



# Tenants' Newsletter



April 2014

## Odu-Dua Housing Association

### Your service charge explained

All tenants pay rent on their homes. However, some tenants have extra services and pay charges for them as well. These charges are separated from the rent and are used to cover things in communal areas such as lighting and cleaning.

Service charges are cost-based. This means that you are only charged according to how much we spend on the services. Not all tenants pay the fees. If you have a shared communal area, it is very likely that you pay service charges.



#### What are included in service charges?

The services that we provide may include communal cleaning, bulk refuse, door entry system, pest control, electricity and lifts. But the actual services may be varied between different properties.

If you are paying a service charge it will say so in your Tenancy Agreement. There will also be a list of the services you get. You can also refer to the breakdown of service charges that was sent to you along with the rent increase letter. If you require an extra copy of the breakdown of service charges, you can contact the office on 0207 625 1799.

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### More changes to the team

Shantol, the Housing Assistant, has left Odu-Dua in March. We thank her for the hard work in the past few months and wish her all the best in the future career.



In the mean time, we welcomed Miss Diana Duncan to join us as Housing Officer. Diana has over 20 years experience of providing housing management services in a variety of housing associations and local authorities; her most recent post was with London & Quadrant HA. She will work with the team and liaise with Akima to provide a customer focussed housing management service. One of her key priorities is looking at the rental income, focussing on tenants not paying their rent as well as assisting those who may be having difficulties in paying their rent.



### Get in touch online

#### [www.odu-dua.org](http://www.odu-dua.org)

Do you know that you can get on hold with your Housing Officers and Repair Officer through our website? When you get on the website, go to the section of 'Tenant Services'. In here, you can find 'Rent Queries' and 'Report a Repair'. Select them accordingly, fill in the form and press send, your queries will go straight into your Officers' email inboxes. The website is also available on mobiles.

If you have other comments, complements and feedback about Odu-Dua, you can also send through your messages by clicking on the button of 'Your Feedback' on the website's homepage.

However, do not report emergency repairs online. If you have an emergency repair, call the office on 0207 625 1799 immediately or phone APM Maintenance on 0208 385 2133 when it's out of office hours.

# Preventing condensation: what you can do

The most common form of unwanted dampness is water from the air that forms as condensation. Condensation is often as a result of poor heating and ventilation. When the warm, moist air comes into contact with cold surfaces, walls, windows, etc, the air will condense and water will form on these surfaces. The ignorance of condensation can lead to a deterioration in the property, stained curtains and decay in window frames. Moulds will appear on the surface of wallpapers and paints in poorly ventilated areas. Condensation can also occur under suspended floors greatly increasing the chances of fungal decay in floor timbers.

## What to do to control condensation?

- ✓ Always leave the extractor fans on especially when you are cooking and after shower or bath. Some of you switch off the extractor fans in the kitchen and the bathroom due to the cost. However, the extractor fans use very little electricity. Switching off the fans may lead to greater cost due to condensation.
- ✓ Cover pans when you're cooking. Don't leave kettles and pans boiling longer than necessary.

- ✓ Hang washing outside to dry whenever you can. If you have to dry washing indoors use the bathroom and keep the door shut and the room well ventilated.
- ✓ Keep the door shut to stop the moist air spreading into the rest of your home, especially when you're washing, cooking or taking a shower or bath,
- ✓ Keep a small window ajar, or a trickle ventilator open, in each occupied room to give background ventilation, (but make sure your home is still secure).

# Keep your home fire safe

Most fires in the home start when you least expect them. Some simple actions can keep your home fire safe.

- ✓ Fit a smoke alarm and make sure it's working.
- ✓ Test your smoke alarm regularly.
- ✓ Never smoke in bed, or in an armchair if you think you may fall asleep.
- ✓ Do not leave a lit cigarette, pipe and candle unattended.
- ✓ Do not throw hot ash into the bin.
- ✓ Keep matches and lighters well out of the reach of children.
- ✓ Never leave pans unattended when cooking.
- ✓ Do not overload electrical sockets.
- ✓ Sit at least three feet away from heaters.
- ✓ Never put a heater near clothes or furniture.



# Free childcare (early education) for two year olds



The Free Early Education for Two Year Old offers eligible children up to 15 hours per week of high quality early years education from the term after their second birthday.

In order to qualify for a free place you must be in receipt of one of the following support payments:

- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The 'Guaranteed' element of the state pension credit
- Child tax credit - provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual

gross income of no more than £16,190.00 (as assessed by HMRC)

- Working Tax Credit 'run-on' - the payment someone may receive for a further four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit.

In addition, the following group of children are also eligible:

- Children looked after by the Local Authority: Child in Care.

If you meet the criteria, call your local council.

Barnet: 0800 389 8312

Brent: 020 8937 1234

Camden: 020 7974 1679 option 2

Hillingdon: 0800 073 4800