

February 2018 • Issue 42
A newsletter by residents for residents


Phoenix
Our community in our hands



community news



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Welcome...



We're on Instagram – visit our page www.instagram.com/phoenixtogether/

Welcome to Community News

Welcome to the February issue of Community News. A lot has happened since our last issue: not only the holiday season – we hope you had a lovely Christmas and New Year (it all seems so long ago now) – but Phoenix also turned 10. You can read more about ongoing celebrations on page 4.

But it's also been a sad time for us: Tina Heyfron, who was a member of our Residents Communications Group, passed away in December, aged only 50. Tina only became a Phoenix resident in 2017, but she soon became hugely involved in the life of the community. As part of the Communications Group, she was full of energy and fresh ideas and made a big impact in a short time.

She will be missed by all of us. **From the Residents Communications Group**



Tina Heyfron

WIN! 'Spot yourself!'

If this is you pictured at our Christmas Community Links, please get in touch to claim your £25 shopping voucher.



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Have you ever dreamed of becoming a TV news presenter?

Interested in seeing yourself on screen? Then stay tuned for news of an exciting Phoenix project that will star our residents.

Cover Image – Lakeisha Lynch-Stevens, photographed by Chris O'Donovan for our 10 Years Together celebrations

Phoenix Community Housing Association (Bellingham and Downham Limited) is a Community Benefit Society, number 30057R. VAT number 162 4926 03. The Regulator of Social Housing number L4505.

Community links

Book your place
by 14th February

WINTER



OLYMPICS



Skate in the
Phoenix
ice rink for
one night only



Hot food and
pancake
making
activity



Medal making
and lace making
demonstration



PS4 Winter
Olympics game
competition

15th February 5-7pm
Ice skating from 4pm

The Green Man, 355 Bromley Road, SE6 2RP

☎ 0800 028 5700

✉ communitylinks@phoenixch.org.uk

🌐 www.phoenixch.org.uk

🐦 @phoenixtogether


Phoenix
Our community in our hands


Community Links



Round the houses

Get on board!
We have vacancies for a resident Board Member and Phoenix Gateway Committee members. Find out more on our website – applications close on 9 Feb.

Everything's gone green

We've brought our grounds maintenance team in-house for the first time. This means that the people who look after the green spaces around your homes are employed by Phoenix directly. Previously, they were working for a company called Glendale.

And as you may have noticed, they have already been busy planting ahead of the spring.

Our aim is to provide a higher quality, more efficient and responsive service to benefit you. Let us know how we are doing.



Happy birthday to us!

Phoenix turned 10 on 3 December 2017, and we've been celebrating everything that all of us – residents, staff and partner organisations – have achieved together.



At the centre of this was a photography exhibition called 10 Years Together, using pictures of nine residents and one staff member to tell our story. If you didn't catch it in The Green Man in November or December, you can have a look at the online version at www.phoenixch.org.uk/10years. You can also share your memories of the last 10 years there, and your hopes for the future.



The exhibition was also part of a very busy Christmas Community Links – more than 350 people came along to the event that featured live reindeer, Santa's grotto, music, and children re-enacting the Nativity, which was read by Strictly Come Dancing star Reverend Richard Coles.



Win like Tracy

"My name's Tracy Blyde, and I've won £500 of vouchers through the Gold Club – I'm ecstatic!"

"Joining the Gold Club doesn't cost you anything and if you're a tenant who's up to date with their rent, then why not? I'm someone that's won £500 so you can next time!"

As well as getting a chance every three months to win £500 in vouchers, the 3,505 tenants and leaseholders who are Gold Club members also earn reward points. If you would like to join, do get in touch. And if you are a member come along to our special event on 23 March.



Round the houses

Welcome home to Hazelhurst Court

The first residents have moved in to their new homes at Hazelhurst Court, close to Beckenham Hill station.

Hazelhurst Court, our first residential development, is an extra care scheme built with older people in mind. Each apartment is modern and spacious with accessible bathrooms and kitchens. There is a café, landscaped gardens and a courtyard.

