

Progress

Autumn 2004

For the tenants and residents of BPHA



bpha

building communities



Rose and Lily Aylott,
tenants at Sir William
Harpur House



John Prescott meets bpha

Deputy Prime Minister
meets with BPHA
construction apprentices



Bedford Foyer

Read about BPHA's superb
facility

Customer satisfaction

A satisfaction survey
gives you a voice in BPHA

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USEFUL BPHA PUBLICATIONS

- Tenancy agreement
- Your tenancy agreement explained - video available in English, Punjabi, Italian, and Bengali
- Tenants handbook
- Leaseholders handbook
- Tenants home contents insurance - booklet and application form
- Tenants panel - enquiry form
- Sustainable communities plan - leaflet
- Service statements: rent payments
- BPHA corporate plan

USEFUL BPHA TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Useful Numbers

All numbers are preceded by STD 01234 unless otherwise stated.

Housing Officers

These are often your first point of contact. They can help with all tenancy matters, rent queries, home visits, aids and adaptations etc. Your quarterly rent statement will tell you who your Housing Officer is. This includes listings for shared owners and private lettings.

| | |
|-------------------|--------|
| Janice Anderton | 221360 |
| Stuart Bennett | 221352 |
| Joanne Bennett | 221316 |
| Wayne Breed | 221347 |
| Harpreet Chander | 221209 |
| Richard Garnham | 221354 |
| Rose Khan | 221379 |
| Philip Keech | 221374 |
| Catherine Andrews | 221351 |
| Will McFarland | 221344 |
| Mark Joseph | 221361 |
| Sohan Sihota | 221372 |
| Rob Stanley | 221363 |
| Rosemary McCabe | 221371 |
| Steve Parsons | 221353 |
| David Register | 221373 |
| Tricia Roberts | 221362 |

Maintenance Surveyors

| | |
|--------------|--------|
| David Imrie | 221358 |
| Barry White | 221358 |
| Keith Houson | 221358 |

Welfare Benefits advice

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Annette Pacey | 221292 |
| Amanda Ryan | 221287 |
| Jobseekers Allowance | Contact local Job Centre |
| Housing & Council Tax Benefit | Contact local Council |
| Disability Living Allowance | 0800 882 200 |
| Tax Credit/Disability Premiums | 0845 300 3900 |
| Invalid Care Allowance | 01253 856 123 |
| Attendance Allowance | 0800 882 200 |
| Incapacity Benefit | Contact local Dept Work & Pensions |
| Statutory Maternity pay | Contact employer |
| Maternity Allowance/grant | Contact local Dept Work & Pensions |

Residents & Tenants Associations

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Abbott Crescent Residents Group | via 221219 |
| Balliol Community Action Group | via 221219 |
| Brickhill Roundabout | 854959 |
| Dumble Close Community Action Group | 01536 741921 |
| Foyer Residents Group | via 221270 |
| Shortstown Residents Group | 403644 |
| Tavistock Action Group | 306864 |

If you are interested in setting up a new tenants or residents association, or want to tackle a community matter, BPHA's Community Development team can help. Contact us on tel: 01234 221348

Other useful BPHA numbers

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Bedford Foyer | 221270 |
| Carelink | 211095 |
| Contents insurance - enquiry | 221292 |
| Contents insurance - claims | 01962 844454 |
| Repairs | Freephone 0800 581707 |

Other useful numbers

| | |
|---|---|
| Beds Drug & Alcohol Action Team | 408348 ext 44358 |
| Bulk rubbish collection (Bedford) | 221708 - fee payable |
| Carelink | 01234 211095 |
| Credit Union | Anglia: 01233 893642 Bedford: 01234 346352 Cambridge: 01733 371760 Corby: 01536 747918 |
| Disability Information Service | 349988 |
| Domestic Violence National Helpline | 0800 2000 247 |
| Furniture Link Bedford | 353578 |
| Handyperson Scheme for the over 60s (fee payable) | 215995 |
| Morgan & Fone (Heating Contractors) | 01582 414100 |
| Racial Harassment - tell us | 350459 |
| Tenancy Support Officers | 221101 |

For help and support in maintaining your tenancy



How do we look?

Welcome to your new style Progress, updated to match BPHA's fresh new look.

