

Unity News

Autumn 2016



Homes & Enterprise

Supporting BME Communities
and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods

Unity Development's Official Opening

**Who's excited about
Brown Lane East?**

**Beware of
Bogus Callers**

Make sure you know
what to do when people are
at the door
(Page 8)



In July we were joined by Ingram Street Primary School and Hilary Benn MP to officially open our Brown Lane East development in Holbeck. This development provides affordable housing in the form of flats for rent and also shared ownership properties. The scheme complements Leeds City Council's construction and refurbishment of new homes in Beeston and Little London as part of the Sustainable Communities for Leeds programme. For more information, go to page 4.

Contents

4. Brown Lane East Official Opening

Read about the official opening of Unity's housing development in Holbeck.

5. Holborn Court

Take a look at our latest development, set for completion in December 2016

6. Kick-start your career!

Learn about Unity's employment workshops that can help get you into work.

8. Bogus Callers

Some advice from West Yorkshire Police on how to avoid being duped

9. Estate Visits

Find out when your Housing Officers will be visiting your area.

10. The Benefit Cap

A reminder of the changes to benefits that came into effect in April and advice about what to do if you are affected.

12. Universal Credit

How to prepare for the changeover

14. Autumn Activities

Discover how to spend some time looking after wildlife this Autumn.

Quick Messages

A Message from... **The Income Management Team**

We are pleased to announce that over the last 2 years, **over 300 tenants** have reduced their debts and maintained their homes. Total debt recovered to date is **£59,000**. The team are aware there are further challenges to be faced in the coming year. So, please, if you are facing difficulty paying your rent, get in touch.

We can help!



Are you expecting a repair?

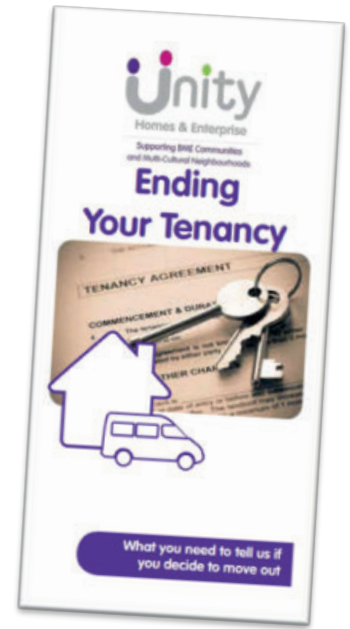
If you are expecting a visit from Forrest to do some repairs in your home, make sure you answer their phonecall confirming the appointment. There have been a few cases where Forrest have tried to get in contact with tenants regarding appointments and their calls have not been answered and tenants have missed the repairs. There are a couple of things you can do to prevent this from happening:

- ✓ Make sure you have Forrest's contact number, **01204 477 487**, saved in your phone so that you know it's them calling.
- ✓ **Let us know** if your contact details change so that we have your most up to date contact information.

Terminating Your Tenancy?

If you have decided to terminate your tenancy with Unity, it is vital that you give four weeks notice and let the **Income Management Team** know straight away. They will have all the information you need to ensure that the process is as easy as possible!

If you need further information check out our leaflet on our website or give us a call!



Meet The New Staff...

Adrian



Jamal



Nathan



Manager of Enterprise

Adrian now manages Unity's enterprise facilities, including: Unity Business Centre, Leeds Media Centre and Chapeltown Enterprise Centre. If you want to learn more about the services that Unity enterprise offers, get in touch.

 adrian.green@unityha.co.uk
 0113 242 5996

Business Administration Apprentice

Jamal works closely with the employment team and the regeneration team. He assists with the various classes that occur within employment services and hopes to build on his business experience. For more information regarding employment services, contact the employment team.

 employmentoutreach@unityha.co.uk

Communications and Marketing Intern

Nathan has taken over the role of communications and marketing at Unity. The role includes: managing the social media sites, producing marketing material, such as Unity News, and tenant involvement. If you have any suggestions or requests, please get in touch.

 nathan.dale@unityha.co.uk
 0113 200 7751

Brown Lane East Development The Launch!



July saw Unity celebrate the launch of the Brown Lane East development in Holbeck. We were joined by Ingram Street Primary School, who also visited when we first started the build, and they helped Hilary Benn MP to cut the ceremonial ribbon to officially open the development.