Staff will be on site 24 hours a day in case of emergency, and care will be provided to residents with an identified care needs by Notting Hill Pathways.



Extra care homes for affordable rent are available now. If you're over 55 and have a care need, please speak to your social worker or contact us today.

**More homes on the way
And work has started on more new Phoenix homes – watch for updates.**

Beryl Goodhew moved into her new home in November.



"I never expected my new flat to be as lovely as it is. My friends have all told me how lucky I am, and how they wish they were moving in too.

I'd been in my house for 25 years and it was time for me to move on. It was too big for me and health wise I knew I needed somewhere that was more suitable. So when Phoenix spoke to me about Hazelhurst, it sounded like a good idea.

It's a comfort to know that there are people here to help if I need it. My old house will be really suitable for a young family, but I hope whoever lives there next is as happy as I was."

In brief

It's hello to the new line-up of our Phoenix Gateway Committee, which for the first time includes two staff members along with eight residents.

And it's a warm thank you to Maria Ali, who is stepping down from her role as Chair of Farmstead Road Community Garden.

Want to know what our Resident Scrutiny Panel do? Check out member Eileen Davies' blog and a short film on our website.

Sad news

We're sorry to have to pass on the news that Wendy Lines has died. Wendy was a resident who had been involved in Phoenix from the start, taking the opportunity to help shape the place where she lived. She was most recently a member of the Policy Working Group.

Fellow resident Deirdre Kennedy said: "Wendy worked tirelessly on committee after committee. She was delighted to serve on the old Phoenix Residents Group and it was there taking my first tentative steps within the organisation that I met her."

"Despite her failing health towards the end, Wendy was still determined



to be involved and came to the last joint event evening, offering her heartfelt opinions on how the Phoenix community could move forward within the next decade."

"Wendy was a warm and generous person and she will be sadly missed."



Special update Fire safety

Following the terrible events at Grenfell Tower last year, people have become more aware of the risks of fire. Keeping you safe in your home has always been our priority. This update is about what Phoenix is doing to look after our residents' safety and what you can do to help.

What does Phoenix do to ensure fire safety?

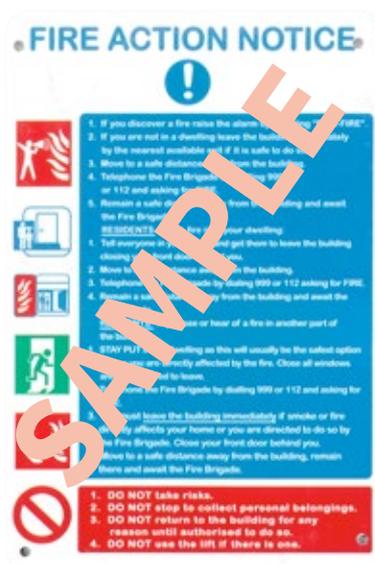
We have a legal obligation to undertake Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) in all the buildings we own except for individual houses.

FRAs aim to identify risks and hazards. All FRAs are undertaken by our specialist contractors Ridge LLP who have been working with us since 2016.

The FRA sets out what we need to do to ensure fire safety, along with a plan for how we should make that happen and a review to make sure it has been done.

Along with having FRAs, we:

- ensure escape routes are kept clean and sterile
- remove anything found to be blocking an escape route
- carry out safety checks such as gas safety, emergency lighting, domestic electrical checks (every 10 years) and communal electrical checks (every five years)
- have a no smoking policy in all our blocks and buildings
- display fire action notices in communal areas to provide information about what to do in the event of a fire
- install and maintain smoke alarms in all our properties
- install fire-rated front doors to tenants' flats if they enter onto a communal area.



We want to be open and transparent with – you are welcome to discuss your concerns about safety in your home with us. And, if you want to, you can see or have a copy of your property's fire risk assessment.

How can I contact you if I have a question?

If you have any concerns regarding fire safety, don't hesitate to contact us.

