

PHOENIX PLACE NEWSLETTER

All the latest Updates and News for our customers



— CO-OPERATIVES —

**A welcome
from Housing
Manager,
Temi Awolaja**



Hello and welcome to our first newsletter of 2021!

2020 was unprecedented and truly different from what we expected. I know we have all been impacted in some way by the coronavirus pandemic, whether that has been home-school children, adjusting to working from home, caring for elderly / vulnerable relatives, or just simply having to cope with the anxiety the virus has brought. As we start 2021, I believe there is hope and a glimmer of light at the end of what appears to be a long tunnel with the rapid roll out of the vaccines. I am sure most of you are patiently waiting to be vaccinated and continuing to follow the government's guidance to stay at home in what we hope is going to be our final national lockdown of this pandemic!

Our priority continues to be the health and wellbeing of all our residents and staff. Please remember that we

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HELP US TO KEEP YOU
SAFE**



we are here if you just want a chat or a listening ear if you're going through a difficult time, please give us a call. You are not alone, and we will support you in any way that we can including signposting you in the right direction if you would like more specialised help.

This year, we really want to hear what you think about the estate services you are receiving and what other services you would be willing to pay for – your opinions and feedback will help us shape what we do and ensure we are continuing to provide the homes and services you want. Please contact your Housing Officer via email or by phone if you have any ideas to share.

Temi

Can You Help Us To Become Better Listeners?

We have recently adopted the 'Together with Tenants' Charter. This was developed by social housing residents and landlords across the country, working closely with the National Housing Federation. It provides a framework for improving the way we work with and for you.

The Charter focuses on 6 key areas of work/improvement:

1. **Relationships** – building relationships that are respectful, honest, open, and transparent.
2. **Communication** – providing clear, timely, and accurate information about things that matter to our residents and letting you know how we are performing and how we make decisions.
3. **Voice** – seeking out and valuing the voice of residents and using this to influence decisions. Making sure everyone has a chance to be heard.
4. **Accountability** – working as partners with our residents to make sure our work is open to scrutiny and we can be held to account for our decisions.
5. **Quality** – providing homes that are of good quality, are well maintained, safe and well managed.
6. **When things go wrong** – giving simple, accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints and getting things back on track quickly





What is CDS changing...

We are rethinking the way that we work so that we can really change the relationship we have with our customers. As part of that, we want to bring together a group of residents – one from each of our estates – who can help us to develop our plans and particularly help us to develop ways in which we can more actively listen and respond in all of our work. We want to make sure that the knowledge and experience of living in all of our estates is reflected when we are making plans for change.

What would be Involved?

If you join the Together with Tenants Panel you will need to be willing to give us a little of your time on a reasonably regular basis – perhaps an hour a month:

- Attend some meetings on line
- Comment through things like surveys to:
 - Help us to understand what it feels like to live on your estate
 - Help us to understand what it feels like to use things like the repairs service in your home
 - Share your thoughts with us about what we are doing well and what we need to improve
 - Work with other residents and with our team in a respectful and inclusive way

Interested in joining or want to find out more?

Email sara.bell@cds.coop or ring 020 3096 7750.



Meet Our Board... Introducing Matt Creasey

Matt Creasey joined our Board in January 2021. We caught up with Matt to find out a bit more about himself and what he hopes to achieve on the CDS Board. Matt said:

Hi everyone,

I am delighted to have joined the CDS board. A bit about me... I live in Surrey and have 2 teenage kids and, a very young Cocker Spaniel puppy called Alfie who is keeping us all entertained during these strange times. I am a car nut and a keen football fan, still playing vets football when I can.. and when lockdown rules allow!



I joined the board because of the combination of a collaborative and forward-thinking board and senior team and their strong belief in, and commitment to, the benefits of housing Co-operatives and community-led housing. I hope to help CDS to exceed its goals by sharing the benefit of my experiences with technology and other similar organisations.

I have worked with some of the UK's largest housebuilders, property management firms and housing associations helping them all to make better use of technology across their businesses, particularly in terms of communication with tenants. During my time on the CDS Board, I hope to use this experience to ensure that co-ops and cooperatives and tenants alike have good quality and safe homes to live in and feel that they are receiving a great service from CDS.

Phoenix Place News

CCTV To Be Reinstalled at Phoenix Place

On the 8th of March we will be reinstating the CCTV at Phoenix Place. Residents told us that they wanted to feel safe and secure in their homes and they felt that CCTV would be one way of helping to ensure this. We listened to this feedback and will be reinstalling the CCTV in communal areas that had previously been decommissioned. With a view to decreasing anti-social behaviour, the new CCTV will cover all carparks, entrances to blocks, outside lift entrances and in areas where fly-tipping has been an issue.



