

your HOMES matter

Summer 2024

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Welcome to Your Homes Matter, the magazine for tenants of Charnwood Borough Council. Your Homes Matter, or YHM as we sometimes call it, is distributed to tenants four times a year with the rent statement.

The aim is to keep you informed about any developments that affect you or your properties. It's also an opportunity to share news about and involving tenants and leaseholders. If you have a bit of news that you want to share, please send it to us using the email address below.

We very much want to work with tenants and leaseholders to create the best possible homes for people.

If you have any feedback on YHM please let us know.

To submit an article idea, picture or make a comment, please email communications@charnwood.gov.uk

Other ways to keep in touch with Council news:

Sign up to email alerts at www.charnwood.gov.uk/alerts

Follow the Council on X/Twitter or Facebook

X/Twitter: @CharnwoodBC

Search **CharnwoodBC** on Facebook and like our page

For more information about housing issues, visit www.charnwood.gov.uk/housing

Alternatively, call **01509 634666**

Knowing our tenants and helping us to keep in touch effectively

In the coming weeks we will be contacting all tenants with a request for updated personal and contact details. In order to provide services that take into account the needs of our customers it is important that we have as much detail as possible about everyone who is living in our council homes.

Our partner, Service Insights, which carries out our tenant perception surveys on our behalf, will be carrying out this work.

The information that we are asking you to give us will be used only for purposes contained in our privacy statement, which can be found on our website at www.charnwood.gov.uk/privacy_statement.

It is also important that we are able to contact and communicate with tenants effectively. A crucial factor in this is having the correct contact details for everyone. Please do let us know when your contact details or the way in which you prefer us to communicate with you changes.

Rent incentive winners!

Congratulations to the winners of the 2023/24 rent incentive for maintaining 12 months' direct debit payments. The winners were:

- Mrs A and Mrs C from Syston
- Mrs P from Sileby
- Mrs L from Mountsorrel
- Mr B and Mr M from Anstey
- Mr M from Shepshed

Each of the winners received £100. Well done everyone!

Meet the resident liaison team

A new team has been created to improve the experience for tenants who are having repairs or improvements made to their homes.

The resident liaison team will be aiming to keep tenants better informed about repair work or planned improvements such as the installation of kitchens, bathrooms or roofing replacements.

They will also be available to take inquiries from tenants and resolve issues.

You can contact the team by calling 01509 634666. In the meantime, here's an introduction to each team member:

Amanda Eastwood (team leader)

"I love the variety of this role and meeting our customers face-to-face. Feeling like we have an appearance within the borough. The role is a challenge as we are not always able to resolve everything in a prompt way, but we try our best and tenants appreciate that we are there to help, which has shown in our customer feedback."

Mark Houlton

"I enjoy speaking to tenants and being able to resolve queries with a satisfactory outcome. It has been a challenge to get used to all the processes and policies at the council, but it's been worth it as we are often thanked for our communication and commitment to our tenants."

Neha Jotangiya

"It is great to meet our tenants and to work with various teams within the council to understand different procedures and come together to get a matter resolved. It can sometimes be a challenge when we don't have an answer for a customer right away, but we empathise how difficult situations can be for people and work hard to find solutions. It is always nice to receive customer feedback. A customer sent through a lovely compliment for me recently, simply because of a fast response to a query. This goes to show a quick call can go far."

Here are some of the lovely compliments the team has received from tenants:

"What an asset you are to the team. It's been an absolute pleasure and I appreciate everything you have done and all of the reassurance."

"I wanted to say thank you for all your help throughout the process. Having the bathroom and kitchen completed really has made all the difference to me."

"Just to say a big thank you for what you have done over the last year."

"I don't know what I would have done without you for the last seven weeks. You have gone above and beyond."



From left: Resident liaison officers Neha Jotangiya and Mark Houlton, and team leader Amanda Eastwood.

Adapting to new social housing regulations

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) is the public body responsible for improving social landlords, including local authorities like the council and housing associations.

It does this by setting standards and taking enforcement action against landlords where appropriate. This can include fines or sanctions or other interventions.

