

Tenants' Handbook



www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk

This document contains important information about housing services provided by us. The information can be provided in your language, in large print, Braille or other formats. Contact the Contact Centre or check the Royal Greenwich website for details.



Housing Services

The Woolwich Centre,
35 Wellington Street
London SE18 6HQ
Telephone 020 8854 8888
www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Your rights as a Royal Borough tenant and other important information

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Your home and area

Introductory tenancies

Unless you are already a Royal Borough of Greenwich tenant, the first 12 months of your tenancy is an Introductory tenancy. This is a trial period, and if we do not take any court action against you during this time, your tenancy will usually become 'secure'. From a date to be decided, your tenancy will become a secure tenancy.

As an introductory tenant, you have the right to:

- have your home repaired
- succeed to the tenancy (see 'Succession' section for more about this)
- be consulted.

While you are an introductory tenant, you do **not** have the right to:

- take in lodgers, although we may allow you to do so with our written permission if it would relieve hardship
- assign your tenancy (pass it to someone else in your family – but see the section on succession)
- sublet part of your home
- make permanent improvements to your property

- exchange your home, or
- buy your home.

However, when you become a secure tenant, the trial period will count towards the qualifying period for the Right to Buy. If you are already a secure tenant and move to another Royal Borough property, you will not be an introductory tenant.

For more detailed information, see the Introductory Tenancy scheme booklet.

Passing your home to another person

Succession

Succession means passing the tenancy of your home to another person when you die. Your rights currently depend on when the tenancy to which you are succeeding began.

If it began *before 1 April 2012*, when a tenant dies, the tenancy may pass to:

- a joint tenant, who will automatically get the tenancy when the other joint tenant dies providing they reside at the property
- a husband, wife, civil partner or partner who was living in the property when the tenant died (a husband, wife or partner can stay in their home, even if it is too big for them)
- another member of the family who was living in the property for at least 12 months before the tenant died.

However, if the property is too big for other members of the family, we can apply to court for possession of the property. If we do, we must offer them another suitable place to live.

If it began *on or after 1 April 2012*, it can only pass to:

- a joint tenant who is the spouse or civil partner, and other joint tenants who will automatically get the tenancy when the other joint tenant dies, or
- a husband, wife, civil partner or partner who was living in the property when the tenant died.

However, if the property is too big for them (where someone other than a spouse has succeeded) or has been substantially adapted to meet the needs of someone with a disability and that person no longer lives there, we can apply to court for possession of the property.

If we do, we must offer them another suitable place to live. We will always assist them to find somewhere else to live by encouraging them to bid for other properties.

Only one succession is allowed by law. So, if you have succeeded to a tenancy, it cannot be passed on to someone else when you die.

If you are worried about your tenancy and want to talk to someone about it, telephone 020 8921 6383 give your name and address, and ask to speak to your Tenancy Enforcement Officer.

Assignment

Assignment means transferring your tenancy to another person who would be entitled to get it when you die.

If you are thinking of assigning your tenancy, you will need to complete a 'deed of assignment'.

We strongly advise you to get independent legal advice before you do this. After assigning your tenancy, you lose all legal rights to live in the property and the new tenant may ask you to leave. If you then applied to the Royal Borough for housing, we could not guarantee to house you. It is important that you give us a copy of the deed of assignment, so that we know who the new tenant is.

Owning another home

You are not permitted to own or rent another home in the borough or anywhere else. This is because our properties are intended for people in housing need who do not have access to anywhere else to live.

If you inherit a property, you must ask our advice about your options and responsibilities within three months of acquiring the property, so that you do not breach your Tenancy Agreement.

Lodgers and sub-letting

If you are a secure tenant you have the right to:

- take in lodgers; and
- sub-let part of your home
- A lodger is someone who lives in your home, but generally do not have a key to their room, and is there by permission. They usually share facilities such as the kitchen and bathroom with you. A sub-tenant is someone who lives in your home, but who can exclude you from their living quarters, and the payment is described as rent.
- However, to sub-let you must first get **written permission** from the Royal Borough, we will only refuse if we have good reason (for example, the property would become overcrowded if we allowed you to sublet). You cannot sublet the whole of your home.
- It is also a good idea to get independent legal advice on whether the arrangement you have in mind is lodging or a sub-tenancy before you do so, as it affects your ability to get them to leave, and their rights.
- **If you think a tenant has permanently left their home and let it to someone else, please contact the Unauthorised Occupation Team on 0208 921 5122 or Unauthorised-Occupation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**

Repairs to your home

- The repairs the Royal Borough is responsible for can be found here in the Guide to Housing Repairs booklet: https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?downloadID=168. The repairs we are responsible for are also defined in your tenancy agreement, and include:
 - repairing the structure, exterior and communal parts of the building including drains, gutters and external pipes;
 - keeping in repair and proper working order installations for the supply of water, gas and electricity, bathroom, kitchen and toilet fittings, and waste pipes;
 - keeping in repair and proper working order installations for room heating and hot water (where we provide them);
 - keeping the communal areas of estates, including play areas, clean and well maintained.
 - repairing or replacing fences which adjoin public land only.

We will remove fencing which is in an unsafe condition.

There are different timescales for different repairs, some examples are: (in working days)

Total loss of electric power or water supply	1
Blocked toilet	1
Blocked flue to open fire or boiler	1
Blocked sink, bath or basin	3

You should report all repairs to the Contact Centre on 020 8921 8900. If you want to change a repairs appointment, you should phone 020 8921 4526 or 0800 052 1183.

You can also report your repair by e-mail to:
housing.repairs@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

If you want to enquire about an outstanding repair, or want further information on follow-up works, you can email:
occupied.repairs@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

You can also use this address to contact us to change an appointment.

We aim to complete most repairs quickly and can usually offer appointments for either morning or afternoon.

If you live in a house, you should make sure that your loft is kept tidy, so that we can get to the roof or water tank if any repairs are needed.

Emergency repairs outside office hours

You can contact the Royal Borough's emergency service outside normal office

hours in the following circumstances:

- The emergency creates a very serious health and safety risk to your household.
- The emergency causes damage to the building or has a serious effect on other accommodation, such as adjacent flats.

The emergency service aims to make your property safe, and if necessary, a repair will be ordered the next working day. If you can manage to deal with the problem temporarily, we will visit and carry out a permanent repair afterwards.

We may take into account special circumstances in your household, such as sickness, age, and disability or young children (usually under 5 years of age).

Examples of emergency repairs include:

- no drinking water supply
- burst pipes and you cannot stop the water leak
- blocked drains and toilets causing flooding inside or outside your home
- complete power failure in your home
- dangerous structures, such as ceilings, walls and chimneys
- fire or storm damage to your property. We will make your property safe if this is practical, bearing in mind weather conditions
- boarding up windows or doors and securing your property after a

break-in, provided you have a crime reference number from the police

- regaining entry if you have lost your key – we will recharge you the cost of this
- lift breakdowns
- In sheltered housing; any repair that is causing a tenant immediate concern in their home, or in the communal areas of their sheltered housing scheme.

If you smell gas or have an activated Carbon Monoxide alarm, please phone SGN immediately on 0800 111 999.