We gave ourselves a makeover when many of our partners, staff and tenants said our old image no longer suited us or reflected what we do. With competition for funds to improve our homes and build new housing becoming ever fiercer, we needed to move with the times and introduce a more modern look that gives us a headstart.

So now we've changed, and so has our style.

You'll still find our old logo appearing on some things for a little while because we are deliberately not changing everything overnight so that we can keep costs down. This means we will wait until stocks of things like leaflets run out before having them reprinted with the new look.

Some things will stay the same - our name, for example, although we are just using the initials 'BPHA' in future as our

full name is a bit of a mouthful and doesn't reflect that we provide many homes and services beyond Bedfordshire.

You'll also find that Progress has the usual news, features and information telling you all about BPHA tenants and people. We hope you like the new look, and please tell us if there is anything that you would like to see in future issues - we always welcome feedback and comments.

Choice-based lettings

For a large print, audio or Braille version, please call **01234 791080**

এটা বৃহৎ সাহায্যের জন্য অনুগ্রহ করে
01234 791081 নম্বরে টেলিফোন করুন

ਵਿਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਟੂ ਸਮਝਣ ਲਿਖ ਮੈਟਰ ਲਈ, ਮਿਹਰਬਾਨੀ
ਕਰਕੇ 01234 791082 ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫ਼ਿਨ ਕਰੋ।

اس کوکھ میں مدد کیجئے۔
مددگاروں کو خبریں ملی تو نمبر 01234 791083

Per aiuto a capire questo documento, telefona **01234 791084**

For help to understand this please ring **01234 791089**

Bengali, Punjabi, Urdu, Italian

BPHA is trying out a new way of renting properties to tenants to give them more choice about where they live.

The scheme - known as choice-based lettings - gives customers a greater say when picking their homes. The aim is to encourage people to stay in their new homes longer, creating more stable communities.

BPHA's assistant housing manager Geraldine Ryan said: "The pilot scheme will be aimed at people needing one bedroom accommodation. We'll send details of available homes to would-be tenants who have sufficient points, and ask them to say if they are interested in the accommodation.

"If more than one person 'bids' in this way, the property will generally go to the

person who has been waiting longest. The scheme will run for 12 months to begin with, and if it is successful we may extend it to other types of property."

At the moment, properties are offered to potential tenants depending on where they have said they want to live on their application form. Choice-based lettings will tell them about other properties they may not otherwise hear about, so giving them a wider choice.

If you are hoping to transfer to a one-bedroom property, this scheme may affect you. If you want more information, or know someone who does, please call our Lettings Team on 01234 328828 for advice.

John Bunyan pupil bags prize



A competition run by BPHA has benefited two Bedford schools.

The competition asked pupils of John Bunyan Upper School and Hastingsbury Upper School to design a logo for the Investors in Communities (IiC) scheme, an initiative aimed at encouraging residents to work with local agencies to improve the areas in which they live.

The two schools were selected to take part in the competition because many of their pupils live in the areas where BPHA are piloting the IiC scheme, Balliol in Kempston and the Fenlake area of Bedford.

The winner, Lynette Windridge of John Bunyan Upper School, received a prize of high street shopping vouchers. Her design (shown here) was selected by the two Community Action Groups.

Jackie Bunting of the London Road Community Action Group said: "We liked Lynette's design because we felt it was simple and eye-catching."

Carol Phillips of the Balliol Community Action Group said: "It stood out as a professional design and we're using it to

promote the work we are doing."

Lynette's winning entry won her school some computer equipment for their Art and Design Department. There were no losers as all entrants received a certificate of appreciation thanking them for their entry, together with a High Street shopping voucher. Hastingsbury Upper School also received the runner's-up prize.

Servicing your boiler

As landlords we are responsible for making sure that all gas central heating systems have an annual service. It keeps them efficient, and protects you and your family.

A small number of people die each year from carbon monoxide poisoning - an invisible tasteless odourless gas caused by badly-maintained flues and appliances - but even one is too many.

The national Health & Safety Executive advises that appliances are checked once every year, so we have a rolling programme of maintenance which does just that. You'll be contacted by

our contractor Morgan & Fone to let you know they are in your area - or you can call them direct on 01582 414100.

If you've not been contacted yet, but believe an annual check is due then contact Enid Harding, BPHA's maintenance administrator, on 01234 221277, or Repairs on 0800 581 707.

