

**choose
& move** NEWS

Spring
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News & information for applicants of Walsall Housing Group



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A new home is just a click away... see page 7

Contact us

choose & move is the way people can find a home to rent from Walsall Housing Group (whg). There are a number of ways you can get in touch to access the service.

Visit our website: chooseandmove.co.uk

Email: chooseandmove.enquiries@whgrp.co.uk

Call: 0300 555 6666

You can visit us at our property shop or any of our housing offices:

choose & move property shop,
10-12 Bridge Street, Walsall WS1 1EW

Aldridge & Brownhills Housing Office,
13 Silver Court, High Street, Brownhills WS8 6HA

Blakenall Housing Office, Thames Road, Blakenall, Walsall WS3 1LZ

Bloxwich Housing Office, Bloxwich Hall, Elmore Court, Elmore Green Road, Walsall WS3 2QW

Darlaston Housing Office, 45 King Street, Darlaston WS10 8DE

Willenhall Housing Office, Beechwood House, 22 New Road, Willenhall WV13 2BG



whg customers Haviv Alshemmaary and Robert Bluck with colleague James Khannon.

Blake House joins the fold

A three storey block of flats with communal gardens and customer car parking has been taken over by whg.

Blake House, on the corner of St John's Road and Pleck Road, was previously owned and managed by English Churches Housing Group.

The low rise block houses nine two bedroom flats, some of which are vacant and available for rent. Improvements are planned for the building.

Your thoughts matter

Thank you to everybody who took the time to complete our online survey.



We have already used the feedback to make some changes. Other suggestions will be acted upon when we update the website later this year.

You said that you would like the results page to give more information on bidding and that you would like to see where you ranked on the bidding list for individual properties.

We have started to give more information on the results page of the website. We now publish the dates for the top 20 bids which gives applicants a better idea of how long other applicants have been waiting.

Thinking about what makes a good landlord

whg customers had an opportunity to take part in a consultation to create new national standards in social housing.

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is the new regulator for social housing and its first aim is to draw up a new set of standards for all social landlords which will be used to monitor performance.



They launched an initiative known as the National Conversation to encourage customers from all over the country to say what services are most important to them.

We provided customers with information and offered them an opportunity to fill in the questionnaire in the office or online.

The TSA has promised to give customers feedback on what they found so watch this space for further updates.

Latest Lettings

The bar graph below shows the number of homes we let during the six months from September to March.

The columns show how many properties were let by area and the key shows the types of property. If you require any further explanation of our service please do not hesitate to contact us.

Number of homes let from 31st September 2008 to 31st March 2009

Aldridge & Brownhills – total homes let 182



Bloxwich – total homes let 188



Central Walsall – total homes let 217



Darlaston – total homes let 136



Willenhall – total homes let 197



KEY	■ Bungalows
	■ Low rise flats (age 60+)
	■ Low rise flats
	■ Multi-storey flats
	■ 2 bedroom house/maisonette
	■ 3+ bedroom house/maisonette

Looking to move home?

We understand that you may need to relocate or move to a different sized home. You may be interested to know that with whg you can apply for a transfer.

The length of time you will have to wait will depend on how many properties there are available and what kind of demand there is. To register your interest pop into the office where colleagues can help you fill out the necessary forms or visit www.chooseandmove.co.uk.



Try HomeSwapper

Another option is to swap homes with other council or housing association customers all over the country.

All you have to do is go to www.homeswapper.co.uk and register. You can then log on regularly to check whether anyone would like to swap homes with you.

If you find a home that seems suitable, please speak to us first as this may affect your customer rights. After that all you need to do is fill out an application form. We will let you know within six weeks if the exchange has been agreed. If we agree to the exchange there will be paperwork to complete to make sure that the arrangement is legal and binding.

Please call into any whg housing office if you would like further information.

Changing the face of Pleck



Part of the Pleck development.

Six blocks of high rise flats in Pleck were levelled and replaced with a development of houses and flats that has lifted the area.

