

Our House goes digital!

Welcome to your 2018 Winter edition of Our House.

In response to the many requests from customers, Our House has moved into the digital age. We hope you find this way of receiving the magazine more convenient.

In this edition we report back on some of the things we have done and changed since asking for your feedback and suggestions in our customer survey.

We also have a selection of handy tips and advice on looking after your home, including some useful videos which you can access by clicking the links in the article.

As Christmas is now just days away we would like to take the opportunity to wish you all the very best for the festive season. Please do take a moment to familiarise yourself with our Christmas opening hours.

We hope you find the articles and information useful – if you have any suggestions for articles you would like including in the future, please email PR&MarketingTeam@accordgroup.org.uk

Wishing you all the very best for a safe, secure and prosperous 2019

The Accord Team

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Get your Home Ready for Christmas-

With Christmas Day fast approaching, we want to help you make sure your home is in ship-shape so you're ready to enjoy the festive break.

There are a number of things you can do in your home to make sure your property is running efficiently and avoid things escalating into an emergency, such as locating your stop tap, knowing where your fuse box is, replacing lightbulbs and fixing broken water tiles.

To help you with some of these tasks, please take a few minutes to look at our website to see some short video tutorials to help you with the repairs that are your responsibility as general needs tenants, such as fixing leaks, unblocking toilets, ensuring your gas appliances have been serviced and replacing fuses: <https://bit.ly/2F63DCz>

Our Customer First contact centre

Christmas opening hours

Our Customer First contact centre will close on the afternoon of Christmas Eve and will reopen at 8am on January 2, 2019. New routine repairs will not be dealt with during the Christmas break, as we will be operating an emergency only service.

If you have an emergency during this period please call 0300 111 7000 and you will be directed to Accord's out-of-hours service.

Once we return after the festive break, we expect to be busier than usual, so please bear this in mind when calling us in early January – we will have additional staff on hand so that we can respond as quickly as possible. If you are calling about follow on work relating to an emergency we have attended during the festive period, please be aware that updates on this will be available from 7th January onwards.



What counts as an emergency?

An emergency repair is work required to remove immediate danger from your home, or to protect your property against serious damage.

The easiest way to report a routine repair ahead of Christmas is by using your online Customer Account. Every customer has one; you just need to activate it to use it. Once you're set up, you can get in touch with us anytime, anywhere using your smartphone, tablet or PC to report repairs and pay your rent. Simply call us on 0300 111 7000 to activate your account, then visit: accordgroup.org.uk/customers

Please note: If you are a customer living in one of Accord's Care & Support properties your responsibilities may be slightly different, so please ask a member of staff if you are unsure if these responsibilities apply to you.

Looking after your home

A list of scenarios YOU ARE responsible for

- Decorate to a reasonable standard.
- Repair fixtures you have put in or any fixture you have damaged
- Prevent and control condensation
- Prevent pipes from bursting
- Locate and check stop tap
- Replace lost keys
- Replace broken or cracked glass
- Renew garage door pulls
- Use draught excluders if necessary
- Fit or repair doorbells
- Test and clean smoke detectors
- Fit curtain rails, blinds and shower curtains
- Replace light bulbs and fluorescent tubes
- Reset trip switches
- Keep rain water gully grids clear
- Clean extractor fan vents
- Fit waste pipes to washing machines and tumble driers
- Clear blocked sinks, baths and toilets
- Repair or replace toilet seats
- Replace plugs and their chains
- Reattach light pull cords
- Replace cracked or broken wall tiles
- Replace clothes lines, posts and rotary driers
- Repair minor problems with fences
- Maintain garden paths
- Look after TV ariels, unless shared

There are a number of things you can do in your home to make sure your property is running efficiently. Check out the videos on the [Accord site here](#).



You Said, We did... Customer Feedback

Assets:

You wanted clearer communication regarding your responsibilities as opposed when to call us to report a repair.

So we redesigned and published our guide to 'Looking after your Home'.

You said you needed to report repairs for communal areas on a regular basis.

To address this, we have established more frequent estate inspections in collaboration with Housing colleagues, to identify & resolve repairs and maintenance requirements more quickly.

You highlighted that sometimes there are concerns with the quality of the repairs carried out.

We're currently developing a method for capturing your feedback on a hand-held device at the point of a repair, so that we can review the service we provide more effectively.



Customer Engagement:

You said you wanted more opportunities to be involved. A pack has been compiled and sent out to those customers wanting to know about engagement opportunities.

You wanted easy to access information about how you can engage with us on the issues that matter to you.

Our Customer Engagement Team is reviewing the Accord website to help customers navigate engagement opportunities and register their interest more easily.

Communities:

You told us that you frequently experience instances of anti social behaviour in some neighbourhoods.

We have continued to support the Police in their ongoing work in these areas; and we late night patrols with them in some areas.

You said sometimes you experience issues of neighbour nuisance, and despite having conversations between neighbours, you cannot reach a resolution.