Whichever way you contact us, remember that these checks are absolutely vital - indeed if you don't allow us access to do this you are breaching your tenancy agreement which could lead to BPHA taking action against you for possession of your home. So please give us a warm welcome.

Tenants invited to House of Commons



Members from two of our residents' groups, Balliol Community Action Group and London Road Community Action Group, went to an Investors in Communities award ceremony at the House of Commons in July - invited by Lord Jeff Rooker MP, Minister of State for Regeneration and Regional Development.

The event was held by Hastoe Housing Association to thank all those housing organisations and residents' groups for

taking part in the Investors in Communities pilot scheme. Awards were also presented to organisations and groups that had been accredited, BPHA being one of them.

The two Community Action Groups are working towards obtaining their full accreditation, so BPHA would like to wish them good luck.

Investors in Communities is an initiative that encourages residents to work with other local agencies to improve the areas in which they live.

Mystery customers help BPHA



A band of independent mystery customers is helping us to check the services we offer to customers.

The 'mystery shopper' exercise is being run by independent market research agency, ORC International. It is making general housing related enquiries - without identifying where they are from - in order to find out how well BPHA staff deal with queries. The results will help us decide where service improvements could be made.

Linda Huckstep, BPHA's policy and research manager, said: "We've asked ORC to conduct their research in three areas. They are contacting us to see, firstly, how quickly and how well we answer telephone calls, secondly, how well we deal with more detailed telephone enquiries, and finally, the quality of services provided at Pilgrims House. The findings will be available at the beginning of October."

ORC research executive Liz Morley said: "Mystery shopping provides organisations

with a 'snapshot' of the service that is delivered to tenants. This information can be a powerful information source that enables housing providers to ensure that tenants' needs are being met by the services delivered."

BPHA is now looking for customers to help with the next mystery shopper exercise.

"We hope that a number of tenants will put themselves forward to be trained as mystery shoppers - they can then help review our services. We will provide training and support to those who want to be involved in the project," said Linda.

If you would like more information about the mystery shopper programme - or would like to join in future exercises - call Linda Huckstep on 01234 221221.

Did you know?

BPHA manages 360 properties in the Brickhill area. The vast majority of these - more than 200 - are flats. We also have more than 100 houses and have still managed to squeeze in the odd bungalow here and there. If you are a tenant of ours in Brickhill and have any queries regarding your tenancy or ideas on how to improve where you live, then contact your housing officer, Richard Garnham, on 01234 221354.

Focus on Brickhill

Brickhill Roundabout Tenant and Residents' Association has been running for more than eight years and covers the whole ward of Brickhill. It is run by a small group of local residents who chose the name as the roundabout is in the centre of Brickhill.

One of its many achievements is providing supermarket shopping trips.

Sue Threapleton, the association chair, said: "Currently there are no bus services to any supermarkets from Brickhill, which causes problems for local people. The trips, which are run fortnightly, are free to all Brickhill residents."

The association works closely with the local Community Centre and Community Police, as well as the new Parish Council. BPHA liaises with them on one of their ongoing projects, which is to raise awareness about anti-social behaviour.

Brickhill Roundabout is looking for additional members, so if you would like to know more, or would be able to volunteer some time to help deliver its newsletters, then contact Sue on 01234 854959.

A new home - Sir William Harpur House



From the outside, on a sunny day, you'd be forgiven for thinking you were visiting a holiday villa in Portugal - the lovely clean walls and the balconies with plants peeping out. However this isn't Portugal, it's Brickhill in Bedford and it's the new retirement housing scheme, Sir William Harpur House.

The facilities are excellent, the decor tasteful and homely, with a calm and inviting atmosphere. Lunch is served in the dining room every day and there are evening activities organised too, so there is always an opportunity to socialise.

Situated on Avon Drive, this was a project developed by BPHA in partnership with

the Harpur Trust and completed in February 2004. One of the first occupants was Mr Eric Baines who has lived in Brickhill for more than 40 years.

A lot has changed in Brickhill since Mr Baines has lived there, particularly with the increase in housing, but he said that he is very happy living in Sir William Harpur House and is fortunate to have some old friends nearby. Most of the flats have a balcony and Mr Baines enjoys sitting out with a cup of tea watching the world go by.