Every one of the 65 new whg properties in Oxford Street, Merton Way and Wycliffe Grove is now occupied by successful choose and move applicants.

Brenda Clews-Cartwright, Central Walsall tenant board member, said the difference was significant.

“Gone are the concrete tower blocks of yesteryear and in their place is a marvellous new development that has lifted the area.

“Having every home quickly snapped up is testament to the fact whg is providing the type of properties customers want.”

Demolition of the flats began in autumn 2007 and was completed 12 months ago.

We worked with national developer Bovis Homes to build the mixture of houses and flats.

Over 60? Struggling in your home?

If you live in a house or in a first or second floor flat in Walsall and are finding it difficult to manage the stairs we may be able to help.

We can upgrade you from a bronze band to a silver band which will increase your chances of moving to a more suitable home.

Call 0300 555 6666 for more information.

Mystery shoppers

One way to find out how customers experience our services is to use mystery shoppers. We asked customers to drop into our choose & move property shop and record their experiences as customers.

We are now able to compare their findings with our service standards.

97% of our mystery shoppers told us that they were:

- seen within five minutes
- satisfied that their enquiry had been dealt with.

80% of mystery shoppers said that they were:

- told where properties are advertised
- given an explanation about the banding system
- told how to place a bid.

75% of our mystery shoppers said that they were:

- offered advice about the type of property they could bid for.

70% of our mystery shoppers said that they were:

- told about bidding timescales.

70% of our mystery shoppers also said that they felt:

- that the property adverts were clear and precise.

The mystery shoppers were also given opportunities to comment on different aspects of the service.

We have used this information to develop and improve the way we do things. Since the mystery shop we have also consulted with customers in our review of the:

- reception areas in the Bridge Street property shop and in Blakenall Village Centre
- the choose & move website
- the way that we display bidding results in each office

If you would like to get involved or find out more please contact the Resident Engagement team on 0300 555 6666 or by e-mail

residentengagement@whgrp.co.uk.





A block of refurbished flats in Tennyson Road and successful choose & move applicants Scott Jackson and Karen Allen.

New beginnings in Willenhall

Blocks of unpopular flats in Willenhall have been transformed beyond recognition and are ready to welcome new customers.

Nine low rise blocks in Tennyson Road and Coleridge Close have been modernised and improved with new bathrooms and kitchens. The buildings have also been rewired, fitted with central heating and redecorated.

Scott Jackson and Karen Allen have moved into one of the newly refurbished flats. Karen said:

Each three storey block houses six two bedroom flats, making a total of 54 homes, and communal hallways. Three blocks of one bedroom flats have been demolished to create space for customer car parking.

Solar panels have been fixed to the roofs of the blocks and will generate energy to power corridor lighting. There is also new fencing and door entry systems.

"We love our new home and I think we will be very happy here."

Your questions answered

Q: Can my pet come with me when I move into a new home?

A: If you have a cat or a small dog the answer is usually yes but if there is a restriction this will be mentioned when a property is advertised. This is most common on new build properties and multi-storey flats so it is best to check before making a bid. Please remember that if you are allowed to keep your pet you must make sure that it does not cause annoyance or nuisance to your neighbours.

Q: What happens if I refuse an offer?

A: Your application will be deferred until you have contacted the choose & move marketing team to discuss your application. We do this so we can make sure that we understand why you have refused and that you understand how choose and move works.

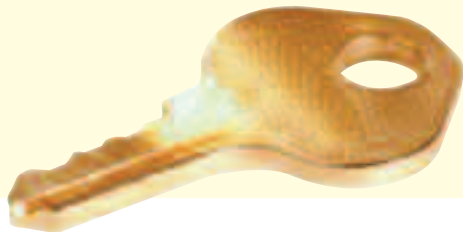
Q: I live in a whg flat and want to move to a house but I have rent arrears – will I be allowed to move?