From April 1, 2024 the RSH has introduced a new set of standards and will now be inspecting social landlords. Landlords can also self-refer to the RSH if they are failing to meet the standards.



New consumer standards

The RSH has introduced a new set of consumer standards which means landlords will need to:

- ensure tenants are safe in their homes
- listen to tenants' complaints and respond promptly to put things right
- be accountable to tenants and treat them with fairness and respect
- know more about the condition of every home and the needs of the people who live in them
- collect and use data effectively across a range of areas, including repairs

There are four consumer standards:

- Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- Safety and Quality Standard
- Tenancy Standard
- Transparency, Influence and Accountability (including Tenant Satisfaction Measures)

There is also a consumer standards code of practice to help tenants and landlords understand what is expected under the consumer standards and how landlords might deliver the outcomes of the standards.

There are also economic standards for social landlords to meet. These have not changed.

What happens next

The council is assessing how it meets the new standards. We accept there is some work to be done and we will be involving tenants, partners and others in making some changes.

We welcome the new standards as this is about raising standards of homes for tenants in Charnwood.

The RSH will apply gradings to social landlords against the standards.

Safety and quality and tenant engagement

Key areas for the new standards are safety and quality and tenant engagement.

Safety and quality

If you are a tenant or leaseholder of the council and have any concerns regarding health and safety issues relating to your home or the building you live in, Janet Glass, the head of landlord services and her team can be contacted on:

Email: hsls@charnwood.gov.uk

Telephone: 01509 634666

By visiting or writing to: Charnwood Borough Council, Southfield Road, Loughborough, LE11 2TX

Tenant engagement and satisfaction

We regularly measure tenant satisfaction and share those results with our Housing Management Advisory Board. The board also receives regular performance reports about how the council is performing on the range of other tenant satisfaction measures, and local priorities. Information about the Housing Management Advisory Board and reports setting out performance levels can be found at:

<https://charnwood.moderngov.co.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=149>

More information about ways in which tenants and leaseholders can get involved in the delivery and scrutiny of housing services can be found at www.charnwood.gov.uk/engagement.



Customer engagement team 'pops up' in Thurmaston

The customer engagement team held the first of many planned 'pop-up' events on Wednesday April 24, at Offranville Close in Thurmaston. They attended with their new gazebo, accompanied by the tenancy and estate management officer for the area. Residents in the area were invited to come along, see what the customer engagement team does and raise any issues they might have.

The event was very successful, with tenants thanking the team for attending and for listening to their issues and views.

Further events are planned, and they will be publicised in YHM and via the customer engagement calendar of events at www.charnwood.gov.uk/whats_on_for_tenants.

For information on how customer engagement can help you in your community, please email involvement@charnwood.gov.uk or call 01509 634955/634679 to speak to Helen and/or Andy.



Tenant tales - Wayne Bridges

"I have been a council tenant and living in Shepshed for the past six years. The estate I live on has seen its fair share of difficulties, and when I first viewed the flat on Brook Street the whole area didn't look like it had changed in years, but I agreed to take the flat and wanted to help make a change.

This began when I started to speak with the customer engagement and tenancy and estate management teams visiting the block. We started to discuss what was required to make positive changes here, and after talking to other tenants in the block I decided to take the first step in getting more involved, which was to join the Charnwood Housing Residents Forum, also known as the CHRF.

Helen and Andrew from the customer engagement team explained to me that the best way to get involved and become a voice for council tenants in my area was to come to CHRF meetings. The CHRF meetings showed me that any query raised by any resident would be up for discussion. This included putting in for tenant bids that would enable tenants to develop gardens and allow them to have tool sheds, take tenants out on day trips (who might not have been able to otherwise) using schemes such as the community initiative fund. I didn't know that these funds existed before, and I know they have been a big help.

The tenant networking event took place in Shepshed this year, which I was a part of. It allowed me the opportunity to speak with other tenants and discuss the works done by the council. The networking events are a good asset for tenants to attend as they allow tenants like me to have face-to-face time with council officers and put faces to names. Emails and phone calls are great, but you can get so much more direct information from attending these kinds of events, and officers are happy to assist in my experience. This type of contact means you're getting the best from every officer from every department and sometimes the answer quicker or the way to deal with the issues you have.

