



## **GRRRRREAT COMMUNITY FUN DAY**

Pictured: One Community fun day event in Wallingford page 8-9. Photo courtesy of Simon Apps.

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**Money Matters**  
Help and advice with your finances



# Blackbird Leys Choir

Lew Fryer spoke to the Chairman of the choir Graham Russell about how money from OCHA's Community Chest fund has helped them.



## When did the Blackbird Leys Choir first form and what was the idea behind it?

The choir first came together back in 2006 as part of a four episode documentary for Channel 4 called 'The Singing Estate'. The programme invited people from Blackbird Leys to audition before picking 40 with the objective of a performance at the Royal Albert Hall in front of 13,000 people! So from very early on it became quite a famous choir because of the way it was born.

## How many members does the choir have and does it hold auditions for those who would like to join?

We have about 30 members right now. We don't hold auditions. If people are interested in joining they can come along to the Blackbird Leys Community Centre at 6.30pm on a Wednesday evening when we rehearse.

Lots of people who join the choir haven't sung for a long time and there are some who are just starting out. Some are very good singers and others not quite as good, but they find time to work on things together and as a collective do really well.

## How has the money from the Community Chest fund helped?

It has enabled us to continue doing what we do because we have lots of costs. We have to rent the hall, hire the musical director and pianist, as well as buy and rent music. We want to keep the choir open and accessible to everyone, so the money, very importantly, also keeps the subscription costs down, which means people can afford to take part. It also means we can help subsidise those who can't afford to pay the £4 each time we

meet, and gives them the opportunity to pay what they can afford. It would be great to eventually have sponsorship as at the moment it is very much hand to mouth.

## What has been the most exciting thing that the choir has been involved in?

I think for the half a dozen original members of the choir who are still with the group, the most exciting part must have been being involved in the television project. The prestigious conductor Ivor Setterfield, the original musical director who pulled the documentary together, led them to the performance at the Royal Albert Hall and a private audience with the Queen!

**“Lots of people who join the choir haven't sung for a long time and there are some who are just starting out.”**

The choir's 5th birthday party was also very exciting and got a lot of press attention because we had Ivor Setterfield back participating. We took on Vivaldi's 'Gloria' at the Jacqueline Du Pre building. It was a very demanding piece, but we pulled it off. This really buoyed us and we are now tackling more challenging pieces. The choir has also sung all over Europe and performed with the famous cellist Julian Lloyd-Webber.

**If you are interested in joining the choir, sponsoring them, or going to a rehearsal, you can find out more by contacting Graham Russell on 07921 649486, or emailing [committee@blackbirdleyschoir.org](mailto:committee@blackbirdleyschoir.org) or visit [www.blackbirdleyschoir.org](http://www.blackbirdleyschoir.org)**

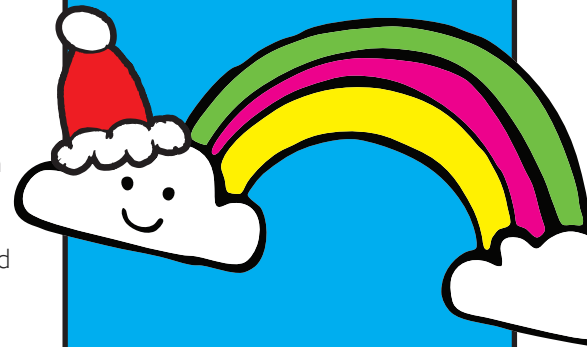
See the choir at the Ceremony of Carols at Deddington Church on Sunday 4 December and the carol service at the Holy Family Church, Blackbird Leys on Sunday 18 December.

**APPLY TODAY!**

## Community Chest Fund

Did you know that OCHA awards small grants to local groups across Oxfordshire?

Would a small grant of up to £750 help your group?



A great opportunity to bid for funding for your groups Christmas event!

**Deadlines for the 2011/2012 applications are 5pm on:**

- All Christmas related applications must be received before **7 November 2011**
- **28 November 2011**
- **20 February 2012**

**If you would like to find out more please contact Paula Haslam on Freephone 0800 980 9272 01865 782507 or email [paula.haslam@ocha.org.uk](mailto:paula.haslam@ocha.org.uk) Details are also available on our website at [www.ocha.org.uk](http://www.ocha.org.uk)**



# by residents, for residents

## SURVEY WINNERS

April – June 2011

**Repairs satisfaction survey winner**

Mr Crawford of Bourton Close won £100 of Love2Shop vouchers.



**Telephone satisfaction survey winner**

Mr Crump of Fry's Court won £50 of Love2Shop vouchers. Pictured above left with Paul Joyce, Customer Service Officer, OCHA.

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## Eid party is a tasty success



Last month Rose Hill's diverse cultural communities came together to celebrate Eid – a day of enjoyment rejoicing at the end of Ramadan fasting. Eid is also a time of gathering family and friends together for good food, music, and dancing.

Over a 100 people from all cultures and religions attended the celebration held in the Rose Hill Children's Centre. Everyone enjoyed Bollywood dancing, boxercise fitness sessions, henna tattooing, and face painting for both adults and children.

A celebration lunch brought together both Asian and Arabic cultures with tasty delights such as pakora, samosas, dhal, and tiramisu.

