

The Church of England Pensions Board

Housing Department

Summer Newsletter

September 2024



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Hello,

The Housing Team carry out a huge number of different activities, and being involved in this variety is one of the most rewarding parts of my role.

Looking at my diary for this week, I will be leading one of our quarterly Safeguarding meetings, chairing our monthly Housing Senior Leadership Team meeting where we review performance (including all our building safety and statutory compliance responsibilities) and having our annual meeting with one of the external partners who provide financing to support us in adding new homes to our portfolio.

As well as the day-to-day work of delivering services, I, along with the team, are in the midst of digesting the feedback we have heard on our ideas for how the Church might enable choice for future retirees about their housing plans, to support upcoming national Church funding discussions.

We are also taking good steps forward in progressing the procurement of our new repairs and maintenance service to replace Sanctuary who are standing down after 14 years. There is an update on this from David Hann on page 7. Transitions to new maintenance providers are never straightforward so we are working hard to iron out the likely bumps in the road.

All this work however is there with one objective – supporting you, our tenants and residents. And the highlight of the coming week isn't going to be any of these commitments but welcoming our Resident Panel to our first ever in-person meeting. They are stepping out from behind their computer screens and coming to Church House (our London office) for a day together with the Housing Team.

I'm grateful for the time and commitment which our Resident Panel give to our work together, whether its reviewing communications, providing honest feedback on how well we are doing or suggesting changes to key processes. Together with surveys, the letters and emails you our residents write to us – with concerns and sometimes compliments – our Panel ensures that we remain focussed on serving you. If you would like to get involved with the Residents Panel, please get in touch via cepbfeedback@churchofengland.org

Have a great summer.

Best wishes,
Tom England
Director of Housing

Pilot Resident Sentiment Survey



In December last year we piloted our very first resident sentiment survey. The survey was sent to a random sample of 450 tenants in our Rental and Community Living Schemes to seek their views on Pension Board Housing and the services we provide.

We are delighted with the level of response we had to the survey with 308 of you completing and sending us your views.

Thank you for your time and your honesty about our services. It is very much appreciated, and we are looking at carefully at all the feedback we received.

Here are some headlines.

We asked, *"taking everything into account how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the housing service provided by the Church of England Pensions Board overall?"* In response **81%** said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the housing service provided by the Board.

Other key points of feedback include:

- **78%** were satisfied with the way in which the Pensions Board communicates with residents.
- **80%** thought that Board keeps you informed about the things that matter to you.
- **76%** were satisfied that the Pensions Board provides a home that is well maintained. Around 72% were satisfied overall with the repairs service undertaken by Sanctuary.
- **89%** of you said you would be willing to have energy improvement works carried out to your home.

Next steps

This is just a snapshot but is already giving useful feedback to us to inform the service we provide to you e.g. highlighting areas of strength and areas we need to focus on a bit more.

We will send out a full survey to all our tenants and residents in the Autumn. We hope to email most surveys out, as well as offering paper options to those who need it. Please look out for your survey in the coming months.

Finally, we would like to thank our Resident Panel for their help with setting some of the questions.



Enabling choice about future retirement housing plans

The Pensions Board recently published a [report](#) sharing the feedback gathered through the recent conversation process on how the Church might best support future retirees with housing.

Thank you again to all residents who shared their views on this process. While the ideas proposed won't have an impact on you, it was important to us that we heard your perspective and wisdom.

To share some headlines from the feedback:

- **87%** of respondents supported steps to enable choice around future housing plans.
- There was strong support for planning which starts earlier and runs throughout the ministry - with a clear desire for advice that is both personalised and in-person.
- There was also a pull for more agency and responsibility at an individual level.
- Younger respondents were particularly interested in any help which put home ownership in reach for those living in tied accommodation or on a stipend.
- Feedback also highlighted that the Church should do more to signpost to, partner with and make connections with expert providers who can offer new/more choice to clergy about future housing plans.
- We also heard some repeated areas of concern e.g. on adequacy of stipends, and with the challenges of undertaking retirement planning alongside a busy ministry.

- The feedback also further underscores the importance of the provision of quality Church retirement housing to clergy well-being.

This feedback will be used to inform the design of future services and support offered to clergy with their retirement housing plans, and to inform proposals into upcoming national Church funding discussions.

If you have a moment, please do have a look at the report which is available at www.churchofengland.org/enablingchoice.