The Royal Borough's Emergency Service phone number is: 020 8854 8888

The emergency service is available: Monday to Thursday from 5.30pm to 9.00 am; Friday 4.30pm to 9.00am, all day Saturday, Sunday and public holidays.

We should be able to respond to emergency repairs within 2 to 4 hours, depending on the type of emergency.

Communal Passenger Lifts

Communal passenger lifts located within the lobby areas of properties owned and managed by The Royal Borough of Greenwich are regularly inspected and maintained by trained, competent and qualified personnel.

Planned Preventative Maintenance and Inspections

Over any 12 month period, all communal passenger lifts will be removed from service regularly for the following planned reasons:

Routine Maintenance – 12 Visits per annum (1.5 – 2 hours per visit Monthly)
Statutory Inspections – Twice annually (at six monthly intervals)

Planned Repairs

Following on from any planned service visit or statutory inspection, should any remedial works be identified and required, these will be suitably organised and planned. The Royal borough of Greenwich lift supplier shall ensure that adequate notification is provided to residents in advance to ensure that any lift downtime is made available.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich will always endeavour to complete any repairs where lifts are out of service as swiftly as possible to ensure lift service is available within any property. Should any issues arise due to lift failures, please make contact with your Tenancy Support Officer who will be able to advise you accordingly.

Unplanned Repairs

A passenger lift is an item of plant designed for the transportation of passengers. Over the life cycle of a passenger lift, various key components and sub-components will wear and fail, which will unfortunately result in lift failures and downtimes whilst repairs are undertaken.

Whilst the Royal Borough of Greenwich are confident that any worn key components and sub-components are identified during routine maintenance and rectified prior to a full failure, there will always be an instance where a component unexpectedly fails for an external reason outside of our control and this will result in lift(s) being out of service whilst parts are sourced or repaired by specialist suppliers.

Unfortunately, unplanned repairs can result in lengthy downtimes of the lift equipment.

Lift Failures and Reporting

There are three types of lift failure as follow:

Full lift failure - Entrapment

Full lift failure – Non-Entrapment

Lift fault reporting

Lift Failure – Entrapment

In the event of a lift entrapment where a resident or visitor becomes entrapped within the lift during travel, please remain calm. All lifts are fitted with lift auto-dialer systems which offer two way connection between the lift itself and The Royal borough of Greenwich's lift service provider.

In the event of an entrapment, please press and hold the alarm button for 10 seconds and following this, a direct communication will be achieved with our lift service provider.

The industry standard for attendance and release following an entrapment is one hour.

Should an auto-dialer be found to be non-responsive, please revert to contacting our 24/7 Contact Centre on: **020 8921 8900** Monday to Thursday, 9am to 5.30pm, and Friday, 9am to 4.30pm. **020 8854 8888** at all other times.

Please refrain from calling 999 unless the entrapment is an absolute emergency.

Lift Failure – Non-Entrapment

In the event of a lift failure which does not result in a passenger entrapment, please contact the Royal Borough of Greenwich 24/7 Contact Centre on the above numbers to report an issue and request a repair by our lift service provider.

Following any report being logged and raised, our lift service provider should complete initial attendance within two hours (during normal working hours Monday to Friday) and within three hours at all other times.

Lift Fault Reporting

In the event of requiring to report any general lift fault (for example, lighting not working, doors rubbing or not closing first time, banging noises etc), please contact The Royal borough of Greenwich 24/7 Contact Centre on the above numbers to report an issue and request a repair by our lift service provider:

Improving your home and doing repairs

Your tenancy agreement says that you are responsible for:

- keeping the inside of your home clean and tidy, and the fixtures and fittings in the property in good condition, allowing for 'fair wear and tear';
- handing back the property at the end of the tenancy in as good and clean a condition and repair as it was when you received it, allowing for 'fair wear and tear' and taking account of any repairs and improvements made by us during the tenancy;
- before the end of the tenancy, removing any unauthorised alterations and making good any resulting damage.
- repairing or replacing existing fences surrounding your property which do not adjoin public land.

It is important to observe these conditions. If you do not, we will charge you for putting things right. You have the right to improve your home, for example by fitting a new kitchen, a bathroom and toilet, or painting the outside, but you must first get the Royal Borough to agree to any of these changes in writing.

In particular, you must get our written permission before you:

- do any repairs or other work which involves drilling into or otherwise disturbing the fabric of the property. This is because we want to make sure that the work that you are going to do will not cause a health and safety hazard to you or others. If you want to discuss what you intend to do, please contact our repairs section on 020 8921 4526.
- install any media or communication equipment such as aerials or satellite dishes, or cable boxes, or
- put up a new fence.

It is important to get permission before installing equipment on the outside of your home, as doing so may cause water to penetrate your home, and damage any special finishes which we have put on the house (e.g. cladding) which may void our guarantee.

We will only refuse if we have good reason. However, you are responsible for not causing any damage to your property.

We will not give you permission to fit a security door or grille to your home as it may prevent the emergency services getting into your home if there is a fire or other emergency. If you have fitted these, we will remove them and charge you the cost of doing so.

It's important that you know the Royal Borough's conditions before you go ahead with any improvements. If you don't, you may not get compensation when you leave, or have to put your property back to its original state, at your own expense.

Compensating you for improvements

If your tenancy is coming to an end, you may be able to get compensation from the Royal Borough for improvements you have made, where we have granted permission to do so.

You have the Right to Compensation for certain improvements, such as a new bathroom, toilet, kitchen, central heating, and home security improvements. You may also be able to get compensation for other improvements – your Royal Borough Office will let you know.

Gas servicing

We have a legal duty under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 to service gas appliances and do a gas safety check every 12 months, even if you don't use gas. It is also our policy to carry out an EICR (Electrical Installation Condition Report) every 5 years as part of our responsibility to making sure the property is in a safe condition.

Whilst carrying out the gas safety check in your home, we will also test your smoke detector.

When we tell you that a gas safety check is due, it is important that you make an appointment for the check and keep to it.

We need you to allow us reasonable access to do these checks and will take legal action to gain entry if necessary. If you do not give us access, we may force entry to carry them out, after

having given you 48 hours' notice.

If you want to change a gas appointment, please phone 0800 317 715 or email Gas-Section@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

For Environment Issues Caretaking, street cleaning, grounds maintenance:

Contact the Caretaking service by calling 020 8854 8888 and asking for the Caretaking Team or by e-mailing Housing-Caretaking@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

Staying safe - fire and other safety measures

The Royal Borough provides smoke alarms in most properties. To provide immediate smoke detection to the property, we will provide 10-year tamper proof, lithium battery powered, interlinked smoke and heat detection system.



Tenants have a responsibility to act sensibly in preventing a fire in communal areas, by not leaving rubbish or anything which is likely to cause or increase the risk of fire or explosion in entrances, stairwells and staircases, and on communal balconies or in any other communal areas. This includes inflammable liquid, gas bottles, or contaminants. You must not keep freezers or freezers anywhere but inside your home.

You must not install security gates or grilles, as they may be a risk to health and safety. Where they are present, we will remove them and may charge you the cost of doing so.

Domestic waste, i.e. rubbish should be removed to the appropriate refuse area immediately and not stored in communal areas, which would cause a fire hazard.