These types of events are also important for tenants who have mobility and transport issues and who cannot attend the main office. They can meet officers at these events and find the necessary help to resolve the issues you are facing. Giving time to carry out this type of event is rewarding as it allows tenants and officials to talk away from office settings or receive emails that feel less personal to you.

The CHRF is always looking to increase its members. If you are over 18 and a tenant of Charnwood Borough Council, please come and join the group. We are a diverse group and want to make a difference, so if you feel the same way, please express your interest in joining the group by emailing the customer engagement team at involvement@charnwood.gov.uk or speak to Helen or Andy on 01509 634955/634679.

Come and have a chat with us. You will quickly see all the great works we have already been able to achieve. A voice for all is needed and we're looking for yours, so please get in touch. I'm glad I did!"

Have a tenant tale to tell for a future issue of YHM? Contact the customer engagement team on 01509 634679 or 01509 634955 or email involvement@charnwood.gov.uk.



Shepshed resident Wayne Bridges

Hello from the neighbourhood development team

We are a dedicated team committed to making a difference within our communities. Though we may be small, our determination knows no bounds. We are the neighbourhood development team.

We are a team of three and we pool our resources and expertise to address challenges, enable change and strengthen the neighbourhoods in which we work.

We focus primarily on areas with greater need including the Bell Foundry, Warwick Way, Ashby Road and Shelthorpe estates, working hand in hand with local groups and residents in these areas. Collaboration is key to our approach. We are proud to work alongside valued partners like the police, health, education, the county council, councillors and the various departments at Charnwood Borough Council.

We work with two key community hubs: Marios Tinenti Centre (Bell Foundry) and Altogether Place (Warwick Way) and we also extend support to The Hut (Ashby Road Estate) which is run entirely by volunteers. At these hubs, residents not only find support but also a sense of belonging and access to crucial services. Visit www.charnwood.gov.uk/community_centres_and_facilities.

As officers, we attend multiple partnership meetings including mental health forum meetings, collaborating with mental health workers offers a unique opportunity to gain insights into the complexities of mental health care and in learning about services available that we can share this in the communities we work in.

Further to this work our team is behind Charnwood Community Heroes, an annual event organised by the council. This event serves as a platform to honour and celebrate the remarkable contributions made by individuals within our community. Find out more at www.charnwood.gov.uk/heroes.

We're here to bring about positive change, empowering communities, fostering resilience, and creating a brighter future for all.



Neighbourhood development officers (front left) Rebecca Walton, Chris Covill and Nadja Rein.

Insure your home contents

For peace of mind, insuring your home contents is a great idea. There are two cover levels for you to decide from: Standard and Standard including accidental damage. Most of your household goods and contents are insured when inside the home, including bikes and computer equipment. They are covered against loss or damage caused by specific events such as theft, fire and flood.

Also insured are lost or stolen keys, freezer contents, your own legal liability to the public, the cost of alternative accommodation and improvements you have made to your home such as fitted kitchens, bathrooms, wardrobes, laminate flooring, patio doors etc. (but not greenhouses or conservatories).

You can also add cover for personal belongings, hearing aids, and wheelchairs/mobility scooters. More details are available at www.charnwood.gov.uk/hci or call 01509 634666 for an application form.

Good times returning to Longcliffe community

Longcliffe Road community lounge in Shepshed is a story of success and a tribute to the hard work that residents have put into improving their community, and just shows what can be achieved in a short amount of time with a little help and support.

Last summer, Sandy Taylor, the warden at Longcliffe Road, contacted the customer engagement team and asked if it could help promote the communal lounge. A coffee morning was arranged which was well attended, but a second one proved to be very successful, with a lot more residents and friends attending.

Following on from this, and with tenants Trev Fairminer and Carol Airey taking the lead, the lounge has been completely transformed into a home from home where people are very welcome. There are coffee mornings, a weekly drop-in session, a bingo club, and aircraft club and mental health drop ins are also being planned.

