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8th Edition  
Feb/March 2008

Rykneld  
HOMES   
*The road to success*

# Homing in

Customers and service users of Rykneld Homes



## Putting smiles on tenants' faces

New Rykneld Homes' tenants are making the most of the three-month-old Choice Based Lettings Scheme 'Choice MOVE' and finding homes that are perfect for them.

Since we started advertising properties available in the area in a newsletter and on a special website, tenants are taking the initiative and expressing interest in specific properties, rather than having to wait for a home to be allocated.

Satisfied Choice MOVE tenants James and Linda Cave, both aged 55, are moving into a home in Moray Place, Dronfield, and said: "We are absolutely delighted to be moving into a home that is suited to our needs. It has been really good because we have been able to be far more involved in what we need and where we want to live because of

the Choice Based Lettings scheme.

"There was lots of help and support from the team who made everything very easy for us and we really appreciate that.

"Our Neighbourhood Champions Matthew Yeomans and Gail Herrett were extremely professional and showed a great deal of empathy to my health problems. We are indebted to them and Choice MOVE."

Craig Fletcher is delighted to have a home of his own in Garrett Green, Danesmoor, having experienced homelessness.

"Having been homeless, it was wonderful to have the opportunity



Neighbourhood Champion Matthew Yeomans and Lea Owen, Choice Based Lettings Administrator, congratulating Mr and Mrs Cave.

# Putting smiles on tenants' faces – Continued



*Craig Fletcher with Neighbourhood Champion Amanda Boulter and Lea Owen.*

to choose where we live. Everyone has been so helpful and made the whole process very easy. I am really looking forward to settling into my new home.

"I would like to thank the homeless team, Joanna Hayes, the temporary accommodation officer and Sue Fisher, homeless prevention officer, for helping me out."

Julie Marriott Solution and Support Manager said: "Choice MOVE is a transparent system and it provides

applicants wanting re-housing with the necessary information and feedback for them to make an informed choice when bidding for a property.

***"Having been homeless, it was wonderful to have the opportunity to choose where we live."***

"We currently have over 3,000 applicants on the housing register and only let on average 14 properties per week so the more choice we can offer by having other organisations involved and advertising a varied choice of properties the better for the applicants."

After completing an application form, prospective and existing tenants are then put in a band which includes emergency need, priority, moderate need and general need. They can then bid for properties that are advertised. Bidding is an expression of interest in a property – no money is involved.

Prospective and existing tenants can

also view properties available from local housing associations and Rykneld Homes hope other partners operating locally will join the scheme this year, making Choice MOVE a one-stop shop when looking for social housing in the district.

The homes are advertised weekly from Wednesday to Tuesday, so applicants need to place their bids in this timeframe before the list closes and a new list is advertised.

**To view properties visit [www.choicemove.org.uk](http://www.choicemove.org.uk) or call the Choice MOVE team on 01246 217650.**

## Pete's plastering wins praise

Plasterer Pete Revill so impressed tenant Mr Marlow that he wrote to tell us about it.

Mr Marlow was extremely pleased with the work and says Pete is a very polite and nice man!

## May has still got the key of the door!

**One of Rykneld Homes' oldest tenants, Mrs May Elliott, was treated to a bouquet of flowers recently.**

The 102-year-old has been a tenant since 1985 and has had the same warden, Jeanette Slack, for more than 20 years so who could be more appropriate to make the presentation.

Mrs Elliott says: "It doesn't matter how old you are, you still want to be happy and comfortable where you live. The people at Rykneld make that happen for me."



*May Elliott with her warden, Jeanette Slack*

# Government promises Rykneld Homes' stars will guarantee £60 million

The Government has awarded Rykneld Homes a guaranteed place on its funding list.

The Government has announced that if Rykneld Homes achieves improvements to services to a 2 star level at its Audit Commission inspection, it will secure the earmarked cash.

Rykneld Homes is making vast improvements to homes and services with the goal of securing the extra £60 million needed for the total £117 million Decent Homes programme that will help bring all properties up to standard.

