

In The Know

For Origin Housing customers in London and Hertfordshire

Spring edition 2011

Toddler on the roof



A delighted toddler tries out the new child-friendly rubber flooring at Rooftops Nursery in Kentish Town (literally located on a rooftop) watched by an audience including the nursery manager, an Origin staff member, and contractors from Breyer Group who carried out the project for Origin.

A teacher at the nursery, Michelle Sweeney, said: "It looks amazing, the children enjoy playing on it and the parents think it is safer. Much better than the stone slabs that were there before."

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..and much more!

Great homes
positive people
strong communities


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Social hous



Chancellor George Osborne delivers the budget

In the last issue of In the Know (distributed just before Christmas), we outlined government proposals for reforming housing and welfare.

The government has decided to drop the proposal to cut housing benefit by 10% if you have claimed Jobseekers Allowance for over a year. However, there are still plans to cut benefits for households deemed to be under-occupying their properties. In addition, welfare benefits payments will also be capped at £26,000 (about the average wage in the UK).

Two proposals that we know will affect many tenants directly are:

1. A reduction in housing benefit for tenants who

have non-dependants aged 18 and above living with them. Non-dependants could be an adult son, daughter, relative or friend;

2. Housing benefit will be calculated according to the size of living space you are assessed to need – if you are over 18.

Item 1 is likely to start in April 2011, item 2 is likely when the Welfare Reform Bill is accepted and becomes law, probably in April 2013

If you have any concerns about how you will be affected by these changes, please contact our Customer Service team on 0800 040 7989 and we will be happy to talk it through with you.

sing reform update

Message from Origin Chair, Colin Sherriff



Public services are constantly changing, driven by the increasing expectations of customers, new technology, or the need to save money. Thirty-two

years ago in 1979, the government started to cut spending in education, health, housing and other public services and continued to do that for the next eighteen years.

Over the next four years we face a much bigger challenge than the cuts in the 1980's and 1990's. The speed and size of these cuts mean that some public services will look very different in the future to what they are now. Changes in public services are happening in many other ways too. Who would have thought thirty years ago that many of us would be buying our gas from a French water company, that housing associations would be managing flats and houses previously run by councils, that different train companies would

be competing for our fares, or that the National Health Service would be on the brink of being run by self-employed local contractors - our doctors and GPs?

Experience shows that it is dangerous and foolish to wait for things to get better or to expect changes to be reversed. As the tenants, customers and staff of a housing association, we have to adapt and be flexible to get through this. The recent and planned cuts in public spending - including the changes to welfare benefits - will most affect the poorest and vulnerable in society, and Origin is working hard to make sure we support our tenants and customers as much as we can.

The budget information on page eight shows we are financially secure, but what the numbers don't reveal is our biggest asset - the wealth of skills and knowledge of our people, the Residents Forum, our staff, my colleagues on the Board and, most of all, the people living in the communities where we work. Putting those resources to work in delivering services through the work we do together is the way we can maintain the levels of support we all know are going to be necessary in the coming years.

Back to work with Origin

Origin operates a number of employment and training schemes for the benefit of our residents. Last year we took on a student social worker from the University of Hertfordshire on a nine-month placement with our Learning Disabilities team. Julie Hammond, Team Leader (pictured below), said the experience was beneficial for both parties



Case study 1: Student social worker - staff view

"Hannah was enthusiastic, cheerful, and got on well with the team. She had no experience with people with Learning Disabilities

when she arrived but within a very short time she became quite confident in supporting the tenants. She shadowed staff and learnt a lot from them which led to her passing the placement, which goes towards her degree. Hannah enjoyed working here so much that we now have her on call as a support worker."

In another initiative Origin resident Ndidi Obi (pictured right with Communications Manager Peter Taylor) received funding to train as a Resident Quality Inspector on a 15-week course accredited by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH). Ndidi completed the CIH Level 2 Certificate in Housing with distinction and is now able to carry out planned and structured

inspections of specific aspects of service including estates and neighbourhoods, communal areas, void properties, repairs, gas maintenance and major improvements.



