

# WELFARE CHANGES COULD AFFECT YOU! BHT IS HERE TO HELP



Many changes to welfare reform are due in 2016.

If this affects you, let us know and we can help answer any questions.

**Housing Benefit** From April 2016, claims can only be backdated to **four weeks**. This makes it even more vital that you claim or let the Housing Benefit Office **know immediately of any change** to your income or general circumstances.

**Universal Credit** Now live in Hastings, Brighton and Eastbourne. If Universal Credit affects you, please let us know immediately. We can tell you how it affects your rent payments or assist you with other queries.

**Working Age Benefit** Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA), Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support (IS) and Housing Benefit **will not increase until at least 2020**. This also includes the Local Housing Allowance. The Working Tax Credit disregard reduces to £2500 in April 2016. **If you need help with budgeting, contact your Income Recovery or Housing Officer.**

**Single Household Benefit Cap** Coming in 2016, this will reduce the annual amount paid in benefit for a single person to **£13400**. Including Housing Benefit, the maximum benefit you can receive is £257.69 per week. (Disability payments or anyone in the ESA support group are not included).

**Pay to Stay** The Government wants household earning above **£30,000 a year to pay a higher rent**. This is really new and no detail is available yet.

## GET INVOLVED! BHT APPOINTS NEW COORDINATOR

Welcome to Juliet O'Brien, our new Tenant and Client Involvement Coordinator.

Juliet's appointment is a direct response to the need for greater tenant and client involvement, highlighted by you in our recent survey.

Juliet brings with her a wealth of experience, having worked for 10 years at a national charity managing volunteers from Black and South Asian backgrounds to raise awareness of diabetes.

**"I am looking forward enormously to working with BHT tenants on a range of activities that will increase their involvement in the work of the Trust and improve its services."**



## Juliet would love to hear your views:

Call **01273 645443** or **07825 425084**.

Alternatively, you can email Juliet at [juliet.obrien@bht.org.uk](mailto:juliet.obrien@bht.org.uk)



# MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS FOLLOW TENANTS' SURVEY

Major service improvements have been introduced following the recent Tenants' Survey. Some of them are listed below, with more to follow.

Many thanks to all BHT tenants who took part. Congratulations to Ms **Veronica Rolfe-Johnson** of Brighton who won the **£100 draw** and was able to spend her Sainsbury's vouchers before Christmas. **Many thanks to all of you who took part.**



## YOU SAID: We needed to improve the way that we carry out repairs

**WE DID:** We have met with all of our contractors and have **doubled the number of jobs completed on time** since August.

**WE DID:** We have **introduced a standard for how our contractors work with us** including their customer service.

We know we need to do more and we plan to review how we deliver repairs.

## YOU SAID: We needed to improve the overall condition of our homes

**WE DID:** We have a **£400,000 planned works budget** this year and next year.

**WE DID:** We have **upgraded some of our kitchens** in Hastings and Brighton where we own the housing.

**WE DID:** We are **refurbishing the outside of Albany Road** and **replacing windows in Baird House**, both in St Leonards.

## YOU SAID: Only 64% were satisfied with your rent being good value for money

**WE SAID:** We are **freezing all our private rented sector rents** and reducing the rents on homes we own by 1%.

## YOU SAID: Only 48% of you received a tenancy review visit in the last six months

**WE SAID:** We have revised our processes to ensure that **every tenant** receives a visit from a Housing Officer **at least once a year**.

## YOU SAID: Only 59% of you were satisfied that we listen to your views and act upon them

**WE SAID:** We have appointed a new Tenant Involvement Liaison Officer to work with you to improve this.

**WE SAID:** We are offering more opportunities to tell us what you think and we will tell you how we have listened.

## YOU SAID: Only 15% of you understood the new benefit system Universal Credit

**WE SAID:** we are offering workshops in Brighton, Hastings and Eastbourne to explain how this will affect you.

**WE SAID:** we have now put a new video on our website about Universal Credit.

**WE SAID:** we have included an article in this newsletter and will do so regularly.

## A NEW WAY TO PAY YOUR RENT

### AllPay

By now you should have received your AllPay card with your unique reference number.

It's just the size of a credit card. You no longer need to go to RBS or NatWest to pay your rent. The day after you make your payment it will show on our rent account.



# WANTED: MORE TENANTS FOR THE NEWSLETTER'S EDITORIAL PANEL

Introducing Kai Descubes (formerly known as Kia) and Kevin Towner who have both joined the new editorial panel for the Tenant's newsletter.

