TENANT TALK

SUMMER/AUTUMN 2026

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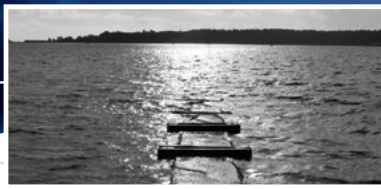

Please stay connected and join us.

There are many ways to stay up to date with BCHA news and events including following our social media channels.

@bcha.org.uk @bcha9962 @bcha.news @BCHA

Welcome

A big welcome to our latest edition of Tenant Talk. This edition is specifically tailored for you so is full of updates across the region that we hope you find useful. To kick off this new Tenant Talk, I'm pleased to introduce BCHA's Director of Homes, Chris George.

Lorraine Mealings, Chief Executive

Hello, I'm Chris George, Director of Homes and I'm delighted to introduce you to our revamped Tenant Talk that's focused more on our general needs customers. My role is leading the housing, asset, compliance, customer service and repairs teams for BCHA.

At BCHA, we recognise that connection with our customers and keeping you up to date should be accessible and informative. We've compiled customer stories alongside practical tips, including how your Housing Officer can support you, to make sure you're getting the information you need.

This is the first time we have done an edition this way, so any feedback is welcomed. Please contact our customer services team on customerservices@bcha.org.uk if you'd like to pass anything on.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition as much as I have done.

Chris George, Director of Homes

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28 new homes in Sturminster Newton celebrated with a community bake-off

BCHA customers let their creativity shine through their cooking in a community bake-off to celebrate the official opening of Fiddleford Ridge. Bakes were judged by Councillor Gill Taylor, Portfolio Lead for Housing & Homelessness at Dorset Council, Lorraine Mealings, CEO of BCHA, and Shaun Pettitt, Managing Director of Wyatt Homes.

The development provides 28 new family homes in Sturminster Newton, including 10 shared ownership properties and 18 affordable rental homes.

"What a privilege to formally open our 28 new family homes in Sturminster Newton. It was great to meet so many of the new residents and see what a lovely community it already is. The effort of the 'Bake Off' bakes was amazing too!"

Lorraine Mealings, CEO

The event brought residents of all ages together. Customer Joanna House gave a speech, saying: "In just three days from start of bidding, I was handed the keys and I'm still pinching myself.

"On behalf of us all, thank you from the bottom of our hearts for an amazing collaboration and a place we can all call home."

Bake-off winner Tai-Mar Newland impressed judges with a Victoria sponge featuring lemon and coconut, while resident Michelle, who described herself as "*not much of a baker*", delighted guests with a crocheted BCHA-branded cake. Her creation will be displayed at BCHA's headquarters in Poole as a lasting memory of the event.

BCHA's Domestic Abuse Team to host a stall at Wild and Wiser Festival

The Domestic Abuse team will be present at the Dorset based festival, a weekend long event curated by women, for women.

Blending creativity, nature, wellbeing and personal exploration, Wild & Wiser brings together female-led makers, practitioners and guides in a beautiful setting on the edge of the forest in stunning Dorset.

If you're attending, make sure to say hello, or reach out to the team for support, signposting or advice.

"We're thrilled to be attending Wild and Wiser and celebrating the strength of our community. It's a wonderful opportunity to connect with women, raise awareness of domestic abuse, and remind anyone who may need it that support is available, they're not alone, and help is here when they're ready."

Kaila, Senior Practitioner for BCHA's Domestic Abuse services

If you're attending, make sure to say hello, or reach out to the team for support, signposting or advice.

WILD & WISER

BCHA's Festival of Wellbeing makes stellar 2026 comeback

BCHA's Festival of Wellbeing has made a comeback after a short break, bringing together local organisations in the BCP area united in their missions to support health and wellbeing to those in the community.

The event saw an action-packed afternoon, with free activities including gentle yoga, inclusive dance lessons and even circus skill workshops. The activities were held alongside organisations with practical support options, like Access Wellbeing, Bournemouth Foodbank and Steps to Wellbeing.

