



Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants
and leaseholders

Spring 2018 Issue 3

Get ready for Universal Credit

A big change to the national benefits system is coming and residents are urged to get prepared.

From 3 October all working age adults needing to make a new claim for housing benefit, income-based job seekers allowance, income support, income-related employment and support allowance as well as child tax or working tax credits will have to apply for Universal Credit (UC).

Royal Borough residents in Deptford postcode SE8 and Lewisham postcode SE13 are advised the switch to UC for them will take place earlier on 4 July. Anyone facing a change in circumstances such as losing their job, having a baby or becoming too ill to work may have to apply for UC.

As people making new claims will have to wait more than five weeks before receiving their first payment they will need to plan ahead to make sure they can pay for their food, rent and other bills. Claimants will be able to get an advance loan but this will have to be paid back. Visit: www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/universalcredit

Top tips:

Maximise your income – check you are claiming everything you are entitled to. Call Welfare Rights Service on **020 8921 6375** or visit www.entitledto.co.uk

Start saving – so you have some money put aside. The Greenwich and Bexley Credit Union is a great place to save and borrow at low rates. Pop into the office at 21 Calderwood St in Woolwich town centre or call **020 8855 4344**. Visit www.gbcreditunion.com

Pay a little extra into your rent account – to build up credit to cover the first six weeks of a new claim. To discuss call **020 8854 8888** and ask for your Income Officer.

Get in control of your debts – by agreeing repayments you can afford. Please visit: www.nationaldebtline.org or contact Greenwich Money Advice **020 8309 8646** or Meridian Money **020 8293 3432**.

**Blooming lovely
- see inside**



Talk Housing



Having arrived to take up my role as the new Director for the Royal Borough's Housing and Safer Communities services in the New Year, I am delighted to have this opportunity to introduce myself to you all.

I have a wide experience of housing across London, and I have always believed that we are at our best when we listen to what you have to say and act on it.

This is why we are really keen to promote the different ways that everyone can have the opportunity to have their say. This edition of Talk Housing includes many ways in which residents can get involved, from spot-checks of our caretaking services to reviewing our publications.

I would also like to encourage everyone to join in the great community projects to make our estates and neighbourhoods look more attractive. Many of you may have already seen the colourful results of our 13,000 bulb planting scheme this spring that children, residents and community groups recently took part in.

I am particularly excited that our estates are also to be ablaze with poignant poppies to mark the centenary of the First World War. Please see page 3 for more on this.

From October, people needing to make new claims for working age benefits will have to apply for the nationwide Universal Credit system. In this Talk Housing we have highlighted the need for people to think ahead now about how they will manage their money – new applicants will have to wait more than five weeks before they receive their first payment. As all applications for UC have to be made online, the next Talk Housing, which is published in the summer, will focus on the support available for our residents.

Jamie Carswell

Director of Housing and Safer Communities

Pledging to do our best



Royal Greenwich has now launched a Caretaking Service Charter, as part of its work to keep estates clean and tidy.

The Charter highlights the tasks our caretakers are responsible for and the standards of cleanliness residents are entitled to expect. It also sets out the key things tenants and leaseholders can do to help keep communal areas looking their very

best. You can ask your caretaker for a copy or download at **www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/caretakingcharter**

To enquire about the service, or if you would like to meet your local Caretaking Supervisor email **housing-caretaking@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**

A Repairs Service Charter is currently being drawn up with residents. The Charter will highlight how residents can help in the upkeep of their homes. Look out for more information in a future edition of Talk Housing.

To report boiler, heater or gas problems:

If you've lost heating or hot water, call **020 8921 8900**.

If you have a gas leak, call Transco on **0800 111 999**.

On the move

More than 150 people attended an event in January for Council tenants to find a bigger or smaller home more suitable to their needs.

The event gave people the chance to find out how the House Exchange Scheme and the Council's Under-Occupation Scheme can help them move to another area or enable them to swap their home for a smaller or bigger property.

To find out more call the Allocations Service on:

020 8921 2941 or **020 8921 2685** or visit:

www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/homeexchange

To report a broken lift in a Council block:

If a lift is not working or people are trapped in it call our 24-hour Contact Centre on **020 8854 8888**.

The Council will aim to arrange for an engineer to attend an out-of-service lift within the hour if people are inside, or two hours in all other cases. The service is operated 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Need repairs? Get in touch

To request a repair **020 8921 8900**

To follow up a repair **0800 0521 183**

Emergency out-of-hours number **020 8854 8888**

Alternatively, please email

housing.repairs@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Anti-social behaviour patrols



The estate patrol team plays a vital role in tackling anti-social behaviour on estates and around neighbourhoods.

The team carries out highly visible patrols to deter any behaviour which impacts negatively on the lives of residents, and to help identify any perpetrators. Special patrols are also introduced in places which may have become hot-spots

for anti-social behaviour so the team can gather evidence and action can be taken.

Residents are urged to be the eyes and ears for their neighbourhoods and report any issues to the patrolling team. The team is also keen to talk with residents about any concerns, including advice about fire safety.