The BPHA secret service

Most people know BPHA offers such things as a repairs service, a tenants' home contents insurance scheme and Carelink.

But not so many know BPHA has two welfare benefits advisers to help tenants with the intricacies of the benefits system.

They provide independent advice on social security benefits (including disability benefits) and tax credits - answering questions about entitlements, benefit amounts and appeals.

Annette Pacey said: "Some straightforward queries can be dealt with by phone. Others may be more complex, or it may be easier to speak to someone face-to-face, so we can see them at our offices.

"If necessary - with your agreement - we can take action on your behalf - even representing you at social security appeals."

In exceptional circumstances welfare benefits advisers can visit tenants in their homes, although this service is not available to those living in the Counties area.

For more information contact Annette Pacey or Amanda Ryan on 01234 221292 or 221287.

Anti-social behaviour rules reviewed

BPHA is reviewing the way it deals with anti-social behaviour in light of new Government legislation.

Working with other agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour is a key BPHA commitment.

Gill Higginson, head of housing services, said: "It is absolutely crucial that our customers are involved in helping to shape the way BPHA deals with, and strives to prevent, anti-social behaviour. We really welcome the views of our customers on this issue. We want to hear from any customer willing to take part in this service review - so please volunteer if you can."

Gill said that BPHA would consult customers by whatever method they prefer, by phone, through home visits or office interviews, by e-mail, or by holding discussion groups. If you are interested in taking part, please contact Gill on 01234 221350.

Community development @ BPHA

An estate is more than a collection of houses and BPHA has a 21-strong team dedicated to Community Development working collectively with tenants and residents to bring about change.

Welfare Rights

There are two full-time welfare rights officers, who offer a specialist advice, mediation and representation service to tenants, shared owners and leaseholders. The team also provides information about benefit changes through Progress and manages the home contents insurance for residents.

To see how we make a difference, see Jane's story below.

Project Work

The team works to turn ideas into reality with projects such as the Silver Surfer project which teaches computer skills to the over-60s, fitness projects for the over-60s (Bhealthy@60), after-school clubs, employment and business start-up



initiatives, as well as neighbourhood renewal.

Community Development

Three community development officers offer a range of services - supporting residents' groups and the tenants' panel.

They have been busy recently with the new pilot of Investors in Communities, Progress and developing tenants' training. In addition, they have been running the tenant election to the Customer Services Committee, the Community Champions event and the annual volunteers' event.

Jane tells her story

"When the housing benefit department told me I had to pay back £1,000 in benefits I was stunned - I simply couldn't believe it.

Previously, in January, they had made a mistake lowering my housing benefit because of my Working Tax Credit. BPHA wrote to the housing benefit department for me, and this was put right.

But then, the housing people wrote to me to say they had made a mistake calculating my benefit. They said I had to pay back £800 in housing benefit and £200 in council tax benefit.

This made me very upset. I am a single mum with a 16-year-old daughter, and I couldn't see how I could possibly repay

that much money. I told BPHA and they said they would look into it for me. They were very supportive - they even have two welfare rights advisors.

They lodged an appeal, but the council refused to change their decision, so BPHA took my case to an independent tribunal.

They acted as my representative, speaking for me and presenting my case.

I was so pleased when the tribunal found in my favour, saying that, as the council had made the mistake, I would not have to repay the £1,000.

I'm really grateful to BPHA and all their support."

(Jane's name has been changed to protect her identity)

"A day in the life"

Kate Francis



Arriving at the Community House at 9.30am I plunge straight into my emails and in-tray!

This done, I move onto project work and start writing a

final project report for the "Flourish" project. I look at each client I have helped, and then demonstrate how the project has assisted them in developing their skills and their business.

This is rewarding as it's good to see the outcomes down on paper - there are some really positive stories. Sometimes I'm so busy I can forget that people are genuinely benefiting from the work I do.

My first client - Aleatha Cumberbatch - arrives at 11.30am. She is working on her Business Plan in the Cybersuite and is hoping that she will soon be in receipt of a £500 grant for capital start-up items from The Learning Partnership. She is an artist working towards facilitating self-designed workshops to engage all ages

with issues such as culture and healthy living, using a variety of mediums.

