



Housing News

Choice Based Lettings A new way to find an affordable home

We now have a new way of letting Council and housing association properties in Oadby and Wigston. This is called choice based lettings and it is for you to decide the empty properties you want to be considered for. We will then offer the property to the person or family who has the most pressing needs.

Here is how it works...

Step 1 – Register to join the scheme

You can do this by contacting the Council and asking for an application form. You can also apply on-line – www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk. If you are already on the Council's Housing Register, then you should have already had a new form – please return this if you have not already done so.

Step 2 – Finding out which properties are available

Every fortnight, we will advertise details of the properties that we have available for letting. These will be on our website and in a newsletter, which is available at our offices, customer services centres and libraries. Some properties may only be open to certain people (for example, bungalows are normally reserved for older people without children). See below for the dates when the bidding cycles start and finish.

Step 3 – Making a bid

This is all about letting us know which property you want to be considered for. It is not making a bid for money – just registering your interest. You can make bids on-line, www.leicestershire-homes.org.uk, by phone or by calling into one of our offices. You will get to know straight away where your bid sits in the queue. Before the fortnightly closing date, you can always change any bid you have made.

Step 4 – Deciding who should have the property

With more people applying for homes than we have available, we have to decide who has the most urgent need to move. We do this by putting every application into one of four 'bands'. These range from a low band (where there is no urgent need to move) through to the priority band, (for example, families who are homeless). We then put all applications into date order within each band. A property

will be offered to the bidder who is in the highest band and has been waiting the longest.

Step 5 – Getting feedback

Every fortnight, we will publish details of the band and the length of waiting time for people who have been successful (but not the name or any personal details). From this, you will be able to get a better idea of the likelihood of being successful when you bid again.

This is only a quick summary of how the new system will work. For further details, please call into any of our customer service centres or telephone Leicester (0116) 257 2609. You can also look on-line – www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk

Advertising and Bidding Cycles 2011

Start Midnight on	End Midnight on
30 June	6 July
14 July	20 July
28 July	3 August
11 August	17 August
25 August	31 August
8 September	14 September
22 September	28 September
6 October	12 October
20 October	26 October
3 November	9 November
17 November	23 November
1 December	7 December
15 December	21 December
29 December	4 January 2012

Mortgage Help



Having problems with your mortgage payments?

For information and practical advice, go to: <http://mortgagehelp.direct.gov.uk/>



Improving your home

Every year, we spend over a million pounds on improving our homes. Over the next 9 months, we will be:

- Installing new kitchens at flats in Elizabeth Court in Wigston
- Fitting new bathrooms at Bennett Way and Blaby Road in South Wigston, Northfield Avenue and Harcourt Road in Wigston, along with some houses at Orson Drive, Owston Drive and Rolleston Road, Wigston.
- Replacing old back boilers with new energy efficient heating systems at Orchards Drive in Wigston.
- Painting the communal entrances to blocks of flats at Boulter Crescent and Elizabeth Court in Wigston.

With over a thousand properties to look after, we cannot deal with everything at once. Our aim is to deal with those properties that have the oldest facilities first. We have rolling programmes of work, which run from one year to the next. This helps make sure that our homes are well maintained.

If you would like to find out more about our improvement programmes, please contact the Housing Maintenance Team on Leicester (0116) 257 2614.

Paying your rent by direct debit

The convenient way to pay

Peace of mind – knowing that your rent will be paid on time and your account will be up to date at the end of the year.

Under your control – you decide how much to pay, with a choice of two payment dates every month (1st to 15th).

Easy to set up – phone the Housing Section on Leicester (0116) 257 2618 or call in at any of our customer services centres for further details.



Having Problems Paying Your Rent?

Do not ignore it – contact your Arrears Officer at the Council on Leicester (0116) 257 2649, the sooner the better.

It is always best to talk to us about the problem so that we can help and legal action can be avoided.