Communal staircases, corridors and balconies should be kept clear of all material which might burn, or anything that might block escape routes e.g. household waste, furniture, pushchairs, prams and bicycles.

Preventing Fire in your home

Do not smoke in your home unless you are confident that you will remain awake and dispose of cigarette ends responsibly. When emptying ashtrays, make sure the contents are cold.

Keep matches and lighters well out of the reach of children.

- Check the condition of cables to all electrical equipment regularly.
- Don't overload electrical sockets.
- BBQs are a fire hazard, so are never allowed on your balcony or in any communal gardens.
- Lithium-ion batteries (found in electronics like a camera), loose batteries (e.g. AA, AAA 9 and volt batteries), e-scooter and vape batteries can all cause fires.

Always dispose of batteries separately from your other rubbish and recycling, never in with your household rubbish.

Before going to bed:

- Make sure the cooker and heaters are turned off.
- Switch off and unplug all electrical appliances which are not supposed to remain on.
- If you or anyone else in the home has mobility issues, ensure mobility aids and methods of calling for help (like emergency pendants) are close to hand in case help is needed to assist with an escape.
- Make sure escape routes are clear of anything that may slow your escape down.
- Never leave candles, incense sticks and oil burners unattended.

Prevent a fire starting in the kitchen:

- Never fill a pan more than one third full of fat or oil or leave it unattended with the heat on.
- Dry food before placing it in the hot oil – wet food will cause the oil to bubble up and possibly spill over the edge of the pan.

If the pan does catch fire:

- Don't move it or throw water on to it.

- Turn off the heat if it is safe to do so.
- If in any doubt, leave the room, close the door, shout a warning to others and call the fire brigade.

E-bikes and e-scooters

E-bikes and e-scooters are a popular means of getting around. But a cheap, poorly made or damaged battery, or using the wrong charger can lead to dangerous fires, which can destroy a room in minutes.

If you keep one at home, this is what you should do to stay safe:

- Don't store e-bikes or e-scooters near the entrance to your home or anywhere near a through route or escape route, because of the fire risk they pose. If you have a garage or shed, store them there.

The majority of fires related to e-bikes and e-scooter have happened in homes. These fires are often caused when charging batteries, so it's vital that your battery and charger meet UK safety standards and you should only buy official ones from a reputable seller.

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions when charging.
- If charging in the home, ensure smoke alarms are fitted and working.

- Charge batteries whilst you are awake and alert so if a fire should occur you can respond quickly. Don't leave batteries to charge while you are asleep or away from the home.
- If you do need to charge at home overnight - make sure ALL internal doors are closed.
- Always use the manufacturer approved charger for the product, and if you spot any signs of wear and tear or damage, buy an official replacement charger for your product from a reputable seller.
- Do not charge batteries or store your e-bike or e-scooter near combustible or flammable materials.
- Do not overcharge your battery – check the manufacturer's instructions for charge times.

Electrical Equipment

Make sure all electrical appliances have a British or European safety mark and are kept clean and in good working order.

Read your Fire Action Notice

You'll find the strategy for your building, if there is a fire, on the Fire Action Notice in the communal area of your building. The council will write to you annually to remind you of this.

There are different types of strategies depending on the type of property you live in, **so always familiarise yourself with the fire safety plan for YOUR building or property.**

1. Full evacuation: You would do this if the fire is in your flat.

2. Stay Put: If the fire is in another part of the building, you're usually safer staying inside your home. This is because each flat is built as a separate compartment which contains fire and stops it spreading. If the fire is inside your home or if you hear an alarm, you should get out.

If there is a fire but not in your flat

- Call 999 - NEVER assume that someone else has done so.
- Close all of your doors and windows.
- Stay Put unless told to move by the Fire Service.

If the Fire Service need you to evacuate they will door knock

Festive Safety

Christmas trees

Christmas trees should never be stood near an open source of flame or heat, as this will dry out the tree and create a higher chance of it catching fire.

You should also ensure the tree isn't blocking an exit, as this poses a hazard in the event of a fire.

Fairy lights

Turn off all lights off before you go to bed and whenever you go out.

Be careful not to overload sockets with lots of plugs from multiple strings of lights.

Don't let the bulbs touch anything that can easily burn.

Paper chains and other decorations

Keep all decorations well away from heaters, lights, candles and fireplaces.

Fire doors

Fire doors are essential life safety devices, designed to stop the spread of smoke and fire for a substantial period of time.

Your building may be fitted with a number of fire doors including your flat entrance door.

Altering a fire door in ANY way can stop it from doing its job to keep you safe in the event of a fire.

To help us keep you and your family safe **you MUST** ensure that:

- Fire doors are kept shut when not in use
- Residents and visitors do not tamper with doors or self-closing devices
- That you report any faults or damage immediately to us using the details below

You MUST NOT:

- Wedge open or obstruct fire doors at any time
- Alter or change your flat front door without prior consent from the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

Plan your escape in the event of a fire

Fire can strike when you least expect it, often during the night. You will only have a short time to get out, so plan your escape route rather than waiting until there is a fire. Think of another way out in case the normal one is blocked.

Keep the escape routes clear of obstructions at all times. If the corridors, balconies or staircases outside your home are not kept clear report it to the Royal Borough. It is a criminal offence to block these routes or damage any fitting provided to protect the route.

Tell everyone in the house where the door and window keys are kept. Avoid locking yourself in at night with a key, use a thumb turn lock or leave the key in the lock at night.

Escaping from fire

The London Fire Brigade gives good advice about how to escape from fire on their website - <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/escape-plan/escape-plan-blocks-of-flats/> .

Please also consider the advice below:

Fit a smoke alarm but let us know if you have to drill into or otherwise disturb the fabric of the property. Make sure it complies with the British Standard or equivalent. Local voluntary organisations or the fire brigade may be able to help you fit one if you are unable to do so yourself.

If your smoke alarm goes off and there is evidence of fire, get out as quickly as possible, and dial **999** immediately.

Escaping from fires in flats and Maisonettes

If you live in a flat or maisonette please follow this extra advice:

Flats and maisonettes are built to give you some protection from fire. Walls, floors and doors will hold back flames and smoke for a time.

If there is a fire elsewhere in the building, you're usually safer staying in your flat unless heat or smoke is affecting you.

If there is a fire in your flat, leave the building, closing the door to your flat behind you.

If you can safely do so, warn others in the adjoining flats that you have a fire in your home.

If there is a lot of smoke, crawl along the floor where the air will be clearer.

If you live in a building with a lift:

Do not use lifts if there is a fire. Go down the stairs instead. If doors are open on the staircase close them as you leave to stop smoke spreading. Call 999 from any phone as soon as possible when it is safe to do so. Give them the address including the number of your flat, and tell them which floor the fire is on. If you know your postcodes, give this as well.

Do not re-enter the building unless instructed to by the Fire Brigade

You must not enter or store anything in the space above your flat. This area is in any case not part of your home as defined in the tenancy agreement. Doing so could be dangerous – you might injure yourself, and things you put in the loft area might be combustible.

If you live in a house, you should make sure that your loft is kept tidy, so that we can get to the roof or water tank if any repairs are needed.

