



St Georges
COMMUNITY HOUSING



Press Release

Gas Safety Checks

Basildon housing organisation St Georges Community Housing has signed a new partnership with gas servicing contractor Alhco which will help vulnerable tenants to access housing support services.

The contract is part of a new focus on providing tenants with better access to housing services and on delivering improved gas servicing for the housing organisation.

April 2009

As part of the contract Alhco gas servicing teams, which access all 12,900 properties managed by the organisation, will be tasked with identifying vulnerable tenants during safety inspections and passing this information to the organisation's tenant welfare team.

In a recent example, an elderly, partially sighted, gentleman was found to have no cooking facilities. This information was fed back to the Gas Service team, who made arrangements with his family to provide him with meals until the appropriate cooking facilities could be fitted in his home.

The St Georges Community Housing customer call centre is located with the Gas Servicing, responsive repairs contractors and Aids and Adaptations departments which enable the different teams to effectively communicate and share information on vulnerable tenants.

The partnership is part of a new drive by the housing organisation to identify vulnerable tenants and to highlight the importance of gas safety across the organisation.

St George Community Housing is required by law to inspect gas appliances to protect

tenants from carbon monoxide poisoning and other hazards. The checks are provided free of charge and ensure that gas boilers are working as efficiently as possible therefore reducing the overall cost of heating bills.

As part of the campaign, St George Community Housing has begun legal proceedings against tenants who refuse to allow Gas Servicing teams to access their properties. In one recent court case a housing tenant was ordered to provide gas engineers with access to his property and to pay back over £500 in legal costs.

Steve Shynn, St George Community Housing Interim Chief Executive said: Annual gas safety checks are essential to ensure the safety of our tenants and their wider communities and we will do everything in our power to ensure that gas appliances can be maintained safely. Tenants that refuse to allow access to engineers are not only putting their own lives at risk but also the lives of others".

"The new partnership with Alhco is an example of two parts of the organisation working together to deliver more effective, joined up services for our tenants supporting those vulnerable tenants who most need our help".

St Georges Community Housing is gearing up for the organisation's inspection report due in June 2009 which could unlock further

investment to enhance homes and the wider community.

The gas servicing team was praised during the last government inspection which found that: “the provision of gas servicing and repairs was of a high standard”. However the report also identified a need for the housing organisation to tackle the issue of tenants who refuse access for gas safety inspections. The recent court actions and new partnership is an example of the organisation addressing these issues and delivering an improved service to its tenants.

St Georges Community Housing was established as an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) in April 2007 and manages Basildon District Council’s 12,900 homes and 5,900 garages. It works in partnership with the council and its residents to develop communities in which people are proud to live.

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