Case study 2: Housing inspector - resident view

"By doing this course I have gained a professional qualification and a new skill which has increased my employability in the housing sector and given me the opportunity to further my career."

To find out more about other employment and training programmes available through Origin, contact Joned Khan on 020 7209 9208 or email joned.khan@originhousing.org.uk.

Interested in construction?

Get free training with Origin! If you are over 18, enrolled in a course at college, and/or unemployed, this is a rare opportunity for you to gain 18 months of practical training at one of our building sites. Origin is part of the Construction Training Initiative (CTI) scheme which is open to all residents. No previous experience is required and we particularly welcome applications from Enfield residents. For more information contact our Customer Service team on 0800 040 7989.

Your tenancy agreement... on DVD

Residents needing support can now see and hear their tenancy agreement through their TV or computer from an interactive DVD.

The 30-minute DVD uses a combination of stills, moving images and voiceovers to illustrate topics such as repairs and maintenance, antisocial behaviour, moving home and other usual tenancy issues.

The idea behind the DVD was to liven up what can be a dull, albeit important document. Peter Taylor, Communications

Manager, said: "We appreciate the information in written tenancy agreements can be dry for all tenants, but for people who struggle with a lot of text it can be very inaccessible, so our aim was to make the agreement more engaging. We are considering rolling out a similar version to all residents."

If you are a learning disabilities tenant and would like to view this DVD, please contact our Customer Services team on 0800 040 7989.

Your neighbourho



Some of the new neighbourhood team (l-r): Jonathan Radcliffe, Clare Davies, Liam Gillespie, Nicola Fawcett and Wesley Burton

At Origin we are committed to delivering the highest levels of customer service. We know that we do not always get this right and this is something we want to change.



Evonne Hudson,
Assistant Director
of Housing
Services

Over the past six months we have been working to improve our customer service and review the way our neighbourhood services (how we look after our estates, buildings and open spaces for our social-rented housing) are delivered.

We listened to everything you told us during consultations and as a result we have developed a new vision for neighbourhood services, including creating six new Neighbourhood Manager roles to act as your champion and put you at the heart of everything we do.

You can expect your new Neighbourhood Managers to:

- Communicate with you how you want, keeping you informed about issues that affect you;
- Provide a service that is responsive to your individual needs;
- Listen to you and work with you to improve your neighbourhood;
- Respond personally to any request for help or advice, including visiting you at home if you wish;
- Tackle tenancy issues and antisocial behaviour in a positive and proactive way;
- Be honest on what we can and cannot do;
- Respond positively to complaints and work with you to put things right when they have gone wrong.

The next six months

Most of the new team are now in place but it will take some time to get them trained and settled so please bear with us during this process (please read the enclosed letter for full details). The new roles and the way services are delivered will be kept under review over the next 6-12 months so we would welcome any feedback you have on this. Please contact Jonathan Radcliffe, Head of Neighbourhood Management, on 020 8345 7978 or email jonathan.radcliffe@originhousing.org.uk.

hood... our vision

Staff changes in other sections

Retirement Housing:

After three years as Retirement Housing Team Manager, **Angela Morgan** has now moved on. To maximise efficiency, her former post has been combined with the Supported Housing Manager role to create the new role of Housing and Contracts Manager which has been filled by **Stephanie Bollen-Hickman**.

Vicky Phillips will be leaving her role of Retirement Housing Manager (Stevenage) at the end of April. A replacement is currently being recruited.

Leasehold Housing:

At Eversholt Street, **Christine Nicholson** joins the Home Ownership Leasehold Management team as the Head of Home Ownership, responsible for the post-sales service. **Insley Ettienne** also joins as the interim Inner London Leasehold Manager, **Lisa Jambaya** as the Team Administrator for general enquiries, and **Jennifer Simpson** as Home Ownership Income officer, dealing with collection and arrears of service charges and rents.