Greenwich Telecare

Greenwich Telecare is an alarm service that is provided by the London Borough of Royal Greenwich, which offers increased security and confidence within the home for both you and your family. The service helps provide peace of mind and helps you maintain your independence. It consists of a telecare button that can be worn around the neck, or on the wrist and enables people to live independently in their own home.

The service is based in Woolwich, operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is staffed by trained Royal Greenwich officers. Telecare helps provide peace of mind and arranges help in an emergency, by calling your key holders, or emergency services. If you have a key safe fitted, the Telecare service may also be able to attend for some emergencies, subject to other emergency response calls. The service currently costs £6 a week.

Greenwich Telecare is able to install a Police approved Key Safe for you, should your key holders be unavailable, or unable to attend for any reason and this could save precious time in getting emergency help to you. The Key Safe can be supplied and fitted free of charge by the council Handyman service. This will be fitted externally to the block for fire safety reasons.

For more information contact:
Greenwich Telecare 020 8921 4444 (24 Hours)
Upper Ground Floor,
Woolwich Centre,
35 Wellington Street,
London SE18 6HQ
Email: telecare@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Looking after your health and wellbeing

Did you know there are five key things we can all do to improve our health and happiness and reduce our risk of ill health? These are:

- Eating well
- Moving more
- Drinking less
- Stopping smoking
- Looking after our mental wellbeing

Making changes in our lives isn't always easy – but small steps can make a big difference. There's lots of information and services available locally that can help too. Visit our local website www.greenwichhealthyliving.org.uk to find out about the above and much more.

If you would prefer to talk to someone, you can also call the Live Well Greenwich Line, a free helpline staffed by local, trained health and wellbeing advisors for signposting and support to live well.

They can help with the following areas:

- Money, debt and benefits advice
- Housing issues, including staying warm in winter
- Training and employment support
- Reducing social isolation
- A healthier body and mind, including support for stopping smoking, getting active, mental wellbeing

Call the Live Well Greenwich Line on 0800 470 4831 for help and information.

Community Directory

The Greenwich Community Directory is an online resource offering local residents access to information on social care, health, wellbeing and advice services in the Royal Borough of Greenwich. The integrated directory serves as a single point of information and advice on services to help people to live well in Greenwich. The Directory is aimed at Greenwich residents who want to improve their own health, or who are isolated or vulnerable. It is also geared to anyone who wants advice on getting involved in activities to improve their wellbeing or to help them become more involved in their local community. The Directory offers support to carers, family, friends and those acting on behalf of vulnerable people. Council and NHS services are listed alongside those provided by local voluntary organisations.

Visit the Greenwich Community Directory online:
www.greenwichcommunitydirectory.org.uk

Moving home - how you can move

Transfers

You can apply to transfer to another Royal Borough property, and we will take into account all your circumstances. If it is agreed you need to move urgently you will be awarded a priority for a move.

If you owe rent or you have broken your tenancy agreement, for example by causing deliberate damage to your property, we may not offer you a transfer.

Greenwich Homes - how it works

Greenwich Homes is a rehousing service provided by the Royal Borough in partnership with local housing associations.

Under the scheme you can apply for a home of your choice rather than the Royal Borough deciding which property you will be offered.

Every week Royal Borough and housing association properties are advertised on the Royal Borough of Greenwich website at

https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200177/apply_for_a_home/529/search_and_apply_for_a_home

and in a leaflet available at the Woolwich Centre and Eltham Centre.

People on the housing register are able to bid for all properties regardless of their banding. They must be eligible for the size property and bids will be considered in the following order:

First band A, followed by Band B1/B2 both in priority date order. Those in Band C will then be considered in registration date order.

To take part in the scheme you will have to be on the Royal Borough's housing register. To get on the housing register you will need to apply online at www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk. If you need help with applying, please contact the Allocations Team at housing-registration@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or by telephone 0208 921 2941

When you are on the housing register you will be able to apply for advertised properties by calling 020 8921 4340 (24-hour hotline), by text bidding on 07786207913, or on line through the Greenwich Homes website at www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/homes You can also use the online system in Royal Borough offices free of charge.

How will I hear more about my bid?

After the closing date for the advert, all applications will be looked at. The Royal Borough of Greenwich will decide who the most suitable applicant is. This is based on them meeting the criteria for the property and the length of time they have been on the housing register. We will **not** contact you if your application is unsuccessful.

Under the Allocations Policy:

- up to three applicants will be invited to view a property
- an applicant can only be invited to view one property, irrespective of whether they have bid successfully for more than one property.
- If an applicant is more than 15 minutes late for the viewing appointment they will not be considered for the property

Exchanging with another tenant

You have a right to exchange your home with other Royal Borough and housing association tenants within and outside the borough.

You will first need our **written permission**, which we will only refuse if we have good reason, and we must let you know within 42 days.

The main reasons why we refuse permission are:

- Legal action has been taken against one of you to repossess your home.
- One of the properties is much larger than either of you need.
- One of the properties is unsuitable for the specific needs of you or the person you want to exchange with.
- You have rent arrears.
- You have lost your secure tenancy by breaking the terms of a suspended possession order.

If you are interested in moving, we can give you more information.

A Mutual Exchange information service is also available on the Greenwich Homes website at www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/homes.

Giving up your tenancy

If you are leaving your property, except through a transfer to another Royal Borough property, you must contact your Royal Borough Office to arrange to end your tenancy and provide 28 days notice.

Remember you will still have to pay your rent and be responsible for any damage for as long as your tenancy continues. So, think very carefully before moving out and leaving someone else in the property, including any joint tenant you were living with.

For advice about your circumstances, contact Tenancy Services or an independent advice agency. Details are at the end of this book.

When leaving the property, make sure you take all your things with you. Please do not leave carpets in the property, they cannot be left for the new tenant and we may have to make a charge for removing them. The Royal Borough will not usually store anything that has been left behind.

Sheltered housing schemes

Sheltered housing

Most older people want to lead an independent life in a home of their own. Sheltered housing schemes provide this independence in a secure and comfortable environment.

Each Sheltered Housing Scheme has a manager who is responsible for making sure residents get the help they need when they need it, and there is always a range of social activities for tenants to take part in. Our aim is to enable tenants to remain independent for as

long as possible.

Sheltered tenancies

In sheltered schemes you are a secure tenant like any other Royal Borough tenant, with similar rights and responsibilities. However, sheltered housing is different because it is specially designed and tenants do **not** have the right to buy their property.

Type of accommodation

Some of the main features are level access, lifts, wide corridors and good lighting.

There is central heating in the flats and in all the communal areas. The doors are wide enough for people who need to use wheelchairs or walking aids. Every flat has an intercom, which enables the tenant to speak directly to the scheme manager or Greenwich Telecare. There is also a 24-hour emergency call-out service.

The Scheme Manager

The Scheme Manager is one of the most important benefits of sheltered housing. Managers are specially trained and experienced and play a big part in promoting independent living and encouraging tenants to be involved in social activities.

Social activities

Every sheltered scheme has a communal lounge, which is available to all tenants for various organised activities or simply as a place to meet and chat. There is usually a wide range of social activities, including shopping trips, outings to

places of interest and various entertainment. All tenants are welcome to join in. Most schemes have a visiting hairdresser and a library service.