Mr Benn MP said: "I want to thank Unity Homes and Enterprise for helping families to get the chance of a new home, and Leeds City Council, the Homes and Communities Agency and Keepmoat for each playing their part in making this possible."

Ali Akbor, Chief Executive of Unity Homes and Enterprise, added: "Creating sustainable neighbourhoods is at the heart of everything we do at Unity. 10 work opportunities for local people, including apprenticeships, were created during the construction phase of this project, with a number of those individuals still in employment."

Unity's latest development at Brown Lane East, Holbeck comprises of 42 properties including a mix of 2 bedroom flats and 3 and 4 bedroom houses. The development is the first of its type in the area of Holbeck and marks the start of a process of ongoing regeneration in South Leeds.

We would send our thanks to Ingram Street Primary School and Hilary Benn MP for coming to the event. We would also like to thank our tenants for coming along and allowing us to visit their homes.



Holborn Court

Due for completion December 2016



Supporting BME Communities
and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods



Unity are pleased to announce our affordable housing scheme in Little London. Holborn Court is made up of 15 properties, including 1 and 2 bedroom flats, and is due to be completed in **December 2016**.

Unity will only allocate to tenants who can demonstrate an excellent tenancy record and have a local connection to the electoral ward. Priority will be given to families who are in social housing and have either:

- Too many bedrooms for their family size
- Families who need more bedroom

Applicants will need to provide references and a home visit will be carried out.

All of our properties that are available to rent can be accessed on the Leeds Home website:

www.leadshomes.org.uk

Alternatively, contact us at Unity for more information and guidance:

0113 200 7700

Keen to improve your skills?

Digital Inclusion



Here at Unity we provide a wide variety of **free** services, not only to our tenants, but for anyone seeking guidance or advice on selected sectors. Take a look at a few of the workshops that are taking place with our employment team.

Do you struggle using computers?

Digital inclusion is a course that will give you the skills you need to feel confident when using a computer and will have you surfing the web in no time!

**Tuesdays
10 - 12.30am**

Why are computer skills important?

- The current digital era we live in means that a lot of information can only be accessed online
- Computer skills are necessary when searching and applying for jobs.

The Benefits:

- **Develop skills** to allow you to use computers with ease
- **Increase your confidence** and get you online
- Gain access to Unity's **Twitter and Facebook** pages and receive important information and updates about upcoming events.



What - Digital Inclusion
Where - Business Centre
26 Roundhay Road
LS7 1AB
Price - Absolutely Free!

 Unity Homes & Enterprise

 @UnityHomes

For more information please contact:

Kelly Jennings
Outreach Support Worker

 0113 200 7738  07730 870 810

 kelly.jennings@unityha.co.uk

Could you do with a confidence boost to kickstart your career?

Free Employability Workshop

Location: Unity Business Centre, 26 Roundhay Road, LS6 1AB

Receive **free** help and advice with **practical job skills**, such as:

- Identifying your skills and building your confidence
- Preparing your cv and cover letter
- Guidance on job searching and using Universal Jobmatch
- Completing application forms
- Practicing your interview skills

For more information, or if you wish to book a place, please contact:

Noma Moyo



0113 200 7746



07714 134531



noma.moyo@unityha.co.uk

**Thursdays
10 - 12.30am**

Construction Vacancies in Leeds

Do you have experience in construction?

If so, we are currently seeking the following workers on our Unity building sites (CSCS card is required):

- Joiners
- Plumbers
- Bricklayers
- Electricians
- Roofers

Paid Positions!

Register your interest for vacancies by contacting:

Noma Moyo



0113 200 7746



07714 134531



noma.moyo@unityha.co.uk

Kelly Jennings



0113 200 7738



07730 870810



kelly.jennings@unityha.co.uk



Free English Lessons

Are you interested in learning how to speak English?

For more information, please contact:

Kelly Jennings



0113 200 7738



07730 870810



kelly.jennings@unityha.co.uk

Coming soon...

Bogus Callers

How to make sure you're protected

As **Citizen's Advice Scams Awareness Month** is running throughout July 2016, West Yorkshire Trading Standards has teamed up to urge residents to spread the word about scams and expose the tactics of fraudsters to protect others. National research by Citizens Advice finds scammers are using a variety of tactics to get people to part with their cash, on average people are losing **£2,500** across all types of scams. Please share the following information and advice, which was given to us by the **West Yorkshire Police**, with friends, family and neighbours.

