Welcome!

HELLO and welcome to the latest issue of our newsletter.

2017 seems to be flying by, I can’t believe we are already half way through Spring! We have had a great start to the year and the hard work and good news continues. You will read about our new Capital Works Programme that starts shortly where hundreds of tenants will see various improvements and upgrades taking place in and around their homes.

And with Spring comes our annual YHA in Bloom competition. There is an entry form in this issue so, if you think you have a blooming good garden then please let us know about it. We want this year’s entries to blow the judges away!

There is also an update on the fantastic charity work YHA staff were organising all through last year. They raised enough money to build a house in Africa for a homeless family that will keep a safe and secure roof over their heads for generations to come. This is a charity that is very close to YHA’s heart.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter and, as always, if you have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact us on 01904 636061 email info@yorkha.org.uk or visiting our offices at Alpha Court.

Julia Histin
Chief Executive

Turning up the heat on YHA’s new kitchens!

A delegation of residents, members of the YHA Scrutiny Panel and key staff went for a day to Symphony Kitchens’ factory and distribution centre near Barnsley to find out what exactly goes into designing, manufacturing and delivering YHA’s latest kitchens that are going to be installed across 54 homes this summer. Work is due to begin in July but - as part of the YHAs’ commitment to informing customers about key projects – the delegation was sent to Symphony Kitchens for a special behind the scenes tour beforehand.

The group enjoyed the VIP tour treatment and got to see first-hand where the units are made, the quality of the materials used, as well as the choices of finishes and colours available for YHA customers to choose from.

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Mina Soi-Westby, YHA’s Head of Property and Maintenance said: “Symphony Kitchens are a renowned manufacturer who also supply kitchens for John Lewis and Next. The service and products they are giving YHA are no different to private customers; in fact, it is probably better as we had designers come out to the homes to speak to residents, helping them come up with the design and then choosing their colour schemes and work tops.”

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Cupboard love – YHA residents enjoy sneak preview.

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Knit & Natter group is purl of an idea

A new social club where members can enjoy a good yarn in more ways than one has started in Pasture View, Rothwell.

The Knit and Natter group was formed by a group of ladies in the Autumn of last year. Meeting every other Tuesday morning they enjoy a catch up and it helped to fill the social gap between the popular coffee mornings on a Thursday and Bingo at the weekends.

The ladies felt that it was good to have a get together on another day during the week, especially during the winter months, but they wanted to make the time even more productive than just a meet n’ greet.

The group decided they would join forces and knit clothes for the Special Baby unit at St James Hospital, Leeds. As well as producing some lovely items for the babies who need special care the ladies still love the chance to swap patterns and wools and have a general chit-chat about their week. They then go away, knit and come back to compare progress the next time around.

They currently have made approximately 20 jumpers and cardigans, with a Support Worker kindly agreeing to take the woollies on to “Jimmys” on their behalf with a letter from them.

One of the ladies, a sprightly 91-year-old, had never knitted before and she is also attending another group in Rothwell to learn. She is really enjoying this new hobby and looking forward to “getting stuck in properly”. They are contining with their knitting and hope to have another bag full of warm woollies to send on to St James’ very soon.

YHA under the Spotlight

A huge communications project has just been successfully completed by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) whose members were tasked with looking at the ways YHA talks to its customers.

Three very dedicated members of the panel – Rob Mesher, Joan Dyke and Harry Worthington - have been working behind the scene for weeks on tenants’ behalf to explore how the organisation could engage more at grasp roots level.

After speaking to many tenants in a variety of areas, reviewing existing materials and speaking to other similar organisations the TSP produced a report of recommendations that was sent to YHA directors.

There were a whole host of positive ideas that came out of the project and many have been adopted or adapted into a full YHA Action Plan for 2017.

“When we did our last Tenant Survey one of the areas highlighted was around YHA listening to its customers,” said Kate Spencer, Operations Director and Deputy Chief Executive. “It’s important that we know if the ways in which we are communicating with our tenants are working properly and how we were responding to their views.

“This was a huge piece of work and we are very grateful to the panel members for giving up so much of their time to the research and then report their findings back to us. Their report highlighted several areas where tenants thought we could improve and so we are now working our way through them to see where we can really make some positive changes.”