Most schemes have a guest room to enable tenants' family/friends to visit for short stays. These rooms are no smoking areas, and they are available on a first come first served basis.

Extra Care Sheltered Housing

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has developed Extra Care Sheltered Housing as an alternative for people who might otherwise go into a residential care home. The schemes will provide 158 flats across the Borough. People living in these schemes will have a secure tenancy, either with the Royal Borough of Greenwich, or a housing association (you would have an assured tenancy). Individual flats are self-contained and there are communal facilities. Support staff are on site and accessible 24 hours a day.

Senior Living Schemes

These are schemes which are designated for older people, but have no support and care built in to the scheme. The properties are of a high standard and can accommodate most aids and adaptations to allow residents to remain there even if their support needs increase. There are schemes in Eltham and Woolwich which already provide 30 properties in a mix of bungalows and flats, and a scheme at the Royal Arsenal Site which provides 80 rented flats. Many of these properties are managed by housing associations.

We and housing associations are developing more housing for older people.

There are some schemes where older people can buy a flat or house on an outright or shared ownership basis, although not under the Right to Buy. If you are interested in this, contact the allocations section on 020 8921 2941.

You are not allowed to have any pets on sheltered housing in a managed scheme. You can however have a trained assistance dog that has been provided to assist you with your disability.

All we ask is that you notify the Scheme Manager before you get the dog.

How you can buy your home

The Right to Buy - how you can buy your home

Under the Right to Buy scheme you can buy your home at a price lower than the full market value.

This is because the length of time you have spent as a tenant entitles you to a discount.

At Greenwich, the maximum discount allowed is currently £127,900 and will increase to £136,400 from 06/04/2024. It will increase each year in April in line with the consumer price index (CPI).

If your landlord has spent money on your home (Cost Floor rule)

Your discount will be less if your landlord has spent money building, maintaining or acquiring your home:

- in the last 10 years - if your landlord built or acquired your home before 2 April 2012
- in the last 15 years - if your landlord built or acquired your home after 2 April 2012

You will not get any discount if your landlord has spent more money than your home is now worth.

You probably have the Right to Buy if;

- You are a secure tenant of the Royal Borough.
- You have spent 3 years as a public sector tenant in order to qualify for the right to buy.
- Your home is self-contained and it is your only or main home.

You do not have the Right to Buy if;

- You are not the secure tenant (for example, you are an introductory tenant)
- An initial demolition notice (valid for up to five years) has been served on you by your landlord. This notice suspends the landlord's obligation to complete a right to buy purchase
- You have to live in your home so that you can be near your work and your employers own your home
- If your home is inside the boundaries of a school, a social service home, another type of operational building or a cemetery and you live there because you are an employee of that body.

For more exceptions to the Right to Buy scheme, and/or information regarding the scheme, please contact:

Home Ownership Service
Royal Borough of Greenwich,
4th Floor

The Woolwich Centre
35 Wellington Street, London SE18
6HQ

Phone 020 8921 4031

Email:

home.ownership@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Information on the web: You may wish to visit:

www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/righttobuy

This page will give you current information about the conditions regarding buying your home, including a step by step guide to buying your home.

What you can expect from the Royal Borough

Access to Housing Services

We aim to provide an accessible, high-quality service for all our customers.

All our public offices are accessible to wheelchair users and customers with other mobility difficulties.

Fixed hearing loop systems are available in our reception areas and private interview rooms. We will also accept SignVideo calls, so if you subscribe to SignVideo you can contact us via our general number (0208 921 4444)

www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/signvideo

We may be able to provide information in community languages on request, or arrange an interpreter to translate documents on a one-to-one basis.

Our leaflets or other information can also be provided:

- in Braille
- in large print
- in other formats – please let us know what you need and we will do our best to provide it. We cannot guarantee to translate material into all community languages due to financial constraints, and in these circumstances you may wish to ask a friend or relation who speaks English to assist you, or approach a community translation service. We can give you details of how to approach these.

You can also get information and access to Royal Borough services via our website at: www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk

We may be able to provide interpreters for interviews and for phone calls and arrange for sign-language interpreters to attend interviews and meetings.

Usually this is British Sign Language but other sign-language interpreters may be available.

If you need any of these services, please let a member of staff know at your Royal Borough Office.

We will make every effort to respond to your request as soon as possible and will let you know how long it will take.

What the Royal Borough expects from you

As a Royal Borough tenant, you have responsibilities to the Royal Borough and to other tenants. It is very important that you keep to the rules set out in your tenancy agreement, which include paying your rent on time and not acting in a way that may cause a nuisance or annoy others.

Your tenancy agreement

You have signed a tenancy agreement for your home. It is a legal contract and if you break it, you could be faced with court action, which could end in you being evicted.

If you abide by the terms of the tenancy agreement, the Royal Borough will not have to take action.

It is very important that you read both the main part of the Agreement and the information section. This is in plain language.

In particular you must:

- pay your rent and other charges on time
- behave reasonably and ensure that any other members of your household, visitors or pets do not cause nuisance or annoy other people
- Apply for permission if you intend to keep a dog; dogs must be microchipped
- look after your home and garden
- ask the Royal Borough for permission if you want to alter or improve your property, paint the outside, install an outdoor aerial or satellite dish, sublet part of your home, exchange your home, or assign your tenancy.

- keep your home and communal areas free of items which might cause a fire or prevent you and others escaping it

Payments

What your Rent Covers

Your rent is made up of net rent and service charges, which are identified separately. The net rent covers the general cost of maintaining and managing your home and neighbourhood/area.

The service charges cover services provided to your home or local area, for example, ground maintenance, estate cleaning, or communal facilities like estate lighting.

If you are on a low income, you may be able to get universal credit or in some cases housing benefit to help you pay your rent.

Universal credit and housing benefit do not cover:

- (a) Heating and hot water charges for communal heating and hot water systems.

Other costs relating to your home may be charged separately and not included in your weekly rent, for example the cost of hiring a garage from us.

The rent for your property is due on MONDAY each week. Failure to pay your rent on time could have serious consequences for you and your household.

You can pay weekly, fortnightly or monthly, but you must pay your rent in advance.

You can pay your rent:

- **by direct debit – monthly frequency**
Online forms are available at: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housingpayments or telephone the Council Housing Direct Debit team on 020 8921 3201.
- **Bank standing order – any frequency**
Set up via your banking app/on line using the following details:
Name of Bank: *Greenwich Borough Council*
Bank sort code: *60-24-26*
Bank account: *11464763*
Reference: *use your rent payment reference*
OR
Contact your Income Officer on 020 8921 8900 to request a form to complete and send to your bank.
- **Online** – pay by credit or debit card at www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk
- **Telephone** – use our automated telephone payments service on 030 0332 0202 and pay by using a credit or debit card
- **Payzone outlets and the Post Office**
By cash or debit card using your housing payment card
- **At our offices using “the self-service kiosks”:**
The Woolwich Centre, Wellington Street,
Woolwich, London SE18 6HQ
The Eltham Centre, 2 Archery Lane,
Eltham, London SE9 1HA
The Greenwich Centre, 12 Lambard Square,
London, SE10 9GB

- **Pay Point outlet**
By cash only using your housing payment card.
- **By wage deduction**
Contact your Income Officer on 020 8854 8888 to request if you work for Royal Greenwich.

