



TENANTS' NEWSLETTER

Winter 2010/11



'A Fair Service'

Venture was inspected by the Audit Commission in September 2010. In December they published their report which recognised the improvements in services that you will have seen since our last inspection. They said:

Housing management services provided by Venture Housing Association are fair. It is easy for tenants to access services, nearly all properties have been improved to the Decent Homes standard and neighbourhood working addresses tenants' key concerns.

However, they believe our repairs service is weak, as is the approach to securing value for money and for these reasons they thought that our prospects for further improvement were uncertain.

We have been working with tenants to put these things right.

Already we have delivered a number of the recommendations for improvement. If you would like to get involved in this work, have a suggestion for improvement, or would like a full copy of the report either:

Call: phone us on **0151 261 2100**

Click: visit our website at **vha.org.uk**, or

Come on in: call into our offices at **212h Boaler Street, Liverpool, L6 6AE**

The more tenants who are involved in these improvements the better the outcome will be for all tenants. Help us to improve things for all Venture tenants. Get involved now!

Satisfaction Up



Satisfaction with Ventures Services is on the up. Each year we ask our tenants what they think of our services. The full results of this survey can be found on our website but here are the headlines:

- 84.6% are satisfied with Venture's services overall (up 4.5% since last year)
- 67% are satisfied with the opportunities to get involved (up 4.1% since last year)
- 84.5% are satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service (up 5% since last year)
- 85% are satisfied that their rent offers value for money (up 2% since last year)

We've still some work to do on improving satisfaction in other key areas such as anti social behaviour and getting hold of the right person, so we'll be out and about talking to tenants at their homes until May to help us to understand what needs to change.

Thank you to the many people who completed their satisfaction form.

New Repairs Day

Rent Increases

Local Offers

Good Neighbour Award

Get Involved

5 Year Plan

Sweet 16th May is New Repairs Day

You've told us that the repairs service is the most important service to you and our goal is to provide you with an excellent repair service that offers good value for money.

So with the help of Tenants Committee Members the repairs service has been tendered and **from 16th May** a new contractor will be providing responsive repairs in your homes.

Morrison is our new contractor. Tenants were a key part of the panel that chose Morrison as our contractor. Tenants were involved at every step and will continue to be involved in monitoring the service delivered by Morrison to make sure they keep their promises.

The company work all over the country, but their local base is in Bootle, and they are already working in your area. You will have seen their vans out and about.

Some Familiar Faces

Some of the men who repair your homes now will transfer to Morrison and will continue to do repairs on your homes.

Some New Jobs

Morrison has also already started to recruit new staff to ensure that they are ready to go on day one. Job opportunities were advertised at our weekly jobs café to allow local people the chance to apply for these jobs.

In July 2011 Morrison will also be recruiting a small number of apprentices and again, these opportunities will be advertised through our job café to allow tenants and other local people the opportunity to apply if they wish.

Appointments – every time

You will still report your repairs to our customer service team on **0151 261 2100**. But they will now have access to a new system called **Optitime** which allows them to give you an appointment there and then without the need for us to call you back.

Text Updates

Morrison will send you a text message to tell you they have the job, and to let you know when they are on their way (***so it's really important that you tell us if your mobile phone number changes***)

Getting it 'right first time'

Tenants have told us that they want repairs done properly first time around. So this is one of the things we will be measuring. Morrison are committed to getting things right first time, reducing the inconvenience and cost of repeat visits.

These are just some of the benefits the new service will bring. We look forward to working with Morrison and know they are looking forward to working with you. If you want to join those tenants already involved in monitoring the repair service call Dennis Graham on **0151 261 2100**.

Remember, you still call us on **0151 261 2100** when you want to report repairs. We make the appointment, Morrison do the repair.

New and Improved Gas Servicing & Gas Repairs – 16th May



With the help of tenants, Venture has awarded its gas service and repairs contract to Bromborough based PH Jones. PH Jones was started by Phil Jones in 1963 and remains a family run business. They were awarded this work based on the quality and value for money their bid offered.

PH Jones will start this work on **16th May**.

From this date when you have a gas repair or need to arrange a gas service you will call PH Jones who will complete arrange the appointment, complete the work, and make sure you are happy, keeping us informed at every step of the way.

So **from 16th May** call PH Jones on **0151 343 4198** to report gas repairs (eg a faulty boiler, radiators not heating up) and to arrange your gas servicing.

DENNIS (not the Menace)!



Venture is proud to introduce your new repairs manager, Dennis Graham. Dennis, whose official title is Assets and Contracts Manager, joins us from Cobalt Housing in Croxteth and brings with him a wealth of experience in delivering excellent repair services. He'll be leading on the new repairs contracts and will be coming out to meet tenants very soon. In the meantime if you would like to speak to Dennis give him a call on **0151 261 2100**.

Rent Increases

Last year most of you saw your rent go down. This year we have increased the rent and a number of tenants have been in touch to ask why their rent has gone up when things are so difficult with the economy. We thought a short explanation might help you to understand. In 2003, the Government decided that all social landlords (such as housing associations and councils) needed to work out their rent charges in the same way. They called this process rent re-structuring or rent convergence. Because of this your annual rent increase is set using a formula which considers:

- average manual wages in the area
- property values in the area
- the number of bedrooms in your home

The idea was that, over time, two tenants living in similar properties in the same area should be paying the same rent, whether the landlord is a housing association or a council.

