

2011 Website News Stories...

February 2011

Welcome to Golden Gates Housing Trust (GGHT)!! (archived Feb 2011)

The 29 November marks the launch of the new Trust. We will be delivering £105m of investment in tenants' homes and the estates on which they live over the next 5 years. We will improve our services – including quicker repair and anti social behaviour response times. We look forward to working closely with tenants to deliver the promises to tenants to high levels of satisfaction.

March 2011

New Vans are here!! (archived March 2011)

The eagle eyed among you may have started to notice the new GGHT vans out and about. The new vehicles (a fleet of Renault Traffic) have started to appear with the full fleet going into service from the 1 March. The full fleet will be in place by the end of June. GGHT used a Warrington based company for the racking for carrying materials, tools and equipment.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Services (archived March 2011)

Six million lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people live in the UK. At least, one in four LGBT people experience domestic abuse in their relationships and from members of their families. But there are no mainstream services in the UK for LGBT people experiencing domestic abuse. Lesbians fleeing domestic abuse may face homophobia in women's refuges. Gay men fleeing domestic abuse from partners and families have access to only eighteen beds in the whole of England and no provision in the rest of the UK. Transgender men have absolutely nowhere to go. With the introduction of the Gender Recognition Act 2005, transgender women now have the right to access refuges. Yet for transgender women fleeing domestic violence, the fear of transphobia within women's refuges could prevent them from seeking essential support. Bisexuals remain completely 'invisible', even to most LGBT agencies. Young LGBT people coming out to homophobic and transphobic families are forced onto the streets, into dangerous situations and relationships. Broken Rainbow (UK) is working to change the situation for LGBT people experiencing domestic abuse. They run a confidential UK-wide listening, information and signposting Helpline Service (0300 999 5428), staffed by LGBT people. They also offer limited advocacy work.

April 2011

Stonewall thank GGHT for fundraising during LGB month (archived April 2011)

During LGB Month, GGHT hosted a wide variety of activities, featuring a Learning Lunch, attended by more than twenty staff and the Chief Executive. At the lunch staff learned about sexual orientation, understandings myths & stereotypes about the LGB community and their effects, as well as examining homophobia and the negative effects it can have in the workplace. As the finale for LGB month Golden Gates Housing Trust held a 'Rainbow Day' where staff members were encouraged to come to work in the colours of the rainbow flag, to show their support for LGB rights. The executive management team all wore Stonewall's 'Some People Are Gay. Get Over It!' and 'Love Your Inner Lesbian' t-shirts and staff raised £63 for Stonewall. The event helped all of Golden Gates Housing Trust staff understand the importance of maintaining an inclusive environment in which all staff can truly be themselves. Stonewall are greatly appreciative of the time and effort that Golden Gates Housing Trust put in to supporting their work, and have thanked us for our efforts on their website www.stonewall.org.uk

May 2011

We need you - tenant Board member vacancies!! (archived May 2011)

GGHT will have vacancies for 2 tenant Board members in September 2011, one of these positions is vacant now and needs to be filled. The challenge: to ensure GGHT achieves its vision of creating quality homes and neighbourhoods. The Board of Directors all work on a voluntary basis using their skills, knowledge and expertise to ensure that GGHT meets the challenge. The deadline for applications is Wednesday 4 May. Contact us free on 0800 25 26 27 to request a pack or download it directly yourself. If you have any questions please contact Alison Foy on 0800 25 26 27 or email Alison Foy. Please note only 'assured (formerly secure) GGHT tenants can apply.

GGHT Announcement regarding tenant Board Member, Sheila Barber (archived May 2011)

Sheila Barber, tenant Board Member, sadly passed away on the 30 March. Sheila had been a Board Member since July 2006 and had been actively involved in working with her local community for over 40 years. She was the first Chair of the Tenants Federation, was the first member of the public to Chair the Housing Estate Committee and was a member of the panel that set up the first Estate Management Board. Sheila was always a really busy woman, who loved life and was committed to improving services and encouraging inclusion for all. Sheila will be sadly missed by staff and tenants alike.