Here are just a few of the recommendations that, hopefully, can make communications between YHA and its customers easier and clearer going forward:

Recommendation
Look at holding more meetings at tenant-friendly times and include “Meet Your Housing Officer” sessions.

Action
By August, YHA committed to varying tenant surgery times and holding test evening meetings with better advertising of the events.

Recommendation
Have specific tenant consultations around the future of community centres.

Action
By September, hold consultations with residents at Bretgate, Margaret Philipson Court and Pasture View Road.

Recommendation
Review the YHA website to make it more user-friendly and provide more information about how to engage with the Association.

Action
Ensure all Tenant Scrutiny Reports and tenant newsletters are on the website, provide more information on the Home Page, look at good website examples elsewhere that YHA can learn from and raise awareness of the website and twitter account.

Recommendation
Consider a new newsletter format, more locally focused.

Action
By September, staff to arrange coffee mornings and invite the Scrutiny Panel and Customer Panel to discuss the newsletter format and content. Appeal for tenants to become involved in producing future newsletters.

The full list of recommendations was too detailed to include everything but if you are interested in finding out more or joining the Tenant Scrutiny Panel then you can contact YHA Head Office 2 Alpha Court, Monks Cross Drive, Huntington, York Y032 9WN Tel: 01904 636061.
Major investment in the works

More than £630,000 has been earmarked by YHA to invest back into homes and communal spaces across the Association this year.

Month by month starting in May, hundreds of customers across the region will be able to see improvements taking place both inside and outside their homes.

Taking advantage of the nicer weather (hopefully!) contractors will start work from May on replacing old roofs, gutters, fascias and soffits on many YHA properties.

June will see some homes getting new central heating systems, windows and doors – all helping to make the properties warmer and better energy rated - meaning lower Co2 emissions per property and smaller heating bills for the households.

As we move through the summer, 54 homes will have brand new kitchens fitted in July following a joint tendering/bid process with two other smaller housing associations. This meant YHA was able to get even better value for money for its customers. As well as new kitchen units and work surfaces these homes will also get new flooring and tile splashbacks as part of this refurbishment.

Residents had a choice of 5 colour schemes for the units and 3 different work surfaces to choose from.

As work completes inside the homes, contractors will then start improving communal spaces with new hard standing, communal painting work and upgrading security lights between September and November. The last project will be new fencing that rolls out in January 2018.

“We will be speaking with customers early on and completing a survey before the works start so they know exactly what is going to happen,” said Mina Soi-Westby, Head of Property and Maintenance. “It is going to be a busy year but hundreds of our customers should be able to see and enjoy the improvements both inside and outside their homes as a result.”

Home Sweet Home, thanks to YHA

YHA staff have been involved in a very special project, raising thousands to build a family home in one of the world’s poorest countries.

The team have worked all year to raise more than £4,500 which is being used to build a house in Malawi, Africa, through the Reall charity which helps poverty-stricken families have a home of their own.

The money was raised through various activities including a bike-a-thon, cooking curries to sell at lunch time, quiz nights and car boot sales.

Said YHA Chief Executive Julia Histon. “Our staff have worked incredibly hard on their fund-raising for Reall. I’m very proud of what they’ve achieved and how they’ve pulled together. It has been a huge team effort and it’s a fantastic result.”

The money in the form of a giant cheque was handed over to Reall at YHAs latest development at Sheriff Hutton, Ryedale. When complete, the site will have six homes for rent and another six for shared ownership sale.

“Building houses in Malawi is a very different prospect to YHAs latest development at Sheriff Hutton, but the difference a new home makes to a family – whether in Africa or North Yorkshire – is enormous,” said Susan Scott, who led the YHAs successful fund-raising campaign. “This money will help change the lives of a disadvantaged family in one of the poorest parts of the world and will help shelter a family for decades.”

YHA urges tenants to drop-in!

York Housing Association is pleased to announce that it is now offering weekly drop-in advice sessions for its tenants.

The aim is to provide housing-related advice and information that will help you maintain your tenancy, gain greater independence, enable you to feel safe and secure in your tenancy and provide a personal contact from York Housing Association.

“We have been delivering a drop-in provision across the City over the past several years which have proved to be invaluable to hundreds of people experiencing a variety of housing related issues. We are now able to offer this service exclusively to York Housing Association tenants from our office at 114 Walmgate on Tuesdays between 10.00 and 13.00,” said Kate Spencer, Operations Director and Deputy Chief Executive.

