




**What you  
thought:**  
Tenant survey 2001



**Election  
time:**  
Whitefriars North



**Happy?:**  
Put a smile in  
the box

the magazine for Whitefriars tenants and leaseholders

**Issue 5**



# home

***Lauren's  
home is  
picture  
perfect***

# Involving tenants

There's something of a theme running through this issue of Home.

It's about empowering people; giving you opportunities to influence your environments and communities in all sorts of ways, whether it's telling us what you think in surveys and helping to shape training projects, using 'smiley faces' to tell us whether the service you received was good or bad, or being elected as a tenant Board member. There are stories on all these things in the following pages.

And involving tenants is important. Tenants should be helping to decide on our priorities and have chances to tell us what they think of our services. Your involvement is vital if we are to be a success as your landlord.



## Colourful Cover

It was painted by Lauren aged 7, who is a pupil at Limbrick Wood School, Tile Hill.

Children there responded to our invitation to paint a picture that would be used as the cover for a future edition of the magazine.

We wanted it to depict entrants' homes - outside or inside - or which shows how they'd like their street or estate to look, complete with landscaping and environmental improvements, open spaces or facilities such as a play area.

Lauren and Bradley aged 6, whose picture won the runner up prize, showed real imagination in their paintings. Well done to both of them. They each received sets of art materials, with another set for the school which were presented to headmaster Nigel Read.



## jobs and training opportunities: funding success

Whitefriars has always been keen to make sure that local people benefit from its major improvement programme, not just with new bathrooms, kitchens and windows in their homes, but through proper training and real jobs to help complete those works as employees of our contractors.

We have just received a huge boost for this with a successful bid for £397,500 from the Government's Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

Nationally, the construction industry faces a skills shortage and Whitefriars is keen to make sure that its improvement programme is not slowed down because of a lack of local people with the right skills. This bid, and the work that was already being done by the Whitefriars Employment & Training Agency, is ensuring that the programme is delivered and local people get training and jobs.

This latest money will be used to work directly with unemployed young people and adults in Stoke Aldermoor and Willenhall by providing training in a range of skills, but with the chance of a real job based on the Whitefriars refurbishment programme.

If you live in Stoke Aldermoor or Willenhall or indeed anywhere else in the city and are interested in these opportunities, please contact Corrine Cappell on 024 7676 7023 or 07803 261541, Whitefriars Employment & Training Agency.



# Paying rent is your responsibility



## A tenant's greatest responsibility is paying rent.

Indeed, making sure that it's paid should take priority over all other bills.

Thankfully, most Whitefriars tenants know this, and they do pay their rent on time, every time.

But a significant number are still failing - even refusing in some cases - to make sure it's paid.

And this affects the way we operate. Without all of the rent coming in, we're unable to do everything we have told tenants they can expect from us.

Payment of rent by all tenants means more improvements, more repair work, more and better services and, crucially, more jobs. If we are able to do more work that means more local people are needed to do that work.

For those who don't pay - for whatever reason - there's a risk that they may face court action and possibly lose their home. They may also have problems getting credit.

Housing Benefit is one of the ways in which rent is paid, for those tenants entitled to claim. But more and more tenants who do claim are not making sure that they provide all of the information to help progress their claim. This is essential and is the tenant's responsibility.

People who are experiencing financial difficulties, which are affecting their ability to pay rent should come to us: we can offer help and advice. The worst thing they can do is ignore the problem - it won't just go away.

Whitefriars will be increasing its efforts to recover arrears of rent owed to us. We will be taking a much firmer, but fair approach to operating our policy in future.

# Good start, but lots



## TENANT SURVEY 2001

More than seven out of 10 of you said you're satisfied with the services we're providing.

That was one of the key findings that came out of our first comprehensive tenant survey.

But we're not resting on our laurels, and realise that there's still a lot to be done.

While the survey showed that more than eight out of 10 of you are happy with your homes and seven in 10 are satisfied with the area you live in, you're concerned about crime, vandalism and litter.