Local earnings: the local earnings part of the formula compares the average manual wage in Liverpool and Wirral with wages elsewhere in the country.

Property values: the council in your area were asked to value properties for this purpose. But it's not possible for the council to value each property individually. So they identify typical properties (called 'beacons') within each area and these have been valued by local surveyors. These beacon homes are then used to give a value to every other property that is of the same size, type and location. All properties have been valued at 1999 prices.

Number of bedrooms: the number of bedrooms in your home is also used to calculate the rent. The more bedrooms there are, the more the rent will be.

What will happen to rent because of this policy?

Taken together these elements make up a **target rent** for your home. This target rent increases each year.

If the target rent for your home is higher than your current rent you will see an annual increase until the target rent is reached. Some rents will increase by more than inflation, others will increase by less than inflation but the Government has stated that no-one's rent will increase by more than:

- the inflation rate in September of the previous year
- + ½%
- £2 per week

We have to reach the target rent on all of our homes by 2012. While this doesn't make things any easier we hope this explanation makes it easier to understand why we've acted as we have.

LOCAL OFFERS

In October 2010 we sent you a copy of our annual report to tenants'. This described how we comply with the Tenant Services Authority's (TSA) regulatory framework. In the report we explained how we are meeting the standards set by the TSA which are broken down into the following areas:

- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment
- Homes
- Tenancy
- Neighbourhood and Community
- Value for money
- Governance and Financial viability



In the report we also explained that we would be working with other local landlords and tenants to develop 'local service offers'. It is our promise of the services you can expect from Venture Housing and aims to tailor services to the specific needs of our customers.

Following consultation with tenants it was agreed that we would develop four local offers which would cover the following areas:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Lettings
- Repairs
- Responses to hate crimes

Since October we have been working with the Tenant's Committee to develop the detail of the offers. The Tenant's Committee held a series of meetings in October to which all tenants' were invited and the views of our tenants have been used to shape the local offers. The Tenants' Committee will be monitoring our performance against these offers in the future to make sure that we deliver on the promises that we are making.

We will be sending all of our tenants a copy of the local offers soon, watch out for it coming through your door.

If you would like to get involved in the Tenant's Committee please contact **Peter Barnett** or **Louise Wallace 0151 261 2100**.



Investing in Your Homes

As you know we take pride in offering an excellent repairs service and you approve because 85% have told us you are satisfied with this service.

But we also want to keep your homes in good condition. Each year we invest in improvements and upgrades as things like windows, kitchens and bathrooms reach the end of their useful life.

Tenants in West Everton, Kirkdale, Kensington and Birkenhead have already started to see these improvements.

In the next few years we will continue this programme of investment in new kitchens, bathrooms, heating upgrades, double glazed windows and lots more. The table below shows how many properties will benefit from this work.

As time progresses we'll add more and will keep you informed as this investment programme reaches your area.

	kitchens	bathrooms	double glazing	heating upgrade
2011-2012	100+	100+	140+	80+
2012-2013	140+	60+	40+	30+
2013-2014	80+	40+	50+	30+
2014-2015	70+	40+	50+	30+

This investment continues beyond 2015.

If you'd like to know whether your home is included in this programme check out the repairs section of our website at: vha.org.uk



How does the tune go.....

*‘that’s when good
neighbours become
good friends’*

Every day we read about neighbours from hell but we know that there are lots of people out there who wouldn’t be without their neighbours. So in recognition of this we’re launching our very first **Good Neighbour Award** to find the best neighbour living in a Venture property.

If your neighbour is the best you could wish for and you would like to see them rewarded for their patience, help, support or just for being there then watch this space. We’ll be announcing more details in our **Spring** newsletter.

A Thoroughly Modern Way to Get Involved

To add to the many different ways you can get involved in your housing services Ray Davies, Tenant Board Member has started his very own blog!

Each year we produce a report that tells our tenants how we performed in the key areas they find most important. We’re just about to start on the report for his year. If you have strong opinions on what should be in this report, or would like to get involved in producing it please get in touch with Graeme Freeman on **0151 261 2100** who will let you know how you can do this.

The Best Things in Life Aren't Always Free!



Most repairs to your home don't cost you anything. But there are times when we may charge to complete repairs to your home

We may charge for repairs if the damage is:

- caused by you, a member of your family or a visitor to your home
- the result of abuse or neglect by you, a member of your family or a visitor to your home
- the result of a crime but you haven't reported this to the police
- caused by gaining entry to your home because you forgot or lost your keys
- to replace something you have removed, or remove something you have fitted without permission eg a gas fire

There may also be a charge if the repair is your responsibility as part of your tenancy agreement eg replace a toilet seat.



Why Charge?

- because tenants have told us that people who abuse their homes should pay
- so responsible tenants aren't penalised for the actions of others
- to make best use of the repairs budget we have to maintain your homes

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0151 261 2100

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