The information about venues will be fed back to the group at the next meeting for their decision.

The proposed date for this year's conference is the 30th September 2010. The theme is to be around "Bridging the gap and building the future together"

Don't forget to put this date in your diary and look out for further information in future Customer Involvement newsletters!

Street Representatives Quarterly Meeting

Following a request from our Street Representatives, Wigan & Leigh Housing's Customer Involvement Team organised the first of our quarterly information sharing events for Street / Block and Scheme Representatives. The event was held at Wharfdale Sheltered Housing Scheme, Leigh.

16 Street Representatives attended the event and the Customer Involvement Team invited 2 guest speakers to talk about the work they do and to raise awareness of issues such as Fire Safety and Health. The idea behind this is to ensure Street Representatives have all the right information necessary for them to carry out their role effectively. The Street Representatives agreed that presenting information to them in this way was valuable to their own particular roles.

John Burns, Community Fire Safety Officer, from the Greater Manchester Fire Service was one of the speakers and he gave a very interesting and eye opening presentation about Fire Safety in the home. This reminded one of the attendees to make sure her fire had been turned off at home and caused a bit of a stir until the matter was resolved for her. The team issued the group with details which the Representatives could share with the people in their areas.

Craig Hamilton and Jo Crooks from the NHS also came along to introduce themselves to the group and gave a talk about their role as Health Trainers in the local community and how they can provide assistance such as helping you quit smoking and help in accessing local services and support.

The Customer Involvement Team proposed future quarterly meetings with a guest speaker and would also include a training session to assist the reps in their role. Training includes Customer Care and Equality and Diversity.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 12th May 2010 at 10.00am – 12.30pm at Kildare Sheltered Housing Scheme, Hindley.

If you are interested in becoming a Street Representative or would like further information, please contact the Customer Involvement Team on 0800 389 7652.

Gardening Competition

The Gardening Competition is an annual event that links in with the Better Neighbourhoods Plan. It is a tenant led initiative.

This year, the group are planning a fantastic competition, with new categories.

Application forms will be delivered in the Spring edition of Housing Matters. But you can register an interest in entering now!



If you don't receive an application with Housing Matters, contact the Customer Involvement Team on 0800 389 7652 and we will register your name and send you an application for the competition.

We are also on the look out for new judges this year. Contact us for more details!



Agreeing local service standards - what are your top 3?

We want to know what standard of service you want from us!

Over the next few months we will be reviewing our service standards with customers to ensure we have local agreement about the level of service that you expect from us. Once these service standards are set, we will then provide regular reports to you on how we are performing against them.

You have told us that one of the services that is most important to you is the Anti-Social Behaviour service. We have prioritised looking at this service first and will then look at others later in the year.

At the Area Housing Forums in April we will be asking you what standards of service you would like to see for our Anti-Social Behaviour service. We will be setting up a "Wall of Ideas", providing feedback forms and having a discussion with you on what you think the priorities are.

So come along to your local Area Housing Forum (dates on page 10) and tell us what is important to you:

"What are the top 3 things you expect from the Anti-Social Behaviour service?"

Some of the things you might think are important could be about how quickly we deal with your enquiry or complaint, how we keep you informed and how we treat you. You may also want to think about how we make sure the service is fair to everyone or how we support vulnerable people.

It is really over to you to give us your views on what standards you expect!

Safe At Home - National Home Safety Equipment Scheme

Wigan Council's Private Sector Housing Section aims to improve privately owned homes and their neighbourhoods

The Safe At Home National Home Safety Scheme is a major initiative to help families keep their children safe from home accidents. The main focus of the national scheme is to provide home safety equipment to the most disadvantaged families in areas with the highest accident rates.

Which families can benefit?

To receive equipment under the national scheme, families must:

1. Be living in the Wigan Borough
2. Be unable to afford home safety equipment because they are unemployed or on very low income.
3. Have a child or children aged 0-5 years of age



A home safety check and a fire safety check will be carried out to establish what safety equipment each family needs.