ALWAYS keep your receipts when you make payments for your rent. This is proof of payment.

We will send you a statement of your rent account every three months.

You can now check your Housing Charges, Accounts Balance and Account Transactions online. You can register for this service here: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housingselfserviceguide.

Please note that this service is not compatible with tablets or mobile phones.

Rent arrears

Rent is your main priority payment. If you have difficulties paying your rent contact your Income Officer immediately. We can set up a payment plan and provide support options.

Failure to contact us or to take up offers of support, and failure to maintain rent payments will result in negative decisions towards you and an increased risk of eviction.

If you are evicted you will find it very difficult to get re-housed as you will be considered as someone who has made themselves intentionally homeless.

We will not have a legal duty to provide you with suitable accommodation, even if you are in priority need.

If you are on a low income, you may be able to get universal credit or in some cases housing benefit to help you pay your rent.

Your Income Officer can provide advice and guidance about this, or you can visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk for benefits and financial help.

If you are finding it hard to pay your rent, contact the Tenancy Income service by calling 020 8854 8888 and ask for your Income Officer or e-mail rent-account-enquiries@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Old tenancy debts

If you have arrears from a previous Royal Borough tenancy, you will still have to pay them off. If you have any questions about this, call the Income Recovery Team on 020 8921 5351.

Problems with Anti-Social Behaviour, Hate Crime and Domestic Violence and Abuse

Our commitment

The Royal Borough will:

- take action against people who cause problems for their neighbours.
- support people whose right to peaceable enjoyment of their property and area is seriously affected.

- take all reasonable steps to ensure that the tenancy agreement is complied with, including using the “Absolute” Mandatory Anti-Social Behaviour grounds introduced by the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to evict you where you, your family or visitors are guilty of serious anti-social behaviour which has caused a nuisance to other residents or our staff, or if you or they have been convicted of rioting. If this ground is proven, the Court must grant us possession.
- Work in partnership with the Police and other agencies in order to deal effectively with perpetrators and assist people who are affected by anti-social behaviour.

You can get a detailed copy of our policy and a booklet about tackling anti-social behaviour from the Woolwich Centre, or you can view both documents on the Royal Borough’s website at: www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

Hate Crime harassment

Harassment can happen anywhere – in the home, school, work or when you are walking down the street.

We can deal with harassment that affects your peace, comfort or safety in your home.

If you experience any form of harassment (including Hate Language) or abuse, report it immediately to the Community Safety Team on 020 8921 8396 or email community-safety@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

You do not need proof that you are being harassed for us to investigate.

We will respect confidentiality by not contacting or passing your details to anyone else without your permission.

We can take action to make you feel safer in your home by fitting additional security, or providing a link to the Greenwich Telecare Service.

We can take action against people who are harassing you. **Royal Borough tenants who harass their neighbours may be evicted for breaking their tenancy agreement.**

Domestic abuse

The Royal Borough has specific arrangements for helping people who are experiencing domestic violence or abuse. Domestic abuse can be physical, sexual, mental, financial or emotional, or a combination of these.

- We will give advice and help according to your needs.
- We will explain clearly what you can do if you are experiencing domestic violence or abuse.
- Anything you tell us will be confidential.
- We can arrange confidential interviews with a member of staff of the same sex.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic abuse or abuse, please let us know. **Domestic abuse is a crime, and breaks your tenancy conditions. The Royal Borough is committed to taking action against tenants who are violent, which may result in them losing their home.**

Safeguarding children

Every child has a right to be protected from neglect and from physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

Our staff have a duty to report any concerns they have about a child's welfare and safety, so that families can get the help and advice they need. **If you have concerns about a child's welfare, please contact the Royal Borough's Initial Response and Assessment Service, on 020 8921 3172**

Outside normal office hours - call 020 8854 8888.

Safeguarding adults

Everyone has the right to live in peace and free from harm. A vulnerable adult is anyone over the age of 18 who is unable to protect themselves from any kind of harm or injury due to their age, illness or disability.

Safeguarding and protecting vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility. Our staff have a duty to, and will respond to, any report or concern of abuse.

If you are the victim of abuse, or think someone is being abused, you can get help by contacting the Royal Borough's Adult and Older Peoples Services on 020 8921 2304.

Outside normal office hours call: The Emergency Duty Team on 020 8854 8888.

Problems with Wild Animals, Pests, Pigeons and Pets

Wild animals and livestock

You must **not** encourage wild animals to visit or breed in your garden or any part of your home. Wild animals include foxes and pigeons and other wild birds, but are not limited to these. This means that you should not feed them or provide nesting materials. The reason for this is that it may cause a nuisance to residents or damage to the property.

You must not keep livestock – including but not limited to horses, donkeys, goats, bees, pigs, cattle, ducks, and geese in your home or garden.

You can keep chickens, but not cockerels, in the garden, as long as they do not cause a nuisance or health hazard, but you must get our permission first.

Household pests

If you have any problems with:

- cockroaches
- Pharaoh ants (very small pink ants)
- rats or mice

- fleas
- wasps

You should contact the Royal Borough on 020 8854 8888, and ask for the Pest Control Section.

No charge is made for dealing with any of the above. However, if you have a problem with bees, the Pest Control Section cannot deal with this and will try to refer you to a specialist.

Pigeon problems

Damage

Pigeon droppings are unpleasant, unsightly and corrosive to buildings. Gutters and downpipes can become blocked with food waste, droppings and nesting materials, causing dampness and subsequent structural damage.

Safety

Fire escapes, ladders, steps, balconies and pavements can become slippery.

Pests

Where pigeons are fed there is often mouse or rat infestation, as bread and other food left out for pigeons also attracts them.

Play your part to help – don't encourage pigeons

Your Tenancy Agreement states that you must not encourage wild birds onto Royal Borough property, which includes feeding pigeons. Wild pigeons are pests, and carry diseases.

Under the conditions of your Tenancy Agreement, it is your responsibility to clean your balcony. This applies to pigeon droppings and nesting materials, and taking this action also discourages pigeons from roosting there.

Pets

You can only keep the following animals in your property as pets:

a dog (except any dog listed in Dangerous Dogs legislation or assistance dogs); cat; small, caged bird; rodent; rabbits; nonvenomous insects; fish; or small non-venomous reptiles.

- You are responsible for any pets that you, members of your household or visitors bring into your home or communal areas.
- You must not let the pet cause any nuisance, annoyance or danger to neighbours or visitors to the property (including Royal Borough officers), or any damage to the property.
- You must ensure the pet is not harmed or neglected in any way.

You must apply for permission before bringing a dog into your home and all dogs must be microchipped. We will not usually refuse permission for dogs unless they have caused a nuisance. To obtain a dog registration form, please contact us on 020 8854 6371.

- You must ensure that dogs are accompanied by a responsible person and kept on a lead in communal areas.
- If your pet fouls any Royal Borough property, including communal areas, you must clean up the mess promptly.

If you do not keep to these conditions, we may order you to remove the pet. If you do not do so, we may apply to court for an injunction ordering its removal.

