

HOMEOWNERSHIP NEWSLETTER 2018



MEET THE PROPERTY SALES TEAM

We can help you with the following:

- ✓ Right to Buy and Right to Acquire - queries on the purchase of a rented property.
- ✓ Staircasing – purchasing further shares in a property.
- ✓ 100% re-sales with service charges.
- ✓ All shared ownership resales – selling shares in a shared ownership property (under 100%). (Prospective buyers will need 'Help to Buy' approval).
- ✓ Re-mortgage queries.
- ✓ Transfer of Equity – going from joint to sole, or sole to joint owners on shared ownership properties.
- ✓ Equity release queries.

Please note: we cannot provide legal advice



CARLY SHARP
Senior Property Sales Officer



HELEN MAYFIELD
Property Sales Officer



SHAHEEN BEGUM
Property Sales Assistant



REBECCA HARRISON
Property Sales Assistant

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DARREN WHITFIELD
HOMEOWNERSHIP MANAGER

A lot has changed since our last update, but our aim remains the same – to provide excellent services that represent good value for money and to ensure your home is safe.

Our new contracts for gardening, cleaning and window cleaning are beginning to settle down, but we know we have more improvements to make on some schemes. We are working very hard to provide you with a cost efficient service that meets our service standards and your expectations.

We have an increased programme of major works to complete this year, and we are working closely with our maintenance staff to ensure the programme is delivered efficiently and cost effectively.

On a number of our schemes, we have introduced 30-year maintenance plans which aim to ensure that all our developments, (where we collect sinking funds), are adequately funded to meet future requirements.

Hearing what you think about our services is very important. As part of our new engagement strategy, there are opportunities to get involved in shaping our services. We have included a feedback form so you can tell us directly what you think about the services we provide and how we can improve them.

Also inside is information on future changes to our customer portal, and information about the services our property sales staff can provide. We've also included some important information about fire safety.

There is lots going on and lots that you have the chance to influence, so please get in touch if you'd like to get involved.



PAULA WILSON
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER CONTACT

TIME FOR CHANGE

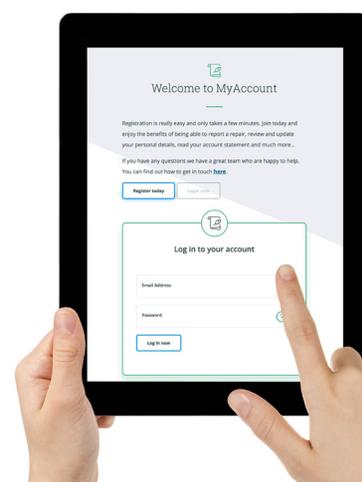
Our new customer portal '**MyAccount**' landed at the end of July.

The new portal is a huge improvement on the existing one. We are really excited about it and the chance to work with you to further improve your services.

In the meantime, don't forget that there are lots of ways you can talk to us, either digitally or personally. Using MyAccount is simple, straightforward and secure, and you can manage many things to do with your account, including viewing your payments, ordering a payment card, reporting and tracking a repair and much more.

If you need help setting up your account, or you'd like to know more, please contact us or speak to your homeownership officer.

To create an account visit:
myaccount.accentgroup.org



PAYING YOUR CHARGES

From 1 April 2018, we stopped accepting cheques for the payment of rent and service charges.

We decided this because of the large transactional costs involved in processing these payments. The number of you paying via this method had fallen to such a low level that; it was no longer economically viable to continue with.

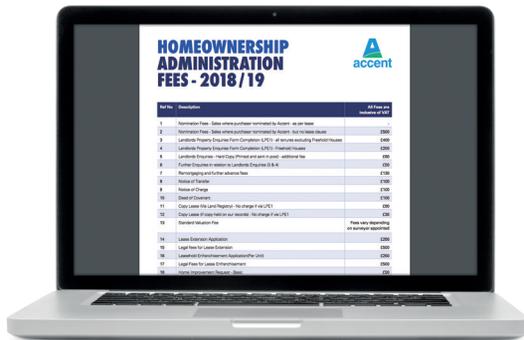
Paying by direct debit is the most efficient way for us to process your payment and the most convenient way for you to pay. Once set up, payments are automatic so there is no need to worry about falling into arrears.