Stamp Out Stigma Campaign Thank GGHT for Helping to Hit 100,000 Pledges... (archived May 2011)

GGHT is a Corporate Partner of 'Sticks and Stones', a campaign to challenge mental health and learning disability-related stigma. We are pleased to announce that they have achieved their goal and collected over 100,000 pledges (106,211 to date!) on their petition. Stamp Out Stigma have passed on their thanks to GGHT and feel they could not have achieved this without the support of our Equality & Diversity Officer and GGHT staff. Together we have been able to send out a very clear message that there is no place for stigma within our organisation or society as a whole. They also set out to create 500,000 opportunities to view positive stories in the media about the campaign and about people with mental ill health and learning disabilities. This target has been achieved nearly five times over, creating 2.3 million chances to read 73 positive stories in the past 12 months. "On behalf of all the service users and carers who asked for this campaign and helped us to deliver it, we thank GGHT once again for your kind support." (Stamp Out Stigma)

GGHT Sponsored Rugby Team Win Cup...(archived May 2011)

Crosfields under 18s, sponsored by GGHT, have run out winners of the North West Counties cup, defeating Folly Lane 25 v 22 in a tense but thrilling cup final. GGHT would like to congratulate the team on their success.

GGHT Announce Details of Rent Increases (archived May 2011)

GGHT rents are to increase by an average of 6.22% or £3.92 per week from 4 April 2011, although increases are calculated on an individual basis ranging from 1.66% to 10.58%. The vast majority of tenants will see rises of £3.29 to £4.54. This increase would have been slightly higher had the stock remained with the Council. More details on how the increases have been calculated and why we are having to increase our rents can be found by reading our briefing.

Changes 2011 - Be Prepared (archived May 2011)

If you have one or more adult (aged 18 or over) other than your partner living with you, your household income may be affected by the new benefit changes from April 2011. For more information on how to Beat the Benefit Change contact the Income Management Team NOW to discuss how we can help you.

June 2011

Announcement: PH Jones bought by British Gas (archived June 2011)

On 16 May 2011 it was announced that P H Jones (one of our Gas Servicing and Maintenance Contractors) has been bought by Centrica Plc the parent company of British Gas. We would like to assure customers that this change in ownership will not affect the services provided to GGHT. The brand name, staffing, vehicles and existing repairs and maintenance service are to remain the same.

GGHT's HR department win team of year award at 2011 Housing Heroes Awards (archived June 2011)

Our HR team have been named Human Resources team of the year 2011, beating stiff competition from other social housing providers around the country. GGHT's Human Resources and Organisational Development team were honoured at a glittering awards ceremony in London last week, hosted by the BBC news presenter George Alagiah.

July 2011

Summer Mela Event 2011 (archived July 2011)

Warrington Ethnic Communities Association (WECA), GGHT and WBC are organising a 'Summer Mela 2011.' The Mela will take place on Sunday 24 July 2011 running from 11am-5pm at Parr Hall Warrington & Queens Gardens in Palmyra square, WA1 1TA. A Mela is a celebration of the different cultures and communities in a local area coming together and this Mela is going to be both fun and exciting for all that come along! There will be showcases of cultural dance performances from various groups including local Polish school children and traditional Indian dancing. There will be fantastic music all day from all of the different cultures including traditional instruments played and a DJ. There will be a wealth of all of the different local cultures food available to try. More importantly it's a great way to meet people who live in your community and to try new things. The Mela is a free family fun day which is open to all and embodies the true meaning of embracing diversity and community.

Vacancies: Independent and Co-opted Board Members (archived July 2011)

We are recruiting one Independent and two Co-opted Board Members to join our established Board. We are looking for innovative individuals, who have a strong customer focus. You must be enthusiastic about playing a part in the development of GGHT, be highly motivated, a team player and have excellent interpersonal skills. We are looking for individuals with skills and expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- Finance and Accounting
- Housing Finance
- Business management
- Employment/Human Resources

You must be willing to attend Board and committee meetings, normally eight per year, as well as training events. Board positions are voluntary; however, out of pocket expenses are reimbursed. The Independent position is for a 3 year term, Co-opted members will be appointed for 1 year and then subject to review.