More than 2,000 tenants were randomly selected to take part in the survey, and independent researchers asked questions on a range of issues concerning your homes, the areas you live in, your future housing plans, your views on your day-to-day contact with Whitefriars, your household and the services we provide.

### We discovered:

- **7 out of 10 tenants are satisfied with the condition of their home**
- **half of tenants contacted Whitefriars in last six months, usually about repairs**
- **9 in 10 tenants find Whitefriars staff helpful**
- **7 in 10 are satisfied with information Whitefriars provides**
- **More than 6 in 10 tenants are satisfied with the overall repairs service, with 8 in 10 being satisfied with the quality of the last repair carried out in their home**
- **1 in 5 expect to move home in the next three years**
- **1 in 10 are considering buying their home**

### What happens next?

The survey's findings are one of the ways which will help us to understand your views and needs, and will form a key part of our planning for the future as we take on board what you've said.

Whitefriars chief executive Howard Farrand said: "We'll be acting on the survey findings to improve and develop services that tenants see as priorities.

One of the most successful things about the way in which we carried out the survey was that it was done in tenants' homes. We got so much more feedback because of this."



# still to do

## Action

These are just some of the things we're already doing which have been informed by the survey results:

**Repairs service** - we have been working closely with our contractors to set improved standards and to make sure that they are consistently achieved. Improvements so far have included an increase of more than 15% on the completion of non-urgent repairs within target times. This now means that 78% - or more than 2,700 jobs per month - are being completed within target. We are aiming to improve this to 90%. As well as this, 95% of urgent jobs, again more than 2,700 per month, are now responded to within the target 24 hours.

**Older people** - the survey gave us more information about the numbers of older people in our tenancies and some indication of how many are having difficulty in living in their home. This has helped us to decide to invest more money in adaptations, and we are now employing an occupational therapist to help identify what adaptations are needed, including where some of these can form part of home improvement works.

Grounds maintenance contracts - you set a high priority on improvements to grounds maintenance and we have started to review this. More details in future editions.

**Training** - overall, the survey said you were quite happy with our local staff, but we know that we can improve, so a major training programme has started and customer care training for all staff will begin soon.

**Tenant involvement** - a review has begun and is using the responses to the communication and involvement section of the survey to help develop better and more ways of involving tenants. A group of tenants is already working with us. If you would like to help with this then phone Lynn Hanson on 024 7676 7026. You can be involved as little or as much as you like.



# How we're helping others



Because Whitefriars is sometimes able to secure additional money from its funders, we're in a position to be able to help local groups and organisations that would benefit from a little extra cash.

To qualify for a grant, groups should be community-based and run by volunteers for the benefit of other tenants and leaseholders, and contribute to the quality of life of people living in Whitefriars homes.

If you're part of a group - or know of one - that would like more information about how to secure a Whitefriars grant, contact Lynn Hanson on 024 7676 7026 or Andrew Burman on 024 7676 7014.

We help in other ways, too, and below are a few examples of how we're getting involved.

## Myton Hospice is our charity of the year

We've adopted the Coventry Myton Hospice Appeal as our charity of the year, and we're already raised over £2,200. More events are planned over the next few months to raise even more cash for the proposed unit for terminally ill patients.



Collection boxes have been distributed to all Whitefriars offices - there will be a raffle, and a sponsored walk is scheduled to take place in the summer.

The £5 million hospice, to be sited in the grounds of Walsgrave Hospital, will provide care for patients from Coventry and Warwickshire. At present there is no such facility in the city, with patients having to use Myton Hospice, in Warwick.

Coventry Appeal manager Kate Skinner said: "Whitefriars approached us after recent publicity surrounding the hospice, and we are delighted to have such a high profile organisation backing us.

"The fact that Whitefriars has so many employees is particularly useful, because they can really help to spread the word, and it'll be great having collection boxes in so many offices."

If you or a group to which you belong would also be interested in supporting that cause, contact Kate Skinner on 01926 838812.