This year OCHA's Community Chest helped to fund the day with a donation of £200 – which enabled the organisers to put on the lunch as well as to buy goody bags and balloons for the children.



**Multifaith calendar – You can find holy days and festivals by religion, date, or year at [www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/tools/calendar)**

## What's on?

### RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT & COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

If you would like to see the full list of events coming up for residents, please visit [www.ocha.org.uk](http://www.ocha.org.uk) and go to the 'What's on' section.

Alternatively contact the RICl team for more information using the contact details on page 2.





**“It’s lovely being out there. I could garden all year round. When you see everything come out, it gives you great satisfaction, it’s so worthwhile.”**

Rosemary Court resident Mrs Healey with her award for outstanding floral display in the ‘Best Kept Small Garden’ category. The same category she won two years ago for Oxford in Bloom.

## caught on camera



Tower Close  
**CLEAN-UP DAY**

## Greater Leys ‘Green Thumb’ hanging basket competition

### 1ST PRIZE – £75\*

Ms Kemmett of Acacia Avenue

### 2ND PRIZE – £30\*

Miss Hayes of Cranesbill Way

### 3RD PRIZE – £15\*

Mrs Edmead of Shepherds Hill

### RUNNER-UP PRIZES – £10\*

- Mr and Mrs Ronald of Primrose Pl
- Mr Omuregogo of Farm Close
- Mrs Martin of Dunnock Way

\*Love2Shop vouchers

## Trip to Ryton National Organic Garden Centre

**On Tuesday 13 September, 20 members of the Senior Leys Independent Gardening Organisation, SLIGO, gardening club enjoyed a coach trip to Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Warwickshire.**

When we arrived at Ryton, we were welcomed and given a short history as to how and when the land was rescued – about 25 years ago. It is supported by horticultural and agricultural colleges and many individuals with a love of natural ways of growing fruit, vegetables, and other plants. There was much to see and we were encouraged to taste some of the apples, which were many and varied.

We enjoyed lunch in the café, where they used much of their own produce for soups and main courses. Also, some of us brought picnics, which we ate in the small gardens, in the orchard, in some of the sample gardens, seating shelters, and greenhouses. Many of us bought plants, seed packets, and other tempting items from their well-stocked shop.

**Barbara Moody, OCHA resident**

## We’re keen to feature more of your contributions on these pages in future issues of Citizens!

Have you got a story to tell us about you or where you live? Perhaps you’d like to tell us about a local scheme or community project, or an OCHA neighbour who works tirelessly for the community? Or maybe you’ve been involved with a charity that other residents would be keen to know about? Or you may just want to provide feedback on what is in this issue?

**You can receive up to £10 for articles, photos, or ideas that OCHA publishes in Citizens! So send your ideas TODAY!**

**To send us your ideas or to find out how you can get involved with Citizens, please contact Lew Fryer using the contact details on page 2 or email [lew.fryer@ocha.org.uk](mailto:lew.fryer@ocha.org.uk).**



# Money Matters



## Housing benefits

**If you're on a low income (or on certain benefits) and you are one of the people in your home paying the rent, you may be entitled to housing benefits. Housing benefits are paid by your local council.**

You may not be eligible if you have capital (savings, property, shares, etc) over £16,000, if you are a full-time student, or if you are allowed to live in the UK only if you don't claim benefits.

If you are on income support or jobseeker's allowance, you will normally get full housing benefits. But, if you get other types of benefits, your housing benefits could be reduced. If you have capital between £3,000 and £16,000 (or between £6,000 and £16,000 if you or your partner is 60 or over), you will be entitled to reduced housing benefits. If you have an adult son or daughter, or an elderly relative (non-dependent person) who lives with you, you may be entitled to reduced housing benefits.

You may get full housing benefits if you are blind or get the care component of the Disability Attendance Allowance. You may also get them if the non-dependent person who lives with you is:

- on youth training
- a student
- a long-term hospital in-patient
- in prison
- under 25 and on income support.

We can help you complete the claims form. You will need two forms of identity and evidence of your (and your partner's) income – including any other benefits received. You also need proof of how much rent you pay.



## Credit unions

**Credit unions offer their members savings and low-interest loans. This is cheaper than borrowing from doorstep lenders, high-street stores, or even from banks or supermarkets.**

Credit unions encourage members to save regularly, provide loans at fair interest rates, and give members help and support with managing their finances if they need it. They also cover members with life insurance – so if a member dies, their loan is paid off.

Becoming a member is simple: you must provide proof that you live and/or work in your credit union's area and pay a minimum of £1 to open your savings account.

You will need to save regularly in the union (as little or as much as you wish) because members' savings form a common pool of money from which loans can be made. The interest on loans is usually about 12.68% APR. For more information phone 01865 777757 or visit [www.oxfordcreditunion.co.uk](http://www.oxfordcreditunion.co.uk)

## Avoid some phone charges

**Most mobile phone providers in the UK charge for calls to 0800, 0808, and 0500 numbers. If you receive inclusive minutes to UK landlines as part of your contract, then you could save yourself money when you call these numbers by contacting 0800Buster.**

0800Buster lets you call these numbers using your mobile's inclusive minutes, by providing you with a UK landline number to dial instead. Just dial 01236 21 0800, enter the full freephone number you want to call at the prompt, then press#. That's it! For more information visit the website at [www.0800Buster.co.uk](http://www.0800Buster.co.uk).