Recent achievements include:

- ✓ The launch of Choice Move, a new way of allocating homes offering more choice to tenants.
- ✓ Raised the standard of improvements including showers

- over baths and floor coverings to kitchens and bathrooms.
- ✓ Extended hours available for repairs
- ✓ Established a £100,000 Neighbourhood Improvement Budget focussing on issues communities think are most important.
- ✓ Launched a new apprentice scheme.
- ✓ Helped set up two new tenants' and residents' groups.
- ✓ Introduced appointments on all repairs except emergencies.
- ✓ The launch of a new website, keeping tenants up to date with latest news and developments.

- ✓ Appointment of Neighbourhood Champions to provide a more hands-on reactive service.

Su Gomer, Interim Chief Executive said: **"This is a major step forward, showing that the Government has confidence in Rykneld Homes. We are working extremely hard to modernise our services and listen to our tenants, so that we can achieve our goal of 2 stars at inspection. We have achieved a lot since last April and are determined to meet the challenge with enthusiasm.... and a great deal of hard work by everyone involved!"**



Chair of the Federation  
Alan Jess



## A message from Alan Jess

The Federation of North East Derbyshire Tenants and Residents exists to represent, support and finance constituted local groups throughout the District.

The funding of groups is possible because of a grant given by Rykneld Homes. The Federation has regular access to, and meetings with, Senior Officers of Rykneld Homes and the Council.

Tenants and residents alike have issues that affect their particular community. These issues will probably affect other areas as well. By sharing knowledge and experience it may be possible to achieve a successful outcome. This is why it is so important to have all areas represented by groups. The greater the input, the greater the knowledge and support that is available to ALL tenants and residents.

Each group nominates representatives to speak on their behalf at Federation meetings. This is the way that we know what matters to tenants throughout the area. Not all groups have the same concerns and interests, but can get the help and support of the whole area for their

specific issue by sharing it at monthly Federation meetings.

Issues that arise are not necessarily about Council housing. Groups have interests in all sorts of things. We can help by pointing the way to organisations that may be able to help fund various community projects. Everyone lives in a community. The Federation reps are there to help get your community's issues recognised.

On numerous occasions people wonder why things are happening and question why a particular decision has been made. Get involved and you will have a say before these decisions are made.

The Federation is very active in trying to help set up new groups. Last year several were started and are now active and successful. More Groups will be starting this year.

GET INVOLVED! We are here to help you! We will point you towards existing groups or help put your view forward if there isn't a local group to help. Individuals are important as well. Even if you don't want to attend group meetings we will listen to your opinions and views and put them forward for recognition.

# Interim Chief Exec has sights set on two star status



Rykneld Homes has appointed a new Interim Chief Executive to help drive improvements to services to secure £60 million directly from Government for Council homes in North East Derbyshire.

**S**u Gomer brings with her more than 20 years experience in managing the housing sector and delivering innovative housing policies and strategies. She achieved a 2 star Audit Commission Inspection result in just ten months of setting up and leading a similar Arm's Length Management Housing Organisation (ALMO).

role as Scout leader sees them regularly hiking in the hills around Chesterfield.

She continued: "Over the next few weeks and with the support of the chair and the board I intend to meet as many tenants, staff and partners as I can to find out what is working well and what we need to improve on. I do

She has been responsible for delivering front-line services to tenants and leaseholders. Su also achieved a 2 star 'good' housing management and maintenance service inspection result of an ALMO within 10 months of its formation.

Her varied career includes sitting on the London Area Procurement Network and planning for the

*"I am very enthusiastic about this new challenge and am confident that services can be improved to 2 star level with a lot of hard work and determination."*

Su said: "I am looking forward to making positive changes to people's lives and building on the firm foundations laid down by the Rykneld management team. One of my main priorities will be seeking the satisfaction of our tenants because as tenants of the services their views are of the utmost importance to us all."

Su intends to consult with tenants on a regular basis and develop a robust business plan that will bring about Government investment.

Su, who has a daughter, is no stranger to Derbyshire. Her partner's

not underestimate the many challenges that we need to meet in improving the provision of services for tenants and thus securing that 2 star badge.

"But I have moved on up the 2 star road before and with the sheer determination of everyone involved we will achieve that vision of securing the money to improve all homes in the district to the standard tenants have a right to expect."