The House is quite busy this morning, the Citizens' Advice Bureau has been in to hold their drop-in session, and the phone rings and rings. The House has become a central part of the community - also hosting police and welfare rights and other community development surgeries - and there are plenty of local residents popping in each day.

My next client arrives at 1pm. He already has a grant and is dropping by to talk about his business and keep me updated. He is not in for too long so I update his file and get on with more project work while I wait for the next client. For my Employment Initiative project I am establishing contact and offering support to people in Kingsbrook and Cauldwell who are unemployed.

Through this project I am also researching Social Enterprises and am preparing a report looking at the possibilities for developing these. Social Enterprises aim to ultimately benefit the community and local residents, and form part of our

sustainable communities plan to develop resident and community involvement, improving quality of life and tackling poverty. The project is funded by the County Council and is part of a wider Local Public Service Agreement.

Our local trainer Philippa arrives to hold her IT training session at 2pm...laptops are set up in the Cybersuite and are ready to go. It's the last session this week so upwards and onwards...time to plan some more.

My day is drawing to a close now as it approaches 3pm and time to go. My children have their swimming lessons tonight so I'll just get through that and then flop!

Kate Francis

Tel: 01234 350795

Community Development Officer - Employment Initiative

(based at Community House, Faldo Road, Bedford)

BPHA

Can't get no satisfaction?

BPHA is about to embark upon the latest survey of its tenants to discover your views. The Government and the housing regulators require us to carry out a major customer satisfaction survey every three years.

We have commissioned MRUK, an independent research company to carry out the survey on our behalf between October and November. MRUK will select a random sample of 625 tenants - this will include those from Bedfordshire, and the Counties. The interviews will take the form of an in-home interview which will last on average 25 to 30 minutes. We'll

receive a report from MRUK by December, and we'll aim to summarise these results in the next edition of Progress.

We already collect statistics about our performance - but your views give us a fuller picture. The survey was developed by the National Housing Federation in association with the research company MORI. It has been tested out on more than 6,500 housing association tenants across the UK, and, because it's a standard test, we can compare our results with those of other associations.

The survey will ask what you expect of us and which things concern you most. It will identify areas where our services can

be improved, and will give us a snapshot of the make-up of our current tenants, in terms of such things as age and household size.

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. While the answers you give will be collated and presented to us by the research company, they won't tell us who has said what - so you can speak your mind.

So if you are approached by MRUK please participate. All researchers will carry ID and ask your permission to talk to you. If you feel uncomfortable or need further reassurance, please contact the Research and Policy team at Pilgrims House - telephone Linda Huckstep 01234 221221.

Equality & diversity - questions, questions... and hopefully service improvements!

BPHA is totally committed to equality & diversity.

We oppose discrimination on any grounds and work to ensure that our service helps everyone. We are positive about the benefits of working within diverse communities and having a diverse workforce.

Discrimination isn't an issue for a small number of people, because most people face discrimination at some point in their lives.

At BPHA we state that we will not discriminate on any of the following grounds: gender, sexual orientation, marital status, responsibility for dependants (this means children), race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, age, class, disability or unrelated criminal convictions. This long list shows that paying attention to equality and diversity benefits pretty much everybody.

Besides our moral obligation not to discriminate, we also have legal

obligations under various acts of Parliament. These include The Sex Discrimination Act 1975, The Race Discrimination Act 1976 as amended in 2000 and 2003, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. An act outlawing age discrimination is also expected within the next couple of years.

BPHA's Gill Higginson said: "We already get quite a lot of information to ensure a good service that meets a range of diverse needs. However we want to be sure that our service is continually improving for our customers as a whole, and also in the opinion of all the diverse groups.

"So - as well as asking customers questions about satisfaction with our service we will be asking equality and diversity questions about their own backgrounds and situations."

She added that BPHA would do this when someone joins the Housing Register, each

time they move into a BPHA home, when a repair is carried out, when asking for welfare benefits, when making a complaint and when responding to customer satisfaction surveys.

She emphasised that the information given will not negatively affect the outcome of housing applications, the quality of BPHA's service or the outcome of complaints. It should, however, lead to service improvements.

Gill added: "You do not have to answer any of the questions if you choose not to, or you may decide to answer some of them but not all of them. However, the more questions you answer, the more you will be helping us to provide a better service."

If you want to discuss the questions that we will be asking please call Gill Higginson, Head of Housing Management, on 01234 221350.