We will shortly be publishing a policy which will let you know a bit more about how the CCTV will be used but if you have any questions in the meantime then please get in touch with either Vivien, or Dave.

We spoke to Housing Officer, Vivien Okonkwo about the decision to install CCTV at Phoenix Place:

As part of our Safe and Satisfied Project at Phoenix Place, I have been working alongside our Project Officer, Dave Brand, to understand what matters most to residents with a view to finding lasting solutions. In surveys, emails and in conversations with residents it became clear that safety was a concern to many of you and so we are installing the CCTV primarily in response to this consistent feedback. We are confident that it will quickly have a positive impact in decreasing anti-social behaviour, such as fly-tipping and damage to communal areas, and we hope that it will give you greater peace of mind in your home.

As we mentioned earlier, we are introducing this CCTV based on your feedback and we want to continue listening to what matters to you most. If you have any further thoughts about the CCTV, or about how we can further improve Phoenix Place then we want to hear about it. Get in touch with us today:



Vivien Okonkwo

Housing Services Officer

020 3096 7730

vivien.okonkwo@cds.coop

Phoenix Place News

New Dryers in All Blocks at Phoenix Place

In February, we installed new tumble dryers across the blocks at Phoenix Place. Following consistent feedback about the unreliability of the current dryers from residents, we have taken action and are delighted that your brand new machines that are larger, more effective and more efficient.



To find out more about the new dryers please watch our [video](#), featuring Housing Officer, Vivien Okonkwo. We spoke to Vivien to find out more about the decision to upgrade the dryers at Phoenix Place:

We are confident that the dryers will improve the estate, and your experience as a tenant, now, but we made the decision to upgrade them with an eye to the future. We want to be able to offer our residents the very best value for money and this investment now in high spec, reliable dryers, will protect that in the long run. The new machines will be up to 80% more efficient which means that both the cost of running the dryers, and the estate's carbon footprint, will decrease.

Meet the Phoenix Place Team:



Vivien Okonkwo
Housing Officer
020 3096 7730
vivien.okonwo@cds.coop



Dave Brand
Project Officer - 'Safe and Satisfied Phoenix'
020 3096 7730
dave.brand@cds.coop



Matthew Reach
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078180 17833
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Madeleine Barker
Repairs Adviser
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Service Charges Explained

You will soon be getting (or may have just received) your service charge information from us in the post. We wanted to explain in a little more detail what service charges are, what they are used to pay for, and how they are calculated. We have made a video about this which you can watch [here](#).

So.. what is a service charge?

A service charge covers the costs of maintaining the communal areas of your estate and/or block. What we may charge you as part of your service charge is stipulated in the contract you signed when you let your home from us.

Where you live, and what sort of property you live in, also determines what sort of things your service charge is used to pay for. If you live on an estate, for example, your service charge may include gardening costs, whereas this might not be the case if you live in a house on a street with no communal gardens. In line with your contract, we are responsible for paying for repairs in your property i.e. when something goes wrong, but we will charge you for planned maintenance on your estate or in your building. If you are on Universal Credit that covers your housing costs, or receive housing benefit, then your service charges are eligible to be covered by these payments.

How is your service charge calculated?

We set your service charges prior to the beginning of the financial year in April. We base the service charges on a variety of things, and a lot of work goes into ensuring that charges are accurate and offer our residents great value for money. Some of the things we use to inform services charges include existing contracts, our plans for the upcoming year, and the amount we anticipate spending in the coming year based on our knowledge of the estate. It is not a one size fits all process but instead is bespoke to your home.





If you have any feedback on your service charges then we would love to hear about it!

Maybe you want to suggest an additional or extended service, like more gardening, or have an idea of a service that your don't feel is adding value?

Get in touch with your Housing Officer today and let us know your thoughts!

What are compliance costs and why are they important?

It is our job as your landlord to make sure that your home is safe to live in. This means we are legally required to carry out a range of tests and inspections to make we are doing all we can to keep you safe. This work includes asbestos testing, fire alarm and emergency lighting checks.

In recent years, regulation around safety has increased and this means that we may have to do additional work to bring your home up to new, higher standard. These costs are classed a 'compliance costs' and we have been doing everything we can to ensure they are affordable for our tenants.

We want your feedback!

There is a degree of flexibility in what your service charges pay for. Whilst there are some non-negotiables, such as compliance costs, there are other areas where we could alter our approach. We strive to strike a balance between providing a lovely environment for on your estate and in your block and offering you value for money in your service charges. We want residents to have a say in the services on their estate and will consult with residents before making changes to optional services that affect them. Although we already make these decisions based on feedback from customers we would like to invite you to get more involved in this process.