Su has had more than two decades of experience shaping services in senior management and determining direction, policy and strategy in the housing market.

regeneration of a West London estate. She has vast experience in regenerating local communities, getting value for procurement and equality and diversity issues.

Her experience also includes leading on the RESPECT agenda for Anti Social behaviour in 2006. The agenda was so successful that tenant satisfaction increased by a staggering 40% over three years.

Sue said: "Throughout my career I have always placed modernising services and listening to tenants as my top priorities."

# Adapting to your needs

Rykneld Homes is committed to providing services that meet the needs of all its tenants, including those with disabilities.

Approximately 20% of Rykneld Homes' current capital programme funding is targeted on the provision of adaptations, but it is evident from recent inspection findings that many people or carers are unsure of how or to whom they should apply for an adaptation.

The proposed adaptations information leaflet, 'Adapting your home to meet your needs', will be available shortly and will address all the issues disabled residents or their carers need to know in order to obtain an adaptation.

Neville Parboo, Specialist Works and New Business Manager, said: "We want to make sure that all our tenants have all the information they need in an easy to understand way.

"We believe this new leaflet will make the process of applying for adaptations much easier and provide all the information tenants need 'at a glance' with contact details should they need more individual advice and information."

This leaflet will be available from the reception of local area offices, the Saltergate main office, Derbyshire County Council's Social Services and the dedicated adaptations team within Rykneld Homes currently based at the Coney Green Business Centre.

**For further information please contact Julia Bond on 01246 217298.**

## Mystery shoppers find a warm welcome at Rykneld Homes

Rykneld Homes has just received its first mystery shopping report on the services it provides.

Trained mystery shoppers give a customer perspective on the services Rykneld Homes offers to its tenants.

The exercise was carried out by the Derbyshire Tenants Network (DTN) and focused on the accessibility of the repairs contact centre via telephone, email, text and site visits.

The mystery shop was conducted in November last year using 30 different scenarios for reporting repairs.

### The findings were:

- 95% were answered with 20 seconds
- 89% of calls felt the employees were helpful
- 93% were given correct information in line with the repairs procedure
- 96% felt no jargon was used
- 100% of employees used good diction

### However, there are areas for improvement and the DTN recommended:

- The telephone answering procedure is re-enforced
- Focus on 'unhelpful' calls and take appropriate action to re-enforce good practice
- Ensure all staff check the caller is happy and go the extra mile where required
- Devise an action plan to improve the 'feel good' factor

**More mystery shopping is planned for 2008 but if you want to get involved we have our own Customer Involvement Group which is led by Dave Foster. Dave can be contacted on 0114 2489252.**

## It's 'bin' a problem

**Q: People often leave their bins out on my street long after collection. Who can I contact about this problem?**

**A: NEDDC's Refuse and Cleansing Services team are the people to contact if you have any questions or concerns about refuse collection or recycling.**

**You can contact them through the call centre on 01246 213333.**

We are looking for your ideas about how we can involve our tenants, leaseholders and residents in making decisions about your homes, your neighbourhoods and our services.



# Have you got **ideas** about how **we** could do things **better**?

We have been using the Council's Tenant Compact but now that Rykneld Homes is 10 months old, we and our local tenant and resident groups think it's time we had our own agreement to map out how we move forward together.

To ensure we develop the kind of agreements that you want to see, we are keen to bring in the views of a wide range of tenants and residents – not just those who are willing to join groups and go to meetings – and we want to give you other ways of being involved.

We have already started on a project to develop our future service for involving our people in our business. We have held three workshops with tenants, Board Members and staff to look at how we should do this.

We invited some 'new faces' along – people who have not been actively involved with us in the past – and a big thank you to those who came. But it's not too late for YOU to join us too.