**If you would like more information about the information in our 'Money Matters' section, or if you need some advice about how to budget, save, and get the best deal for your household bills like rent, fuel, and water, and especially if you are struggling to pay your bills, please contact Paul Worthen, Financial Inclusion Project Leader. Use the details on page 2 or email [paul.worthen@ocha.org.uk](mailto:paul.worthen@ocha.org.uk)**

***Pictured: Paul Galley (left) and Paul Worthen (right) with local Edmond Morris (centre). They were in Templars Square recently to inform and advise local residents of the impending changes to welfare benefits.***

## Scrutiny Panel

Update from Kerry Law, Chair of the Resident Scrutiny Panel



The GreenSquare Resident Scrutiny Panel (RSP) is currently looking into financial inclusion, having finished its inquiry into the proposed governance changes within GreenSquare. The panel is aware that many residents may be facing financial problems in the current economic climate and want to check that GreenSquare is doing everything it can to help residents who may be facing redundancy or changes to their benefits. The RSP will be working with resident inspectors and market researchers to check what services are offered to help residents, and make sure residents are aware of the help available.



## Do you have oil fired central heating?

**If your home is heated by oil fired central heating, here are a few tips that may help you:**

- A number of different companies supply heating oil, and because you don't need a supply contract with the company (as you do for your electricity) you can choose the company offering the lowest price each time you need a delivery.
- The price of oil changes every day, so it can be hard to know what your next delivery will cost.
- If you have internet access, you can join an 'oil club' such as The Heating Oil Club, Boiler Juice, or My Consortium, which are online groups that help you to find the cheapest deal for each delivery. Please note that we do not endorse or imply any recommendation between you and your chosen supply.
- You can get free internet access in our office reception at Bams Road, or at the local library, or you can ask to use a friend's or relative's computer so that you can join an oil club.
- 500 litres (half a tank) is the smallest delivery you can usually arrange, and this can cost around £300. But if you just need your tank topped up to full, you only pay for the amount delivered on the day.
- Most oil delivery companies want you to pay up-front for your first oil delivery from them, but if you stay with the same company for more deliveries you can usually pay by monthly direct debit after that.
- If you can't pay by direct debit, it makes good sense to save money after your first delivery so that you can pay in full for your next delivery.
- Usually you will need about three deliveries of 500 litres of oil per year. So you will need to save at least £20/wk, all year round, to pay for oil when you need it. This is about the same as gas central heating for a 3-bed semi-detached house.

*Your local credit union is a safe place to save money regularly for your next oil delivery, and they can also help with a low-cost loan if you need help to pay for your heating oil.*

## Sewers no longer a drain on OCHA

**For most people, drains and sewers are out of sight and out of mind. That is until a neighbour tells them there is something unpleasant coming out of the manhole at the bottom of their garden!**

Traditionally these matters have always been dealt with by OCHA contractors. However, from Saturday 1 October 2011, your local water company became responsible for the ownership and maintenance of thousands of kilometres of private sewers and drains following a change in the law.

If you are currently connected to a public sewer, the only wastewater pipework that remains the responsibility of OCHA is that within your property boundary serving only you. All other drains and sewers have become the responsibility of your local water company.

In most cases this is either Wessex Water or Thames Water, and they have taken on the responsibility for any problems within these pipes. The information as to which water company supplies your property should be on your bill.

From 1 October 2011, if your property is served by Thames Water, please report any

blockages or problems to Thames Water on (0845) 9200 800. They will arrange for the blockage to be cleared or remedial maintenance to be carried out. Similarly from this date, should your property be serviced by Wessex Water, please report any sewer or drain problems to them directly on (0845) 600 4600

In both instances, when you report the problem to your water company, please make sure to state that you are an OCHA resident. This will ensure any subsequent bill will be sent directly to us rather than to you.

While responsibility for sewer ownership has changed, doing your bit to help prevent blockages is as important as ever. OCHA sets aside a budget each year for sewer and drain problems in the region of £45,000, and contractors are called upon regularly to clear blockages to discover items that shouldn't be there, including nappies, wet wipes, etc.

Only human waste should be flushed down the toilet and items such as sanitary products, nappies, wet wipes, condoms, dental floss, etc should all be wrapped up and put in the bin.

Domestic waste such as cooking fats and oils should be disposed of with other household rubbish. Chemical waste, such as solvents, engine oil, and paints, should be taken to your local refuse site for disposal.

## Complaints report

Between 1 July and 31 September we received 4 formal complaints. Of the 4 complaints, 1 was upheld. All 4 complaints were responded to within the target time of 10 working days. The complaints reported were relating to communal gardening, lack of appropriate response, recharges, and scheme management consultation.

As a result of the feedback we received from these complaints, we have taken the following action:

- A recommendation has been made regarding advising residents of recharges at the end of their tenancy.
- ASB and harassment procedures have been checked to make sure we are following them correctly.
- A review of communal gardening is taking place.
- A consultation of communal heating was reviewed to check the outcome.

