

# OPEN HOUSE

Summer 2010

ISSUE 7

THE ROSEMARY SIMMONS MHA & FELLOWSHIP HOUSES TRUST NEWSLETTER

## ACTION PLAN PUTS ICING ON THE CAKE

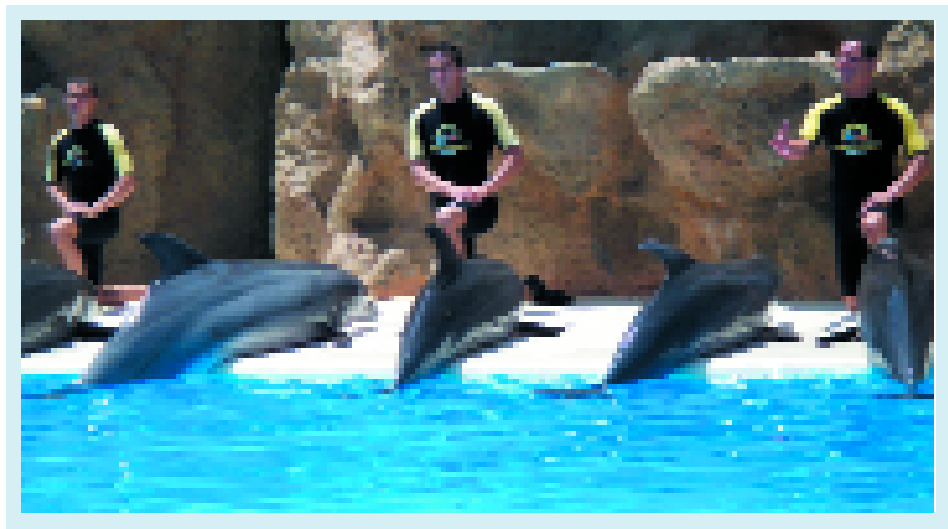
**Text messaging, estate walkabouts and starter tenancies are just some of the improvements set out in RSMHA's action plan in response to the STATUS survey which we reported on in January's Open House.**

Nick Coverdale, Housing Director, says: "While residents gave RSMHA a strong vote of approval in the survey, we know there's always room for improvement. Our Action Plan sets out what we intend to do to tackle issues of most concern to residents."

**Text messaging** will make life easier for busy residents. They will be able to send enquiries from their mobile phones and we will text repair appointment information to residents who join the free service.

**Estate walkabouts** will help us to identify issues and nip them in the bud. Staff and residents will tour estates together to share views and ideas about their neighbourhood.

**Starter tenancies** can help people to maintain their tenancies and prevent anti-social behaviour. We are introducing them for all new residents during the first year at their new home, before they are granted a full assured



tenancy (unless there is a serious breach of the tenancy during the first year).

**What's your view?** We would really value your views on the action plan proposals. Please get in touch with RSMHA for your copy, or download it from our website [www.RSMHA.org.uk](http://www.RSMHA.org.uk).

*More on the Status Survey inside ...*



Meeting new people and these aquatic performers in a 'tropical paradise' with fantastic facilities for disabled people made

Geraldine Edgerton's holiday a great experience. Find her story and snaps inside.

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EASY WAYS TO REPORT REPAIRS ... NEW STANDARDS FOR ASSOCIATIONS

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## SETTING NEW STANDARDS ...

### THE TENANT SERVICES AUTHORITY

Since 1 April 2010, for the first time, every social housing tenant now benefits from a common set of standards that applies to all providers whether they are a local authority or housing association resident. These standards have been introduced by the Tenant Services Authority, the regulator for social housing in England.