The front and back gardens have been cleared and planted, and with the help of the tenant bid fund run by customer engagement, garden furniture has been installed and a communal notice board has been erected in front of the lounge to keep the community informed.

Alongside this work, Travis Perkins was also kind enough to donate a first aid kit. Lewis Shaw (pictured right) from the Loughborough branch delivered it to the centre. Trev Fairminer said: "We would all like to thank Travis Perkins for their donation, as it was a big concern to us that that we had no first aid kit in the communal lounge. We are very grateful."

It is heartwarming to see what can be achieved when a community comes together and the feel-good factor that this can produce.

If you would like any information on how the customer engagement team can help you and your community, email involvement@charnwood.gov.uk or call 01509 634955/634679.



Working with contractors on some great projects

Gardeners at Longcliffe Road in Shepshed have been given a helping hand by council contractor Jeakins Weir.

The team was quick to respond when they heard the residents wanted an outdoor tap to help them look after their fabulous gardens.

Jeakins Weir, which fits new kitchens and bathrooms in tenants' homes for the council, met with tenants and the council's customer engagement team to complete the work.

Residents thanked both the customer engagement team and Jeakins Wier.

Longcliffe are now looking forward to entering the annual garden competition this summer.

Durham Road communal garden gets a makeover

Following a project funded by the tenant bid scheme two years ago, the communal garden at Durham Road in Loughborough was landscaped.

As this is a sheltered court, garden maintenance can be difficult for residents, so the customer engagement along with the Altogether Place community hub asked a voluntary group from St Barnabus Church if they could help.

As a result, a team of volunteers spent a day making a fantastic job of clearing the garden and restoring it to its former glory. The customer engagement team and residents would like to say a very big thank you to the St Barnabus team for doing such a good job, and to Travis Perkins, which provided supplies for the project free of charge as part of its social value commitment to Charnwood Borough Council.



Keep in the loop with council news

If you would like to keep updated with all the latest news from the council - including events, updates from the Active Charnwood team, business news, planning news and much more - subscribe to our email alerts at www.charnwood.gov.uk/alerts. As YHM is a quarterly magazine, the 'news for council tenants' topic will give you the most timely updates. Get subscribed and stay in the loop.

Keeping communal areas clear = keeping people safe

We carry out an inspection of our blocks of flats each month to ensure that there are no breaches of tenancy and that we are complying with fire safety regulations.

During these inspections we have noted in some blocks that items have been left in internal communal areas. This includes landings, under stairwells and communal cupboards. In some blocks it appears that the people are using the communal landing as an extension of their home. No communal areas are let as part of a tenancy/licence agreement.

Items left in communal areas pose a risk to other residents and anybody else who enters the block. Should the area become smoke-filled in the event of a fire, people could trip over these items, causing injury or worse. The safety of residents and visitors to our blocks is of paramount importance to us as is the legal requirement to comply with fire safety regulations.

Items in communal areas can also impact on the communal cleaning and could result in the contractor not being able to clean an area. If you have any items in the communal area (e.g. push bikes, prams, mobility scooters) and/or in communal cupboards, please ensure that you remove them immediately. Any items left in communal areas will be removed.

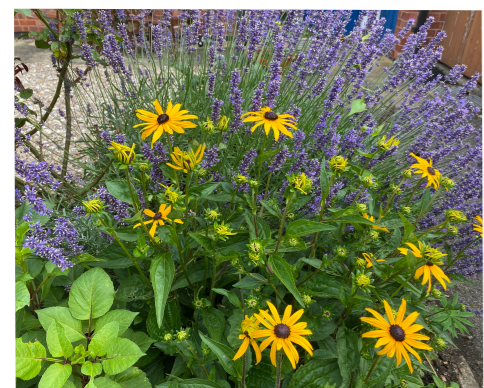
Thank you in advance for your co-operation to keep these areas clear.

Thank you for your entries

The tenant garden competition returns this summer and our judges are preparing to visit your gardens and make their choices across the categories.

Thank you to all tenants who have entered the competition. Let's hope for some beautiful weather when the judges visit the week commencing Monday July 22, 2024. Some photos from last year's entries can be seen below.