Hair braider Daisy Blewitt volunteered her time to bring some colour and sparkle to the festival, saying "*Attending the festival was such a fabulous experience. Seeing members in our community from all walks of life come together to support mental health was so uplifting, and I'm glad I was able to support such a worthwhile event.*"

Jamie Clarke, BCHA Learn Manager, said "*I have been involved with the BCHA Festival of Wellbeing since it started back in 2014, and it is always one of the highlights of my year. Seeing the local community come together and celebrate wellbeing is such a great thing to be part of.*"

Take a look at some of the fantastic images from the day.

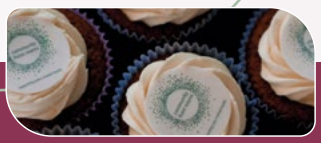
Mental Health Support in Dorset

Access Wellbeing

Access Wellbeing hubs across Dorset provide a welcoming space for members of the local community to find support on the issues affecting them. With over 30 Hubs and Drop-In Spaces, there's plenty of support available. Find your nearest one on the Access Wellbeing website.

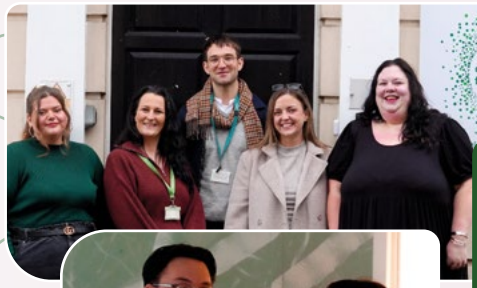
Community Front Rooms

The Community Front Rooms (CFRs) provide a safe and welcoming environment where adult visitors (over the age of 18) can self-refer to access support for their mental health on their own terms, and to define their crisis. We have branches in **Bridport**, **Shaftesbury** and **Dorchester**, open **Thursday - Sunday**, **14:15 - 21:45**.



Attend Anywhere

Attend Anywhere is a secure NHS video call service, available for Community Front Room customers. The service allows you to access support from your home or work, saving time and money in getting to services. To access Attend Anywhere, join the waiting room during the Community Front Room opening hours (**Thursday - Sunday**, **14:15 - 21:45**) by scanning the QR code.



Upcoming courses with BCHA Learn

As we move into autumn, it can be difficult to stay motivated when learning new skills.. BCHA Learn have some great courses that can keep your mind active and get you out into the crisp air this autumn!

All our courses are free and available to those aged 19 or over in Dorset. If you'd like to find out more about our courses, or fill out an enrolment form, scan the QR code here:

Horticulture level 2

Enrolling Tuesday 29th September

This 5-week course covers propagating leaf cuttings, caring for planted areas, indoor plan maintenance and how to prepare for sowing. You'll receive a qualification on completion, and you'll need to have completed the Level 1 course to enrol.

Horticulture level 1

Enrolling Thursday 1st October

Our 5-week course is delivered at the New Leaf Allotment (Throop) in rain or shine from our fantastic Yurt 2 days per week. Learn how to prepare soil, sow seeds, pruning shrubs, houseplant care and more - plus receive a qualification on completion!

All Being Well

Enrolling Wednesday 7th October

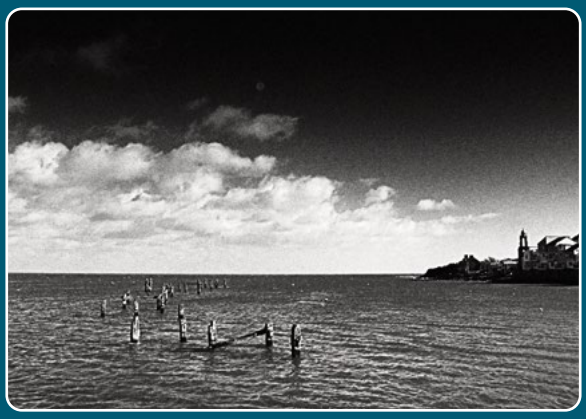
BCHA Learn's 5-week Wellbeing course will help you to improve your personal wellbeing, including physical and mental health, manage and prevent stress, and build your confidence.