A telephone satisfaction survey on the complaints process was also carried out and 4 of the complainants took part. Unfortunately none of the respondents were satisfied with the overall complaints handling process during this quarter. Feedback showed that they were left feeling that the complaint hadn't been resolved to their satisfaction and that we didn't fully understand their complaints. We are continuing to work with these customers to gain a better understanding of their reasons for dissatisfaction.

**If you would like any further information about how to make a complaint, please refer to your 'Complaints and Compliments' leaflet or contact the Customer Services team using the details on page 2.**




Your feedback and views matter to us and they can help us to shape how we work in the future. We would also encourage you to thank us when staff provide a good service, because this helps us to identify good practice.




## How we performed

Citizens looks at how OCHA performed in the quarter ending June 2011 and compares the figures with the same time last year.



### Carrying out repairs

-  99.2% of emergency repairs, 98.1% of urgent repairs, and 99.1% of routine repairs were completed on time, which, apart from routine repairs, is lower than the 99.8%, 99.3%, and 98.3% we achieved last year. But is higher than our targets of 97% for urgent and routine repairs and just falls short of our target of 100% for emergency repairs.
-  84.7% repairs completed first time fell just short of the 93% target but was higher than last year, which was 81.6%.
-  93.8% of residents were satisfied with our repairs, falling below our target of 98% but higher than last year's score of 89.8%.

### Answering your calls

-  We answered your calls in an average of 7 seconds, which is three seconds better than our target and is faster than the 18 seconds the best associations achieve.

### Lettings and rent arrears

-  We are continuing to get empty properties ready for their new occupants much faster! The latest figure of 19.9 days for general needs properties is five days faster than our target of 25 days but nearly two days slower than last year's recorded figure.
-  Current tenant arrears for general needs and housing for older people stand at 2.96% of our total annual rental income, an improvement on last year's figure of 4.5% and on target to meet our target of 2.7% by March 2012.

### Resident satisfaction

-  92% of residents were happy with our customer services, which is 2% higher than last year and 12% above our target.
-  83% of residents in rented properties were happy with our overall service, 5% higher than the last satisfaction survey carried out in 2006 but 3% short of our target 86%.
-  81% of residents in rented properties were happy with the way their views are taken into account, 13% more than in 2006 and well above the target of 69%.

# Coopers Piece COMMUNITY FUN DAY



Pictures taken at the recent 'One Community' fun day event in Wallingford. Photos courtesy of Simon Apps.



## We held a community fun day at Coopers Piece in Wallingford on Sunday 18 September

The event launched OCHA's community development project 'One Community' which is now running on the estate. In between the downpours of rain, residents enjoyed live music, a BBQ, the Oxfordshire Playbus, bouncy castle, talking to local PCSOs, a face painter, goodie bags from the Wallingford Children's Centre, as well as the chance to chat to OCHA staff about a variety of issues.

The OCHA 'One Community' project works with OCHA residents in a particular area to build on the existing community spirit, to let residents know what groups, services, and support organisations are available locally, and to make OCHA staff more accessible and visible on their street.

"Coopers Piece residents have made us feel very welcome today and have kept



us smiling despite the rain! Everyone is so supportive of our community work, especially the youth work we are providing with the Oxfordshire Playbus. We're looking forward to more events and projects here over the next year or so," said Paula Haslam, OCHA's Community Projects Coordinator.

**If you live in Coopers Piece and would like to help us plan more events and activities such as our**

**youth work and fun day, even just to give us ideas, please contact Paula Haslam on 01865 782507 or email [paula.haslam@ocha.org.uk](mailto:paula.haslam@ocha.org.uk)**



# Citizens Panel

Get involved today!

OCHA's Citizens Panel is made up of residents who give us regular feedback, which helps us shape and improve our services. We will give details of what the Panel has said – and what we are doing in response – in each edition of Citizens.



## Access to Services

88 residents took part in the survey.

### HOW YOU LIKE TO CONTACT US

85% told us they had been in contact with us in the last 12 months using a variety of methods, with telephone coming out as and remaining the firm favourite. Interestingly, the number of customers who would prefer to email us has fallen in comparison to last year.

### OPENING HOURS

In our 2010 Access survey we tested whether the opening hours for both the reception and telephone service provided by the Customer Service team were meeting our customers' needs. The feedback strongly indicated that they were, with only 12% of those we spoke to advising us they would like our opening hours to be longer. Our opening hours have remained unchanged since that survey and are 8:30am until 6pm for our phone service and 8:30am to 5pm for reception. We asked customers how they felt about these hours now and the results were almost identical to last years.

### SERVICE STANDARDS

OCHA has some key service standards for responding to customer contact and we used this survey to determine whether these were still appropriate, and if they are what customers expect and want from us. 89% are happy with our five working day letter response target – three days was the most popular alternative. 77% are happy with our two working day email response target – one working days was the most popular and only other alternative suggested. 82% are happy with our ten minute un-appointed reception response target – a further 15% would be happy to wait longer.

One respondent said, "My experiences of OCHA services have been generally

excellent. I hope they remain so under GreenSquare."

## Building for Life

82 people responded to the survey.