0800 0285 700

info@phoenixch.org.uk

Post or in person: The Green Man,
355 Bromley Road, London SE6 2RP

The London Fire Brigade are also working with us to promote fire safety in the home. You can contact them on:

020 8555 1200

info@london-fire.gov.uk

www.london-fire.gov.uk



Number of block checks for fire safety issues completed by caretakers (Apr-Dec 2017): 9,106

Number of emergency lighting tests completed by caretakers (Apr-Dec 2017): 9,106

% of extinguishers serviced in previous 12 months as of 31 December 2017: 100%

What to do if there's a fire

1. If you discover a fire raise the alarm by shouting "FIRE-FIRE".
2. If you are not in a dwelling leave the building immediately by the nearest available exit if it is safe to do so.
3. Move to a safe distance away from the building.
4. Telephone the Fire Brigade by dialling 999 or 112 and asking for FIRE.
5. Remain a safe distance away from the building and await the Fire Brigade.

RESIDENTS - If the fire is in your dwelling:

1. Tell everyone in your home and get them to leave the building closing your front door behind you.
2. Move to a safe distance away from the building.
3. Telephone the Fire Brigade by dialling 999 or 112 asking for FIRE.
4. Remain a safe distance away from the building and await the Fire Brigade.

RESIDENTS - If you see or hear of a fire in another part of the building:

1. **STAY PUT** in the dwelling as this will usually be the safest option unless you are directly affected by the fire. Close all windows and be prepared to leave.
2. Telephone the Fire Brigade by dialling 999 or 112 and asking for FIRE.
3. You must **leave the building immediately** if smoke or fire directly affects your home or you are directed to do so by the Fire Brigade. Close your front door behind you.
4. Move to a safe distance away from the building, remain there and await the Fire Brigade.

1. **DO NOT** take risks.
2. **DO NOT** stop to collect personal belongings.
3. **DO NOT** return to the building for any reason until authorised to do so.
4. **DO NOT** use the lift if there is one.

What can I do to make my home safer?

Most fires start in the home by accident. There are lots of things you can do to prevent a fire and to help you escape in the event of an emergency.

- Test your smoke alarm weekly and report any faults to us immediately
- Make an escape plan and share it with everyone in your household
- Ensure internal doors are closed at night to help prevent fire spreading, keep escape routes clear and door and window keys easily accessible
- If you live in a flat, familiarise yourself with the Fire Action Notice in the entrance lobby (see sample above)
- If you smoke, make sure cigarettes are extinguished properly and never smoke in bed – fires caused by smoking result in more deaths than any other type of fire
- Avoid leaving cooking unattended and keep appliances clean – a build-up of fat and grease can cause fire
- Be careful with candles, and keep children away from them
- Keep portable heaters away from clothes, curtains and furniture
- Keep electrical appliances in good working order and ensure they carry the British or European safety mark
- Do not overload plug sockets
- Check your fire door internally – if you live in a flat your home should be protected by a door designed to withhold smoke and flames for 30 minutes. Make sure your door self-closes, that it is not damaged, there are no big gaps between the door and the frame, that letterplates, handles and hinges are in good condition and that glass is not damaged – report any damage to us
- You should keep escape routes, including communal areas and stairwells, clear of anything that can block your way out
- You should not leave household rubbish in communal areas



Better than the pest

We had 97 pest control incidents last year. We will investigate infestations in communal areas and in flats (but not houses) and arrange for contractors to deal with them if necessary.

We won't arrange treatment for:

- rats – these are dealt with by your local authority free of charge
- fleas and spiders
- foxes – these can, however, be discouraged by not leaving food out and keeping your garden tidy.

Bees are not considered pests.

There are some simple steps you can take to help prevent a problem with pests:

- clean your cupboards regularly
- clean up any food dropped on to floors
- make sure your property is clean
- keep food wrapped and stored properly
- keep a lid on your bin and don't let it overflow
- keep pets clean and flea vaccinations up to date
- do not leave large items of rubbish in gardens for extended periods of time.

Find out more about the services Lewisham Council offer at www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/environment/pestcontrol.

One man went to mow...

If you have a garden and need help looking after it, try our low-cost garden scheme.