Customer creativity at BCHA

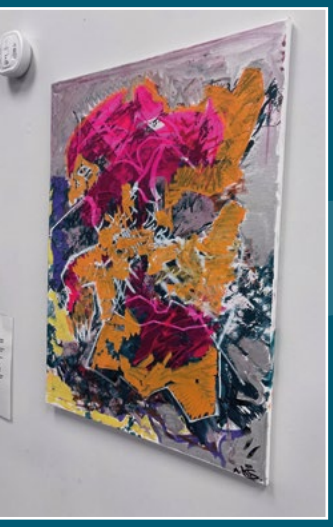
At BCHA, we love to see artwork from our customers - we have a gallery of artwork at our headquarters in Poole. Take a look at some of the fantastic artwork and creative pieces we have the pleasure of displaying.

Photography - Richard Maldini at Cornelia Lodge

Paintings - colleagues and customers across our support services



If you have any artwork you'd like to display at The Factory, Poole, or featured in the next edition of Tenant Talk, please email us on **customerservices@bcha.org.uk**



More affordable homes in Sherford, Plymouth

We're pleased to announce that BCHA has secured 15 new affordable family homes in Sherford, near Plymouth, helping more people access quality housing in Devon.

The development includes 11 homes for social rent and four available through shared ownership. To help meet local housing needs, priority for rented homes will be given to people with a connection to the area, supporting South Hams District Council's affordable housing objectives.

The two and three-bedroom homes have been designed with families in mind, each offering a garage, additional parking space and energy-efficient features to help keep household bills lower.

"We are delighted to bring these new affordable homes to Sherford, supporting our commitment to delivering much-needed housing in Plymouth and the surrounding areas. We look forward to welcoming customers to this thriving new community"

Nigel Ingram, Head of Development at BCHA

Sherford is a growing new town on the edge of Plymouth, with schools, community facilities, green spaces and excellent transport links.

New temporary accommodation for families experiencing homelessness

Work is underway on plans for new temporary accommodation for families experiencing homelessness in Plymouth.

BCHA has submitted a planning application to replace the existing Raglan Court building, located in Devonport, Plymouth, with 27 modern, self-contained apartments. The current building is no longer fit for purpose, with significant repair, accessibility and energy efficiency challenges making refurbishment unviable.

The new scheme is designed to provide more homes than the existing site, with energy-efficient apartments, accessible accommodation and shared spaces that encourage community connection and wellbeing. The development will also support psychologically informed and trauma-informed approaches, helping families feel safe and supported during difficult times.

With demand for temporary accommodation continuing to rise across Plymouth, the project aims to increase the availability of quality housing for families who need it most.

Funding has been secured to support key enabling works and over the next 12 months BCHA and its partners will continue to assess viability and secure funding needed to bring the project forward.

BCHA and Trevi launch new support service for survivors of domestic abuse in Plymouth

trevi
where life begins

From 1 July 2026, BCHA and Trevi are working together to deliver the Safe Accommodation Support Service Plymouth, providing specialist, trauma-informed support for victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

Commissioned by Plymouth City Council, the service offers safe accommodation alongside tailored support to help people rebuild their lives. Support is available to survivors of all genders and backgrounds, helping people find safety, stability and the support they need to move forward.

The partnership combines BCHA's expertise in housing and support services with Trevi's specialist knowledge of domestic abuse and trauma-informed care, ensuring survivors receive support that understands the impact of abuse, risk and control.

Domestic abuse can take many forms, including physical, emotional and sexual abuse, stalking and harassment. If you or someone you know is experiencing abuse, support is available.

In an emergency, call **999**.

For advice and support, contact a specialist domestic abuse service or the **National Domestic Abuse Helpline** on **0808 2000 247**.

Michael Caines MBE opens EX4 café in Exeter

Michael Caines MBE officially opened EX4 café in April, cutting the ribbon at a community celebration accompanied by the Salvation Army band.

Speaking at the event, Michael said: "*This café is very important to our community. Alongside the work that the café is doing, it's giving space for the stories from the people of our community.*"

EX4 began at BCHA's Gabriel House in Exeter, where founders Dan, Nathan and Rebecca hosted toastie and coffee mornings for fellow residents. After building their skills and confidence through Employment Plus courses, they launched their first venture, DBN Café, in 2023.

Now based in a larger space within the Salvation Army's Friars Gate building, EX4 provides a welcoming environment for people experiencing loneliness or isolation.

