



# Tenants' Newsletter



July 2013

## Odu-Dua Housing Association

### Act on rent arrears

In June, we evicted one tenant who was in high rent arrears. It was a hard decision to make. However, it is very important that you act on your arrears immediately and continue to reduce it. Otherwise, further legal action will be taken to possess your home.



Bedroom Tax is implemented. Council Tax Benefit is cut. The financial burden on each household is getting heavier. We've noticed that some of you are facing higher and higher rent arrears.

Odu-Dua understands that situations might be difficult for you. However, if you fall behind with rent payment, you should talk to your Housing Officer, Akima, before arrears build up. An agreement to repay the money at a set amount and frequency might be an option for you.

Alternatively, if you are affected by the bedroom tax, you can take steps to help yourself by exchanging homes with other

tenants through HomeSwapper or House Exchange. Registering with either company is free. Make sure that you discuss the exchange with Akima and make Odu-Dua fully aware of your progress. Your existing rent arrears will need to be cleared before you move into another property.

If you prefer to move to a smaller home with Odu-Dua, you can request a mutual exchange form to register for a transfer. Please be aware that we do not have empty properties at the moment, but we will contact you as soon as there's a suitable property available.

Paying your rent should be the priority when you are planning your budget. High rent arrears

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may result in losing your home. If you are worried and would like more information or advice, call the office on **0207 625 1799** and speak to Akima. You can also arrange office appointments or home visits to discuss suitable payment agreements.

### New faces join the team



We are excited to introduce three new members of staff to the team: Zoe Gayle, Sharon Dawe and Rakesh Outar. Many of you may have spoken to Zoe. She is the new Estate Services Co-ordinator, who is based at Ebony House and responsible for

managing the Lithos Road estate in NW3.

Sharon Dawe joined us as the Repairs Assistant. She has over 25 years of public and housing sector experience. She will assist Miral with all your repairs and maintenance queries.

Rakesh Outar brings a wealth of finance experience and takes up the role of Finance Officer. She is responsible for managing Odu-Dua's accounting and bookkeeping systems.

# A happy neighbourhood starts from you

Getting to know your neighbours helps create a sense of community and contributes to a happier and safer living environment for everyone.

We should all make an effort to get to know and to get along with our neighbours. Here are a few tips for you to have a great neighbourhood.

It starts with communicating with your neighbours. Simply smiling or saying hello is a good start. Be kind and considerate to your neighbours, treat them as you would want them to treat you.

Talk to your neighbours about concerns before alerting authorities to see if the issue can be resolved. Try to avoid making so much

noise that it becomes a nuisance to your neighbours.

If you have young children or pets, take steps to ensure the noise they make is kept to a minimum. If planning a party or anything which will involve guests and possibly noise at your property, then make your neighbours aware prior to the night, even invite them if appropriate.



# What is your number?



We are currently updating the records of your contact details. Some of us will be calling you to make sure all your landline numbers, phone numbers and email addresses are up-to-date.

If you change your contact details, it's important to let us know as soon as possible. The most recent contact records will help us to inform you of any repairs appointments, housing issues and rent changes.

Any information you provide is held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and will only be used by Odu-Dua. We will not disclose any details to third party without your permission.

# Reporting Emergency Repairs

Any repairs outside of office hours are dealt with by contractors who operate on a rota basis. The emergency repairs number is **0208 385 2133**. However, only genuine emergencies will be dealt with outside of office hours.



When you report repairs to us, they are put into different categories which means they will be completed within either 24 hours, 5 days or 28 days.

There are some repairs for which tenants are responsible; however, exceptions can be made for elderly or disabled tenants. Repair items such as no mains water supply, no electricity supply, gas leaks and broken pipes are deemed as genuine emergencies and will be dealt with within 24 hours.

For full information on which repairs you are responsible for and what category of emergency repairs come under, look at the tenants handbook.

# Help 4 parents in difficult times

Being a parent isn't always easy. Home-Start is a national family support charity that helps parents to build better lives for their children.



It offers support, friendship and practical help to families with at least one child under five.

The volunteers provide one-to-one support for parents by visiting the family's home each week. You can discuss tailored support which will better suit your family circumstances. Volunteers will keep visiting until the youngest child turns five or starts school, or until the parents feel they are able to cope without the support.

Camden: Family Resource Centre, 020 7424 1603

Barnet: Avenue House, 020 8371 0674

Hillingdon: All Saints Church Hall, 01895 252 804