Keep an eye out on our social media channels and email newsletters for future updates! Winners will be announced at www.charnwood.gov.uk/gardens and will be featured in the winter issue of YHM.



Residents of St Peter's Court get new outside tap and hoses fitted

Thank you to our property maintenance contractors CLC Contractors Limited for fitting an outside tap and providing two hoses at St Peter's Court sheltered accommodation in Syston.

The tenants there are now looking forward to seeing the benefits of having the taps closer to their communal gardens and greenhouse, which is currently growing cucumbers and tomatoes for residents to enjoy in the summer. Resident Alan Hopwood said that the new taps will make it a lot easier for residents to keep the gardens and vegetables watered.

Many thanks to our customer engagement team which worked with CLC's project manager, Tom Smith and multi-skilled operative, Dave Wardell to complete the works.



Green-fingered tenants at St Peter's Court with CLC Contractors Ltd.



Alan Hopwood at the greenhouse at St Peter's

Editorial panel give their views on new rent statements

On March 12, the editorial panel met at The Hut on Old Ashby Road in Loughborough to meet Richard Smith from Integrity Connect, the company that manages the contract for our printing services.

The panel got together to discuss the new rent statements and voiced their opinions on the layout, content, and colour. It was interesting to see the different examples provided by Integrity Connect and the panel were very eager to share their views. Integrity Connect used all the feedback given and went away to produce your new statements with a fresh, easy to understand layout.

The panel meets twice a year to discuss articles for the Your Homes Matters magazine and they also get involved in reviewing policies, literature, and promotional material. Refreshments are served and transport can be organised. Details can be found at www.charnwood.gov.uk/editorial_panel.

The panel is a great opportunity to give your feedback, share opinions and meet new friends so if you are interested in getting involved, or just to see what it's about then please contact the customer engagement team on 01509 634955 or 634679 or email involvement@charnwood.gov.uk.

Reminder – We are in a 53-rent week year

The previous newsletter informed there are 53 chargeable weeks this year. This happens every few years and working out your monthly rent is slightly different if you pay monthly or four weekly.

There are 49 weeks when rent is charged when we take into account the four rent-free weeks. The table below shows an example of how to work out your rent if you are paying monthly or four weekly.

Frequency	Calculation	Example
Monthly (Same date each month)	Rent x 49 (weeks) = total for the year	£97.96pw x 49 = £4800 for the year
	Total ÷ 12 (months) = rent to pay	£4800 ÷ 12 = £400 to pay per month
Four-weekly	Rent x 49 (weeks) = total	£97.96pw x 49 = £4,800 for the year
	Total ÷ 13 payments = rent to pay (for the year)	£4800 ÷ 13 = £369.23 to pay four-weekly

If you are on universal credit, the DWP will only pay you for 52 weeks, therefore you must pay the extra week yourself to make sure you do not get into arrears.

A reminder, if you are in arrears, you still need to pay on the rent-free weeks to reduce any outstanding rent balance. If you have any queries regarding this, please contact your income officer via the new online enquiry form at www.charnwood.gov.uk/how_your_rent_is_worked_out or on 01509 634666.

Direct debit – your flexible friend!

Did you know that your direct debit for your rent can be collected on any day of the working week or month? This means you can pay on the on the same day that you get paid your wages or benefits including universal credit.

Since we have made this positive change, we have seen the number of tenants paying by direct debit increase as they see the advantage of paying their rent on the same day as their payment day. We can also accommodate payment dates that are fortnightly or four-weekly.

If you want to change the date of your direct debit to one that suits you, contact your income officer on 01509 634666 or email housing.income@charnwood.gov.uk. If you do not pay by direct debit already, you can now set up your direct debit up online at www.charnwood.gov.uk/how_to_pay_your_rent.