Latest Stewardship Report

Recently the Board published its fourth Annual Stewardship Report, designed to share more about our work on responsible investment on behalf of pension scheme members.

This is our most comprehensive report to date detailing the approach the Board takes and the impact we seek to have through careful stewardship of the assets entrusted to us.

To find out more please go to www.churchofengland.org/cepb



News from Community Living

Congratulations to Joyce Beckley, a resident at Gracey Court who abseiled down St John the Baptist Church in Broadclyst for charity.

Joyce raised a fantastic £500 for her endeavours.



St John the Baptist, Broadclyst



Pictures of D-day celebrations at Gracey Court



Commemorating D-Day **D-DAY80**

On the 6th of June, the nation commemorated 80 years since the Normandy landings.

The D-day landing was the largest seaborne invasion in history. Along with the associated airborne operations, it marked the beginning of the liberation of France and Western Europe.

Across our community living schemes, our residents and staff held events to remember the events of the 6th of June and to honour the brave personnel who risked their lives for freedom and peace.

To find out more about life at Community Living please go to

www.churchofengland.org/housing

Alternatively, you are always welcome to drop by and say hello. Please just get in touch with the scheme manager.



Supporting Moves in Retirement



We know that during retirement your personal circumstances may change over time and your current home may no longer be suitable for you and this could necessitate a move to more suitable accommodation.

When this happens, we are here to help and support you to find the right type of housing for your circumstances.

How we can help you:

Our dedicated team of **Housing Officers** can help you consider options with a range of different housing providers, as well as our own Community Living Schemes, and rental homes so that you find a home that best meets your needs. They will give you clear, timely, accessible information and guidance to enable you to make informed decisions about what is right for you and those you live with.

Our **Housing Support Officer** can help advise and guide you through the whole moving process. They can identify, source, organise, and arrange many aspects of the move with you; from joining you to view a potential new property or scheme and helping to complete application forms, to the

logistics of packing and moving. They can help with travel arrangements and have useful information on tasks like the re-direction of post and changing utility suppliers. They can continue to support you after the move too, with any local details that you may require to help you settle into your new home.

Our **Welfare Advisor** can support you and help you to access any additional financial support that you may be entitled to that can help you with a move.

They can give advice in several ways, enabling you to make informed and realistic choices prior to moving. This includes identifying charitable financial support grants that cover a wide range of essential needs/items associated with moving; each case dealt with on its own merits subject to customers meeting the relevant eligibility criteria. In addition to this, they can run full benefit checks to see that you are not missing out on any social security entitlements, with a view to maximising your income and easing financial pressure on you.

All our advice and support are there to help you, your wellbeing and quality of life and empowering you to be best able to manage your affairs and enjoy your retirement.

Contacting the Housing Team

To contact the Housing Team please email housingservices@churchofengland.org and one of our Housing Officers will contact you. Alternatively, you can call the helpline on 020 7898 1824 and ask to speak to a member of the Housing Team.



Important Information Checking your gas hob

We have become aware that several manufacturers of gas hobs are undertaking corrective works to remedy a potential fault in products they have supplied. The fault, if left uncorrected, may result in a gas leak leading to a possible risk of fire or explosion.

The brand names affected include:

Belling, Stoves, Cata, Culina, Caple, Comfee, Cooke and Lewis (a B&Q brand), Cookology, Electriq, Kitchenplus, Russell Hobbs, Samsung, Statesman and Swan.

To find out if your gas hob is affected you can either scan the QR code or visit the government website at



<https://www.gov.uk/product-safety-alerts-reports-recalls/important-safety-message-gas-hob-elbow-joints-corrective-action-programme>

Here you will find links to the affected manufacturers' website, information about the products and if the one you own is affected by the potential fault. You will also find the contact number to call to report it. Any corrective work required will be undertaken by the manufacturer at no cost to you.

So do not delay, check your hob out today.

Priority Services Register

Have you heard about the priority services register that most of the energy and water companies have?

The priority services register is for customers who are more vulnerable and are likely to be at risk if their energy or water supplies are cut off. This applies to all people over the age of 66 or are ill or disabled.