BEST makes things better

BPHA is trying out new technology to improve its customer services for tenants.

Called BEST (Building Effective Services for the Team), it is a 12-month pilot programme aimed at not only making services better, but also making them easier to contact and use.

Huw Jenkins, BEST programme leader for BPHA, said: "Throughout the last 18 months we have invested in new software and computers - these will be used to improve the way we respond to customer enquiries.

"We'll also be transforming our website to give tenants more information, and better ways to use BPHA services."

BEST aims to make BPHA more efficient and better managed, even though the Association is already among the top 25 per cent of housing associations in the country for efficiency. By cutting costs further, BPHA will have more money to invest in your homes without sacrificing the quality of its service.



Modern apprentices

Jaspal Kaur, our first Modern Apprentice, has successfully completed her two-year Modern Apprenticeship programme.

Jaspal works in BPHA's New Business and Development Team as an assistant administrator and has also had a period of secondment working on our reception.

Jaspal worked really hard to achieve her qualification and attended Bedford College on a regular basis and we are very proud of her achievements.

We currently have two other Modern Apprentices who are nearing completion of their qualification - Saira Bano and Kate Davis.

The Bedford Foyer is a BPHA project offering affordable accommodation and training for 16 to 24-year-olds to help them get back on their feet.



The Bedford Foyer

It is more than just a place to stay - staff are on hand 24-hours a day to give advice and support for such things as benefit claims, independent living, training initiatives, education and employment.

Up to 34 young people live at The Foyer in pleasant, comfortable surroundings. The rooms are fully furnished, and most of them have their own shower, toilet and kitchen area. There is also a shared common room fitted out with sofas, TV, and a pool table.

There is a cyber café both for residents and non-residents, which is open to the public from 9.00am to 8.30pm, seven days a week. It was re-launched on 2nd August 2004 and provides good quality food and drinks at fantastic prices. Customers can surf the net while they enjoy a nice meal. Prices are £1.00 per hour for those in receipt of benefits and £2.00 per hour for others.

Are you aged 16 to 24 and in need of low cost accommodation and meet ANY of the criteria below?

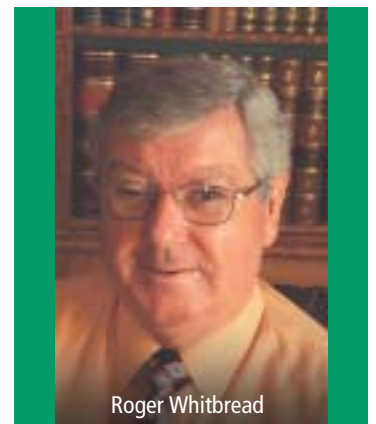
- Unemployed and want to train for a career
- In low paid employment e.g. modern apprenticeship or national traineeship
- Live or work in the Bedford area
- Planning to or currently undergoing training or are in education?

If the answer is YES to any of the above you could be eligible to live at The Foyer.

For more information or an application form please ring 01234 221270.

BPHA changes its Board

BPHA has changed the make-up of its Board to make it more responsive to the needs of tenants.



Roger Whitbread

The Board is to be reduced from 18 to 15 people, and by next summer it will decrease to ten. Our Chief Executive John Cross will now be one of the Board, as well as continuing as CEO. This is acknowledged good practice in the housing sector, as it encourages members to become more involved with the association's work. In addition, Board members will now be paid and subject to a rigorous appraisal system to make sure they are doing a good job on your behalf.

Other changes are on the way. From next summer the Board will consist of six rather than 11 business people, and there will be one tenant and two representatives of Bedford Borough Council.

Roger Whitbread, who will be chair of the Board said: "It's important there is an opportunity for tenants to have their say at the Board. It's also critical that we are able to select the right candidates who can play an effective role looking at the high level issues from a customer perspective.

"It's vital the Board has the skills and expertise to work with the staff to meet our objectives. The changes we are introducing are designed to make sure that the Board is able to meet this growing challenge."

In addition, BPHA has met with Tenants' Panel representatives to look at how

customers can be more involved in decisions. As a result, the Customer Services Committee (CSC) will play an increasing role in informing the Board and staff about tenants' views.