What is 'bogus caller'?

The aim of the bogus caller is to try and talk their way into your home. Bogus callers vary in appearance and use a number of excuses to try and trick their way into peoples homes. Follow this advice to avoid being duped:

- Before you open the door check to see who it is by looking through your front window or by using a door viewer if you have one.
- Open the door when you have put the chain on.
- Get a good look at their clothing, some official callers will have a uniform bearing their company or organisation logo.

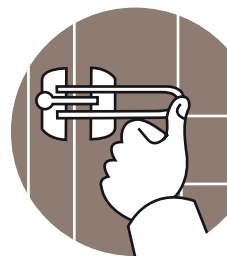
- Utility services may operate a password system, contact your local branch to find out more.
- Suggest that the caller should come back later, you can then check their story by telephoning the organisation or company they claim to represent.
- Check any phone number they give you in your own telephone directory. Do not rely on the number on their card, it may be the number of their partner in crime.
- Always lock the back door before opening the front or vice versa. Bogus callers sometimes work in pairs, one caller could be distracting you at the front and the other sneaking in at the back.
- Let the police and your neighbours know if you have had a suspicious caller at the door.
- Locks and chains are only a deterrent if they are used!

If in doubt, keep them out!



STOP

Is anyone **expected** ?
Back door **locked** ?



CHAIN

Put the **chain** on
before answering



CHECK

Ask for the caller's **ID**.
Check it by **phone**



If you're ever unsure or doubtful, please call us immediately and we can tell you if that person should be there or not!

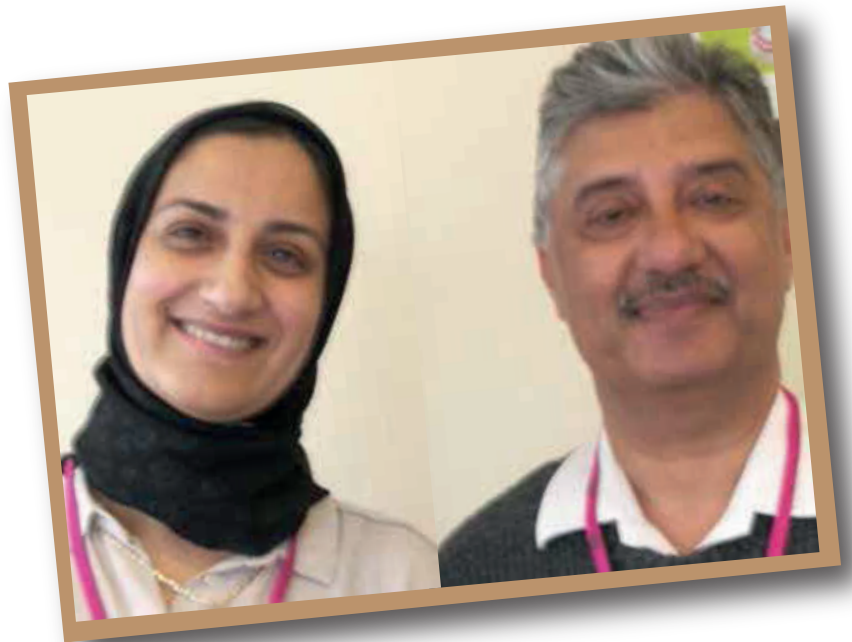
0113 200 7700

Estate Visits

When are you due a visit

Unity's housing officers Kamila and Rashpal visit each of our estates on a three monthly basis, to make sure that everything is in good order.

If you'd like to request a visit from your Housing Officer when they're next in your area, please call **0113 200 7700**.