We'll come and cut your grass and trim your hedges four times from March to October. That will help you meet the requirement in your tenancy agreement to keep your garden tidy, and it will also reduce the risk that foxes and other pests will use it.

To sign up or learn more, please contact us.



It's a bin

Lewisham Council introduced changes to rubbish and recycling collections late last year. Food waste bins have been introduced so that less ends up in landfill when it can be reused in some way.

Most Phoenix residents live in Lewisham and we're aware that some of you may be confused by what's happening (and what's not happening), so we thought we would try to clarify what is going on.

- **If you live on an estate** and don't have an individual wheelie bin, nothing will have changed
- **If you live on certain roads** (mostly main roads), you should still be getting weekly bin collections
- **Everyone else:** you should now have a food waste bin. Collections for these, your recycling and your garden waste happen weekly, and your rubbish is collected once a fortnight.

If you want more information, go to www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/wasterecycle.

Worried about a neighbour?

Do you suspect that people may be taking advantage of an vulnerable neighbour?

Do you know of children who are regularly left alone in the home?

Are you worried that someone next door may be suffering from domestic abuse?

Please don't keep silent. When it comes to keeping people safe, no report is a waste of time.

Call the police on 101 or dial 999 if it's an emergency. You can also contact Lewisham Council on 020 8314 6000 and ask for social services.

SEE IT - REPORT IT

The company that used to be called the **National Grid** is now **Cadent**. The number for gas emergencies remains the same: 0800 111 999.



Phoenix Voices is a new section of our website that gives residents and staff a chance to talk about what they've been up to in the community or what's important to them about this place and this organisation.

In this issue of Community News, we're giving you an example of a Phoenix Voice. We'd love it if you go to the website and read them, but we'd love it even more if you want to share your thoughts with the community. Please get in touch with us at communications@phoenixch.org.uk.

Lakeisha Lynch-Stevens

Lakeisha Lynch-Stevens is an actress, writer and Phoenix resident. Lakeisha is employed to deliver arts projects as part of our Lottery-funded restoration of the Fellowship Inn.

I've lived in Bellingham all my life – 26 years. Regardless of background, culture, race, everyone knows everyone, it's quite a community.

But people definitely could be forgiven for driving through and thinking there was nothing much going on. I know as a kid I went to Downham, or Catford or Deptford for arts activities. There were so many people in my area, in my school, that loved performance and arts, very creative, but we had to go further out to get those kinds of things.

We've never had a cinema on our doorstep or any type of theatre venue. I feel what's happening at the Fellowship is going to give it a new lease of life because the building was becoming a passive, beige space you pass when you leave the station. It's going to heighten the spirit that is in Bellingham – we're going to have something that represents who we are.

In the workshops I've led with primary school children and people I've spoken to, all the excitement and engagement already has brought people together a lot more. So once the pub is open, I feel it will bring back the community spirit that Bellingham was once known for.

It's important to invest in community and arts because it increases wellbeing. It increases a community feel. Having opportunities for people to volunteer, to engage, to feel a part of their community is important. It allows people to feel safer, to feel closer.



Work is well underway at the Fellowship

Working on the Fellowship project has definitely given me a sense of pride in Bellingham as well, and not just being under the umbrella of Catford or in the shadow of anything else.

Because my postcode is SE6, I can get in the habit of saying, if someone asks where I live, Catford. And if I think they may not know it, I say Lewisham borough, and only sometimes I say Bellingham.

But now, it's Bellingham, it's always Bellingham, following this project. If someone doesn't know Bellingham, then the only way they will know it is if I say the word, Bellingham.

Read more Phoenix Voices at www.phoenixch.org.uk/blogs

Focus on... housing fraud

How are we doing?

We explore a different area of our work and performance in each issue of Community News. This time we look at housing fraud. We find out what we do when we **discover** that the people claiming to be our tenants are not living in their homes but are renting them out to other people.

What's happening?

In your tenancy agreement, it says:

“You must live in your home as your only principal home. You must not sublet the whole of the Property. You must not be absent (except in cases of emergency) for a continuous period of more than two months without first notifying us.”