“The drop-in will be run by one of our support staff. This is a small, versatile, dedicated team who have a wide background of knowledge and year’s of experience across many sectors. They also have up to date knowledge of housing policies, welfare benefits and, of course, a direct link to YH.”

The focus of the advice will be:

- Informal housing related advice.
- Tenancy sustainment and options.
- Signposting to relevant agencies.
- Assess tenancy or financial concerns.

YHA Head Office 2 Alpha Court, Monks Cross Drive, Huntington, York Y032 9BW
Tel: 01904 636061.

ADVICE!
Hello & Welcome
We are welcoming some new faces to YHA in this issue as well as saying a few goodbyes. We would like to thank all those who left us for their contribution and wish them well in the future.

Hello to:
Helen Adcock Corporate Resources Manager
Malcolm Lee Management Accountant
Bev Gray Housing Services Manager (Support)
Mina Soi Westby Head of Property and Maintenance

Goodbye to:
Pam Featherstone Management Accountant
April Jones Customer Service Manager (Supported Housing)
Terry Ashton Maintenance Manager
Sandra Parker Corporate Resources Manager
Ginny Hartery Barker Support Worker
Jennie Ironmonger Support Worker

Diary Dates
Weekly drop in sessions for YHA tenants at 114 Walmgate every Tuesdays from 10.00am until 1.00pm.
Tenant Consultation Away Day at Auden House on Tues 13th June 2017
Tenant Consultation Away Day at Priory Street Centre on Thur 15th June 2017
YHA in Bloom – Entry forms to be completed by 26th June 2017
YHA in Bloom – Judging will take place on 3rd July 2017
YHA in Bloom – Prize giving will take place on 19th July

How to contact us
York Housing Association
2 Alpha Court, Monks Cross Drive, Huntington, York Y032 9WN
Tel: 01904 636061
Fax: 01904 612623
Email: info@yorkha.org.uk
Website: www.yorkha.org.uk
Office Open Weekdays
9.00am - 5.00pm
Reparss Hotline:
(phone hours) 0845 605 4050
(out-of-hours) 0845 601 5676

The text of this Newsletter can be made available in other languages, in Braille or in large print upon request.

It’s YHA in Bloom time!
Spring has sprung and one of our most popular competitions is about to kick off once more.

We need our green-fingered residents to put their talents to the test in this year’s YHA in Bloom competition.
Each year judges are challenged to pick worthy winners from the growing crop of entries. It doesn’t matter if your garden is large or small, there are many categories to choose from including best floral, most improved or even best fruit and veg. YHA housing officers will also be out and about looking for great gardens to nominate as well.

The categories for 2017 are:
Best Overall Garden
Best Floral Display
Best Communal Garden
Best Small Garden
Most Improved Garden
Best Fruit and Veg
Most Creative/ Colourful Garden

There will be a gardening hamper and trophy for each winner plus runner up prizes. Anyone whose entry is judged will also receive a £5 voucher as a thank you for all their hard work.
Reply slips to be with YHA by 26th June and Judging date will be 3rd July and prize giving on 19th July.
The deadline for entering is 26 June with judging on 3 July and prize presentation on 19 July 2017. There is an entry form included in this newsletter.

Housing lifeline can be life-changing
Greg had been homeless for almost 10 years, moving from one temporary accommodation to another around the country before returning to Scarborough.

His personal dependency problems meant his reputation went before him whenever he tried to find accommodation.
Through a joint effort with local services Greg is now accepting support from Horton Housing Association – which helps those in temporary accommodation as well as receiving help for his dependency on alcohol.
Thanks to his engagement with YHA and support workers he has now been offered social housing with a care package in place so he can live independently.
Greg had never been offered secure social housing before so this was a real turning point in his life, leading on to an alcohol detox programme which has been a goal of his for many years. (*names have been changed)

Customer Service Excellence
YHA was accredited with the customer services excellence award last year and we are now embarking on achieving a re-accreditation of the customer service excellence standard this year. All our staff team are working very hard to achieve the accreditation. We value the hard work our staff provide to our tenants and customers and we are also having our Investors In People Award reviewed this year.

www.yorkha.org.uk | For out-of-hours emergency repairs: 0845 6015676