Important benefit changes: moving onto universal credit

If you are currently receiving one of the benefits listed below and are under state retirement age, the DWP will be contacting you at some point in the coming months to inform you that you will have to move onto universal credit. The DWP calls this 'managed migration'. The benefits affected are:

- Child and working tax credits
- Housing benefit (except for people in temporary accommodation)
- Income support
- Employment and support allowance ('ESA' - income related)
- Job seekers' allowance ('JSA' - income-related)



The DWP will write to you when your turn has been reached to move onto universal credit. This letter, which DWP calls a "migration notice" or "invitation to claim", will give you a deadline to apply for universal credit. If you do not make the application by this date, your old benefit will stop automatically. If you apply by the deadline, for a short time, the DWP will give you a "transitional payment" in your universal credit award to make sure that you do not receive any less money than you were getting on our old benefit. You will not get this payment if you do not apply in time. Universal credit is paid every calendar month, and first payments are made five weeks after initial application. Applications are usually made online.

We understand that this process may be difficult for some tenants. Help and advice about applying for universal credit is available from our tenancy support team. Please get in touch with the team on 01509 634666 and staff will be happy to help.

Being gas safe – why we need access to your home

As your landlord we have a legal responsibility to ensure that your gas appliances are safe to use. To achieve this, we need access to your home each and every year. A Gas Safe-registered engineer will inspect and service the gas appliances in your home. At the same time, we will check your smoke alarms and any carbon monoxide detectors.

As a tenant you have a legal obligation to allow access to our gas contractor PH Jones to undertake this work. PH Jones will contact you six to eight weeks before your gas or solid fuel appliance is due its annual gas service, they will then give you at least seven working days' notice of an appointment.

Calendar of events for council tenant engagement

There are a number of events and meetings that take place throughout the year that council tenants can attend. The full calendar can be found at www.charnwood.gov.uk/calendar. Leave the search box blank to see all events. Dates/times/venue may be subject to change. The calendar will be updated regularly.

Dear Leaseholders

We hope you are all keeping well and looking forward to the summer.

We are currently busy processing your certified summaries and getting them ready to send out in August. Please keep an eye out for these as they will be sent via email wherever possible. If we do not have a valid or current email address, then they will be posted to you.

If you have a credit on your certified summary, we will request your bank details so that we can process your credit swiftly in September. If you have a debit, an invoice will follow in the month of August/September 2024 which will be separate to your estimated service charges. Please note that there will be a deadline for any queries that you have regarding your certified summaries.

Sarah and Trevor

Request for buildings insurance schedule

If you require a copy of your buildings insurance schedule you can either email the insurance team at insurance@charnwood.gov.uk or call customer services on 01509 634666 and they will forward your request to the insurance team.

How do I extend my lease?

Every leaseholder has the right to ask for a lease extension providing they have owned the lease for at least two years and are not in breach of their lease. There is a fee payable to the council for this which includes an admin fee and legal fee. Separate to these is a fee for the actual valuation of the property which must be carried out by the District Valuer to ensure that a fair price is reached. As of December 2019, the cost for the valuation was £1,080 including VAT.

If you are interested in extending your lease the first step is to go to a solicitor and request them to contact us (they will use the relevant form called a Section 41). Alternatively send a letter to us confirming your interest in extending the lease and we will respond to this letter within 28 days outlining costs. The formal procedure for applying to extend your lease does not commence until your Solicitor has served a Section 42 Notice on the council.

If you decide to withdraw from the process, you will be liable for the landlords' costs incurred up to the date that you withdraw. Please note that if you withdraw, you will not be able to serve another notice for a period of 12 months from the date of withdrawal.



Administration and management fee 2024/25

Last year a proposal was put forward to increase the administration and management fee in 2024/25 to £180.34 and this was approved at the council's cabinet meeting earlier this year. Detailed below is everything we anticipate being included within the calculations of your fee from April 1 2024 to March 31 2025 and a summary of how we calculate the fee.

	Time allocated to the service	Time allocated to the service
Officers	2023/24	2024/25
Leasehold team	100% (two officers working 36 hours per week)	100% (three officers working 36 hours per week)
Managers' time	15%	5%
Officers time attending forums/ open surgeries	5%	5%
Admin support	2%	0%

Other items included within the fee includes: Postage (YHM magazine), Building Cost Information Service ('BCIS') subscription. This subscription is to an organisation that the leasehold service has to use in order to apply correct inflation factors to calculate various annual charges (such as invoicing, and postage costs and various officers' time) for those in the first five years of their lease.