"EX4 is a space to bring people together who are potentially isolated or from complex backgrounds. The café provides a social space, information, signposting, and great food and drinks"

Dan Martins, Chair of EX4

How your feedback is helping shape positive change at BCHA

At BCHA, your voice matters. Throughout 2025/26, customers have shared their experiences, ideas and priorities through Customer Steering Groups, Reference Panels, house meetings, surveys, complaints, activities and everyday conversations. This feedback is helping us understand what matters most, what is working well, and where we need to improve.

What customers told us

Customers told us that the issues affecting daily life in their homes and communities matter most. The key themes were:

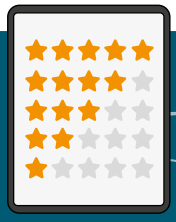
- clear, timely communication;
- repairs, property condition and planned improvements;
- anti-social behaviour (ASB), safety and wellbeing;
- service charges and value for money;
- staff visibility and local support; and
- opportunities to influence decisions.

What we have done so far

Your feedback has helped focus attention on repairs, communication and property condition. While there is still more to do, it has already helped shape improvements such as kitchen replacement programmes, environmental improvements and customer-led neighbourhood projects.

Customers also highlighted ASB, safety and wellbeing as priorities. In response, we are planning a dedicated ASB customer focus group. This will help us strengthen our approach, create more opportunities to discuss concerns, and explain more clearly what support is available and what customers can expect from the process.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and wider performance data have also shown positive results, with customer satisfaction meeting or exceeding national averages. Continued feedback will help us build on this progress and focus on the areas that still need attention.



How you can help shape what happens next

We want to keep working with customers to improve communication, strengthen repairs services, increase staff visibility, expand customer involvement and make better use of the feedback you share.

There are several ways to get involved, including joining a Reference Panel, taking part in a customer voice group, sharing your views through consultations, or becoming part of the **scrutiny group**. A scrutiny group gives customers the chance to take a detailed look at specific services or issues. Unlike surveys and consultation activities, scrutiny groups allow customers to review evidence, explore how services are delivered and make recommendations for improvement.

Scrutiny group members will help choose topics that matter most to customers, gather wider customer views and work directly with BCHA colleagues. It is a valuable way to make sure customers play a central role in shaping future services.

Upcoming opportunities to contribute to change at BCHA include reviewing our approach to service charges, anti-social behaviour, and neighbourhood and community services.

To find out more or take part, please contact your Housing Officer or the Customer Engagement Team by scanning the QR code

A new home and a new beginning

When BCHA customers Teri and Dean decided it was time for a change, Homeswapper - an online mutual exchange platform that enables its users to swap homes with other social housing tenants - helped them do just that.

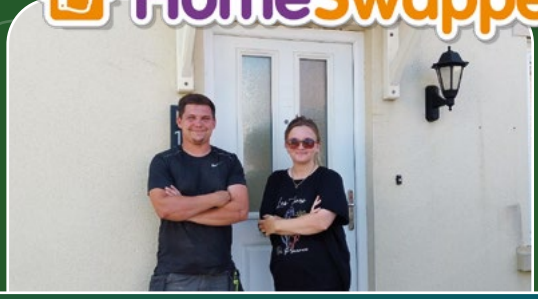
Teri and Dean used Homeswapper to find somewhere new in their hometown with an extra bedroom to fit their family.

This exchange involved multiple properties and Housing Associations, known as a 'MultiSwap'. Teri shared that "*the process was handled incredibly well from start to finish," adding, "BCHA were amazing and provided consistent support every step of the way.*"

Teri also gave special praise to her Housing Officer, Phil: "*Phil regularly chased the other housing associations involved to keep everything progressing and ensured that we were always kept up to date. His dedication and proactive approach made what could have been a very stressful process much easier to manage*."

Once Teri, Dean and their family had moved to their new property, BCHA gained some new customers, Ben and Sian!

Ben and Sian were thrilled with their move, saying "*Moving home can often be stressful, but the mutual exchange gave us an easy way to find a property that suited our needs. The guidance we received helped everything go smoothly*."



"We're very happy in our new home and BCHA have been so supportive, which has made a real difference. We would absolutely recommend mutual exchanging to other customers considering a move. It's been a great opportunity and we're very grateful for how straightforward the experience has been."