Despite this, we know that a number of people will try to make a profit from the homes they are renting from us by letting them out while they live in other places. In one case, we discovered that the tenant had actually been living in the United States for at least 10 years.

These cases can be harder to spot than you might think, because people committing housing fraud are often careful to appear to be good tenants in every other way – making sure to always pay their rent on time, for instance.

We are, however, on the lookout for signs that fraud is taking place in our properties. Housing fraud is bad at the best of times, but London's shortage of homes, especially affordable homes – there are more than 9,000 people on Lewisham's housing list – makes it particularly harmful to the community. In order to make a profit, the fraudster has to

charge their tenants more than we are charging them – in one case that we know of, 60% more.

As well as breaking the tenancy agreement, since 2013 social housing fraud has been a criminal offence with a maximum sentence of two years in prison.

What are we doing?

We have recovered 18 properties that were being rented out by the people who had signed tenancy agreements with us.

In 10 of those cases, we had to take the tenants to court to get an eviction order, while in the other eight the keys were returned voluntarily after an investigation.

Housing officer Dominique Stephenson dealt with one of the most dramatic cases. The story began when Lewisham Council got in touch about a family who lived at a Phoenix address who had received an eviction notice.

Dominique said: “Having checked our records, we knew that no notice had been served and the name of this family did not match the name we have for the tenant at this property. Our fraud investigator made some preliminary checks and found that our tenant had connections to the USA.

We carried out occupancy checks and interviews with the sub tenants and found that the Phoenix tenant had not been residing at the property for at least 10 years and had failed to notify us of their whereabouts.

We had strong evidence to suggest that the tenant had been living in the USA and was still in receipt of government benefits that she would only have been entitled to if she was living in the UK.





Phoenix served the legal notices required to regain possession of the address. We assisted the sub tenants with finding alternative accommodation as the family included an 11-year-old and a 70-year-old.

As we had no contact from the tenant, we referred this case to our legal team to apply to the courts for outright possession. This order was granted along with use and occupation charges and an unlawful profit order of more than £40,000."

The legal firm that we used stated, 'The former tenant who had unlawfully sublet her property now has a County Court Judgement for over £50,000 against her and Phoenix have recovered their property so it can be let to someone in need of it. I think publicity of this nature sets out how Phoenix are prepared to deal with those who unlawfully sublet their property.'

If you suspect that any of the Phoenix-owned homes near you are being rented out to someone who isn't the official tenant...

**contact:
info@phoenixch.org.uk**

**or call:
0800 0285 700**



Noticeboard

Do you want to learn more about social housing and how Phoenix is run? The Phoenix Academy runs on Tuesdays from 24 April to 19 June. Find out more on our website.

You can still bid for the Community Chest! Up to £100,000 is available for community projects that benefit Phoenix residents. Apply by 22 February – see our website for details.

Save the date!

This year's Phoenix Festival will be on Saturday 12 May.



What's on at The Green Man?

In the hub

Mondays

Monday Market 10am-2pm

Tuesdays

Job Club 10am-1pm

Wednesdays

Digital Drop-in 10am-12noon

Energy Advice Desk 10am-1pm

Conversation Club 10am

In the barn

Thursdays

Bingo 2pm

Tai Chi 6:30pm-8pm

Stay in touch



By phone: 0800 0285 700 from 8am-5pm, Monday to Friday (and for emergency calls at all other times)

Please note: every other Tuesday, 2-3pm, we have an emergency phone service only as a result of staff training.



Email: info@phoenixch.org.uk



Web: www.phoenixch.org.uk



Twitter: @phoenixtogether @greenmanhub

YouTube: www.youtube.com/phoenixtogether

Visit: The Green Man, 355 Bromley Road, SE6 2RP

Weave away!

Would you like the opportunity to be part of a permanent piece of local history?

Help tell the story of our community in textile by designing and creating a tapestry that will sit in the newly refurbished Fellowship Inn.

Led by art professionals Stitches In Time, monthly community workshops will begin in 2018.

All tools and material provided - whatever your age and ability this is a project for you!

Contact us to find out how you can get involved.