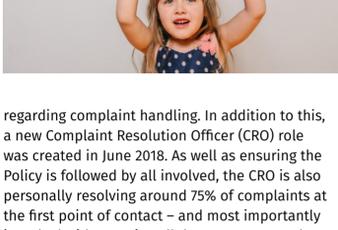
We as assisting with mediation, as well as referring customers to Environmental Health.

Reviewed Complaint Procedure

Following a review of how we manage complaints, we relaunched our Complaints Policy on 1st November, details on how to access this are available on our website <https://bit.ly/2B9DjBk>.

The main changes are:

- Clearer definitions of what is and what isn't a valid complaint
- An additional stage in the process which now allows for the intervention of a Senior Manager prior to the final internal stage – this will help to reach a quicker resolution on particularly complex issues
- Additional guidance within our Procedure regarding who is to be appointed as the Investigating Officer – to ensure we have subject experts at hand when things don't go as well as they should.



regarding complaint handling. In addition to this, a new Complaint Resolution Officer (CRO) role was created in June 2018. As well as ensuring the Policy is followed by all involved, the CRO is also personally resolving around 75% of complaints at the first point of contact – and most importantly is tasked with ensuring all departments use the learning we gain from complaints to work on ways to improve the service we deliver.

Alongside this we have trained around 140 frontline colleagues in the last two months

It's really positive to be able to report that this year so far, complaints have fallen by around 28%, compared with the same period last year.

Work with us!

Could you be the newest member of the Accord team?

If you are looking for a new job, and would like to work in an organisation that is passionate about providing affordable homes, as well as a wide range of health and social care services that make a positive impact to people's lives, follow this link to look at our current vacancies - <https://accord.amris.com/>

We have a variety of job roles that we are recruiting for, including care assistants, grounds maintenance and scheme managers.

Visit accord.amris.com to see our vacancies

Involvement & Empowerment

Would you like to join an Accord Tenant Panel?

At Accord we want to ensure that our customer are at the heart of our decision making and service provision. To help achieve this we have set up a range of Tenant Panels.

We have a selection of panels of your own members can choose to be a member of - panel members represent all geographical areas and tenancy types and can be consulted on local, regional or universal issues.

Once signed up, you will be invited to join various specialist panels to review or develop our services. You can join as many, or as few, as you choose, depending on your time and interests. Most recently we have been recruiting customers to join various scrutiny panels to look at our complaints handling, our procedures and our services.

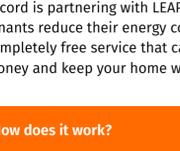
As a panel member, you will be invited to attend meetings with various Accord Boards, Committees and Teams. You will also be invited to an annual panel membership event to celebrate best practice and to meet fellow panel members.

Accord tenant panels are about involvement and empowerment - being part of a tenant panel is an excellent way to have your voice and views heard and to help us provide the services you need.

Accord currently has over 50 registered panel members and we are keen to recruit more.

If you would like to know more about joining our tenant panels please contact Peter Helly on 07702 554437 or email peter.helly@accordgroup.org.uk

Are you struggling to pay your energy bills?



If you have been struggling to pay your energy bills, please don't think you're alone. According to the official Committee on Fuel Poverty, over 10% of households in England are in fuel poverty – that is where someone who is on a relatively low income lives in a house that cannot be kept warm at a reasonable cost.

This can be caused by a mixture of high energy prices, low incomes, and energy-inefficient homes.

Accord is partnering with LEAP to help our tenants reduce their energy costs. LEAP is a completely free service that can help you save money and keep your home warm and cosy.

Are you eligible?

You may be eligible for the LEAP service if one of the following applies to you. If you:

- have a low income
- receive tax credits
- receive Housing Benefit
- receive an income or disability benefit
- have a long term illness or disability

How does it work?

If you are eligible, you will get a free home visit from a qualified home energy advisor. LEAP will then:

- help you to check if you are on the cheapest energy tariff
- install free, simple energy saving measures
- give you day to day energy efficiency tips to ensure your heating system is set up to keep you warm and save money
- arrange free telephone advice to help with benefits, debt and other money problems
- refer you for further energy efficiency improvements, such as loft insulation or a new boiler

How do you apply?

Call LEAP on 0800 060 7567 or apply online at www.applyforleap.org.uk

Stay safe this winter

Danger signs advice from the Fire Service

- Watch out for hot plugs and sockets
- Fuses that blow for no reason
- Flickering lights
- Scorch marks on plugs and sockets
- Frayed leads or exposed internal wires are fire risks
- Don't overload sockets

Also remember to check

- Keep electrical appliances maintained
- New appliances should be British/ EU Safety marked
- Throw away and replace damaged cables – never use tape to join cables
- Never re-use sealed plugs
- Do not run cables under carpets/ mats or where they cannot be monitored
- Have qualified electrician check second hand appliances