Kamila's Estate Visits

Thursday 25th August PM – Hyde Park & Armley

Thursday 1st September PM – Crossgates & Harehills

Friday 9th September PM – Chapeltown

Friday 16th September AM – Harehills

Thursday 22nd September PM – North Leeds

Wednesday 28th September PM – Harehills

Thursday 6th October PM – Beeston

Friday 14th October AM – Hyde Park & Armley

Thursday 20th October PM – Crossgates & Harehills

Friday 28th October AM – Chapletown

Thursday 3rd November AM – Harehills

Friday 11th November AM – North Leeds

Thursday 17th November PM – Harehills

Friday 25th November AM – Beeston

Friday 2nd December AM – Hyde Park & Armley

Wednesday 7th Dec PM – Crossgates & Harehills

Thursday 15th December AM – Chapletown

Rashpal's Estate Visits

(Taking place from 10am - 1pm)

Thursday 8th September – Spencer Place, Markham Avenue, Gathorne Terrace, Pasture Road

Tuesday 13th September – Harlech Park Court, Lodge Lane, Beverley's, Harding Villas, Brown Lane East

Tuesday 4th October – Devon Close, Leicester Close

Tuesday 11th October – Cliff Terrace, Unity Close, Deighton View, Blackmoor Road, Fir Tree Approach

Tuesday 18th October – Stainbeck Road, Stainbeck Avenue, Bentley Gardens, Stonegates

Thursday 3rd November – Haslewood Drive, Haslewood View, Rigton Green, Leopold Street

Tuesday 8th November – Jackie Smart Court, Louis Street, Cowper Street, Hillcrest

Tuesday 15th November – Harehills Avenue, Newton Grove, Pear Tree House

Please note that these dates are subject to change without any prior notice.

The Benefit Cap

Are you going to be affected?

Do you receive over £384/week in benefits, including housing benefit?

During the Autumn months the total amount of work benefits you receive could fall, which means less housing benefit. If you receive benefits totalling more than **£384/week**, any amount above that will come off your housing benefit, even if it is paid direct to Unity.

Will I be affected?



If you or your partner do not work, or work a low number of hours, you may be affected



If you have three or more children, you are likely to be affected.



But it could also affect small families or even single people.

Who will not be affected?



People who are older than pension credit age, unless you have a partner younger than that age



Families that claim Working Tax Credit.



Families that claim Personal Independence Payments or Disability Living Allowance.



If you worked nearly all the year before you lost work, the cap will not apply for several months, to help you get back into work

How will I be affected?

If you meet the criteria for a benefit cap then it may be time to calculate how much you will be affected. The total amount that couples and families will be able to claim is **£384 per week**, and the total amount for a single person is **£257 per week**. **This includes Housing Benefit.**



What can you do to prepare?

The main answer is to be honest with yourself and look at what you are spending every week and set yourself targets to spend less.

We know this is difficult but you may have to look at what you currently spend on your household bills, weekly shop, gas and electric, TV and internet, phones, even your children's allowance, and non-essential repayments.

For Example:

Chloe receives Income Support **£112 p/w**, Child Tax Credits **£272 p/w**, and Housing Benefit **£100 p/w**.
Total amount of benefits = **£484 p/w**.

Under the new Benefit Cap her Housing Benefit will drop to **50p**, which means her total benefits will be **£384.50** and she will have to pay her rent entirely out of that money (Unity will not get Housing Benefit for her)

Michael receives Job Seekers Allowance **£75 p/w**, Child Tax Credits **£259 p/w** and Housing Benefit **£100 p/w**.

Total amount of benefits = **£434**.

Under the new cap, his Housing Benefit will drop to **£50 p/w**, which means his total benefits will be **£384** and he will have to pay at least **£50** of his rent from his money.

You may set a goal to spend £ per week less on food and the same with other bills. Then take the new smaller amount in cash to the shop. If you can stick to this you will save enough each week from shopping to cover the new bigger rent bill and other priorities.

If you know you will struggle to do this on your own our best advice is to get budgeting help. There is plenty available from our Income Management Team (details on page 12).

Changes to Housing Benefit

Keep your claim up to date

Don't delay in claiming Housing Benefit or telling Leeds Benefit Service about any new circumstances, such as different pay or hours worked. You will only be able to backdate a new claim four weeks and not six months anymore. Plus, if Housing Benefit have overpaid you in the past they will take the money back again, from your current

claim, at as much as they can.

Leaving the country for a while?

Housing Benefit and Pension Credits will only pay you for one month, then they will stop. If you go abroad for longer than one month, Housing Benefit will stop.

Universal Credit

How to prepare

Universal Credit began in Leeds in **February 2016**, so it is very important to start to prepare for the changeover. There are certain steps you can follow in order to make sure that you're ready.

Who will be affected?



Firstly, new claims from single people, people who have lost work or coming off another benefit.