The Building for Life requirements are part of the funding conditions that apply to grant funded new homes that we build. There are 20 Building for Life criteria and we have designed schemes to meet at least 12 of these.

The aim of this survey was to investigate whether Building for Life is having a positive effect and to establish if there is anything we can learn or could change.

### LOCAL AMENITIES

There appears to be a decline in local amenities of 22%. The greatest loss of amenities is reported to be play areas, shops, and pubs. No schools were reported to have closed.

### WHERE YOU LIVE

28% of the responders feel proud of where they live and 58% consider it OK. 60% of responders feel that they and their visitors can find their way easily around the area in which they live. 60% of responders feel that parking is adequate.

### HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR HOME?

59% of responders feel that their home does not provide opportunity for adaptation, conversion, or extension. 45% of responders consider that they need to make changes in their home.

The results from the Building for Life Survey will be referred to the GreenSquare Resident's Design Panel for consideration.

## Citizens Panel processes

91 residents responded to the survey.

### REVIEW

98.9% enjoyed their involvement in the

Citizens Panel. 97.8%

said they would recommend joining the Citizens Panel to other OCHA residents.

96.7% felt that the questions asked during the course of the year had been relevant to them as OCHA residents. 91.2% felt that OCHA had responded to the views that had been expressed by the Citizens Panel. 91.2% were happy with the feedback on the Citizens Panel that they had received from OCHA during 2009/10.

### PROPOSALS

96.7% were happy with the list of topics that OCHA will be consulting on during 2011/12. There were several responses asking for improved links between panel members. Comments on questionnaire format included:

- Sometimes it would be nice to have a 'maybe' answer as well as a 'yes' and 'no', or even a 'don't know'... not everything is black and white.
- More space for further comments.
- Make the questionnaires more user friendly. In a few instances I have only been allowed to write in a restricted number of characters into the boxes and not finish my answer! Also, some of the yes / no questions are too black and white – an 'other' box to add further comment would be good.
- A bit more time to complete surveys.

**This is a summary of the results and actions from recent surveys. If you would like more detailed information about any of the surveys reported here, please contact Richard Grant using the details on page 2 or email [richard.grant@ocha.org.uk](mailto:richard.grant@ocha.org.uk).**



- Would you like to earn £25 for answering six or more questionnaires in the year?
- Can't get to evening meetings? • Enjoy using the internet or the telephone?
- Want to be involved but find time hard to commit?

**THEN THE CITIZENS PANEL IS FOR YOU!**

Contact Richard Grant for more information, details above.



**Scott Brown and Emma Tasker are the lucky winners of this year's £1,000 Summer prize draw!**

**Are you a member of The Deal?**

**Then use your reward card to take advantage of these discounts!**

"We think The Deal is a brilliant idea. We never thought we would win anything from being a member so it's nice to know the draw is real!" Emma and Scott were picked from over 1,100 other members.

Scott and Emma have lived in Barrington Close, Witney for five years and have been members of The Deal since our reward scheme was launched in April 2008. "We've spent some of the money on Christmas presents for the children," said Emma.

"Presenting this cheque really is one of the highlights of my job," said Julianne, Head of Customer Services. "The Deal is all about rewarding loyalty; recognising and investing in our customers who take pride in their homes, and keep to their tenancy agreements. I hope that Scott and

Emma's win encourages even more people to sign up and become members next year – we want the opportunity to give you the thanks you deserve!"

**The next membership round will be in January 2012. This is when we give existing members the chance to renew their membership if they still meet the scheme criteria, and we invite new members to join. If you want to find out more, please contact Customer Services (details page 2) or look up 'Resident Rewards' at [www.ocha.org.uk](http://www.ocha.org.uk)**



**Pictured L-R: Scott, Emma and their children being presented with their cheque by Julianne Britton, Head of Customer Services.**

## Winter is coming

Following last years bad weather and concerns raised from residents as part of the Residents' Business Plan consultation, this is a good time to remind you that we have plans for responding to periods of severe weather including extreme cold and snow. The plans have prioritised areas where we will try to maintain safe access to key buildings and the most vulnerable groups of residents who could be critically affected by access problems caused by the weather. Exact details of where and what we do can change depending on the situation on the ground, and will also be affected by the need to maintain the safety of staff and contractors – services will inevitably be affected, but the intention is to assist residents, where it is safe and practical to do so.

Some residents have expressed a wish to see salt bins located in their neighbourhood and we have undertaken to evaluate such requests. If you think there is a need for this (on land that we own – you must contact the Council if it is a highway or public footpath) please contact the Customer Services team with details and we will assess the request.



### Show card

Just show your card before making a purchase – it couldn't be easier!



save 10%



save 5%

### Shopping cards

Buy online at [www.countdowncard.com](http://www.countdowncard.com) or by phone 0844 576 3494.



4% extra



save 8%

### Vouchers

Buy online at [www.countdowncard.com](http://www.countdowncard.com) or by phone 0844 576 3494.



4% extra




10% extra

# Starting to feel the cold

As we start to feel the temperature change, OCHA and the Homecare team want you to be prepared for the winter months. Below are tips to help you prepare you and your home for the cold weather.