Whatever the situation is, pick up the telephone and ring, or call in at one of our customer services centres.

You can also contact the Citizens Advice Bureau based in South Wigston for free independent, confidential advice and assistance. This is advisable if you have debts as they can contact companies and organisations on your behalf. Their telephone number is Leicester (0116) 340 0116 or you may wish to contact your Arrears Officer at the Council on Leicester (0116) 257 2649, who will be able to refer your case to them.

We understand that, from time to time, people may face difficulty meeting their rental payments - the Council can and will help you to ensure you have the support to keep your home ... so please talk to us.



Kitchen and bathroom replacement programme

You have told us that kitchen and bathroom replacements are the most important improvement we can make. Set out below is a list of areas where we plan to undertake kitchen and bathroom installations over the next few years.

April 2011 to March 2012	
Kitchens: Elizabeth Court	Bathrooms: Newton Lane, Welford Road, Bennett Way, Blaby Road, Harcourt Road, Northfield Avenue, Clarkes Road, Station Road, Rolleston Road (Part), Orson Drive (Part), Owston Drive (Part)
April 2012 to March 2013	
Kitchens: Newton Lane, Welford Road, Bennett Way, Blaby Road	Bathrooms: Elizabeth Court
April 2013 to March 2014	
Kitchens: Boulter Crescent	Bathrooms: Boulter Crescent
April 2014 to March 2015	
Kitchens: Kenilworth Drive, William Peardon Court, Kings Drive, Gibson Close, Gladstone Street, Littledale (1), Aylestone Lane (Nos. 9, 13), Kings Street, Malham Way, Countesthorpe Road, Railway Street, Bassett Street	Bathrooms: Kenilworth Drive, William Peardon, Court, Kings Drive, Gibson Close, Gladstone Street, Littledale, Aylestone Lane (Nos. 9, 13), Kings Street, Malham Way, Countesthorpe Road, Railway Street, Bassett Street

Free training courses for our tenants

We have joined up with a group of other local councils and housing associations to provide a programme of training for tenants. The programme is called 'Learning Equals Partnership' – or 'LEP' for short. It aims to help develop the skills, confidence and abilities of those tenants who want to get more involved in shaping the service they get from their landlord. It is also designed to encourage positive joint working between staff and residents.

All courses start at 10:00 a.m. and the courses finish at 3:45 p.m. All are free of charge and include lunch. Travelling expenses are also paid for you if you wish to attend.

If you are interested in attending any of the following courses, please contact the Resident Involvement Officer, Claire Erskine on Leicester (0116) 257 2619 or email: claire.erskine@oadby-wigston.gov.uk.

Topic	Date	Location
Tenant Inspectors, Auditing and Mystery Shopping – Identify the ways that tenants can audit the services they receive.	12 July 2011	Daventry
'Every One's Different' Equality and Diversity training – Look at diversity in terms of respect, for ourselves, others and our relationships.	7 September 2011	Leicester
New Technology as an Involvement Tool – What types of new technology tools can be used to help tenants have a greater say in shaping the service they receive.	11 October 2011	Wigston
Housing – The Bigger Picture. A chance to learn about the government's proposed reforms to social housing.	25 October 2011	Nuneaton



Social Housing Fraud

Most people have heard about benefit fraud, but have you heard about social housing fraud?

This is where a person has a Council or housing association tenancy, but does not use it as their main home. In some cases, they may have moved out and let the property to another person. In other cases, they may have somewhere else to live but still keep their tenancy on, even though they only return from time to time.

In the last six months, our housing officers have taken back six Council properties from people where it was not their main home. These properties have now been let to people who genuinely need a home. With over 600 households in Oadby and Wigston on our housing waiting list, we cannot afford to let people cheat others out of a home. The message is simple – use it or lose it.