In April this year, the TSA introduced six quality standards which all social housing landlords must meet. They are:

- 1. Tenant Involvement** and Empowerment Tenants can only act as customers if they know about the choices on offer and the quality of service to expect. Good consultation and complaint systems are essential to this.
- 2. Home** A comfortable home and a good repairs service are the first things that most tenants want. This standard sets out what landlords must do to meet these expectations.
- 3. Tenancy** This standard protects the rights and interests of tenants in relation to allocations, rents and tenure.
- 4. Neighbourhood and Community** Landlords must help to improve people's daily lives through neighbourhood management, local area co-operation and by tackling anti-social behaviour
- 5. Value for Money** Landlords must get the best possible value for money and quality for their tenants.
- 6. Governance and Financial Viability** Decisions made by landlords on issues which affect people's lives should be made in a fair and open way, with strong tenant involvement.

Landlords must consult with residents on how they plan to meet each standard and they must offer services that match what residents want locally.

Wendy Pridmore, Chief Executive, said: "RSMHA greatly welcomes the introduction of these new standards and we are fully committed to meeting them across the broad range of services we provide.

"We will be sending all residents a report in the autumn, explaining how we are meeting these standards and how we intend to meet them in the future."

#### Find out more

- More information about the new standards – such as the level of service you can expect us to provide - is available on request and also on our website [www.RSMHA.org.uk](http://www.RSMHA.org.uk)
- You can get a copy of the TSA's Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England by ringing the TSA on **0845 230 7000** or by email [enquiries@tsa.gsx.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@tsa.gsx.gov.uk)

### THE STATUS SURVEY

The survey was all about getting to know you better – what sort of service suits you best and any concerns you have.

Although nine out of ten residents said they were satisfied with the overall service, some also told us where they'd like to see some changes for the better. They asked for:

- Easier ways to contact RSMHA staff
- Better consultation with homeowners and younger residents
- Checks on the tidiness of some repairs contractors
- More focus on tackling anti-social behaviour
- Extended services for residents with disabilities or health problems.

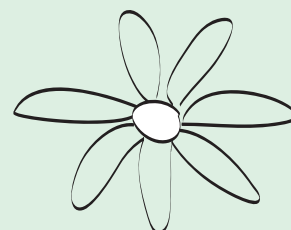
### BRUSHING UP OUR GARDENING AND CLEANING SERVICES

Thanks to feedback from our residents, changes are on the way to improve the gardening and cleaning services provided at our schemes.

We have already replaced our least popular contractors with new ones and drawn up new specifications setting out exactly what each contractor is expected to do.

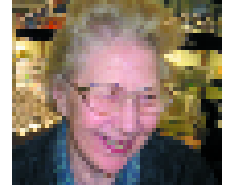
This will help us keep tighter control of how communal areas are maintained. We are sharing this information with residents, so that everyone knows exactly what standard of service to expect.

Please contact your local housing officer (see back page) if you have not yet received a copy of the new cleaning or gardening specification for your scheme.



## GERALDINE SHARES HAPPY HOLIDAY MEMORIES

The Fairings resident Geraldine Edgerton gives us a snapshot of her very special holiday in Tenerife. Geraldine is disabled and the holiday was organised by fellow resident, and tenant Board member, Jenny Edwards, of the Disabled Christian Fellowship.



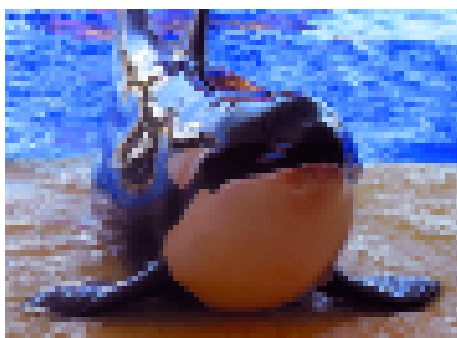
“Tenerife is a very scenic island with its volcanic mountain El Teide dominating the North. In the South, the Playa De Las Americas attracts holidaymakers with its superb beaches, promenades and shops.

We were a party of 15, some wheelchair users with their helpers, staying in the excellent Hotel Zentral Center, recommended for its good food, specialising in regional dishes, friendly staff and a super swimming pool on the roof. Also, the whole of the first floor consists of en suite rooms for wheelchair users and their helpers.

We went on four excursions around the island, including the famous Loro Parque, where we saw the Orca whales and dolphins performing. Loro Parque is like a tropical paradise, filled with beautiful plants, flowers and a variety of wild animals, parrots and fishes.