Closing date for applications: Monday 4 July 2011

Interviews will be held: w/c 11 July

Details of our aims and objectives are provided within the organisations Offer Document. Working together to promote equality of opportunity, celebrate diversity and eliminate discrimination. GGHT encourages applications from all sections of the community. All information provided will be treated in the strictest of confidence and successful candidates will be appointed to the Board of GGHT at the AGM on 21 September 2011.

August 2011

Apprentice Opportunities With GGHT...(archived August 2011)

Are you currently unemployed? Do you live in Warrington? If 'YES' then you may be interested to know that we are looking to recruit a number of apprentices; Business Administration Apprentice, Apprentice Joiners, Apprentice Electricians, Apprentice Plaster, Apprentice Plumber and Housing Management Apprentice. For more information can be found on our job recruitment website: www.gght-jobs.org.uk or www.facebook.com/goldengateshousingtrust. Or call our recruitment line 01925 452666.

Maintenance of sewers & pipes (archived August 2011)

Please note that you will be receiving a letter from United Utilities informing you that water and sewerage companies in England & Wales are taking ownership and maintenance of pipes that connect your property to the public sewer from October 2011. As a GGHT tenant nothing will change for you except the maintenance is changing from GGHT to United Utilities. You can visit www.unitedutilities.com/privatesewers for more information or call 0845 000 000 (Monday – Saturday, 8am-8pm).

September 2011

GGHT continue to deliver excellent customer service (archived September 2011)

GGHT have been recognised for delivering outstanding service to its customers. Following an onsite assessment in June, the Trust were shown to have once again achieved the Customer Service Excellence Accreditation. The Customer Service Excellence Accreditation is the Government's Standard for customer service and is designed to be a driver of continuous improvement. The assessment criteria consists of 57 elements including customer insight, culture of the organisation and quality of service.

Gareth scoops national apprentice award (archived September 2011)

One of GGHT's top apprentices, Gareth Williams, has been crowned 'Apprentice of the Year' at a national awards ceremony for his outstanding achievements. Gareth, who started work on the GGHT decent homes programme as a labourer in 2007, went on to hone his skills as an apprentice joiner with one of our key contractors Bramall Construction. Gareth was presented with the award at a glitzy awards ceremony hosted at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in London by the UK Contractors Group. The awards reflect Gareth's dedication to his role which has seen him achieve distinctions in his NVQ Levels 2 and 3 exams in joinery and gain an excellent attendance and punctuality record at Warrington College of 98%. Gareth, who lives in Dallam in Warrington, was given the golden opportunity to launch his career with GGHT when he walked into the housing offices as a 20-year-old asking for work. Now 23-years-old, Gareth has been practicing his skills in everything from timber framing to roofing, fitting locks to properties and first and second fix joinery. He recently worked on a new build scheme with Bramall Construction to construct 111 properties at Ratcliffe Park in Rainhill and is currently working on bathroom refurbishments as part of our capital investment programme. Gareth said: "I'm delighted to win this award as it's a fantastic achievement in the industry and it wouldn't have been possible without the opportunities that GGHT and Bramall Construction have provided me with. "Where I grew up there's a high level of unemployment and people rely on benefits but I found work by knocking on Bramall and

GGHT's door and I haven't looked back since. "People in the family say I take after my grandfather who was a builder so I think the trade runs in my blood, my mum's especially proud of what I've achieved. "Winning the UK Contractors Group award is another feather in my cap as I have ambitions to become a Site Manager one day and hopefully this will stand me in good stead." Chief Executive Peter Mercer, said: "My warm congratulations go out to Gareth, he thoroughly deserves to win this award and we are very proud of what he's achieved." Robert Bailey, site manager for Bramall Construction, added: "I think that what really stands out with Gareth, both through his work at GGHT and Bramall Construction, is his fantastic attitude as well as his academic success, which has led to him gaining distinctions in his NVQ Level 2 and 3 exams." "Gareth is extremely punctual, his former site managers have praised his work which they say is always perfect and one of his colleagues said he's the best apprentice he has worked with in his 12 year career. Gareth thoroughly deserves to win this award and has a promising career ahead of him."