If you think that a Council property is being let to someone other than the tenant, or that the tenant is not really living there, you can contact us in confidence, by phoning Leicester (0116) 257 2646 or email housing@oadby-wigston.gov.uk

Helping you to live independently – adaptations



We can provide adaptations to our houses and flats, which help older people and disabled tenants to keep their independence and stay in their own home.

These adaptations might be minor, such as a grab rail by a front door, or major, like a stair lift or level access shower.

Adaptations for our tenants are free of charge. We will also organise for them to be carried out. Minor adaptations

can normally be done quite quickly. With major adaptations, there may be a waiting list, as there is only a limited amount of money available every year.

Depending on the type of adaptation required, you may need to speak to an occupational therapist, who can properly assess what you need.

If you are a tenant of the Council and want to find out more, please contact the Maintenance Team on Leicester (0116) 257 2614.

Achievements of the Tenants Panel

The Tenants Panel is made up of a group of Council tenants, who volunteer their spare time to work with staff of the Housing Section.

They are the voice of our tenants and are passionate about local issues enough to want to work with us to make changes, which can benefit every single Council resident.

Here are some of the things that the Panel have achieved so far:

- The Tenants Panel helped to interview some companies who had made bids for the contract to refit bathrooms in some of our properties. They successfully helped us to select a local firm who are now working on this contract for us.
- With the help and feedback from the Tenants Panel, changes are currently underway to introduce a new home decorating pack for new tenants from a well known paint company. This will ensure new tenants are given much more choice and flexibility when they come to decorate their new home.
- The Panel like to bring local issues to the forefront at our meetings and we have now arranged for the local police beat teams to

attend our meetings to listen to and address any issues or concerns. This is great partnership working for us, the Tenants Panel and the police.

- Members of the Tenants Panel have attended many training workshops and seminars to enhance their personal development and improve their skills, as there is a real opportunity to network with residents from other areas. These training workshops and seminars are free of charge and travelling expenses are covered.
- We are in the process of getting some tenants involved with our Maintenance Team, to have a look at how we deal with empty properties. We are planning to get this underway as a regular event, as the feedback we received from the tenants who went to visit the properties was very positive and could help us to improve our standards in the future.

There is a lot to gain by joining the Tenants Panel, and so many opportunities to not only improve the place where you live but also to help improve the service that we as your landlord provide for you. We just want more people to come forward and get involved in changing what is best for you.

If you are interested in any of the above initiatives we would love to hear from you and we will be able to give you some more information. Please contact your Resident Involvement Officer Claire Erskine on Leicester (0116) 257 2619 or email Claire on claire.erskine@oadby-wigston.gov.uk.



Improving what we do for you

Below are some of the improvements we have made to the way that we provide our services to you as a tenant.

A well maintained home that meets the resident's needs:

94% of homes meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard. This is in line with the average across the country.

97% of repairs are completed on time. This is better than average for other councils and housing associations.

Tenants who have asked for a major adaptation to their home are waiting on average 6 months for the work to be carried out. This is quicker than our target of 12 months.

A safe place to live:

We have brought in a new computer system to help us deal with complaints of anti-social behaviour. This will help us to deal with complaints more efficiently.

Working with Leicestershire Police, we now have a new procedure to make sure vulnerable people who are affected by anti-social behaviour are given the help and support they need. These new steps have been put in place following the tragic case of Fiona Pilkington.

Being treated fairly and with respect:

We know that people found the points system complicated, which we used to decide who would be allocated the next empty property. Now that we have Choice Based Lettings, people can see what properties are available and choose which they bid for. Date order is also now used to help prioritise applications, which is easier to understand.

Council housing in Oadby and Wigston – our priorities

Our aim is to be an excellent housing landlord. To achieve this, we must focus on what matters most to our residents. Our residents have told us that what matters most to them is:

- a well maintained home, that meets the resident's needs
- being kept informed, where it matters

- a safe place to live
- being treated fairly and with respect
- offering Value for Money, and
- recognise that residents view us as one organisation and not different sections