



Working Together for a better future

# Federation Newsletter

May 2011

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## Tenants on Tour!

Two proactive tenants, Peter Hartshorne from Beacon Hill Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) and Dennis Harper of New Wrens Nest TRA, succeeded in securing funding from Trafford Hall National Communities Resource Centre to help tenants find out how Dudley Council is set to improve services for tenants.

The funding enabled them to hire an information vehicle which stopped off in Stourbridge, Halesowen, Sedgley, North Dudley and Dudley informing tenants of how Dudley Council will achieve the national housing standards set by the government.

The five national standards in housing are tenant involvement and empowerment, home, tenancy, neighbourhood and community and value for money.

Peter, Dennis, the Participation Development Team and tenant volunteers spoke to over 250 tenants during the week long campaign, giving them a list showing how Dudley Council will meet each standard and asking for their ideas for next years offers.

The event was a huge success, well done Peter and Dennis.

## Vicarage Prospect Coffee Mornings

Coffee mornings are being held by Vicarage Prospect TRA for the residents of Clent and Claverly Courts. They are held on the last Wednesday of every month, and take place in the Church Hall across the road so residents don't have too far to travel.

## Partnership working recognised

Congratulations to Martin Smith of Bowling Green TRA and John Mason from Darby End TRA who were presented with a SMILE award for Partnership working by Dudley Council. SMILE stands for smart, meaningful, interesting, learning, experience.

The pair were joined by their Housing Manager Vicky Skidmore, who nominated them for the award, and Emma Jones their Participation Development Officer to a presentation led by the Director for Adult, Community and Housing Service Andrea Pope-Smith.



## Gas safety checks

Council tenants in the Dudley borough are being urged to take advantage of a free annual gas check as part of a drive to ensure people's safety.

Every year around 20 people throughout the UK die from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by gas appliances and flues which are incorrectly installed or maintained, according to the UK's leading authority, the Health & Safety Executive.

Around 20,000 Dudley Council owned properties which have gas appliances installed are visited as part of a rolling service contract, carried out by the authority's partners, PH Jones. These free visits are made to check council owned gas central heating and fires are working safely and efficiently.

Dudley Council tenants are asked to call 01384 286086 or 0300 555 8283 to arrange an appointment, if their gas appliances have not already been serviced. Servicing is carried out from Monday to Saturday between 8am and 8pm to ensure tenants can arrange a convenient time for appointments.

## Brierley Hill housing office

The Brierley Hill housing office is moving its reception service from next month (May).

The service will move from Cottage Street to the ground floor of Brierley Hill Library on Monday 9 May.

Customers who use the existing Brierley Hill area housing office will be able to access a variety of services within the town's library, which will include a housing services' reception as well as the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

The housing reception desk will continue to provide assistance on general housing enquiries and homelessness issues from Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm. The facility will not be able to accept payments, however those customers affected have already been advised of the other payment options available, including nearly 40 PayPoint, Payzone and Post Office locations within the Brierley Hill area.

Laundry tokens, keys fobs and electricity tokens will still be available from the housing reception desk.

Improvements within the library will include the introduction of self service facilities as well as upgrading facilities for the disabled.

Diane Channings, assistant director of adult, community and housing services, said:

“By co-ordinating the housing office and Brierley Hill Library we are bringing together a number of council services and community advice services together under one roof in a convenient high street location.

“Over the last few years we have been working with the Citizens Advice Bureau developing a homelessness and debt prevention service. Locating the CAB in the library makes absolute sense and provides the public with much needed impartial advice at a convenient location.”

## **The Big Clean Up Group does it again and again**

In March The Big Clean Up Group carried out a Big Clean Up of the Worcester Road area of Darby End the chance to dispose of their rubbish. There are many people who are unable to get to the local tip or afford skips and these events, organised by the group, give them the opportunity to clear out their unwanted items.

The group were visited at Darby End by the Express and Star and Dudley News as well as a very impressed Dawn Carr from Birmingham Community Foundation.

Then in April they cleaned up the Bowling Green Estate. It was an extremely busy day, 170 people visited the skips as did volunteers from a residents group in Alumwell, Walsall who want to carry out a similar event in their area and came along to learn from the group.

The Big Clean Up Group is made up of volunteers from tenants and residents association from Bowling Green, Netherton Central, Saltwells, Darby End and Arley and Compton Court who work in partnership with the Five Estates Project, Participation Development Team, Housing Managers and Enforcement Officers with funding from Fair Shares and Birmingham Community Foundation.

For more information on holding a Big Clean Up in your area such as advice on funding and health and safety issues please call Martin Smith at DFTRA on 01384 868 010.

## Visiting the Mayor...

The 30th March saw a group of people from the '5 estates project' attend a very interesting and informative tour of the mayors parlour and Council Chambers.



The tour involved a presentation which was given in the Council chambers, the group found this very informative and everyone's questions about the Council and democracy were answered.

The group then went for 'tea & biscuits' with the Mayor and Mayoress in the Mayor's parlour, with some members of the group signing the visitor book, they left a special message of thanks for the Mayor and the visit.



## Digital switchover

The central region is beginning its switchover from analogue television to a much stronger digital signal this month (April).

Dudley Council is working in partnership with the official switchover scheme to raise awareness of the change to ensure borough residents have no interruption to their service.

This month the Wrekin & Bromsgrove transmitter will be switching over, followed by the Sutton Coldfield & Brierley Hill transmitters in September. It is important everyone who owns a television in the borough starts to convert their TVs to digital as soon as possible. Anyone who has not updated their system by the change over date will lose their reception.

Information pages have been set up on Dudley Council's website offering advice on how to retune televisions, information on the BBC's switchover help scheme, along with frequently asked questions.

The pages can be viewed at:

[www.dudley.gov.uk/welcome/news-in-dudley/digital-switchover](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/welcome/news-in-dudley/digital-switchover)

**There are a number of events in the Dudley Borough where the Help Scheme will be on hand to offer help and advice. These dates are:**

- Dudley Marketplace on Friday 29th and Saturday 30th July, Wednesday 7th and Thursday 8th September, and also Wednesday 21st and Thursday 22nd of September.
- Halesowen, Somers square on Wednesday 3rd August.
- Stourbridge, Ryemarket square on Tuesday 14th June.

## DFTRA

As always, If you have any information or additions to the newsletter, please call Caroline on 01384 868 010 or email [caroline@dfta.org.uk](mailto:caroline@dfta.org.uk). We can also promote via our website, Facebook and Twitter.

If you're not yet on the mailing list but would like to be, please email [info@dfta.org.uk](mailto:info@dfta.org.uk). We will send the DFTRA Newsletter by email bi-monthly, plus any information we think you may like to know.

Also, for general information on DFTRA plus news check [www.dfta.org.uk](http://www.dfta.org.uk) regularly for updates.

## Training Courses at Trafford Hall

There are numerous training courses available at Tarfford Hall, and at great prices. Courses include Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour, Introduction to Board Membership, Tenants on the Web, as well as many others.

For more information you can visit the website: [www.traffordhall.com](http://www.traffordhall.com). For more details and to discuss availability please contact Claire Lawton on 01244 300246 or email [mc.lawton@traffordhall.com](mailto:mc.lawton@traffordhall.com).