Summer Mela success...(archived September 2011)

Sunday 24 July saw Warrington hold its very first Mela organised by WECA – Warrington Ethnic Communities Association (WECA) and event partners GGHT, WBC, Cheshire Fire and and STiW. WECA chose to hold the event as their main aim is to engage with the different ethnic communities of Warrington from the various Asian communities to the Russian community, Polish and the Chinese communities amongst all others. Melas are a stereotypically Asian celebration but WECA decided to break away from the stereotype and instead celebrate the rich and diverse cultures of Warrington. The day had a programme of events ranging from Bhangra Dancing, Polish & Russian dancing, a Tabla performance, Keyboard performances & Bollywood Music performed both in Parr Hall and also in Queens Gardens. The Mayor of Warrington attended to open the event and was welcomed by a procession of drums (dhol) played by people in Asian ceremonial dress. The mayor then proceeded to make his way through all of the stalls ranging from GGHT's information stall to the inflatable Army assault course, bouncy castle, fair ground rides, henna stalls and also a wealth of fantastic food stalls from all cultures. Halina Kelly an advocate from the Polish community and member of GGHT's Working Together Group had baked traditional Polish delicacies, whilst there also being a wealth of tasty food from local businesses too. Local schoolchildren across the Borough also got involved in the day through a competition ran by WECA, GGHT & WBC. The competition asked for local schoolchildren to draw what their community looked like and to show what makes it great. The three winners were presented with their prizes by the mayor – one of these winners was a young GGHT tenant! Peter Mercer Chief Executive from GGHT attended the event and said: "GGHT is proud to have been involved in Warrington's first Mela and will continue to support this great event." Mr Tatla a member of WECA wanted to make a public thank you to all that made the first Warrington Mela a great success and was overjoyed with the weather, the company and also all of the spectators that came to give their support on such a special day. WECA would also like to express that this Mela will be the first of many. WECA and the event partners will work to make the event bigger and better each year and are already looking forward to the next one!

October 2011

Warning: Household Appliance Recall (archived October 2011)

GGHT would like to raise tenant awareness in relation to certain household appliances which are currently under recall with the manufacturers and are highlighted by Trading Standards due to the possibility that they may overheat and in very rare cases cause a potential fire hazard.

The following household items have been identified and it is advised that you check your appliances to see if they match those on the list. If you have an appliances that matches those listed, you are advised to contact the manufacturers who will advise you what to do next.

- BEKO Frost Free Fridge Freezers (Manufactured between January 2000 and October 2006)
- BOSCH, NEFF and SIEMENS dishwashers (Manufactured between 1999 and early 2005, the affected dishwashers are certain models in the batch number range from FD2901 and FD8504)
- If you think you own one of the products mentioned above, please contact the manufacturer direct. BEKO can be contacted on 0800 009 4837. NEFF, BOSCH and SIEMENS can be contacted on 0800 561 0082

GGHT Secure Emergency Injunction Against Robert Saxon and Neil Emery (archived Oct 2011)

The injunction against the two men was granted by Warrington County Court and excludes the two men from entering Gerrard Avenue in Bewsey, Warrington. It will remain in place until a full hearing takes place on 14 December. The injunction was granted to protect a vulnerable GGHT tenant who lives in the Bewsey area and follows a previous injunction that had been granted against Robert Saxon for targeting vulnerable tenants in the area. The Injunction granted contains a power of arrest, which means that if they breach this they will be immediately arrested. Speaking after the injunction was granted, a spokesperson for GGHT said: "We will not tolerate anyone targeting our tenants and have taken this action to protect all of the residents in this area. We are committed to working in partnership with the Police and other partners to tackle local issues and improve our communities". Anyone who sees either of the men entering Gerrard Avenue should notify the Police immediately by calling 999.