You must ensure that you take your pet(s) with you when you move out of your property. Failure to do so will result in you being charged in full for the costs of removal, kenneling and any veterinary fees incurred. We will also report this as a case of animal cruelty, abandonment and neglect, to the relevant authorities e.g. the RSPCA, and you may be fined for this and in some cases receive a prison sentence.

Household insurance scheme for tenants

The Royal Borough is not responsible for damage to your personal belongings caused by things like leaks and floods, unless you can prove that we are at fault.

It is vital that you get household contents insurance to cover the cost of replacing belongings you may lose through theft, fire, burst pipes, or other causes. The Royal Borough will not meet the cost of replacing your personal belongings.

Do you have home contents insurance?

As a council tenant, you could get £4,000 worth of cover with **NO EXCESS TO PAY** from Aviva, the UK's largest insurer, from as little as £1.13 per month.

Your personal items could be insured against:

- **Fire or theft**
- **Flooding or escape of water**
- **Accidental damage**

You can find more information on: www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/contentsinsurance.

Saving energy and reducing fuel bills

Money-saving tips

Here are some quick tips on how you can save energy and cut your fuel bills by up to 20%.

Appliances

- If you have a washing machine, wash a full load each time.
- Use the 30 degrees Centigrade washing cycle to save up to 30% electricity.
- Defrost your freezer regularly to keep it running efficiently.
- Don't leave your TV and video/DVD on standby, turn off at the main switches, as even on standby they can use up to 25% of the full amount of energy, but check your user manual first.

- Turn off lights and appliances that you're not using.

Cooking safety

- Choose the right size pan for the food you're cooking and for the cooker hob. Keep the lid on the pan or use a pressure cooker.
- Don't over fill the kettle for just one or two drinks. An electric kettle is one of the biggest energy users in the home.

Heating

- Keep windows and doors shut when the heating is on and you are not cooking, bathing or drying cloths.
- Close all curtains at dusk to keep the heat in.
- If you are able to adjust the heating in your home, turn it down - turning it down by one degree Centigrade can save up to 10% on fuel bills.

Lighting

- Replace ordinary light bulbs with energy-saving ones, especially where the lights are on for long periods.
- Energy saving light bulbs use about 25% of the energy a normal bulb uses, last up to 15 times longer and can save around £10 a year.
- Remember to turn off lights when leaving a room.

- Note: All traditional incandescent bulbs have been banned within the EU, as part of a shift towards more efficient technology.

For more information, please visit: <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/lighting/>.

Winter fuel payment

If you are aged 60 or over, you may be able to get a Winter Fuel Payment from the Government.

It doesn't matter how much income or savings you have and payments don't affect any other benefits or pensions.

Payments should be made automatically, usually between November and December, if you received a Winter Fuel Payment the previous year, or if you receive a state pension.

Other people who are 60 or older need to check their eligibility by making a claim. Contact the Winter Fuel Payment helpline on: **0800 731 0160**

Textphone number: contact Relay UK on 18001 then 0800 731 0160
Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm

For more information, go to: <https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment>.

Cold Weather Payments

These are paid for exceptionally cold weeks to help towards extra heating costs. You can get this if you receive any of the following benefits:

- Pension credit (any rate)
- Income Support or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance and:
 - you are responsible for a child under the age of five
 - your benefits include extra amounts because you have a long term illness or disability, or
 - your benefits include extra amounts because you have a child with a disability or special needs
- Child Tax Credit which includes an additional amount because you have a child with a disability or special needs.

To get this help the temperature must be recorded as or forecast to be below zero degrees Centigrade for seven days in a row. You will then get a Cold Weather Payment for each seven day cold period. The payment is made automatically so there is no need to claim.

Problems paying your water, gas or electricity bills

If you are unable to pay a bill you need to get advice or contact your supplier to explain. If you do not pay your bills your supplier could disconnect you.

You should also check your bill and meter reading to make sure they are correct. Your supplier may offer you a way of paying your arrears over a longer period of time.

Energy suppliers have a code of conduct that means they should not disconnect your service if you agree a repayment plan with them and stick to it. Your water cannot be disconnected if you are unable to pay your bill.

The ways in which your supplier can allow you to repay arrears include:

Payment plan

- You may be offered the opportunity to pay a certain amount each week or month towards the arrears until they are cleared.

Prepayment meters

- You buy credit towards your costs. Some of the credit you buy goes towards your arrears and some goes towards your ongoing use. Prepayment meters can be a more expensive way of paying for services than some other methods.

Direct payments from benefit

- If you have arrears of fuel charges and are getting Pension credit, income support, income based jobseeker's allowance, or income-related employment and support allowance, you may be able to have an amount deducted from your weekly benefit to pay towards your arrears and ongoing use. A similar scheme also exists for arrears of water charges.

- Some companies have trust funds that can help by making a payment towards arrears. For more information, contact your supplier.

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau, Advice Centre or National Debtline may be able to offer you further help to negotiate with your supplier or apply to a trust fund. They may also be able to assist you to negotiate with any other creditors you owe money to.

Is there a cheaper rate?

All energy providers have to offer social rates to help their most vulnerable customers cope with the high costs of gas and electricity. If you are struggling to keep up with the rising cost of heating your home, why not talk to your provider and see if you can be moved to a cheaper rate?

There are a number of websites that offer to compare the prices of different suppliers. Those who subscribe to the energy watchdog's code of conduct can be found on the internet at www.consumerfocus.org.uk.

You may also be able to reduce your bills by changing your payment method. Payment of bills by direct debit is usually cheaper than other payment methods.

Converting to a dual fuel deal, where the same energy supplier provides both your gas and electricity, may also reduce your bills.

For further help and advice you can contact your local Greenwich Citizens Advice Bureau or the National Debtline – see last pages for telephone numbers.

To contact the Royal Borough about energy efficiency:
Telephone: 020 8921 4707, e-mail: energy-efficiency@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

Energy providers

You may wish to contact an energy provider switching scheme run on behalf of a number of London councils, Big London Energy Switch (BLES).

You may also benefit from the Stay Warm Stay Safe (SWSS) programme where residents can access a helpline run by the Charlton Athletic Community Trust. The programme can provide advice and if needs be, provide a home visit. For further details, please contact: Telephone: 020 8921 4707 Email: energy-efficiency@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

What happens when things go wrong?

Making complaints

You are entitled to get a service that is prompt, fair, polite and efficient. We want you to tell us when we fall below this standard. The complaint system makes it easy for you to complain and ensures we deal with your complaint effectively.

You can complain by letter, by phone, by email or in person. A complaint form is available from all Royal Borough offices, or on the Royal Borough's website at: www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

The form is also available in other formats. Sometimes we cannot answer your complaint immediately. If we cannot reply in 5 working days, we will tell you that we have received your complaint and let you know who is dealing with it.

We will send you a detailed reply within 10 working days, unless the complaint is complicated. If it is complicated, we will send you a letter telling you what is happening and giving you a date when you can expect a full reply.

The Housing Ombudsman Service investigates complaints made against local councils who run housing services. If you don't think we have dealt with your complaint satisfactorily, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service.

For more information contact: Housing Ombudsman Service PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ
Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Useful numbers if you wish to contact us to complain about a service.