If you would like further information on this scheme or would like a referral form please call 01942 825849, e-mail staying-put.wigan@anchor.org.uk or visit the web on www.wigan.gov.uk/psh



Don't get conned by cowboys! - Use a member of the Good Trader Scheme

Wigan Council's Good Trader Scheme, run by the Trading Standards team, aims to take the stress and worry out of picking a reliable trader. The Scheme is run by trading standards officers to help consumers avoid rip offs and cowboys

Rate your trader

By providing feedback to us about your trader, you can award them up to 5 gold stars.

What about problems outside the trader's control?

All traders experience occasional site problems that are outside their control.

Most building work inevitably involve a certain amount of disruption



What about problems that occur later?

Sometimes faults become apparent after the work is finished. If this happens you should contact the Good Trader Scheme. Depending on the circumstances, your original feedback may be amended.

How do we ensure that feedback is genuine?

From time to time, checks will be carried out to make sure customer feedback is genuine. This may result in us requesting an appointment with you for a site visit by a council officer.

What if I am unhappy with the trader's work?

If you give a trader a poor satisfaction rating, we will contact you to check that the feedback is genuine. We will also ask if you would like us to try and resolve any dispute you have with the trader.

Search online at www.wigan.gov.uk/goodtrader or phone 08454 04 05 06 and ask for the Wigan Good Trader Scheme

Wigan Council's Equality Scheme Consultation

Wigan Council are consulting on their Equality Scheme until 12th March 2010. The Equality Scheme is a plan to help the Council work towards everyone in Wigan Borough being treated fairly and getting the support they need. The consultation asks your views on whether we have identified the right issues to prioritise for action over the next three years, to make life fairer for people living in the Borough.

This is your chance to influence the priorities the Council sets and the actions they take to tackle this important issue.

Please see the consultation document at www.wigan.gov.uk/equalitydiversity, or contact Liz Mackay (e.mackay@wigan.gov.uk, 01942 487367) if you want further details.



His experience
shows he's
perfect for
the job

But until he's
ISA-registered
you can't hire him



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Free training is available to Voluntary & Community groups within Wigan Borough.

Contact Ed Ellis on:

(01942) 825750

Or email:

ed.ellis@wcvys.org

Supported by:



The law is changing to protect children and vulnerable adults. So this does not deter people from volunteering, we have made the process free and as simple as possible.

From **July 2010**, all new volunteers who want to work with children or vulnerable adults **can** register with the ISA through the Vetting and Barring Scheme. From **November 2010**, all new volunteers who want to work with children or vulnerable adults **must be** ISA-registered. Until they have registered (and it is the volunteer's responsibility to do this) they cannot be legally taken on.

Failing to comply with this new law could result in volunteers and the people who take them on having legal action taken against them. But don't worry, registration is free (except in limited circumstances in Northern Ireland) and straightforward.

Currently you may undertake Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)/AccessNI checks on your prospective volunteers. It will still be possible to obtain disclosure certificates from CRB/AccessNI and in some cases these may be required. ISA-registration does not replace these checks but affords vulnerable people an extra level of protection by identifying and barring those people who could pose a risk to them.

Employers will be legally obliged to check a volunteer's ISA-registration. This can be done online, for free.

For more information about this Scheme, ISA-registration, who is affected and how, please visit www.isa.gov.uk or call **0300 123 1111***.

*Calls to 03 numbers should cost no more than geographic 01 or 02 calls, and may be part of inclusive minutes subject to your call provider and your call package.



Working to protect
vulnerable people



Sheltered Housing Scheme and Older Persons **Domino Competition**

Due to the amount of requests at the Area Forums and directly to Wigan and Leigh Housing Staff, our company has decided to offer all Sheltered Schemes and Older Persons Groups on our estates, the opportunity to participate in a Domino Competition.

We would hope the competition would involve Schemes and Groups playing in an Area Housing based competition, from which the winners would represent their areas in a Grand Final involving all the Area Housing patches.

The Customer Involvement Team would organise the competition and reimbursement of travelling and refreshment expenses.

Prizes for the competition will be awarded on the day of the Grand final.

From comments of the previous knock-out competition, all entrants agreed they thoroughly enjoyed it and at the same time met old friends and made new ones. This epitomizes the spirit of the competition. We would hope the competition is played in a friendly and social atmosphere as opposed to serious competition.