You should pay us as outlined in your lease or agreement with us. In most cases, payment is due in advance on the first of the month, quarter or year.



Don't risk losing your home. If you do not pay your charges on time, then we will, ultimately, have to take action to recover any money you owe us. In the most serious of cases, this could mean that you could lose your home.

If you are worried about paying your charges, don't ignore the problem. Please contact us straight away. If you have serious financial problems, we can put you in touch with groups such as the national debt line. We don't want you to lose your home, we want to make sure you can stay in it, worry free from debt.



ADMINISTRATION FEES

We have recently reviewed the admin fees we charge for the services we provide in addition to those covered by our management fee within your service charge.

Details of our revised charges can be downloaded from our website: accntgrp.org/Fees

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

More than 3,000 residents own, or partly own, a property built and/or managed by accent. We want to deliver an excellent service to all our customers, but we know, from recent surveys and consultations, that many of you are not satisfied with aspects of the service you receive.

Some of you feel that your services are too generic and more relevant to tenants than homeowners.

For this reason, we want to create a forum specifically for homeowners to discuss their priorities to help us really understand what you want and expect from us, so we can tailor our services accordingly. This could be a virtual panel, so membership need not be limited by where you live.

If you are interested in being involved, please contact **Darren Whitfield**, Homeownership Manager.

FIRE SAFETY UPDATE

Fire Safety in Accent Leasehold Properties – a shared responsibility

Fire safety is a high priority in Accent. We carry out fire risk assessments in all our buildings with internal common areas to ensure there are adequate fire safety measures in place, and we arrange for any identified problems to be addressed. We also need leaseholders' help in relation to things that are your responsibility.

Gas appliances can be a fire hazard if they are not properly maintained, and we advise leaseholders to have their gas appliances serviced regularly, ideally once a year. As well as being a fire hazard, poorly maintained gas appliances may produce carbon monoxide which can be fatal if breathed in.

If you live in a flat that opens onto an internal common area, the entrance door to your flat plays a vital role in reducing the spread of fire, smoke and toxic gases within the building. It must be a 30-minute fire door with smoke seals, intumescent strips, a fire-protected letter plate and a self-closing device. If a fire starts in your flat, the self-closing device will close the door after you have made your escape, preventing the fire from spreading into the escape route. Once the door is closed the smoke seals, intumescent strips and fire-protected letter plate prevent smoke and toxic gases from entering the escape route.

Following a fire risk assessment, we may ask you to have work carried out on your flat entrance door, because under the lease it is your responsibility. We can help you by arranging for the work to be carried out by one of our contractors; this can often be less expensive than if you arrange it yourself.

Even in blocks with 'delayed evacuation' (stay put) policies, if a fire is able to develop there may be a need for residents to evacuate, and it is important that both residents and the fire service can use the escape routes safely. As well as ensuring fire and smoke in a flat cannot enter escape routes, the escape route must be free from combustible materials and obstructions.

Many of our residents rely on mobility scooters to get out and about, but these cannot be stored on escape routes as they can cause fires and obstructions. If you have a mobility scooter, please keep it in your flat, and talk to your home ownership officer or house manager about storage options before purchasing one.

We would also advocate that regular electrical inspections are undertaken. An electrical inspection condition report, will ensure that your home is correctly wired and that all sockets, circuits and consumer unit meet current standards. A qualified electrician will then advise of the condition of the installation within your home and advise you of any recommendations to rectify any concerns, exactly the same way as a car MOT. An electric certificate would usually last for a minimum of 5 years, dependent upon the electrician's recommendation.



WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR SERVICES?

Name:

Address:

Email:

Preferred contact number:

Please tick here if you would like to receive your newsletter via email in future

Please return to the Homeownership Team at: Accent Housing, Charlestown House, Otley Road, Baildon, West Yorkshire, BD17 7SW