How your Housing Officer can help you

- Rent accounts and arrears
- Service charges
- Repairs and maintenance
- Estate or communal areas
- Anti-social beaviour
- Moving home

If you're unsure on how to contact your Housing Officer, contact our Customer Services team on 01202 410 500 or email us at **customerservices@bcha.org.uk**

BCHA take part in Resolve ASB's Anti-Social Behaviour Awareness Week

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Awareness Week, is run annually by Resolve, the UK's leading community safety experts for over 28 years.

As part of ASB week, Louise, BCHA's Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Specialist, co-organised a community surgery alongside BCP Council, Dorset Police and SNG Housing Association to allow customers and members of the community to discuss their concerns with ASB in the area.

Louise joined BCHA earlier this year and has worked closely with our Head of Housing to ensure our customers and communities are safe and happy places to live.

"I want all BCHA customers and staff to understand exactly what ASB is. It can cause huge issues, not just for individuals but for entire communities and this can have a big impact on mental health. I'd love to see a reduction in ASB across the region too, but being able to support customers and give advice that can help in the meantime makes me feel like I am making a difference.."

Louise

Supporting the Housing Sector with Competence and Conduct

The competence and conduct requirements are a framework for landlords such as BCHA to adhere to, to help improve the quality of service for tenants.

They are subject to regulations by the Regulator of Social Housing and are a requirement for registered providers in England.

Mandatory qualifications for senior housing professionals are just one part of the new requirements, with the full framework providing an overall culture change within the sector on behaviours and professionalisation, which applies to everyone working in the sector.

Housing providers must:

- Ensure all senior managers and executives hold relevant qualifications.
- Enable tenant influence to help shape policy and scrutinise performance.
- Ensure all staff have skills, knowledge and behaviours to deliver services.
- Ensure all contractors have the skills and knowledge to meet the requirements.
- Adopt a workforce professionalisation policy to support learning and development.
- Embed a code of conduct within their organisation for staff to follow.

At BCHA we are well on the way to meeting these standards and have:

- Providing additional qualifications for some of our colleagues.
- Reviewed and improved our code of conduct and associated policies.
- Building our customer engagement strategy to continue to enable tenants to shape policy and scrutinise performance.

Fire Safety in Your Home

Top tips for keeping you and your family safe

Plugs

Turn off appliances when not in use

Doors

Do not leave a fire door open and never disconnect an automatic closer

Appliances

Do not leave an appliance running when no-one is home

Smoking

Do not smoke in bed and always put out cigarettes fully

Smoke alarms

Test your smoke alarm weekly and do not cover or remove

BBQ

If you have a balcony do not have a BBQ on it

Cooking

Do not leave cooking unattended

Belongings

A tidy home with fewer belongings can reduce the risk of fire spreading

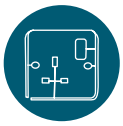
Candles

Do not leave candles unattended and always put out fully

Matches

Store matches and lighters in a safe place and away from children

Electrical



Do not overload electrical sockets and switch them off when not in use

Flammable

Do not store anything flammable such as petrol in your home

Useful Contacts at BCHA

BCHA Customer Service
01202 410 500 • customerservices@bcha.org.uk

Maintenance Enquiries
BCHA Home **0300 1234 001** or email:
repairs@bcha.org.uk

BCHA Floating Mental Health Support
Phone-in service on **01202 612 600** (Mon-Fri 10:00-16:00)
MHfloatingsupprt@bcha.org.uk

BCHA Learn
01202 410 595 • bchalearn@bcha.org.uk

Foodbanks
are available if you are struggling to cope financially.
Call **01202 410 500** for further advice

Help with housing, learning and living
Call **01202 410500**
Email enquiries@bcha.org.uk

www.bcha.org.uk
The Factory, 14 Alder Hills, Poole, BH12 4AS
Unity Hub, 5 - 11 Millbay Road, Plymouth PL1 3LF

Work for us

If you'd like to work for BCHA, find our vacancies or submit a speculative application today

Are you getting everything you're entitled to?

www.turn2us.org.uk • www.entitledto.co.uk

All websites have a benefits calculator to assist you.

Emergency Numbers

NHS: 111

Mental Health Connections: 0300 123 5440

National Domestic Abuse: 0808 2000 247

Samaritans: 116 213

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

Cruse Bereavement: 0800 808 1677

Shelter: 0808 800 4444

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