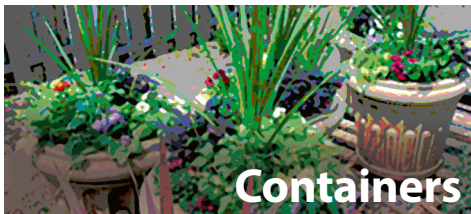
Here's a flavour of what they hope to bring to the newsletter - Kai from Brighton wants to bring stories, poetry and information on local activities and Kevin from Hastings is keen to contribute articles about his local football team, accessibility to local venues and human interest stories.

**Why don't you join them? We know there's a lot of talent among our tenants.**

Contact **Juliet O'Brien** if you are interested at [juliet.obrien@bht.org.uk](mailto:juliet.obrien@bht.org.uk) or call on **01273 645443**.



Tell us what you think of the newsletter by answering our **quick survey** at [www.bht.org.uk/services/housing-services/](http://www.bht.org.uk/services/housing-services/) and you could win a **£10 Amazon voucher**



**Containers**

## YOUR GREEN FINGERS COULD WIN A £25 PRIZE

We are running a gardening competition in June, and you don't need a garden to show your skill and enthusiasm for growing flowers or vegetables.

<< There are four categories in the competition (see left)

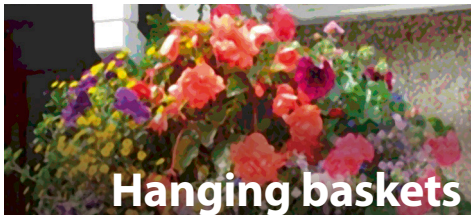
The prize in each category is a **£25 garden centre voucher**. We have got free seeds at your local BHT office for anybody who wants to take part. Drop in and pick some up.

**Don't have any seeds? Or maybe you want some basic gardening advice?**

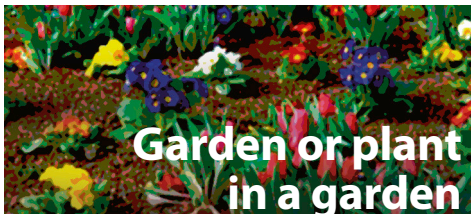
Contact us by using **MyTenancy**, by giving us a call on **01323 340018**, or alternatively you can email [info@bht.org.uk](mailto:info@bht.org.uk) The closing date for entries is **Monday 20 June** and judges will be visiting the entrants in the last week of June to pick our winner.



**Doorstep garden**



**Hanging baskets**



**Garden or plant in a garden**

### Direct Debit

This is the easiest way to pay. You can call us and we can set up a direct debit using the new AllPay system. Your rent payments will come out of your bank automatically and so you will need to do no more.

### Paypoint

AllPay payments can be made at any Paypoint outlet. This gives you seven days a week flexibility.



# RECIPE CORNER: MACARONI CHEESE

For anyone wishing to cook up a simple but nutritious meal without having to spend a long time in front of their cooker.

## Ingredients

- ✓ 250g/9oz macaroni
- ✓ 40g/1½oz butter
- ✓ 40g/1½ plain flour
- ✓ 600ml/1pint 1½fl oz milk
- ✓ 250g / 9oz grated cheddar
- ✓ 50g / 2oz grated Parmesan (or a similar vegetarian alternative)



## Method

1. Place macaroni in a large saucepan of boiling salted water and cook for 8-10 minutes; drain well and set aside.
2. Melt the butter over a medium heat in a saucepan slightly larger than the one used for the macaroni. Add the flour and stir to form a roux, cooking for a few minutes.
3. Gradually whisk in the milk, a little at a time. Cook for 10-15 minutes to a thickened and smooth sauce.
4. Meanwhile, preheat the grill to hot.
5. Remove the sauce from the hob, add 175g/6oz of the cheese and stir until the cheese is well combined and melted.
6. Add the macaroni to the sauce and mix well. Transfer to a deep ovenproof dish of suitable size.
7. Sprinkle over the remaining cheddar and the Parmesan and place the dish under the hot grill. Cook until the cheese is browned and bubbling. Serve straight away.

# EASTER OPENING TIMES

Easter will be falling earlier this year than usual and the BHT Housing Services offices will be closed over that period.

## Our opening times at Easter:

**Thursday 24 March – 9am to 5pm**

**Friday 25 March (Good Friday) – CLOSED**

**Monday 28 March (Easter Monday) – CLOSED**

**Tuesday 29 March – Office reopens, 9am to 5pm**