If you need more information, please contact your Sheltered Scheme Manager or contact me on

0800 389 7652

I look forward to hearing from you.

John Latham

Tenant Participation Officer
Wigan and Leigh Housing

ACTION AGAINST BURGLARY EVENT 2010

Wednesday 24th March 2010

10.00am – 12.30pm

Queens Hall, Wigan

Many Representatives from a wide range of Services will be present
on

the day including.....

- ¶ TRADING STANDARDS ¶ ADULT SERVICES ¶ DAWN PATROL
- ¶ VICTIM SUPPORT ¶ PENSIONERS LINK ¶ ANCHOR STAYING PUT
- ¶ PROBATION SERVICES ¶ TENANCY SUPPORT ¶ HANDYPERSON SERVICE
- ¶ STARTING POINT ¶ GM POLICE ¶ GM FIRE SERVICE

**PLUS A SPECIAL PERFORMANCE OF "NOT SURE, DON'T OPEN THE DOOR!"
FROM THE PUPILS OF ST BENEDICTS RC PRIMARY SCHOOL, HINDLEY.**

**A LIGHT LUNCH AND REFRESHMENTS WILL ALSO BE PROVIDED, PLUS EVERY
ATTENDEE WILL RECEIVE A FREE GOODY BAG, WHICH INCLUDES A £5.00 SHOP-
PING VOUCHER FOR MORRISONS!!!**

To attend this event you need to register with Age Concern Wigan Borough
by Contacting Lisa Garry on 01942 615882. You will then be issued with a
ticket which will enable both attend and redeem your goody bag.



WIGAN BOROUGH
Reg. Charity No. 1103022



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Dates For Your Diary

Board meeting

Board meetings are held in Wigan and Leigh. If you are interested in attending, please contact Edward Flanagan (Board Services Officer) on 01942 486523 and he will confirm the date and venue. The next meetings will be on -

- Tuesday 6th April

Forums

- Atherton Forum

Monday 12th April, 10am - 12pm, Tyldesley Methodist Church, Elliott Street, Tyldesley

- Leigh Forum

Thursday 15th April, 6.15pm - 8.15pm, Leigh Town Hall

- Platt Bridge Forum

Tuesday 13th April, 2pm - 4pm, Abram Community Centre, Vicarage Road, Abram

- Wigan Forum

Wednesday 14th April, 4pm - 6pm, Wigan Town Hall

- Pemberton Forum

Friday 16th April, 10am - 12pm, Norley Hall Community Centre, Norley Hall Avenue, Pemberton

- Sheltered and Older Persons Forum

Wednesday 14th April, 10am - 12pm, Mealhouse Court, Mealhouse Lane, Atherton



Grounds Maintenance Review 2010

Platt Bridge and Pemberton are holding events which will be led by the Grounds Maintenance Department who will give information on their role and types of equipment used. There will be an on-site demonstration and you will have the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback and comments on the service they provide.

For Platt Bridge

The event will be held on 10th March at Abram Community Centre

For Pemberton

The event will be held on 9th March at Worsley Mesnes North Community Centre

If you would like to attend your local tenants assembly Grounds Maintenance Event please contact the Customer Involvement Team on free phone 0800 389 7652



Welcome Credit Union

Welcome Credit Union have arranged two drop in sessions delivering Financial Awareness and Financial Literacy in Wigan & Leigh.

Wigan sessions will be held every Monday from 10.00am to 12.00pm at The Queens Hall, Market Street (near the bus station), and these session will run from 11th January 2009 to 22nd March 2010.

Leigh sessions will be held every Friday from 10.00am to 12.00pm at The Derby Rooms, Market Street (above the library). These sessions will run from Friday 8th January 2010 to 26th March 2010.

The sessions are open to anybody and refreshments are provided. Bus fares can be reimbursed on proof of purchase.

For further information, please contact Donna or Louisa on 01942 828702.



Customer Involvement Team

Unity House
Westwood Park Drive
Wigan
WN3 4HE

Free Phone: 0800 389 7652



Repairs and other enquiries
through the Contact Centre on
01942 705040

WE ARE ON THE WEB VISIT
US AT

WWW.WALH.CO.UK