Complaints about repairs: 020 8921 3991

Complaints about housing services: 020 8921 5856

Or contact us by email on: Housing-Safer-Communities@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

Alternatively you can contact us through the Royal Greenwich website on www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

How you can get involved in improving the quality of service you get

Your right to be consulted

The Royal Borough has a legal duty to consult its tenants. The Community Participation and Diversity Team lead on supporting tenants and leaseholders to get involved in improving services.

There is a housing engagement platform called YourVIEW. You can sign up via www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/yourview.

If you sign up to the platform you can get involved in:

- Estate walkabouts
- Borough wide and local meetings
- Housing Performance and Improvement Panel
- Tenants and Residents Associations and assisting in developing new Associations
- (There are grants available from us to help you to finance your Association or group)
- House Proud Campaign (LGBTQ+ residents)
- (For more information on this campaign, please visit www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/houseproud)
- Standing Against Racism Campaign.
- Support for residents with disabilities to get involved
- Training opportunities.
- Housing Champions Scheme

If you require further information on this or any of the engagement methods we use, please visit

www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/yourview
or call 020 8921 5149.

You can also email us at community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

Leaflets

We have leaflets on many subjects including the following (this list will change from time to time):

Benefits

Money Advice

Domestic Abuse, Hate Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Complaints

Rights and responsibilities

Children

Adults & Older People Services

General Advice

Your local Councillors and Members of Parliament (MP)

If you would like to speak to your local Councillor about any problems you have, you can contact them; or write or Members Support, The Town Hall, Wellington Street, London SE18 6PW, or by telephone on: 020 8921 5151, or by email Members-support@royal.greenwich.gov.uk.

Details of local councillors and Members of Parliament can also be found on the Royal Borough's website at: www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

Contact details

For more information about any of the subjects mentioned or copies of leaflets, contact 020 8854 8888.

A list of all email addresses is available at www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

Royal Borough Offices

The Woolwich Centre 35 Wellington Street Woolwich, London SE18 8HQ
Phone 020 8854 8888

The Eltham Centre 2 Archery Road, Eltham SE9 1HA

Tenants of River Heights Tenant Management Co-operative should contact: River Heights,
177-359 Glyndon Road, SE18 7NX
Phone: 020 8854 9358

Tenants of Walpole Place Estate Management Board should contact: Walpole Place, Brookhill Road, SE18 6TR
Phone: 0208 921 5154
Email: Cassandra.Reason@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Note: All Walpole tenants should go to the concierge office on the ground floor or contact 020 8855 4599 to report all repairs.

Independent Advice Agencies

Age UK Bromley and Greenwich

Community House
South Street, Bromley BR1 1RH
Phone: 020 8315 1850
Email: info@ageukbandg.org.uk

Plumstead Community Law Centre

36 Wellington Street, SE18 6PE
Phone: 020 8853 9970 or 020 8854 9993
Email: info@pclc.org.uk

Greenwich Housing Rights

36 Wellington Street, Woolwich SE18 6PF
Phone: 020 8854 8848

Greenwich Citizens Advice Bureau - Woolwich

Woolwich Old Town Hall, Polytechnic Street, SE18 1PN Phone: 080 8278 7965
Email: woolwich.admin@greenwichcab.org.uk

Metro GAD (formerly known as Greenwich Association of Disabled People)

The Forum @ Greenwich,
Trafalgar Road, Greenwich SE10 9EQ
Phone: 020 8305 2221
Email: gad@metrocharity.org.uk

Greenwich Money Advice Service

Woolwich Old Town Hall, Polytechnic Street, SE18 1PN
Phone: 020 8309 8646

METRO Woolwich

Equality Community Hub
1st Floor Equitable House
7 General Gordon Square
SE18 6FH
Phone: 020 8305 5000
Email: hello@metrocharity.org.uk

METRO works with anyone experiencing issues related to gender, sexuality, diversity or identity.

National Debt Line

Tricorn House, 51-53 Hagley Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B16 8TP
Freephone 0808 808 4000

Seafarers' Advice & Information Line

(SAIL) is a Citizens Advice service for working and retired seafarers, and their families. All advice is free and confidential. Advice is given by phone, email and letter. Support is available on many issues - benefits, debts, housing and much more. The free advice line 0800 160 1842 is open between 10 and 4 on weekdays or you can email advice@sailine.org.uk. There is more information on the SAIL website www.sailine.org.uk.

Our Commitment and Service Standards

In the Royal Borough of Greenwich we are aiming for excellence in all areas of service delivery. At the heart of that is a determination to put people first by empowering and listening to users, residents and customers; understanding their needs and aspirations; striving to improve our responses, by involving them in delivery. In short, treating customers, as we would wish to be treated ourselves.

Our Customer Values

- We will greet you with a smile and treat you with courtesy, honesty and dignity.
- We will give clear current information on services and how to obtain them.
- We will respond to you within reasonable timescales.
- We will enable you to compliment, comment on or complain about our services and will investigate your complaints.
- We will respect all our customers as individuals and ensure good standards of service.
- We will involve our customers when we plan changes or developments to our service. We will encourage customers to access their personal records.

- We care about the quality of service we offer you and will strive for continuous improvement.
- We will treat people and customers fairly and not discriminate against anyone on the basis of age, sex, race, religion, disability or sexual orientation, or where they live in the Borough.
- We will arrange the right type of help to enable you to communicate with us, for example, through a community language interpreter or by providing documents in large print or translated.

Our Standards

When we receive a written comment (letter, email, text message) from you:

- We will give you a full response, or let you know how we are dealing with the matter, within 10 working days.
- We will tell you who is dealing with the matter and tell you their names, direct line phone number and in which part of the Royal Borough they work.
- We will write to you in a way that is easy to understand and use languages other than English where appropriate.
- We will arrange for a reply in Braille, large print or audio when requested.

- If it is not possible to deal with the matter within 10 working days, we will tell you when you can expect to hear from us and keep you informed of any changes.
- We will inform you when the request has been fulfilled.

When we answer the phone

- We will answer within five rings.
- We will greet you in a friendly manner, giving our name and section.
- If the person you wish to contact is not available temporarily and you leave a message, someone will contact you as soon as possible for an urgent matter, and within two working days on all other matters.
- We will only transfer your call if we are sure who to transfer the call to. Otherwise, we will arrange to call you back.
- We only transfer your call to a phone answered by voice mail with your prior agreement.

When you visit any of our buildings

- We aim to speak to you within 20 minutes of your arrival or appointment, but if we don't, we will let you know when you can be seen and explain the reason.

Our reception areas will

- be clearly signposted
- have helpful and welcoming staff wearing name badges
- be clean and tidy
- offer interpreters and ensure they are available if booked in advance
- have a free internal phone or other appropriate means of communication in main reception areas
- provide facilities that will allow confidentiality when talking to staff
- provide for the needs of visiting children and babies as far as possible.

When we visit your home

- we will make appointments wherever possible
- we will normally identify ourselves as Royal Borough employees or contractors, with a name badge
- when we arrive, we will explain who we are and the purpose of our visit
- we will be polite, courteous and conduct our business efficiently
- we will let you know what will happen next as a result of our visit

- we will ask you not to smoke while our officers, operatives and contractors are in your home. This is because we have a duty to protect our staff from secondary smoke.
- we will provide you with an opportunity to give us feedback on our service.