New Board Chair... (archived Oct 2011)

Roy Smith has been elected the new Chair of the Golden Gates Housing Trust (GGHT) Board at the Trust's AGM on 21 September 2011. Roy has been elected for the next 12 months and will be supported by Fran Murray, a GGHT tenant, who has been appointed Deputy Chair.

Warrington's Got Talent 2011 Final... (archived Oct 2011)

Residents young and old packed into the Parr Hall in Warrington on Saturday 17 September as the 2011 Warrington's Got Talent competition reached a thrilling climax. The final saw 22 talented acts from across Warrington compete to be crowned winners in the 5-11 and 12-19 year old age categories. This year's event attracted entries from over 100 acts, with regional heats held between May and June to select the best 22 performers to compete in the grand final. The final acts performed to a capacity crowd and were judged by representatives from Cheshire Police, Radio Warrington, GGHT Board of Directors, Blue Vine Records and a previous cast member of Wicked from London's West End. The 5-11 year old category was won by Lucy Hayes, a classical singer from Penketh who performed a song from Les Miserables,. The 12-19 year old category was won by Mario Smooth, a unique mixed routine dancer from Latchford. The winners received cash prizes presented by the Mayor of Warrington, Cllr Mike Biggin. They will also be given the opportunity to perform live during the half-time interval of a Warrington Wolves game in the next 12 months. [Click here](#) for more winners.

You're Hired - GGHT and partners recruit new apprentices (archived Oct 2011)

GGHT Chief Executive Peter Mercer was on hand this week to say "you're hired", as the Trust celebrated the recruitment of 10 new apprentices. The new recruits were joined at a welcome event by three of the apprentices and trainees employed on the GGHT contract by Bramall Construction,. The new apprentices will work in a range of specialist roles including housing management, business administration, plumbing, plastering and joinery for the next three years.

Peninsula House Incident (archived October 2011)

On Thursday 15 September, GGHT were alerted to a major leak affecting the majority of floors in Peninsula House, a high rise block of flats. Officers from GGHT and Cheshire Fire & Rescue attended and GGHT implemented its Emergency Plan. In order to ensure the health and safety of the residents, alternative accommodation was secured, where required. Peter Mercer, Chief Executive of GGHT stated, "We worked closely with the Fire Service to make the building secure and remove all residents whose homes had been affected. The welfare of residents is paramount and our officers acted swiftly to ensure their safety. A full investigation is underway with Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service to identify the cause of the incident and we will provide further information when this is appropriate".

GGHT and Warrington Wolves Foundation Celebrate Partnership Launch (archived October 2011)

GGHT and Warrington Wolves Foundation have entered into a long-term partnership to benefit the local community. Over the next 12 months the partnership will see the two organisations working together to deliver a range of activities for young people in Warrington aimed at promoting health and physical activity and reducing anti-social behaviour.

December 2011

November is Mental Health & Learning disability month at GGHT (archived Dec 2011)

This means that the whole month of November will be spent raising awareness of the issues faced for people who have ill mental health or a learning disability. Currently in the UK:

- 1 in 4 people will experience some kind of mental health problem in the course of a year. This can include stress, depression or an anxiety disorder.
- A Learning disability is one of the most common forms of disability in the UK. It is also the least understood.
- There are about 1.5 million people - nearly 3 in 100 - in the UK who have a learning disability.
- Almost 1 in 3 people with learning disabilities say they do not have any contact with friends.
- The UK has one of the highest rates of self harm in Europe.

Only 1.2% of customers so far have come forward to GGHT and declared they have ill mental health but as I am sure you will agree that the statistics above show there is a stigma associated with ill mental health; and so not many people declare this information through fear of being targeted. As an organisation, we understand that those coping with mental health problems and learning disabilities not only have to deal with their condition but also face prejudice on a daily basis and so GGHT can support you in many ways if you let us. The first step is updating your employee profile on employee self service to let us know you have ill mental health or a learning disability. Together we can change the way we see, think and talk about mental health by addressing people's fears, breaking down

walls and stamping out the stigma. This is why we are a committed corporate partner of the 'Stamp Out Stigma' campaign. As a corporate partner of the campaign, we have agreed to raise the profile of issues faced by people with ill mental health or learning disabilities. This hopefully resulting in an organisation that understands that each individual is different but it is these differences that make us unique and great. Please help us to 'Stamp Out Stigma' by agreeing not to use the words we have put into the 'Stigma bin'. If you would like a free wristband to show your support to the campaign and to show others you are committed to equality for people with ill mental health, please contact Cam Kinsella.