For Outer London and Hertfordshire, **Karen Zeff**

remains the Leasehold Manager working with **Iris King** the Sheltered Housing Officer for Riddell Gardens, Baldock. At Stokes Court, East Finchley, **Wendy Owen** also remains the Residential Sheltered Housing Officer, while **Elizabeth Handleigh** and **Pauline Mwangi** job share as Sheltered Housing Officers during the day, Monday to Friday. They have been joined by a new Caretaker, **Peter Harris**, working at Stokes Court and other blocks on the Diploma Avenue development.

A Watford room with a view



Cori Daniels, Centre Back for Watford Ladies FC, moved into a two bedroom apartment at Origin Housing's latest development, The Wrap, in November

2010. Cori shares her seventh floor apartment with a friend, and enjoys living in the development, which is built around the south stand of the Watford FC's Vicarage Road Stadium:

"I've recently graduated from Hertfordshire Uni', and when I moved out of my student digs in Hatfield, I was looking to move somewhere really modern. This apartment ticked all the boxes, and it was a real bonus

that it was brand new. What's more, as it's my fifth season playing for Watford Ladies, I just couldn't resist the opportunity to live in a development that is literally wrapped around the Vicarage Road stadium! Living here, I'm about 10 minutes away from the Watford Ladies Ground, Northwood, and I'm pretty close to town too.

"From start to finish, the whole process took about a month. Once I'd passed all the criteria tests, I was put in touch with Origin. By that stage, it was pretty much just a question of deciding when I wanted to move in!"

To register your interest in Origin Housing properties, please call 020 7209 3689 or visit www.originhousing.co.uk

How we spend

The UK's economy is going through an interesting time where there is still a lot of uncertainty over government cutbacks, jobs, and inflation. As Origin tenants you obviously

want to be sure that Origin can deliver a good quality service to you and that it is financially secure enough to do this. In order to help with this, we have set up two charts that show where

we get our money from and what we spend it on. This should give you a clear picture of what is happening at Origin from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012.

Where our money comes from



Our properties are key income generators

- Rent - £23.7m
- Service charges - £3.7m
- Care and support grant income - £2.6m
- Building leases income - £3.3m
- Sale of properties income - £8.5m
- Commercial property income - £2m
- Other income - £0.4m

What we will spend our money on



- Staff costs - £9m
- Cost of properties sold - £35m
- Repairs - £5.4m
- Contingency and surplus - £5.1m
- Office costs and overheads - £6.1m
- Depreciation - £3.2m
- Services for estates (including cleaning, caretaking and gardening) - £4.2m
- Interest - £7.7m

and your money

Is Origin financially secure?

Yes, we are. As you can see from the costs chart, the section called surplus and contingency is quite big. Any surpluses (sometimes called profits) that we make get invested back in the business again to pay for services to tenants.

Will my services be affected by any government cutbacks?

Like all organisations at this time Origin does have to be very careful with its money. We have set up a budget for next

year that is affordable and sensible without affecting the services you receive. We have had cuts in funding to some of our Care and Support services and have had to change or reduce some services as a result.

If you have any concerns about paying your rents, housing benefits, or any other issues, please contact your neighbourhood manager, scheme manager or support worker. Call our Customer Service team on 0800 040 7989 if you are unsure of the phone numbers.

Rent and service charges for 2011-12

By now you should have received a letter informing you of the rent and service charges for the new financial year that started on Friday 1st April for monthly tenancies and Monday 4th April for weekly tenancies.

All social landlords like Origin follow government rules for setting rents. Increases to Secure Rents are limited by the Valuation Office Agency (if you are a Secure tenant your letter explains how we calculated your rent). For Assured tenants, we use a formula based on the Retail Price Index (RPI), again explained in your letter. If all or part of your rent is paid by Housing Benefit, you will need to inform your local authority of the new charges so they can

recalculate your benefit entitlement.

Service charges

We recently carried out an audit of the services we provide and consulted with residents to make sure that your charges are in line with the services you receive. In some cases this has led to adjustments in the price you pay – full details of how the charges are broken down is included in your letter.