**Snappy Snaps**  
40 Cornmarket Street  
Oxford OX1 3HA

**Bensons for Beds**  
Within Harveys  
Unit 1  
Botley Road  
Oxford  
OX2 0HA

For terms & conditions please see www.ourdownland.com

**ASDA**  
Templar Shopping Park  
Between Towns Road  
Oxford  
OX4 3JP

**ASDA**  
London Road  
Wheatley  
OX33 1YZ

**Your local Argos stores:**

North Bailey House New Inn Hall Street Oxford OX1 2RP	23-25 Market Sq Witney OX28 6AD Unit 11 Kings Park Limborough Road Wantage OX12 9AJ
Fairacres Retail Park Marcham Road Abingdon OX14 1BY	10-15 Broad Street Banbury OX16 5BN
30 Orchard Street Orchard Centre Didcot OX11 7LL	

For terms & conditions please see www.ourdownland.com

**Sainsbury's**  
21 Westgate  
OXFORD  
OX1 1PA

**Sainsbury's**  
Heyford Hill  
Littimore  
OXFORD  
OX4 4XR

**Pizza Hut**  
10-12 High Street  
Oxford OX1 4DB

**Pizza Hut**  
18 Chenwell Drive  
Marston OX3 0LY

**Pizza Hut**  
Lockheed Close  
Banbury OX16 1LS

**Pizza Hut**  
67 Calthorpe Street  
Banbury OX16 5EX

**Pizza Hut**  
George Street  
Oxford OX1 2BQ

For terms & conditions please see www.ourdownland.com

## How can I best heat my home?

- ✓ The NHS advises keeping your home at the recommended temperature of 18 to 21C (64 to 70F). If you cannot heat all the rooms you use, heat the living room during the day and the bedroom just before you go to sleep.
- ✓ If bills are a problem, older people might have to live and sleep in one room. Help the Aged advises asking friends or family to move the bed into the living room rather than sleeping in an armchair.
- ✓ Keep curtains drawn and doors closed to block out draughts. Take care not to block air vents or grilles even if you feel a draught coming through them. Make sure radiators and heaters are not blocked by furniture or covered by curtains.
- ✓ Draught proof the front door with a well-fitting curtain and fix draught proofing strips to windows and the bottom of external doors.
- ✓ Attach plastic film or sheeting to the window frame. Seal gaps between floorboards and around skirting boards with sealant or thin wooden strips.



## What can I do to look after my family?

- ✓ The NHS is advising people to have regular hot drinks and at least one hot meal a day. Help the Aged has published a free advice leaflet called Healthy eating. For advice phone 0800 169 6565 (lines are open between 8am and 7pm) or go online [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk).
- ✓ Keep as active as possible. Get your circulation going.
- ✓ Wrap up warm.
- ✓ Use a hot water bottle or an electric blanket at night.
- ✓ Check up on friends, relatives, and neighbours.

## What can I do to look after my home?

- ✓ If you're going away, British Gas advises setting your central heating to come on twice a day at a low temperature to avoid freezing and burst pipes.
- ✓ Put grit or cat litter on paths and driveways to lessen the risk of slipping.
- ✓ British Gas recommends having a frost thermostat valve fitted, which automatically switches it on if the temperature drops dramatically.



**For more information or to request a copy of the 'Keeping safe and warm in your home' leaflet please contact Customer Services using the details on page 2.**



Our OCHA Homecare Team, with the assistance of our two electricians, have now achieved National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NIC EIC) status. On top of this, our two electricians (pictured above) have also successfully passed their 17th edition electrical regulation tests so they are now fully up-to-date with the latest electrical regulations.

NIC EIC status is important because it provides us with:

- **Safety and competence in the works carried out by our electricians;**
- **Compliance with building regulations, which enable us to self-certify our work;**
- **Insurance backed warranty;**
- **Independent complaints procedure; and**
- **Guarantee of standards scheme where NIC EIC expect standards to be high and also the NIC EIC carry out a yearly inspection of the electricians and the office environment.**

Well done to all who have been involved in achieving NIC EIC status.

DO YOU WANT  
**DIY**  
workshops?

OCHA and DW Contractors want to offer OCHA residents DIY workshops. You will learn how to carry out basic DIY tasks around your home.

The workshops will be suitable for complete beginners to those who already have basic DIY skills. The workshops will be offered across the geographical area covered by OCHA, providing there is a reasonable interest. Reasonable childcare and transport costs will be paid. You need to be over 18 and an OCHA resident.



**We need to know if you're interested, so please contact Veronica Rydh-Smith today! Freephone 0800 980 9272, phone 01865 782546 or email [veronica.rydhsmith@ocha.org.uk](mailto:veronica.rydhsmith@ocha.org.uk)**

## Homecare performance figures

### APRIL-AUGUST

- > **99.9% of reported repairs were completed on time.**
- > **Resident satisfaction, based on 14% (285 out of 2034) returned repairs satisfaction surveys, 98% of residents said they were satisfied with the repair.**
- > **First time fix, based on 14% (285 out of 2034) returned repairs satisfaction surveys, 91% of residents said their repairs were completed first time.**

## Welcome to Wheldons

OCHA parted company with Kinetics in June 2011. Kinetics provided a gas servicing and maintenance contract for which they had won a five year contract in 2009. However, Kinetics failed to provide OCHA and our residents with the level of service

we expect despite working together with Kinetics in trying to improve the service.

