

Press Release



Tuesday 4 October 2011

Residents urged to sign petition against benefit changes

Thousands of residents living in social housing could be pushed into hardship if proposed Government changes to welfare benefits go ahead.

Oldham-based landlord Aksa Homes is calling for tenants to sign a petition, or write to their MP, to urge ministers to rethink changes to housing benefit rules which could leave the most vulnerable of residents out of pocket.

As part of a national Welfare Action Week (10 – 16 October), Aksa Homes will join hundreds of other housing associations across the country to campaign against the Government's Welfare Reform Bill.

Under the proposed changes, people of a working age living in a council or a housing association home with a spare bedroom will lose part of their housing benefit. This includes disabled people, foster carers, working families on low income and those with young children.

There are also plans for all households to have their benefits capped.

Separately, the Government wants to scrap tenants' right to have their housing benefit paid directly to their landlord.

This would take away the most convenient way for tenants to pay their rent, making it harder for some to manage their incomes and potentially increase the risk of personal debts and arrears.

Welfare Action Week is being organised by the National Housing Federation. It estimates that 670,000 people living in social housing who are of working age and claiming housing benefit will receive an average cut of £676 per year.

During the week of action, residents concerned about the changes can 'say no' by visiting the Aksa Homes office on Phoenix Street and signing the petition.

Alternatively, tenants can email their MP at www.housing.org.uk/campaigns/housing_crisis/new_action.aspx.

Mushtaq Khan, Director of Aksa Homes said: "These changes are set to hit the people who rely on benefits the hardest and we're very concerned at how our tenants will be affected.

“We want to urge the Government to reconsider its proposal and we need as many tenants as possible to sign the petition, or contact their MP, to help to do this.

“We don’t want tenants to be forced into poverty and we’ll be doing everything we can during Welfare Action Week to publicise the campaign.”

The policies are expected to be introduced in April 2013.

For advice on benefits or more information on the proposed changes visit www.newcharter.co.uk.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

Aksa Homes is part of the New Charter Housing Trust Group (NCHTG). It owns approximately 700 homes across Oldham, Bury, Manchester and Tameside.

New Charter formed in 1999 as the new landlords to own and manage homes transferred from Tameside council in Greater Manchester. With a turnover of £90 million a year and a workforce of 800, New Charter is one of the region’s largest registered providers of social housing, and is regulated by the Tenant Services Authority, a Government watchdog. By incorporating Gedling Homes, the Group owns 18,600 homes. It was named in the Sunday Times best 100 companies to work for in 2011.