The Government will then phase in new claims for couples and then families, and then lastly those on old benefits.



What can I do to prepare?

- 1 Get a **BASIC BANK ACCOUNT** if you don't already have one, as you can't be paid Universal Credit without one.
- 2 If you have any outstanding **DEBTS, GET HELP NOW** and **REDUCE OR CLEAR ANY RENT ARREARS**
- 3 **SAVE FOR EMERGENCIES.** Universal Credit is first paid five weeks after you apply, and you don't want to have no money at that time.
- 4 Get an **EMAIL ADDRESS** and familiarise yourself with using the **INTERNET.** Contact Unity's Employment Team on 0113 200 7738 if you could benefit from some free training.
- 5 Can you **BUDGET MONTHLY?** Your benefits will come all at once, each month, and you don't want to run out of money halfway through the month or get into debt.
- 6 Pay your rent and bills by **STANDING ORDER** or **DIRECT DEBIT** as long as you can avoid going overdrawn. This will help if you are the type of person who forgets which bills to pay and when.

If you need any further information we have leaflets on our website, www.unityha.co.uk, that can help.

Or, why not call up one of our team. They would love to help!

Sam: 0113 200 7737
Matt: 0113 200 7733
Clive: 0113 200 7753

Unity are also hosting a Universal Credit introduction course.

Starts 14th September
at Unity Business Centre,
26 Roundhay Road, LS7 1AB
11am - 12.30pm

How ready are you?



How do I apply?

Online. The Jobcentre, Unity and Leeds City Council can help you do this, as well as offer you computer skills courses. Tell Unity before you apply because we have all the information that you'll need.

How will Universal Credit pay me?

It will give you a monthly benefit or top up your wage.

What do I need to know when I claim?

- Your rent - All tenants pay rent, even if Housing benefit currently pays for you
- Service charges included in the rent - find this information on a letter requested from Unity
- Your property address
- Number of bedrooms in the property
- Unity Housing Association's address (113-117 Chapeltown Road, LS7 3HY)

Are there any issues?

Unfortunately, there are a couple:

- If you are used to getting benefits weekly and housing benefit paid to Unity, this will stop. **You will now get all your benefit to you monthly.** You have to pay all your bills including rent from that monthly money. If this is a worry, get budgeting help from us.
- Universal Credit will not be paid to you until 5 weeks after you claim it.** Delays of 6 weeks or even more have been experienced by some new claimants. This means that if you're paid weekly or fortnightly and you move onto universal credit, you will only have one or two weeks money to last you five or six weeks. To avoid getting into rent arrears, not being able to afford food and electric etc., you need to start putting some money to one side now and every week for emergencies.

Please let us know if you go on Universal Credit.

We can help you get you what you are entitled to, including UC advance payments or alternative UC payments, if you struggle in the first few weeks.

Paying rent over the summer holidays

Unity understands that the school summer holidays and returning to school can be expensive and that it may be difficult to find the rent money for a month or two. However, we have to remind tenants that rent is a priority. Your home will be at risk if you fail to pay your rent.

Our Income Management Team will work with you if you're struggling and can suggest alternative payment plans or ways to pay the rent as well as help with benefit claims or refer you to budgeting and debt advice. But if you don't talk to us we can't help and we will have to pursue the arrears as quickly as possible.

With the introduction of **Universal Credit** and the **lower Benefit Cap**, it is especially important to keep a good rent account. We know just how quickly things can go from bad to worse when rent arrears occur. Please **talk to us** if you are struggling, you might be surprised at how much help we can offer.

Alternatively, you can contact **Feel Good Factor** for a free money management course:

fgfleeds.org.uk
0113 350 4200

Autumn Activities

Embrace the wildlife!

Build a bird house

Why not use the Autumn months to help look after the wildlife that is living around you? By following these simple instructions you will be able to create a lovely home for the birds living around your garden area:



- ✓ Wood should ideally be 15mm thick for warmth although 9mm ply is fine and easier to cut. Use wood from a sustainable source - look for the FSC logo.
- ✓ Use galvanised nails as they last longer than ordinary nails.
- ✓ Small drainage holes in the base are essential to let liquid waste drain away or in open front boxes to let any rainwater drain away.
- ✓ Don't add a perch – predators may intimidate the nestlings and force the adult birds to leave.
- ✓ Put the hole at the top of the box to keep the young out of reach of cats or squirrels.
- ✓ Don't paint the box. A coat of linseed oil will stop the wood drying out but is not essential. Some wood preservatives are poisonous so best avoided.
- ✓ A hinged lid allows you to clean the box easily but make sure it is fastened securely to stop magpies and squirrels raiding the nest.

