

AGAMEMNON HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD.

Telephone & Fax: 023 9282 2021

Registered Office: HMS NELSON
Portsmouth
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Secretary: Peter Tidd

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2012 No. 34

PROPERTIES

Cornwell Court Annex will soon be coming to the end of its Defect Liability Period; it is difficult to believe that it has been opened for almost a year. The refurbishment of Eliza Mackenzie Court commenced on the 18 June 2012 and is anticipated to take approximately 61 weeks. This process for the development of a sixth court has been a long one with the Association having committed to developing in a further building in 2008.

DECENT HOMES STANDARD

The Association, when considering major repairs and upgrades works to the Decent Homes Standard as defined by the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions in conjunction with any recommendations made by the Consultant Architect in his 5 year Stock Condition Survey report.

A decent home meets the following four criteria:

- a. It meets the current minimum standard for housing
- b. It is in reasonable state or repair
- c. It has reasonably modern facilities and services

Dwellings which fail to meet criteria c are those which lack *three or more* of the following:

- a reasonably modern kitchen (20 years old or less);
- a kitchen with adequate space and layout;
- a reasonably modern bathroom (30 years old or less);
- an appropriately located bathroom and WC;
- adequate insulation against noise (where noise is a problem);
- adequate size and layout of common areas for blocks of flats;

- d. It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

VACANCIES

There have been 22 tenancy changes so far this year and once again difficulty is experienced letting flats in the Gosport area. This is not unusual and applies to other sheltered housing providers have the same problem.

If you are aware of someone who might be interested in being accommodated by the Association and are over sixty years of age, please invite them to ring the office on 023 9282 2021 for an application form or visit the web site at www.agamemnonha.org

LETTING AIMS

In view of recent comments on the Tenants Satisfaction Survey it is necessary to remind Residents of the Association's aim, which is to provide Sheltered Housing for those over the age of sixty who are capable of independent living and managing their own affairs. Even though there is a Warden in each building they are employed on a 35 hours per week contract. **TWENTY FOUR HOUR WARDEN COVER IS NOT PROVIDED.**

In case of an emergency there is a system which alerts the Warden, Emergency Services, Family or Friends through Chichester Community Careline. It must be remembered that Sheltered Housing is **NOT** a Nursing Home or Residential Care Home and the Association does not provide nursing or constant care, only "good neighbour" assistance.

WARDENS - WORKING HOURS

The Wardens are contracted to work 35 hours per week. This is made up by working 6.5 hours daily Monday to Friday and alternate Saturday morning. This can be varied occasionally with the agreement of the Manager. If it is, a notice will be displayed in the office window accordingly.

I am sure you appreciate that Wardens are entitled to their free time to enjoy their own life. Therefore, non urgent matters should be reported during normal working hours. **Emergency non technical** matters should be referred to the Chichester Community Careline via the pull chord when the Warden is not on duty or absent from the Court.

PLEASE RESPECT THE WARDENS OFF DUTY TIME.

If there are no staffs on duty during the normal working day, emergency technical problems should be reported in the first instance to the office on 023 9282 2021 who will take the appropriate action. Over the week end **EMERGENCY** technical problems

should be reported via the mobile phone number provided. Non emergency problems should be left until the Monday and reported to the Warden.

Wardens are on contracted hours and provided with accommodation within the building and are expected to live in the flat most of the time to enable them to deal quickly with any emergency that may arise whilst they are on the premises – **it is also their home.** They are entitled to use **all of the facilities** in the building (laundry, communal lounges, car parks, guest room (if not required by a resident) and gardens etc the same as any other resident.

CHICHESTER COMMUNITY CARELINE

Chichester Community Control continues to provide cover when required and I know that this subject is mentioned frequently but I cannot stress enough the importance of keeping information supplied to the Warden and Central Control **accurate and correct.** Failure to report a change of a doctor or details of a nominated persons address or telephone number may result in them being unable to contact those people you would like called in an emergency.

PLEASE ENSURE THAT THIS SERVICE CAN WORK FOR YOU BY KEEPING THE INFORMATION HELD BY THE WARDEN/CENTRAL CONTROL UP TO DATE.

If you have any doubts about the accuracy of information held by the Central Control please contact the Warden immediately.