Help us stop loan sharks now!! (archived Dec 2011)

With an estimated 310,000 households in the UK borrowing from unlicensed lenders or loan sharks as they are more commonly known, illegal money lending is a problem across the country. Anyone who operates a money lending business without a licence from the Office of Fair Trading is acting illegally. The England Illegal Money Lending Team are cracking down on unlicensed lenders who...

- Rarely offer paperwork so those who borrow from them are kept in the dark about how much they still owe.
- Can charge extortionate rates of interest- rates of 131,000% APR have been seen.
- Add additional amounts to the debt so the borrowers struggle to repay.
- Take items as security. These items could even include passports and bank cards.
- Resort to extreme methods to reclaim their debts. This could mean threats, intimidation, violence or worse.

One victim spoke out "I couldn't afford to pay my bills and the rent as I had to pay the loan shark so life was getting pretty desperate. He said 'pay me don't feed the children.' The kids have been subjected to a hostel and attended five schools. It nearly cost me my marriage"

Loan sharks are not a community service and should never be used under any circumstances. Many loan sharks start out as a friend to their borrower but quickly change. If you have borrowed from an unlicensed lender you have not broken the law, they have.

Speak to us in confidence. To report a loan shark:

- Call the 24/7 confidential hotline 0300 555 2222
- Text 'loan shark + your message' to 60003
- E-mail reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk
- Log-on to www.direct.gov.uk/stoploansharks

GGHT celebrates its 1st Birthday - 29 November 2011 (archived Dec 2011)

GGHT celebrated its first Birthday in style after become a housing trust a year ago, following a successful ballot of all our tenants. To celebrate our first Birthday we:

- Turned our Customer Consultation Panel (CCP) meeting into a first Birthday party
- Held balloon race despite the windy weather - so if you find one don't forget to call us free on 0800 25 26 27 to enter the prize draw
- Peter Mercer, GGHT Chief Executive visited some customers who have had improvement works - including a new bathroom and a adapted bathroom
- Launching our new digital TV and smartphone site - Looking Local

To see all our pictures from yesterday - check out our album on the GGHT Facebook site www.facebook.com/goldengateshousingtrust and while you are their - why not 'LIKE' us?

Winners of our first ever Working Together Awards announced...(archived Dec 2011)

A host of local residents and community organisations were on hand this week as GGHT celebrated its first ever Working Together Awards. The Awards were to acknowledge the work the Trust's partners and customers carry out in order to create inclusive communities where everyone is valued for their differences. All nominees were voted for by GGHT customers, partners and staff. The awards ceremony included a presentation from Clifton Robinson, Chief Executive of the Housing Diversity Network and a performance from a group of local Polish schoolchildren who danced to traditional music and wore traditional Polish dress.

Warrington Youngsters Declare Outdoor Event a Massive Success...(archived Dec 2011)

A group of 12 young people from Longford in Warrington have declared a three day residential programme they attended during the October half-term a massive success. The event was organised by GGHT as part of its Longford project and followed the award of a €2,500 funding grant from The North Face® to help children and families explore the outdoors.

GGHT Annual Report 2011 (archived Dec 2011)

GGHT are pleased to present our 2011 Annual report to tenants. The report has been developed with tenants and includes information that tenants have asked to see. It includes information on our performance throughout 2010/11 and what we are doing to improve our performance. A summary of the information is also available in the autumn edition of News & Views. Tenants have agreed that to keep costs down the reports should be made available on the website, in local housing offices or if you would like a hard copy or a copy in another format please contact the Communications Team or the freephone on 0800 25 26 27. We'd like to express our thanks to the tenants for their supporting in developing the report. If you have any questions about the information or would like to give your feedback on the report please contact Alison Foy free on 0800 25 26 27.