Therefore, we used a 'break clause' in the contract and effectively ended the contract.

In the meantime, we carried out a mini tendering exercise to bring in a temporary replacement gas contractor. Following the exercise, interviews, and

site visits, we appointed Wheldons Contracts & Services Ltd to carry out the maintenance and servicing of our gas appliances. They have now been providing a good service for the past four months.

We will be looking at a longer-term solution for the future. The service from Wheldons has been an improvement and they have been meeting the targets we set them.

## Data protection

**We all have a right to know that organisations handle our personal information securely and to know that it won't be released to other people or organisations without our permission. OCHA is no different and as our customer you share these same rights.**

If you contact us and request tenancy or rent account information, please do not be offended if we ask you to confirm some details first. We could ask you for your date of birth or details about other household members. If you visit our reception, we may also ask you for a form of photographic identity.

GreenSquare Group, which OCHA is part of, must follow the guidelines of the Data Protection Act (1998), which governs the release of personal information. A recent change to this law means that staff answering customer queries are responsible for ensuring that they only release information to the person named on the tenancy or lease; their nominated proxy, or an authorised third party.

We are not allowed, under any circumstances, to discuss personal information with friends, relatives, or other third-parties who say they are acting on behalf of one of our customers (or anyone else) without authorisation from the customer themselves. This authorisation must be in writing, must give us details of the specifically nominated people who are to be the representatives, and must then be recorded on the customers file. The authorisation should also tell us what information we can share, for what purpose, and for how long. We cannot accept verbal authorisation anymore.

**If you would like more information, please contact the Customer Services team using the details on page 2.**



## Have you had a phone call?

You, or someone you know, may have recently been asked to take part in a telephone survey by the Viewpoint Market Research team.

### Why we use telephone surveys?

We use the telephone to ask people their opinions about many different aspects of the service we provide. We have found telephone surveys to be very cost effective, compared to a door-to-door or postal survey. Also, the response rate is much higher than by other methods – an average of 44%. Using the phone also enables us to get the opinions and views of a greater range of people, rather than just those who choose to come to formal meetings, or take the time to complete survey forms.

Since we started the surveys at OCHA this year, we have conducted them on various subjects ranging from repairs satisfaction, to how residents would like their rent money to be spent. We are currently carrying out surveys to find out how satisfied people are with the last contact they made with OCHA.

### Who are our market researchers?

We have a team of six market researchers (pictured right), who have been fully trained. Although they are not able to answer specific enquiries, they are able to pass any comments you may have to the relevant department. They have received training in such things as Equality and Diversity and the importance of confidentiality.

### Why complete a telephone survey?

When the market researchers call you, they will tell you what the survey is about, how long it will take to complete, and ask you whether you would like to take part. The surveys usually take between five and eight minutes.



You don't have to take part if you don't want to. However, completing a telephone survey is an opportunity for you to give us your opinions and views, which will influence the services that OCHA provides.

We use different random lists of names each time, so you should not be contacted very often.

### What do we do with the information you give us?

We use the results to assess satisfaction levels, and to influence any proposed changes to service. We always give feedback to anyone who takes part in a survey. This is usually by newsletter, which details what you told us and what we will be doing about it. Some surveys do not have a newsletter because their results feed into other documents such as the Residents' Business Plan.



**If you would like further information please contact Jen Eastman, Viewpoint Team Leader, on 01249 466168 or email [jen.eastman@greensquaregroup.com](mailto:jen.eastman@greensquaregroup.com)**