We are interested in hearing from residents about additional services they might want, or changes to existing services, such as a change in frequency or scope of current services.

Get in touch with your Housing Officer or email sara.bell@cds.coop today!

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OUR CONSULTATIONS?

Over the past couple of months, we have been working hard to update our policies to make sure they reflect our values. We have updated policies on things we know matter to our residents, like repairs and arrears. As part of this process, we have been asking residents

for feedback on the draft policies so we can make sure they reflect what you care about. We want to improve how we do this and want to hear from you about what would encourage you to get involved in this sort of thing. You can email your thoughts to [**consultation@cds.coop**](mailto:consultation@cds.coop).

Money Worries? We Can Help!

We know that this past year has been financially challenging for many and we want you to know that we are here to support you and your family. If you are worried about paying your rent over the festive period then get in touch with us today and we can help you to access any support available to you.

The sooner you get in touch with us, the more we can do to assist so please don't be shy and get in touch today.

We also want to remind you that if you pay your rent over the phone, or online. Visit www.cds.coop/for-residents/makeapayment to pay your rent at any time of day, on any day of the week. If you need assistance with this then get in touch with our team who will be happy to walk you through our online payment system.



Remember, we cannot help you if we do not know about your circumstances.

To get in touch with us about your rent ring our Rent and Arrears Team today: 020 3096 7777 or 020 3096 7778

ARE YOU LONELY, ISOLATED OR GRIEVING?

This latest lockdown has been hard and a lot of people may have struggled through it alone, with limited support. You may even have lost loved ones over the past few months. We just wanted to remind you that there are always groups on hand who can help.

Give them a ring today:

AGE UK support line (designed for the over 60s): 0800 678 1602

Support Line Campaign to End Loneliness and Bereavement Support: 01708 765200

Need a repair carried out?

Follow these top tips to keep you, and our contractors, safe during your appointment...

As ever, keeping you and your family safe is our number one priority. As we are continuing to offer a full repairs service during lockdown we wanted to give you a quick refresher on how you can make sure you keep yourself, your family, and our contractors safe at this time.

- Keep your home as well ventilated as possible whilst the contractor is there – open any windows and doors you can throughout their visit.
- Wear a mask throughout the contractor's visit. Remember, this is to protect them as well as you.
- Leave all doors open if possible to decrease the number of possible points of transmission.
- Try to maintain a 2m distance between you and the contractor and stay in a separate room wherever possible.
- Don't offer them a tea or a coffee – this may feel rude or unnatural to you but is a must for the time being, unfortunately!



Remember, we are still offering our full repairs service throughout lockdown and are taking steps to keep you safe during this time.

We remain on hand to help you. If you have something that needs to be repaired in your home then get in touch with our Repairs Team today.

You can report a repair today by ringing us on 03333 30 30 30 30. Alternatively, you can report a repair via our website by filling in our Repairs Form [here](#). Please note that due to lockdown and the availability of contractors, routine repairs may take slightly longer than usual. This will not be the case with emergency repairs.

NOBODY SHOULD FEEL UNSAFE IN THEIR HOME - SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE

Reports of domestic abuse have increased between 40% and 60% last year. There is support available and you do not need to suffer in silence. Whether you want advice or just a friendly voice on the phone, you can ring the

The National Domestic Abuse Helpline for free, 24/7, all year round (including Christmas Day). Give them a ring today on **0808 2000 247**. Alternatively, have a look at their website [here](#) for a wide range of resources and support.

Pet Policy Consultation Planned For April

Over the past year, the companionship, comfort and joy that pets bring has been brought into focus by the isolation of lockdowns. This has led to a change in the guidance around pet ownership in rented properties to make it easier for tenants to own a pet. We support this update and want to make sure that our new pet policy reflect these changes and our tenants' wishes.

At present we feel that we could be doing more to ensure our Pet Policy is helpful, effective and inline with our values. With this in mind, in April we will be running a consultation on pets in CDS properties so you can let us know what changes you would like to see.

if you would like to contribute to our Pets Policy Consultation then keep an eye on our Facebook and website for information. Alternatively register your interest today by emailing our Engagement Officer today:

E: sara.bell@cds.coop



We Want Your Stories!

We want to start collecting stories for future editions of our newsletter from our residents and need your help...

- **Do you know of something fantastic happening on your estate, or in your local area?**
- **Is your neighbour a superhero?**
- **Maybe you want to tell us about some local history?**

Whatever your idea, we want to hear about it! Get in touch with our Communications Officer, Sara Bell today.

E: sara.bell@cds.coop T:020 3096 7775