If you have any queries or concerns about either your rent or service charge, please contact our Customer Service team on 0800 040 7989.

Homeowners

Letters have also been sent out to all leaseholders and shareholders (on managed estates) about this year's rent and service charges.

The annual rent increase for shared owners is determined by the terms of the lease – usually based on the RPI – and changes on the 1st of April every year.

Service charges are for estate services provided by Origin or a managing agent/ freeholder. The 2011/ 12 charges also came into effect on the 1st April. All your comments from the consultation with you in December were taken into consideration when the charges were set. Service charges may not include ground rent and buildings insurance so these may be billed separately.

If you have any queries about any of the above, please contact Insley Etienne on 020 7209 9292, or Karen Zeff (for outer London & Herts) on 020 7209 9339.

Building services you really want



As outlined in the annual report sent to you in October 2010, our regulator the Tenants Service Authority (TSA) expects us to build our services around what you really want.

We developed our offers from listening to you

for you – were agreed by the Residents' Forum in August, having considered your priorities through surveys, complaints, focus groups and consultations. Since then further work has been underway to develop the Origin Service Offers – for example, for the Customer Care service offer, residents were consulted through a web and postal survey, focus groups in London, and face-to-face surveys in Stevenage and Watford (to ensure the views of outer-London residents are well represented).

These local offers – our 'Origin Service Offers'

Here are the 2011/ 12 Origin Service Offers agreed by residents for residents:

1. Customer care service standards
2. Complaints management
3. Improved access to Aids & Adaptations
4. Getting the repairs service right first time
5. Handyman service for sheltered and supported tenants
6. Improving the Neighbourhood Service
7. Antisocial behaviour service standards
8. Improved service charge information



Repairs, one of our key priorities

The new Offers will start from 1st April 2011 and run to March 2012, with the exception of two – Improved Access to Aids & Adaptations and the Handyman Service for Sheltered and Supported Tenants – which are already in

place ahead of schedule.

To make sure that we deliver the Origin Service Offers we are setting up a Scrutiny Panel of residents who will monitor their performance. Please turn to page 4 for more details of what we are looking for and how you can get involved.

100% satisfaction from Care and Support customers

In October 2010 we gave our Care and Support customers the opportunity to give us feedback about our services that they receive. The result? Our customers are happy!

Of the 23 schemes we operate, 14 received a 100% satisfaction rate from customers in areas such as staff treatment and support plan agreement, with only

five falling below a 90% positive response. The survey was distributed to all Origin Care and Support customers and received 521 responses – a 73% response rate.

We have tried to cater for all our customers but if you would like a copy in larger font then please let your neighbourhood officer or scheme manager know -or call 0800 040 7989.

إننا أردت الحصول على ترجمة للمطوية الإخبارية "إن ذي نوو" ("In the Know") - خدمة المعلومات المقدمة من مالك عقارك' تتصل بالاتصال بمسؤول الحي الذي نقيم به أو بمدير البرنامج أو اتصل على رقم 0800 040 7989.
Arabic

আপনি যদি 'ইন দ্য নো' নিউজলেটার - সার্ভিস ইনফরমেশন ফ্রম ইউর ল্যান্ডলর্ড এর কোন অনুবাদ চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে আপনার নেইবারহুড অফিসার, স্কিম ম্যানেজার অথবা 0800 040 7989 নম্বর ফোনে যোগাযোগ করুন।
Bengali

倘若您需要 "In the Know" newsletter - Service Information from your landlord (內情簡報 - 業主提供的服務資訊) 的翻譯件，請聯絡負責您的居民社區官 (Neighbourhood Officer) 、計畫部經理 (Scheme Manager) 、或致電：0800 040 7989。
Cantonese