WEBSITE

With a great many thanks to Mark Perry, one of the Association's Board Members, who gave his time at no cost, to update the Association's web site. The site can be found at www.agamemnonha.org Please have a look at the site and feedback any comments or suggestions. Please bear in mind that any tenant information added will be of a "general nature" as the web site is in the public domain.

SECURITY

Security is recorded on our application forms as one of the main reasons for applying for sheltered housing but it is a large concern that there are frequent breaches of security in the Associations properties. All of the Association's buildings are fitted with automated doors, a requirement under the Disability Discrimination Act and do take a little longer to close. Therefore it is important that you are sure that the door is closed properly before you leave the entrance/exit area. Also if you see people wandering about the building who you do not recognise, politely challenge them, if they are in the building legitimately they will not take offence.

All of the buildings have door entry cameras so you can see who is at the door before releasing the latch to let them in – if you are not expecting a visitor or do not recognize them do not let them in, and certainly do not let someone in for a neighbour- they may be out!!

If you open a window/door in the Communal areas please ensure that you close it properly when you leave the area, do **not** leave it for someone else to do for you. **Security is everyone's responsibility.**

PRIVATE EFFECTS IN CUPBOARDS

Recently it has been reported that personal items have gone missing from store cupboards within the Courts. First of all I must state that any items stored in these cupboards are at the owners risk and not covered by the Associations insurance. Each item/case should be clearly identified and labelled as cupboards will be cleared of unmarked items. Bulky items like garden furniture, tables, chairs etc should not be placed in these stores and nothing should be placed in them without first talking to the Warden.

Some buildings have cupboards containing electrical equipment, fuse boxes/distribution boards for instance, nothing should be placed on or near these boxes as access is needed and it may be a fire risk.

Car Parking

Once again there have been complaints about car parking in all of the Associations properties and there is no scope for additional spaces at any court. It is a fact that there are insufficient spaces for each to have allocated parking and it is for this reason that spaces are NOT allocated, even mobility spaces, they are **all** on a first come first served basis. I ask that mobility spaces are left clear for use by those who have 'blue badges' and that these badges are displayed in the car parks to avoid animosity and ill feelings.

NOISE

When walking around the buildings I often hear televisions/radios, if they can be heard in the passageways they are too loud and are unfair to immediate neighbours as well as those above and below.

I would like to remind you that if you have difficulty with your hearing there is equipment that will allow you to listen to your television/radio without causing a nuisance to your neighbours. The Wardens will be able to provide you with details of organisations including Social Services and private companies which may be able to assist.

I appreciate that living in buildings of multiple occupancy may at times be frustrating because of noise, cooking smells etc but a degree of tolerance is required by all.

In the meantime I remind you of Clause 3 (7) of your Tenancy Agreement which reads as follows:

Noise 7 Neither to play, nor to allow to be played, any radio, television, record or tape recording or musical instrument so loudly that it causes a nuisance or annoyance to other persons in the neighbourhood or can be heard outside the Premises between the hours of 10.30pm and 7.30am

HEALTH & SAFETY

The Association, as part of its Health & Safety Risk Assessment policy has each building monitored annually by a suitably qualified person who also completes a Fire Risk Assessment. These inspections are required to remain compliant with current legislation.

With regard to Health & Safety, emergency escape routes should be kept clear of all obstacles that may be a trip hazard to those who are partially sighted or who have mobility problems.

BOARD MEMBERS

There have been no changes to the Board of Management since the spring newsletter.

STAFF CHANGES

Unfortunately there has been more staff changes this year due to personal reasons with Mrs Sue Cooper, Mrs Sandra Quainton and Mr Conrad Briggs all leaving the Associations employment. The process to recruit a new warden is underway with interviews being held in October and, hopefully, to start in November. It has been decided to use contract cleaning for Neptune Court as there are financial advantages in going down this route.

DEFECTS

All defects in your flat, which are the Association's responsibility in accordance with your Tenancy Agreement, should be **reported immediately to the Warden**, recorded in the Defect Book in the office so they can be rectified quickly and properly by the Maintainer. This log is regularly inspected by the Administrative Staff to see if

there is a trend developing within a particular building which might be part of a larger problem.

Please remember to report these problems as soon as they occur because what is a small problem today may become a large one tomorrow.