"Ultimately BPHA's Board is the body that is legally responsible for the management and control of what is a relatively large business operation. For example we employ more than 250 people, and we have approximately 11,000 properties valued at £389 million, so it is vitally important that we have the right people running the association, placing a strong emphasis on customers," Roger added.

Modern homes secure homes

We are now in the fifth year of our modernisation programme, which we call Modern Homes Secure Homes, and progress continues towards achieving its goals in the next few years.

Many tenants' homes have been modernised and the feedback from our satisfaction surveys show that well over 90 per cent of our customers are happy with the work, despite the inevitable upheaval.

The programme provides customers with the opportunity to participate in the design of their new kitchens, and to choose the layout, finishes and colours to suit their personal requirements. Tenants have open days at a modernised show house, which gives them the chance to meet their project manager and other key staff, as well as one-to-one design sessions.

We have recently completed the open days for the modernisation project in the Saints area of Bedford, and tenants were able to attend and to meet Daniel Kwashie, the project manager.

If you would like further information about the programme, how any work will affect you and your home, or any further queries, please contact Peter Turney, senior projects manager, on 01234 221271.



BPHA apprentices meet Deputy Prime Minister

Apprentices from a BPHA training partnership met Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott when he visited a major building development.

The six teenagers, aged 17 to 19, are students at Milton Keynes College, and are receiving practical construction training through BPHA and its design and construction consultants, Avebury International.

Jamie Davies, 17, is studying a Construction City & Guilds and level 2 NVQ. He said: "It's a friendly environment where apprentices are treated with respect. Being given the opportunity to be employed on this project gives me the chance to finish my apprenticeship - it is the start of my career."

With Government funding, BPHA is building 500 affordable homes for rent and purchase in Milton Keynes on a total of 23 sites and a further 80 properties on two sites in Peterborough, with the first homes ready for occupation from next year. Half the accommodation will be for key workers - people working in essential public services such as nursing and teaching - who have been priced out of

the housing market.

The apprentices are working in Westcroft, one of three sites in Milton Keynes on which 248 of the homes are currently being built.

They met John Prescott and showed him the modern building techniques they have learnt. In fact, 80 per cent of the new housing will be built using WAVE, a pioneering construction system. WAVE homes are manufactured off site to exceptionally high standards, using natural and sustainable materials, which are energy efficient and have low maintenance requirements.

The Deputy Prime Minister said: "It is encouraging to see first hand people learning construction skills whilst building affordable housing that will give key public sector workers their first step onto the housing ladder".

BPHA Chief Executive John Cross said: "It was immensely satisfying to see this project acknowledged by the Deputy Prime Minister.

"Working with our partners, we've been able to start addressing the shortfall in affordable housing and the lack of skilled construction workers."

Nellie celebrates 100 years

BPHA tenant Nellie Parrot was 100 years old on September 18 and her fellow tenants marked her centenary with a party attended by more than 70 people.

BPHA chief executive John Cross also presented her with a bouquet of flowers and a card giving the congratulations and best wishes of all the staff.

Nellie moved into her new flat at Williamson Court in Bedford in 1965 and has remained a tenant there ever since.

Nellie was born in Kempston and worked there as a domestic maid. She moved away with her husband, but returned after the war to work in the local Cryselco factory.

She survives two brothers - Fred and Frank - and three sisters - Kit, Else and Winn. Nellie had two children Geoff and Anne by her husband Arthur who was killed in Normandy during World War Two.

Nellie, who puts her longevity down to hard work, said: "I am not worried about being 100, as I don't feel 100."



Goodbye to Board members

At the BPHA Annual General Meeting three Board members retired.

Gordon Colling stepped down after serving on the Board since 1989. Gordon was our founding Chairman, and he served brilliantly for 12 years. Gordon's wisdom and ability will be greatly missed.

Long-standing Tenant Board member Paul Imrie has also stepped down. Paul had been on the Board for six years and contributed greatly to BPHA's decision-

making during that time.

The third member to step down was Judith Barker who joined the Board three years ago. Judith works in a senior role in the East of England Development Agency and work commitments have meant that she can no longer commit the necessary time to BPHA. Her expertise and commitment to customer engagement will be hard to replace.

We will provide an update in the next edition of Progress introducing BPHA's Board members.

Fund-raising by BPHA staff

BPHA staff have been working hard to raise money for good causes.