Hedgehog Homes

It's really easy to make a house for hedgehogs. Take a sturdy crate and turn it upside down. Cover it with stones, earth and wood, and make sure there's an entrance. If it's dry and protected, hedgehogs can use it to stay over winter. Make your Hedgehog Home a sturdy one as badgers and foxes will make a meal of a hedgehog, given half a chance.



Where to put your hedgehog home?

- ✓ Hibernating hedgehogs like peace and quiet. Put the house where it won't be disturbed, against a wall, bank or fence if possible and under or near plant cover.
- ✓ The north wind doth blow, so face the entrance away from north or north-east and you're more likely to encourage a guest.
- ✓ Hedgehogs like to furnish their own homes with leaves and garden debris – it's part of their hibernation ritual - so don't line the box for them.
- ✓ Don't disturb the box once it's occupied. You might frighten a nesting mother and cause the young to be abandoned.
- ✓ If you can, put your hedgehog home in or near a damp, untidy area so that hedgehogs are protected when they come out to forage.

Free Budgeting Course with Feel Good Factor

Learn and share simple tips that could see you saving over £100 each month on your bills!

Sessions include:

- ✓ Cooking on a budget, waste less food
- ✓ Cutting your energy bills
- ✓ Working out your budget for a week or month
- ✓ Chance to meet new people and make new friends in an easy-going environment



The course takes place on **Fridays**
at **1:30pm - 3:30pm:**
16th September
23rd September
30th September
8th October??

At The Meeting Point Cafe
409 Harehills Lane
Leeds
LS9 6AP

To book a place on these sessions speak to Pauline or Deacon Sheila at the Cafe, or phone:

Esther: **0113 350 4200 ext. 4207**

Make a difference in your community

#REALCHANGE



Helping the vulnerable people in society...

STREET KITCHEN LEEDS

Real Change and **Leeds Homeless Partnership** are working together to operate a weekly outreach in Leeds City Centre every **Sunday at 6.30pm.**

They urgently need donations:

Clothing

Tents

Food

Sleeping Bags

Volunteers Welcome

Contacting Unity

T: 0113 200 7700

E: uha@unityha.co.uk

W: www.unityha.co.uk

Office Hours:

Monday: 9am - 5pm

Tuesday: 9am - 5pm

Wednesday: 10am - 5pm

Thursday: 9am - 5pm

Friday: 9am - 5pm

If you have an emergency repair when the office is shut, please ring our emergency repairs number (see below). If we have to change our emergency repairs number for any reason you can get the new one by phoning 0113 200 7700 and listening to the message.

Emergency Repairs  0845 634 2766

e.g. serious floods and leaks, total loss of water and electricity, the only toilet is blocked.

Emergency Gas Repairs  01757 244510

e.g. total heating or hot water failure when Unity's office is closed the next day.

Transco (gas leaks)  0800 111 999

Repairs by email: repairs@unityha.co.uk

For information at your fingertips, visit our website at www.unityha.co.uk for leaflets, latest news and community information.

For comments and suggestions about this newsletter please contact Nathan Dale on **0113 200 7751** or email nathan.dale@unityha.co.uk

Leeds City Council Services

Adult Social Care

 0113 222 4401

Anti-Social Behaviour

 0113 222 4402

 onestop@leeds.gov.uk

Children Social Care

 0113 222 4403

Council tax and housing benefit

 0113 222 4404

 lcc.benefits@leeds.gov.uk

Complaints and compliments

 0113 222 4405

Environmental services

Contact the Council's environmental services to get bulky items taken away for free.

 0113 222 4406

 refusecollection@leeds.gov.uk

Highways

 0113 222 4407

 highways@leeds.gov.uk

Registrars

 0113 222 4408

Planning

 0113 222 4409

Minicom

 0113 222 4410



Problems understanding?

If you need any of our information translating or if you need an interpreter, please contact us. We can also provide this information in large print or on CD if you need us to.