We estimated that in 2024/25 the total of the above charges for Charnwood Borough Council to provide the leasehold service would be £64,025.17. This amount was divided by the number of leasehold flats (357 on 20.01.23) giving a new fee of £180.34. We are asked by the Leaseholders' Forum to produce this each year and publish in YHM.

Contacting the leasehold team

The leasehold team comprises Trevor Banbrook and Sarah Taylor. Their contact details can be found below:

Telephone: 01509 634575 Monday and Tuesday 9.30am to 4.30pm (Trevor). 01509 634830 Tuesday to Friday 9am to 3pm (Sarah). Email: leaseholders@charnwood.gov.uk.

Invoice payments Please refer to the back of the invoice or call 01509 634666 (9am until 4pm Monday to Friday)

Payments enquiries income team: 01509 634817

Report a repair and/or anti-social behaviour: Please call our customer services team on 01509 634666 (out-of-office hours number for emergency repair work only - 0333 200 8811). You can report ASB at www.charnwood.gov.uk/asb and request a repair online at www.charnwood.gov.uk/repairs.

Request for buildings insurance schedule Please email the insurance team at insurance@charnwood.gov.uk or call the customer service team on 01509 634666.

Electrical safety at home

The number of electrical fires has been declining, but there are still thousands every year, with Home Office data for 2020/21 showing that over half of all accidental dwelling fires are of electrical origin.



The 2017 Grenfell Tower tragedy started with an electrical fire caused by a fridge-freezer. In 2020/21 in England, there were 55 deaths resulting from fires ignited by electrical appliances or installations and in the last ten years there have been 788 deaths from such fires. Electrical safety faults can be difficult to detect with the naked eye but there are steps the council take to raise awareness and make devices safe.

Poor electrical safety can have devastating effects and we are committed to ensuring that tenants are safe in their homes. We achieve this by carrying out a survey of the property's fixed electrical installations.

Inspection and testing

Landlords are required to have an electrical installation condition report (EICR) conducted by a competent person. In order to issue this certificate we need to get into your home to carry out an inspection in order to produce this report.

This report assesses the condition of the fixed electrical installations. It does not include freestanding or built-in electrical appliances (often called 'white goods'). The inspection must occur every five years, or more frequently if deemed necessary by the inspector. As a tenant you must give us access into your home in order to carry out these electrical tests.

Consequences of refusal

If you refuse a fixed wire test, you will put your safety at risk. Without proper testing, potential hazards may go undetected. We could face prosecution: Non-compliance with safety regulations could lead to legal action against the landlord.

If you refuse us access to carry out the inspection then you are in breach of tenancy and we will take legal action against you in the courts in order to enforce your conditions of tenancy and give us access. Ensuring your safety is our priority and we ask you to work with us by making it your priority, too.

If we have contacted you about your electrical safety test, and you have not provided access for it to be completed, please call 01509 634984 to arrange an appointment for it to take place.

Here's a checklist on how you can avoid electrical fires at home:

- Check that you use the right fuse to prevent overheating
- Ensure that your electrical appliance has a British safety mark when you buy it
- Keep to one plug per socket where possible
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions when charging electrical goods, and look for the CE mark that indicates chargers comply with British safety standards
- An extension lead or adaptor will have a limit to how many amps it can take, so be careful not to overload them to reduce the risk of a fire. Appliances use different amounts of power – a television may use a 3amp plug and a vacuum cleaner a 5amp plug for example
- Keep all electrical appliances clean and in good working order to prevent them starting a fire
- Look out for signs of dangerous or loose wiring, including scorch marks, hot plugs and sockets, fuses that blow or circuit-breakers that trip for no clear reasons, or flickering lights
- Replace any old cables and leads, especially if they are hidden from view
- Always unplug your appliances to reduce the risk of fire
- Ensure that all appliances are turned off when you go to bed, and when they are not being used.