Three members of the human resources team took part in the corporate rowing race at the Star Rowing Club Regatta in Bedford. They had only eight weeks of lessons, but managed to stay afloat and row the River Ouse successfully on the

day - raising approximately £250 for the Keach Cottage Hospice.

Members of our property services team followed this by participating in the raft race at Bedford River Festival - again avoiding getting wet - and raising approximately £146 for charity.

Computer training for all

Church Lane Community Centre in Goldington is offering a free European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) computer course. Running for six hours a week for 10 weeks, it is open to anyone living or working in Bedford.

The course is run by the For You Group which is committed to providing new opportunities to those who are unable to attend mainstream education. Funding is supplied jointly by the The Learning Skills

Council and the European Social Fund.

In addition to the ECDL, we also offer our students an up-to-date CV and the chance to get a personal computer on indefinite free loan. It is a very relaxed and friendly environment to learn in, so come along to Church Lane and find out more.

For further information contact Audrey, course administrator, on 01234 221 6750.

Tenants join group

Two tenants, Robert Jones and David Waterston, have joined BPHA's Sustainable Communities Planning Steering Group.

Abbey gets the after school habit

A new BPHA after school club is to be launched at Abbey Middle School, Gostwick Road, in Cauldwell.

Liz Harris, BPHA's assistant community development manager, said: "The club will have 30 places for 9 to 13-year-olds and will run until 5.30 on weekday evenings.

"Cauldwell is an area of social need, and the aim of the new club is to enable parents to return to work."

Right to buy and acquire

The rules for right to buy and right to acquire are changing at the end of this year.

If you have any questions about these changes, please phone Elaine Peet, BPHA's property sales administrator, on 01234 221337.

Prize winner

Congratulations to Miss B. of Bedford who won the insurance prize draw in the last edition of Progress. She received £25 in high street vouchers.



Left: An imaginative entry to our design competition

Competition

Our competition last time was to come up with ideas to improve the BPHA reception at Pilgrims House and you sent in a great selection. Here are just a few: new colour scheme for walls and carpet...drinks machine...access to toilets...lower reception booth...high chairs...notice board...booths at Cash Hall for more privacy.

Congratulations to Mr R of Roxton whose design was based on energy efficiency and safety. Also to the runner-up Mr B of Bedford.

Our under-16 category was won by a six-year-old. As you can see, his entry was very imaginative and colourful.

All ideas are being considered so thanks for sending them in.

This time, have a go at our Wordsearch which is all about the articles you've read in this edition of Progress.

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| X | G | U | Z | R | E | M | O | T | S | U | C |
| I | A | F | T | B | R | H | K | C | D | Y | T |
| M | S | R | X | U | G | L | B | W | N | T | E |
| I | D | E | P | U | T | Y | X | G | L | I | Q |
| O | V | R | C | W | K | C | N | L | L | N | O |
| O | A | Q | F | I | V | O | I | L | M | U | K |
| H | F | S | Z | L | T | H | E | J | Z | M | N |
| D | H | A | U | V | K | N | T | Y | C | M | A |
| R | U | Z | S | C | Y | R | E | H | S | O | Y |
| A | Y | N | I | G | M | D | O | R | B | C | N |
| O | R | R | L | D | J | I | X | Q | P | J | U |
| B | B | W | Y | R | E | T | S | Y | M | P | B |
| C | O | M | M | O | N | S | U | W | X | I | A |

Wordsearch

| | | |
|-------------|---------|-----------|
| Apprentices | Nellie | Board |
| Deputy | Bunyan | Customer |
| Harpur | Commons | Brickhill |
| Gas | Mystery | Community |

To enter our Wordsearch competition simply fill out the form below, together with your completed entry, and pop them into an envelope addressed to:

BPHA
Freepost ANG 5107
Bedford
MK40 1ZZ
 (No stamp required)

Closing date 31st October 2004

There is a £10 prize for the first correct entry pulled out of a hat.

Name:

Address:

.....

Postcode:

Daytime tel:



BPHA, Pilgrims House, Horne Lane, Bedford, MK40 1NY

www.bpha.org.uk

www.keyhomes-east.org.uk

Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association (BPHA) is registered as a Charitable Industrial and Provident Society (26751 R) and also with the Housing Corporation (LH 3887).