The workshops were about looking

at what we must have in our future involvement service – the principles that should underpin it, and the kinds of activities that we should do. The principles include things like:-

- ✓ We must work together – staff, Board and tenants – with respect and trust for each other.
- ✓ We must be open and honest with each other.
- ✓ We must give all of our tenants and leaseholders opportunities to influence our services if they want to – but we shouldn't try to force them.
- ✓ Making sure we have lots of opportunities, for all different types of people – young, old, and those in the middle; those who do want to come to meetings and those who don't.
- ✓ Searching out people who might find it more difficult to join in – people with disabilities, those from other ethnic backgrounds and those who don't speak or read English very well.
- ✓ We must be realistic, and only

make promises that we can deliver – 'say what we mean, and mean what we say'.

During February and March we will be pulling these ideas together into a new agreement between Rykneld Homes and you – our tenants, leaseholders and residents, and your communities.

We are also working on other projects with you, for example on the Service Standards that you should be able to expect from us across the whole range of our housing services, and on setting up an Editorial Group to oversee the newsletters that we send to you.

In the coming months we will have many opportunities for you to get involved with reviewing and commenting on a wide range of our services, so if you think you might be interested in contributing in some way – maybe by joining a group, or by receiving drafts of documents by email for your comments – please get in touch.

**You can either ring Deborah Hooton on 01246 217214 and give your contact details, or email Deborah at [deborah.hooton@rykneldhomes.org.uk](mailto:deborah.hooton@rykneldhomes.org.uk)**

*It's that simple; and we really would love to hear from you.*

## Review Workshops – A Unique Experience

Tenants, staff, Board member and trade union representative from both NEDDC and Rykneld have all been involved in workshops to look at the way tenants experience our services.

Kristina Turner said: "This approach works because we are getting everyone together to look at the way tenants experience our services.

"We map out exactly what happens for example when a tenant reports a repair so everyone can see the systems and processes. The group then identifies all the improvements that need to be made taking into account inspection requirements, best practice and, most importantly, what our tenants tell us they need. "Involving tenants in direct service improvements in this way is what makes it work."

The final stage is the development of an action plan which looks at the costs and priorities.

Similar methods have been around for a few years but the Rykneld approach, involving tenants in a detailed way on service improvements is innovative. It has been designed by Kristina Turner, Tom Quayle and Sid Williams working with Kay O'Flaherty's team at NEDDC.

**Any tenants wishing to get involved, can register their interest with Sue Elphick on 01246 217686.**



## Welcome to new recruits

A number of new recruits who will be working in close contact with tenants, have been welcomed to Rykneld Homes.

Eight new people have joined the Neighbourhood Services and Community Involvement teams. This approach aims to bridge the gap in community services.

Neighbourhood Services Team Leader Jon Campbell is no stranger to tenants' needs having previously worked for a housing association as Housing Needs Manager. Jon said: *"I think this job is going to prove to be a really exciting challenge and I am looking forward to having all the team members in place so we can make a real difference to tenants' lives."*



Jon Campbell

Sarah Allen will be joining Rykneld Homes as a trainee Neighbourhood Champion. *"This is something I have always wanted to do,"* says Sarah. *"I am very excited about starting the job and being involved with Rykneld's tenants. I can't wait!"*

Nathan Redfern believes the skills he learned working as a mortgage advisor and for the Benefits Agency will prove useful in his new job as trainee Neighbourhood Champion. Nathan, from Bolsover, said: *"I saw the advert for the open day, went along, applied and now I can't wait to start."*

Kirsty Perry was working for Chesterfield Borough Council as an Estate and Neighbourhood Officer, tackling anti-social behaviour among other things when she saw the advert for Neighbourhood Champions. *"I will be involved with so many different aspects of housing, helping tenants with a wide range of housing issues. Rykneld Homes is new and that provides a great opportunity to be involved with an up and coming organisation."*

Sallyanne Akitt is Derbyshire 'born and bred' and looking forward to the challenge of being one of Rykneld's Neighbourhood Champions. *"I was a senior housing officer with another ALMO but the idea of working in one patch and getting involved in the community is very exciting."*

After 30 years with the Fire Service, David Street took a 'gap year' before carrying out some consultancy work while looking for a role that appealed to him. *"I was looking for something public service based and then I saw that Rykneld was looking for a Community Development Champion and went for it. I am really looking forward to working with the community."*

Jessica Popplewell is taking up the role of Youth Involvement Champion with enthusiasm having worked with the YMCA and Derbyshire County Council in a youth role for the past few years. *"I am really looking forward to being a champion for young people, making sure they have a voice and that their opinions are heard,"* said Jessica.