# Join your housing officer on your local Neighbourhood Walkabout

Dates and times for your estate – October, November, and December 2011



**Abbots Close /The Close**  
17 November – 1pm

**Barton**  
20 October – 9.30am  
18 November – 9.30am  
13 December – 9.30am

**Blankstone Close**  
14 November – 11am

**Bourton Close**  
6 October – 10am  
13 December – 10am

**Budds Close**  
8 December – 12noon

**Chichester Close**  
18 October – 3pm

**Clay Hill Close**  
22 November – 11.30am

**Coopers Piece**  
13 October – 2pm  
10 November – 2pm  
8 December – 2pm

**Corn Bar & Bartlett Close**  
10 October – 9.30am  
14 November – 9.30am  
15 December – 9.30am

**Croxford Gardens**  
11 October – 3pm  
10 November – 3.30pm  
15 December – 3pm

**Dark Lane**  
10 October – 11.30am  
15 December – 11.30am

**Dora Carr Close**  
18 November – 10.30am

**Dowell Court**  
10 November – 9am

**Eton Close**  
8 December – 10am

**Fairspear Road**  
10 November – 2pm

**Falcon Close**  
12 October – 9am  
2 November – 9am  
7 December – 9am

**Farmhouse Meadow**  
6 October – 11am  
13 December – 11.30am

**Fishers Close**  
8 December – 10.30am

**George Yard**  
15 November – 4pm

**Greater Leys Central  
(Nightingale Avenue area)**  
12 October – 10am  
2 November – 10am  
7 December – 10am

**Greater Leys East  
(Acacia Avenue area)**  
17 October – 10.30am  
21 November – 10.30am  
19 December – 10.30am

**Greater Leys West  
(Jane Seaman Court area)**  
17 October – 2.30pm  
21 November – 2.30pm  
19 December – 2.30pm

**Home Close, Carterton**  
10 November – 10.30am

**Hooks Close**  
10 November – 9.45am

**Hughes House**  
3 October – 10am

7 November – 10am  
5 December – 10am

**Hundred Acres Close**  
22 November – 3pm

**Laurel Close / Rowan Close**  
18 October – 2pm

**Madley Park**  
10 October – 10.30am  
15 December – 10.30am

**Marsh Court**  
26 October – 3.30pm  
14 December – 3.30pm

**Marriott Close**  
8 December – 11.15am

**Marshall Road**  
24 November – 12noon

**Meadow End**  
15 November – 3.30pm

**Mendip Heights**  
12 October – 2pm  
7 December – 2pm

**Monks Close**  
24 November – 11am

**North Drive, Grove**  
24 November – 10.15am

**Ock Street / Mullard Way**  
12 October – 3.30pm  
7 December – 3.30pm

**Park Road**  
12 October – 1.30pm  
7 December – 1.30pm

**Pembroke Place**  
18 October – 4pm

**Peppercorn Avenue**  
6 October – 2pm

**Poolside Close**  
24 November – 11am

**Queens Close**  
10 November – 11am

**Reynolds Close**  
15 November – 3pm

**Richard Gray Court**  
11 November – 10am

**Rose Hill**  
25 October – 10am  
22 November – 10am  
20 December – 10am

**Shilton Park**  
10 November – 11.30am

**Smiths Rickyard**  
24 November – 9.30am

**Station Yard & Thame Road**  
21 November – 11am

**The Orchard**  
15 November – 2pm

**Thornbury Rise**  
24 November – 10am

**Ticknell Piece Road**  
22 November – 10am

**Tower Close**  
26 October – 2pm  
14 December – 2pm

**Waterways**  
28 October – 10am  
30 November – 10am  
22 December – 10am

**Willow Brook**  
26 October – 4.30pm  
14 December – 4.30pm

**Wimbom Close**  
15 December – 2pm

**Because of current restructuring, we are not able to publish which housing officer will be covering each walkabout at this time. If you would like more information, please contact customer services using the details on page 2.**



## PAPER CUT

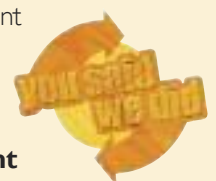
You told us that it would be great if we could cut back on the amount of post we send you, and not only have we listened we've done something about it! Usually we send every customer who pays a service charge a copy of their

annual account in September. We don't need to do this for everyone though, so, starting from this year, we will only be sending it to you if:

- you are a leaseholder
- you live in 55+ or supported home
- the service charge for your home was 10% higher or lower or £5 more or

less than the amount we budgeted to spend last year.

**You can still get a copy of the account if you would like one. Contact our customer service team using the details on page 2.**



# Oxfordshire Befriending Network MONDAY MEET-UPS

**A new friendly group for people living with serious illness.**

The Oxfordshire Befriending Network is expanding its services. In addition to offering one-to-one befriending, we are now running a twice-monthly peer-support group in East Oxford on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month.

The group offers a warm welcome, refreshments, visiting speakers, creative activities, and friendly company.

**For more information call 01865 791781 or email enquiries@oxonbefriending.net**

The Oxfordshire Befriending Network is part of Age UK Oxfordshire, registered charity number 1091529. Handprints image by Salvatore Vuono.



# ask OCHA

We want new people to join our existing Resident Inspector team. Below are some of your questions about the role.

### What does an inspector do?

The inspectors work as a team to 'test' different services offered by OCHA. This is what happens:

#### STEP 1

They look at what OCHA says about their service from leaflets, newsletters, website, and policies.

#### STEP 2

They then carry out 'reality checks' to see what happens in practice.

#### STEP 3

They feed back their findings to OCHA staff, including recommendations for improvements.

### What are the benefits for residents?

The resident inspector team is paid in vouchers, we also make sure that everyone has internet access, and provide training to support the group. People enjoy the fact that it is hands-on and sociable.

### How much of my time is required each month?

The inspectors need to give 2-8 hours/month.

**If you are interested in joining the team, please contact Veronica Rydh-Smith, phone 01865 782546 or email veronica.rydhsmith@ocha.org.uk**



## Competition

### Wordsearch

Find the 10 words listed below, fill in your details, and go in the draw to win £20 worth of High Street shopping vouchers.

- FOLIAGE • FROST • LEAVES • SEASONAL • BIRDS
- HALLOWEEN • BONFIRE • SQUIRREL • RAIN • PUMPKIN

Go in the draw to win High Street vouchers!

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

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to enter the competition, please post it back no later than Friday 25 November 2011 to: **Freeport SCE 14243, OCHA, Citizens Competition, 244 Barns Road, Oxford OX4 3RW.**

Fill in, cut out and post to us to win!



**SUMMER WORDSEARCH WINNER**

**Bryony Hull, from Didcot has won £20 worth of Love2Shop vouchers.**