FIRE ALARMS

Once again it is necessary to remind residents of the importance of following the correct procedure when the fire alarm goes off. Quite often it is assumed that it is just a test or that someone has "burnt the toast". **ALL** fire alarms should be treated as potentially dangerous and you should follow the prescribed procedures for your particular building. On the advice of the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service the Association has a "**STAY PUT**" policy. Unless the fire is in your flat please stay there until the alarm is silenced.

I also request that you follow some simple rules when cooking and use the extractor fans (where fitted) close the kitchen door, (if fitted) and never leave pots unattended. The Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services are tightening up their procedures and as a result three false calls a year to any building will lead to a visit by the Fire Service to assess the cause. The Association has had two of these visits, fortunately our procedures and equipment met their standards and no sanctions were imposed, but please be more careful, a false call to one of our buildings may mean that a fire fighting appliance has been diverted from an incident where it really is needed!

DOGS

The Association has a "No Pets Policy" which means that no pets are allowed on its property unless they are Guide Dogs or Dogs for the Deaf. I am aware that some residents' visitors have been bringing dogs into the buildings and I would be grateful if those residents would remind their visitors of the Association's rules.

ABSENCE FROM THE BUILDINGS

If you know that you are going to be absent from the building please inform the Warden. In the event of an emergency it provides vital information of just who is in the building and what flats the Fire Service need to check. It is not a means of prying into your personal life but complying with a standard of good practice concerning **your** safety and the safety of others in the building.

Likewise if, in an emergency you have someone staying in your flat overnight please inform the Warden.

EMERGENCY PULL CHORDS

Please do not tie up your emergency pull chords because in the event of a fall you may not be able to raise the alarm. This has happened in the past and I am sure it will happen again but the next time could be the last for someone!!! Make sure it is not you.

SO PLEASE RESTORE ALL PULL CHORDS TO THEIR RIGHTFUL POSITIONS.

BLOCKED DRAINS

Blocked drains occur as a result of pouring oils or fats down the kitchen sink. These substances which congeal and eventually block the drains should be placed in a plastic bottle when cool, the bottle sealed and placed carefully in the household rubbish bin. A little bleach or caustic soda crystals from time to time should keep the drains flowing freely and smelling sweet.

Please remember it is not very nice for the Maintainers if they have to clear the drains and expensive if the Association has to call out specialised drain clearing services.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The aim of having a complaints procedure is not to encourage complaints. It is, however, to ensure that if things do go wrong, they are dealt with promptly and efficiently. It is appreciated that complaints can serve as an indicator of dissatisfaction with procedures and performance and the Association will be responsive to considering changes arising from complaints.

Initially the complaint should be made to the Warden as soon as possible. If the Warden is not able to deal with the complaint it should be submitted to the office, who will, if appropriate, deal with the complaint keeping the Board of Management informed.

Complainants who are still dissatisfied may have their complaint referred to the Executive Committee or a special Sub Committee delegated to deal with the complaint.

Appeals. If the complainant is still unhappy with the decision of the Executive Committee or special Sub Committee, an appeal can be made. This should be submitted in writing within 15 working days to: The Chairman, Agamemnon Housing Association Ltd, HMS NELSON, Portsmouth, PO1 3HH

Tenants should be aware that once the Association's complaints procedures has been exhausted if they are still not satisfied, they have the right to have their complaint referred to a "designated person" ie a councillor in the area or a MP. If they are still

dissatisfied with the outcome the complaint may be referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Finally please be assured that if you do submit a complaint that full confidentiality will be observed and at no time will the source be disclosed.

TENANT PARTICIPATION/SATISFACTION

Following the introduction of Tenant Participation Meetings in 2005, meetings continue to be held on a regular basis and prove to be a useful management tool, but some of the things that are raised at these meetings could be raised on a routine visit to Caroline or me. A Tenant Satisfaction Survey form has recently been sent to all the Association's tenants and as soon as the replies are received the data will be analysed and fed back to you. Continual efforts are always made to address genuine issues raised by the surveys and to improve services.

COMPENSATION POLICY

On a lot of Satisfaction Surveys that have been received residents are indicating that they are not aware of the Associations Compensation Policy. This is one of the documents that the Association is required to provide you with and is included in the new Tenants Pack. If you have misplaced yours and would like another one please inform your Warden and the office will provide a replacement.

NEWSLETTERS

Finally, if you have any items of interest which you would like included in the next newsletter please let me have them or if you have any suggestions concerning the presentation do not hesitate to contact me.

Peter Tidd

1 October 2012

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