The estate patrol team was recently deployed to the Woolwich Common Estate following reports of anti-social behaviour and alleged drug dealing. On the third day of their patrols the team identified a group of youths acting suspiciously and reported them to the police. This led to one arrest of a man and the seizure of a lot of cash and a large amount of cannabis.

Keep an eye out for your local patrols and do stop and say hello.

You can also contact your Tenancy Enforcement team by calling **020 8921 6371** or emailing **central-neighbourhood-office@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**

Blooming lovely community projects



A staggering 13,000 flower bulbs were planted on estates across the Royal Borough in a project to bring a blaze of colour and beauty for everyone to enjoy this spring.

Children and residents of all ages pitched in to help plant a range of bulbs including daffodils and

crocus for the project run by our Parks Service, in partnership with community groups.

Plans are now being drawn up for mass poppy planting on estates and other open spaces to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. Estates across the Royal Borough will be covered later this year with the iconic red flowers to remember those who sacrificed their lives for this country.

Anyone who would like to get involved this autumn in planting spring bulbs on their estate for next year can email

participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk



New fire risk assessments published

Reports of the reviews of fire safety undertaken in residential blocks following the Grenfell tragedy have now been published.

The Fire Risk Assessments for the six 24-storey high rise buildings in Royal Greenwich can now be read online on the Council's website. Reports are now available for Claymill House, Elliston House, Elmley Street 46-224, Glyndon Road 177-359, Hastings House and Nightingale Heights.

The next set of reviews are due to be published in the spring. The review of high rise buildings was undertaken to reassure residents that they all comply with current fire safety regulations. The Council has pledged to follow all recommendations emerging from the investigation into the Grenfell Tower fire in Kensington.

Assessments are carried out by trained and experienced Fire Risk Assessors and they are reviewed annually or more frequently if required. The London Fire Brigade also carry out their own checks of the fire arrangements in buildings.

The assessments review fire safety signage, fire doors and door closers, fire compartmentalisation to prevent fire and smoke spreading, operation of automatic opening vents and emergency lighting, escape routes and the access arrangements for the emergency services.

Everyone can help with fire safety by not interfering with the closing devices on their own or communal fire doors and by not blocking vents.

www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/ fireriskassessments

Get involved and have your say

Join your Local Housing Panel – share your views on where you live

The panels meet four times a year and provide a great opportunity for people to voice concerns about housing services and any issues in their neighbourhoods. Officers from our Repairs and Caretaking Services attend meetings and the Contact Centre will be on the agenda.

We are currently seeking tenants and leaseholders to join the panels. The role includes making sure local concerns are raised and accurately reported as well as giving feedback on Council services. No experience is necessary as full support and training is available.

Keen to take part?

Email participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

All tenants and leaseholders are invited to attend Local Housing Panel meetings so to check dates of the next ones visit www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/meetings

Online Reading and Communications Group

We are looking for residents to have an input into Council publications including Talk Housing and other future documents such as those on Universal Credit. Interested in giving your feedback online?

Sign up by emailing:

tenant-contact-data@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Take part in spot checks

Residents are invited to join Councillors and Council officers to spot-check 32 priority estate areas across the Royal Borough each spring and autumn. The visits provide a great opportunity to highlight community issues and meet with key service providers.

A pool of trained tenants and leaseholders has also been set up to inspect the Caretaking Services across the Royal Borough twice a year.

Interested in taking part?

Email: participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Apology We would like to apologise for the error in the dates for the Better Together meetings published in the last Talk Housing edition. For more information: www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/bettertogether

Keep updated For weekly news updates on issues relevant to tenants and leaseholders sign up at: www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/ealerts and tick the 'Housing, council tenants and leaseholders' box.

Got an idea of what you would like to see in future editions of Talk Housing?

Contact: participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

www.greenwichcommunitydirectory.org.uk

Greenwich Community Directory
Your online health, social care and community directory

- Help at Home
- Health & Wellbeing
- Supported Living & Housing
- Things to Do
- Support for Carers
- Advice and Benefits
- Training & Employment
- Staying Safe

Find the support you need, when you need it

www.greenwichcommunitydirectory.org.uk

Greenwich Community Directory

This online directory provides a key way to get information on social care, health, wellbeing and advice services across the Royal Borough of Greenwich. Visit: www.greenwichcommunitydirectory.org.uk

Telephone support to help people use the directory is now available; call the Live Well Greenwich Line on **0800 470 4831**.

Like to do your bit for the environment?

Residents are invited to join the Council's Environment Champion scheme. Champions help us to keep an eye on issues and to report environmental issues affecting their neighbourhoods, including fly-tipping, graffiti and abandoned cars. Volunteers can also take part in litter picks and clean-ups. Interested? Call **020 8921 5381** or email street-services@royalgreenwich.gov.uk



Remember you can pay your housing charges online using a debit or credit card at www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/pay

You can also check your housing charges and account on line. To register for this service go to www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housingselfserviceguide