It was good to be with such a friendly and helpful group and the time went by all too quickly – I was particularly impressed by the great lengths the airport staff went to for those who were wheelchair users.

Altogether, it was a great experience and was certainly a very special holiday for me.”



### LEASEHOLDERS GET THEIR PRIORITIES RIGHT

A huge thank-you to all the leasehold residents who took the time to meet with RSMHA and our independent surveyors, Lawson Quae, recently. Meetings were held at the three leasehold retirement schemes to decide what maintenance work should take priority at each of them.

A draft programme of works for each scheme is now being finalised, with residents. We'll also make sure that everyone understands how the works could affect future service charges.

Doug Johnson from Elizabeth Hart Court (*pictured, right*) said: “We've had a really good look at the priorities for Elizabeth Hart Court – and now I'm looking forward to seeing the work getting done.”

Also pictured with Doug are Scheme Manager Sherree Duncan and Daniel Salmon from Lawson Quae.



## ORDERING REPAIRS MADE EASY

Residents who want to book a repair can use our website and soon they'll be able to text us from their mobile phones. These services are in addition to reporting repairs by phone.

While many people find these new ways of making contact convenient, we want to keep the personal touch and there's always friendly help and advice on hand from our repairs team.

The recent independent survey of resident satisfaction found that 91% of our tenants are satisfied with RSMHA's repairs and maintenance. Behind the facts and figures is a small team of dedicated staff, one of whom is our Repairs Officer, Jackie Younis (pictured).

Jackie has been with RSMHA for more than ten years and is the person you will usually speak to when you ring us to report a repair or raise a maintenance issue. It's Jackie's job to determine what type of repair might be needed and to place an order with the appropriate contractor.

Jackie liaises closely with residents at all times to keep them up to date with progress.

- **Via our website, [www.RSMHA.org.uk](http://www.RSMHA.org.uk)**
- **Ring Jackie on 01372 461440**
- **Text service available soon**

We give all repairs a priority according to their urgency and risk and below is a brief rundown of repair categories and priority times.

### REPAIR TIMESCALES

#### How quickly will my repair be done?

Every repair is carefully assessed. Serious problems are tackled very quickly while others may have to wait a bit longer.

#### Emergency repairs: within 24 hours

Emergency work is designed to avoid more damage to the property and inconvenience to you – such as loss of heating and hot water during winter months, failure of lighting or electrical sockets, burst pipes, major leaks, ceiling collapse.

#### Urgent repairs: within 7 calendar days

Where your comfort or convenience is affected we aim to carry out repairs within a week. Examples include immersion heaters not working (when another form of water heating is available), loss of heating in one or two rooms, minor water leaks, faulty electrical switches or sockets.

#### Essential repairs: within 14 calendar days

Repairs that could normally wait, but where the resident is vulnerable and a routine repair of 31 days would be unreasonable, are carried out within two weeks.

#### Routine repairs: within 31 calendar days

These are repairs that can generally wait, with only slight inconvenience to the resident. They include minor problems with toilets, baths, sinks, doors or windows sticking, plaster repairs, brickwork and other non-urgent internal and external repairs.

#### Planned/cyclical repairs: specified date

Generally these are repairs planned well in advance which we tell you about before going ahead – for example, replacement kitchens, bathrooms, boilers and doors.



There are a few jobs around the home that RSMHA will not normally agree to do as they are the tenant's responsibility. They include:

- Internal decorations
- Door handles and locks due to wear and tear
- Replacement light bulbs
- Blocked waste pipes – where the blockage is caused by the resident

### CONTACT US

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email:

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Customer services:

**Louise Stevens, Ellie Melham**

Repairs: **Jackie Younis**

Housing and tenancy enquiries:

**Karen Woolton (RSMHA)**

**Elaine Gregory (FHT)**

Leasehold enquiries:

**Jeremy Lowry**

Out of hours emergency repairs  
tel:

**Homeserve 08457 573 842**