Αν επιθυμείτε να λάβετε μετάφραση του ενημερωτικού δελτίου «Σωστή Ενημέρωση» - Πληροφορίες σχετικά με υπηρεσίες από τον ιδιοκτήτη σας («In the Know» newsletter - Service Information from your landlord), παρακαλούμε επικοινωνήστε με τον Υπεύθυνο Γειτονιάς, τον Προϊστάμενο του Κτιρίου ή καλέστε το 0800 040 7989.
Greek

ئەگەر حەزەندەکت پەيام نامە (In the Know)، کە خۆزەنگۆزەریەکى هەموال پێداتە لەلایەن خاوەن خانووەکت، بۆ تەرجومە بکەیت تەواى پەيوەندى بکە بە فەرمانبەرى گەرمەکتە (Neighbourhood Officer) یان بەرێوەبەرى بەرنامە (Scheme Manager) یان بە ژمارە تەلەفۆنى 0800 040 7989.

Kurdish

Hadii aad jeceshahay in lagu turjumo 'ogeysiinta' warqada aqbaarta – Adeega ogeysiinta kuwa guryaha iska leh' fadlan la' soo xariir Shaqaalaha qaabilsan xafaddaada, manajjerka meesha maamula ama 0800 040 7989.

Somali

Si desea una traducción del boletín "In the Know" - Service Information from your landlord" (Información de servicios prestados por el propietario), rogamos que se ponga en contacto con el oficial de vecindario (Neighbourhood Officer), el jefe del esquema (Scheme Manager) o que llame el tel.: 0800 040 7989.

Spanish

'In the Know (Vakıf)' – ev sahibinizden Hizmet Bilgileri haber bülteninin kendi dilinize tercüme edilmesini istiyorsanız, lütfen Mahalli Daire Memuru, Proje Yöneticinizle irtibat kurun, ya da 0800 040 7989 e telefon edin.

Turkish

اگر آپ کو اس کتابچے بعنوان 'ان دا نو' خبرنامہ: آپ کے لینڈ لارڈ کی جانب سے مہیا کی جانے والی خدمات سے متعلق معلومات ('In the Know' newsletter - Service Information from your landlord) کا ترجمہ درکار ہو تو براہ مہربانی اپنے نیبرہڈ آفیسر، اسکیم مینیجر یا نمبر 0800 040 7989 سے رابطہ کریں۔

Urdu

Gas safety checks reach 99.8%

Thank you to everyone who has given us access to their homes for a gas safety check. These annual checks are essential by law, but also

to make sure that the gas pipes and appliances in your home are in good working order for your own safety. If you have received a letter

but not agreed a time for a contractor to come to your home, then please contact our Customer Service team urgently on 0800 040 7989.

News in brief

New repairs contractors



From April 2011 we will be using a new repairs contractor called Gilmartins for work on empty properties and repairs. All our contractors

carry identity with them so please ask to see it before you let anyone into your home. If in doubt, call Customer Services on 0800 040 7989.

Origin's homes meet government standard



After years of sound investment, Origin's homes now comply with the government's Decent Homes Standard which means that our homes meet a minimum level of comfort, have reasonably modern facilities, and are

weather-tight. Our Property Services team delivered improvements and repairs such as installing new heating systems, kitchens, bathrooms, roofs, and providing electrics and insulation. The hard work doesn't stop there - we will

continue to improve our homes to maintain our Decent Homes level and improve overall resident satisfaction. To find out more about requirements of the Decent Homes standards, visit our website: www.originhousing.org.uk

Save on your energy bills by switching



The National Housing Federation, which represents Origin and other housing associations, has joined forces with price

comparison site uSwitch.com to provide housing association residents and staff with a free online or telephone comparison and switching service that could help you save lots

of money on your gas and electricity bills. To find out how much you could save by switching, visit www.myhomeenergyswitch.org.uk or call freephone number 0800 051 5346.

New Equality and Diversity strategy

Find out more about how we will be making things fairer for customers through our new Equality and Diversity Strategy by visiting www.originhousing.org.uk or contacting our Service Improvement Team on 020 7209 9293. More details in the next issue of In the Know!