Applying to the register provides access to free extra services. For example:

- ✓ Advanced notice of any planned power cuts for customers where they need their energy supply for medical reasons.
- ✓ Priority in an emergency (this could include providing alternative cooking or heating facilities if your energy supply is disconnected).
- ✓ A password protection scheme to help you work out if the callers, for example, meter readers, are genuine.
- ✓ Quarterly meter reading services if there is no-one in the house able to read the meter.
- ✓ If there is an issue with your water supply, your provider will offer to have bottled water delivered to your home.
- ✓ If you are on the priority services register your energy company is not allowed to disconnect your supply during the winter. (October-March)

To find out more about how to join the register, contact your energy and or water suppliers, and ask to be placed on the priority services register.



Update on the new Repairs and Maintenance Contract

Recently, we wrote to our rental and “lease to occupy” shared owners to let you know that our maintenance and repairs contract with Sanctuary is ending as of 31 March 2025.

We are in the middle of a procurement exercise to select new contractors to support our residents, with our requirements due to be issued to prospective partners in early Autumn. Thank you to our Resident Panel for their involvement in a recent workshop to look at lessons learned from the contract with Sanctuary. This has provided useful feedback to inform the procurement exercise underway.

We will keep all residents up to date with progress and will write to you with details of the new contractor(s) once they are in place.

In the interim, any repairs you need to have undertaken to your home should continue to be reported, to Sanctuary, as normal. Repairs can be reported by telephone on 0800 916 1434 or from a mobile on 0300 123 3566.

Non-urgent repairs can be reported by email at cscpb@sanctuary-housing.co.uk.

Also, please note, that if you have a gas safety check due by 31st May 2025, this will be undertaken by Sanctuary (as they generally try to do these up to 2 months before the check is due).

A note for Shared owners

If you are a shared ownership customer on a “lease to occupy” and repairs to your home are undertaken by us/Sanctuary, we will write to you separately to consult with you on our proposals.

If you have any queries about this update, then please do contact our Property Services Team on pbhpropertyservices@churchofengland.org or call the helpline on 020 7898 1824.

Government Funding for Energy Efficiency Works

Did you know that there are some government fully funded energy efficient measures that our tenants in our Church Retirement Living homes can apply for directly?

To find out if you are eligible for the funding, please follow the simple steps set out below:

Step 1: Find out what Energy Performance Certificate your home has.

For rental tenants, a copy of this was posted to you with the new Tenants' Handbook between September 2023 and February 2024. Alternatively, you can look this up here [Find an energy certificate - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

If your property has an EPC rating of D, E, F or G you may be eligible for a grant.

Step 2: Gather the following information:

- The Energy Performance Certificate for your property
- Know the heating fuel for your home (gas / electric / oil / LPG).
- Details of your Local Authority.
- Details of your Council Tax band
- Your annual household income (many grants have an income threshold).
- Details of any long-term health conditions for any household members.
- Details of any benefits you receive.
- Pensions Board contact details- please use this email address: housing@churchofengland.org



- Your property details – Full address and postcode.

Step 3: Call the Government advice line 0800 098 7950 to check eligibility.

Make sure to ask which grants are fully funded, and which may need a landlord contribution.

Step 4: Contact your Property Services Officer at pbhpropertyservices@churchofengland.org

who will:

- review any proposed work.
- review any landlord contribution needed and,
- assist you in the process to gain landlord consent.

Who is my Property Services Officer?

- **North Region:** Please contact Dean Pratt
- **Southeast Region:** Please contact Claire Ives
- **Southwest Region:** Please contact Karen Stephens
- **Midlands Region:** Please contact Fiona Gaughan

Have you got a Smart Meter?



In our recent resident survey, 65% of respondents indicated that they have a smart electricity meter.

Smart meters are the new generation of energy meters and are central to our shift to a cleaner, more flexible energy system. We need to be able to adapt to the new greener ways we now generate energy, for example through wind and solar power.

Many energy suppliers are installing smart meters as part of a national government programme to replace older energy meters.

Your supplier will contact you to let you know when you are due to get one. You can also request one by visiting www.smartenergygb.org/about-smart-meters/get-a-smart-meter

Why it may be worth considering a smart meter?

We would encourage all our tenants and residents to think about having a smart meter installed to help our transition to a greener energy network.

It may also save you money as some suppliers offer agile tariffs that reduce your charges if you use power when it is cheaper for them to buy on the wholesale market, or when it is cheaper to supply to you – for example on a windy or sunny day.

You do not need to ask for our permission to install a smart meter unless your energy provider needs to move your gas or electric meter within your home.