Siobhan Cunningham, who currently works for the County Council in adult social services will soon be taking up the post of Older Persons Involvement Champion. *"I am really looking forward to getting stuck in and becoming a point of contact, using my skills to help people make choices and determine their quality of life by accessing the support and services that are available",* said Siobhan.

# Keep yourself safe – gas cookers and hobs in flats

New gas safety regulations came into force at the beginning of the year governing the installation of gas cookers.

Only cookers and hobs fitted with a flame supervision device can be installed in flats and multi occupancy dwellings. A flame supervision device is used to stop the flow of gas to a burner when a fault or risk occurs and ensure the safe ignition of gas.

When buying a new gas cooker you should seek professional advice on the options available.

Remember – your gas appliance must be carried according to the manufacturer's installation instructions and by a Corgi registered installer.

**If you need any further information, please contact 01246 217408.**

# Rykneld Homes – keeping you safe

Rykneld Homes is assessing its properties after the Health and Safety Executive issued a safety alert about immersion heaters.

In two fatal incidents in England in the last four years, a large volume of near boiling water poured through bedroom ceilings onto occupants sleeping below.

The alert is to raise awareness of a rare but potentially serious scalding risk from domestic hot water systems which include a fixed all-electric or part-electric immersion heater in conjunction with a plastic cold water storage cistern or 'tank' located in the roof space.

An overheating immersion heater will normally show warning signs so serious incidents are likely to be extremely rare.

*Occupants should be aware of typical warning signs:*

- Excessively hot water coming out of the hot water taps.
- Excessively hot, hot water cylinder.
- Excessive noise or 'bubbling' from the hot water cylinder.
- Hot water coming out of certain cold taps (some storage cisterns also feed cold taps in the bathroom.)
- Steam/moisture in the roof space.

In such circumstances the householder or tenant should switch off the immersion heater system immediately and contact Rykneld Homes for advice.

**Tenants with any concerns about their system should contact 01246 217408.**

# No English? No problem

☎ 01430 457390 (CANTONESE) 廣東話  
☎ 01430 457391 (MANDARIN) 國語

本市的房屋中心業下，居民家中  
及商業用途的市民可能使用我  
們所售的煤氣。為確保其安全  
，我們，可與廣東話或國語  
親自交流。

☎ 01430 457392 (ITALIAN)

Noi ci prendiamo cura di voi. Il  
nostro obiettivo è quello di dare a tutti i  
nostri clienti la possibilità di accedere a  
ai nostri servizi. Per parlare in italiano,  
chiamate questo numero.

☎ 01430 457394 (URDU) اردو

ہمارے مقصد ہے کہ ہر ایک کو ہمارے  
سروسز سے فائدہ پہنچانے کے لیے  
انہیں اپنی زبان میں بات کرنے کی  
اجازت دے سکیں۔

☎ 01430 457395 (POLISH) POLSKI

Dbamy o wasze bezpieczeństwo.  
Pragniemy być w waszym języku  
i zapewnić wam możliwość skorzystania  
z naszych usług. Aby porozumieć się w  
języku polskim, zgłaszaj ten numer telefonu.

☎ 01430 457396 (PUNJABI) ਪੰਜਾਬੀ

ਸਾਡੀ ਉਦੇਸ਼ ਹੈ: ਹਰੇ ਕੋ ਸੇਵਾ ਦੇਣਾ। ਅਸੀਂ ਸਾਰੇ  
ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਸਾਡੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਦੇਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਸਨ  
ਸਾਡਾ ਨਿੱਚੋ ਕਰ ਖਿੱਸਾ ਮਿਲ ਸੇਵਾ ਦੇਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਸਨ।  
ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਬੋਲੋ

☎ 01430 457397 (OTHER LANGUAGES)



**This leaflet is available in large print, braille and audio tape versions on request. If you or someone you know would like to receive a copy in any of these formats, please Tel: 01246 231111**

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