If you are not up to date with your rent any application to move home will be suspended. If you clear the debt you can request to be on the waiting list and if we agree your application will be dated from the day the debt was cleared. So if you want or need to move make sure you keep your rent account up to date.

Leaving your property

When your tenancy comes to an end and you leave your property, we always check things over to make sure that everything is in good condition and you have not caused any damage.

If we come across any problems we will let you know how to put things right and give you an opportunity to fix it. However we will charge you for the work if it is not done. Customers who have asked for a transfer or exchange will not be able to move until all damage is repaired.



Technology helps customers find new home



Photo shows the customer terminals in the choose & move property shop.

Two whg customers learned how to surf the net and made the first step to getting a new home when they dropped into our choose & move property shop in Bridge Street.

When we asked Doreen Simkin, 70, if she would like to learn how to bid for a new home online she was reluctant. But with help from the team the silver surfer soon found out how to navigate her way around the website and called in every week to search for new properties. Doreen's persistence paid off and in December she moved in to her new home.

Robert Seager has hearing difficulties and therefore finds using the telephone problematic. The team first suggested he text in with bids but as his confidence grew he decided to learn how to use the computers himself.

If you have special needs and want us to find a way for you to access our services please call

0300 555 666 or e-mail
chooseandmove.enquiries@whgrp.co.uk.

English

For interpretation, translation, large print, Braille or audio formats, ask an English speaking friend to help you contact your local housing trust.

Bengali

আসহায, অনুবাদ, বড় হরফ, ব্ৰেইল কিংবা অডিও ফরম্যাটের জন্য, ইংরেজী বলতে পারেন আপনার এমন কোন কাঙ্ক্ষকে আপনার স্থানীয় হাউজিং ট্রাস্টের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করার জন্য সাহায্য করতে বলুন।

Punjabi

ਵਿਆਖਿਆ, ਅਨੁਵਾਦ, ਵੱਡੇ ਖਿੱਟੇ, ਬ੍ਰੇਲ ਜਾਂ ਆਡੀਓ ਡਾਕੂਮੈਂਟਾਂ ਲਈ, ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਬੋਲਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੋਸਤ ਨੂੰ ਕਹੋ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਸਥਾਨਕ ਹਾਊਸਿੰਗ ਟ੍ਰਸਟ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਮਦਦ ਕਰੇ।

Gujarati

અર્થઘટન, ભાષાંતર, મોટી પ્રિન્ટ, બ્રેઈલ અથવા ઓડિયો ફોર્મેટ માટે, તમારા ઈંગ્લીશ બોલતા મિત્રને તમારા સ્થાનિક હાઉસિંગ ટ્રસ્ટનો સંપર્ક કરવા મદદ માટે કહો.

Hindi

व्याख्यान, अनुवाद, बड़े प्रिंट, ब्रेल अथवा ऑडियो प्रारूपों के लिए, अंग्रेजी बोलने वाले किसी दोस्त से कहें कि वह आपकी स्थानीय हाउसिंग ट्रस्ट से सम्पर्क करने में आपकी मदद करें।

Urdu

اشرح، ترجمہ، بڑے چھاپے، بریل یا آڈیو فارمیٹ کے لیے انگریزی بولنے والے کسی دوست سے ذرا محنت کریں کہ وہ آپ کے مقامی ہاؤسنگ ٹرسٹ سے رابطہ کرنے میں آپ کی مدد کرے۔

French

Pour tout demande d'interprétariat, de traduction, de document en gros caractères, en braille ou en format audio : veuillez demander à une de vos relations parlant anglais de contacter le bureau local de l'association de gestion de votre logement.

Turkish

Sözü ya da yazılı tercümesini, ya da büyük puntuyla, körler alfabesiyle ya da sesli kayıt halinde edinmek için İngilizce bilen bir tanıdığınızdan bölgenizdeki konut vakfıyla temas kurmanıza yardımcı olmasını isteyin.