## Bringing education to your doorstep

Whitefriars has teamed up with Henley College Coventry to bring education to tenants' doorsteps.

The College's Outreach programme sees tutors running a wide range of courses, all of which carry nationally recognised qualifications, at places like community centres, schools and places of worship.

The College is able to offer courses at just £11.00, or, if you're unemployed, they're free. Everyone taking a course automatically becomes a college student, and receives a student union card, entitling them to a range of benefits and offers.

For more details contact the Outreach team at Henley College on 7662 6309.

## Tenants and staff back nurses with cash

For a number of years Macmillan nurses have been supporting tenants with cancer in William Batchelor House, Spon End. The Sheltered Housing Supervisor at the block, tenants and their families have been working hard to raise money and give a little bit back.

Two fundraising coffee mornings with stalls and raffles have raised more than £500.

Well done to everyone involved.



# Election time in the north

It's tenant Board member election time again, but this time only in the north.

We are running elections for tenant Board members for the Whitefriars Services and North Boards.

The new members will be known in time for the July meetings of those two Boards, and they will be appointed formally at Whitefriars' Annual General Meeting, in September.

We'll be asking you to let us know if you're interested in becoming a tenant Board member during February, and will run a 'What's it all about?' day for tenants who are interested, but who want to find out more before committing themselves to the election process.

The three Boards - Whitefriars Services, North and South - are responsible for the overall management of Whitefriars. Tenants who are elected play a full part in the running of the organisation as members of those Boards.

Being a Board member does take a bit of commitment and those tenants who are appointed would be expected to attend around 12 meetings in a year. None of the Board members are paid apart from out-of-pocket expenses for attending meetings or other Board business. Board members must undergo training in their main areas of responsibility.

So if you want to help run the organisation, look out for the application form which will be sent to eligible tenants in February.

## Smile 😊 if you like the service

Whitefriars Homes South has hit on a fun way of involving tenants.



Visitors to its Stoke Aldermoor neighbourhood office, in Barley Lea House, can show their pleasure - or displeasure - at the service they received by placing a happy or unhappy face in a ballot box at reception.

Office manager Pauline White said: "It's fun, but it has a serious side to it, too. By totting up the number of happy versus unhappy discs we'll know whether we're providing a good level of service to tenants, or whether we need to look at ways of improving."

The 'Smiley Face' initiative has already been introduced into all offices on the south side of the city.

# Good response to tenancy agreements' first phase

More than 7,000 tenants who transferred to Whitefriars from the Council have returned their tenancy agreements following the first phase of issue.

The next phases of issue of the agreements will happen over the next few months.

Some of you raised queries with us, and a few of these are still outstanding. Please bear with us - we're working on them!

If you have received your new tenancy agreement, but not yet returned it, please do so as soon as possible.

The winners of the prize draw held for those tenants who returned their agreements by the original deadline were:

## NORTH

Mr Watkins	Broad Park Road
Ms Patton	Almond Tree Avenue
Mrs Rodgers	Catesby Road

## SOUTH

Mrs Beresford	Brathy Close
Mr Kelly	Coleman Street
Mr Delaney	George Robertson Close

The winners in each area received a £100 DIY voucher, with the runners-up getting vouchers worth £50.

## Want help with this magazine?

If you, or a friend, would like a copy of Home on audiotape or in a large print format, call Teresa Kimbrell on 02476 767029, and she'll make sure you receive a copy. We want all tenants to know what we are doing on your behalf.

هل تريد نسخة من مجلة Home على شريط صوتي أو بصيغة طباعة كبيرة؟ اتصل بـ تيريزا كيمبريل على رقم الهاتف 02476 767029، وسوف نضمن حصولك على نسخة. نريد أن نعلم جميع المستأجرين ما نقوم به من أجلكم.

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## Our website

If you have access to the Internet, you can keep up to date with what Whitefriars is doing at:

[www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk](http://www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk)

If you have any comments please contact, Lynn Hanson at the following address:  
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