

Talk

Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants

Autumn 2017 Issue 1



Fire Safety

In the light of the Grenfell tower tragedy, residents are being reminded of the “be clear, be safe” message.

Residents in all Council homes are being encouraged to take responsibility for helping to keep communal areas clear.

Standards of housekeeping within communal areas of buildings are checked on a continual basis by Caretaking and other Council staff to ensure standards are maintained. The Council wants to work with residents to ensure that escape routes remain clear of combustible materials and obstructions and that fire doors operate as they should.

The Royal Borough takes fire safety extremely seriously and all our buildings are fully compliant with the fire safety regulations.

Hello and welcome to your very first edition of Talk Housing for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders.



This new quarterly newsletter will bring you the latest housing updates from your Council.

In this issue, we'll be reminding you of important fire safety information, how to take part in our free DIY and decoration courses and how you can get involved in our local Housing Panels. We've also included some

useful updates from our front line teams who you're likely to see on a daily basis.

The Council prides itself on the service we provide to our tenants and leaseholders. This year, we have completed our stock condition surveys so that we can prioritise repairs and refurbishments in the homes that need them the most.

The surveys have helped to plan future works to make sure that every resident has a property they are proud to call home in a neighbourhood which is clean, inviting and safe.

That's what we are here to deliver and I am very grateful to each and every resident for their support and help in making sure that Greenwich continues to be a great place to live.

Councillor Averil Lekau

Cabinet Member for Housing and Anti-Poverty

Talk Housing



What you need to know

The national Universal Credit system for benefits will be launched across the Royal Borough of Greenwich from June 2018.

The change means that if working age people apply for benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support or Employment and Support Allowance, from next June they will go straight on to Universal Credit (UC). People will only be able to make new claims online.

Under the new system, claims will be administrated by a team from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) rather than a local Housing Benefit office. Claims may take up to six weeks or longer to process and payments will be made monthly into the claimant's bank account.

Claimants will have to plan and manage their own money to ensure payments such as rent are paid on a fixed and regular basis. Universal Credit involves a contract between claimants and the DWP and so those in receipt of benefits will have to demonstrate they have been searching for work otherwise they could be sanctioned and lose some or all of their benefits. Greenwich Housing Services is gearing up to provide support for tenants which will include help with financial management, debt advice, training in digital skills and courses to improve employment prospects. Future newsletters in the run up to the introduction of Universal Credit will give more information on the help available.

More info at www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/benefits

Independent living with extra care sheltered housing

There are three extra care sheltered schemes across Royal Greenwich which provide independent living for people over 55 who have a care need.

The housing has 24 hour support from onsite staff in addition to security to provide reassurance of

safety for residents. The Extra Care Sheltered schemes aim to offer an alternative to residential care homes for people who need support. They also feature social lounges and offer a range of activities to give residents a great opportunity to socialise.

Home alterations

If you are a leaseholder planning to make alterations to your property, your lease states that you must ask our permission before carrying out alterations to your home.

Examples of such work include, but are not limited to:

- Installing/Replacing the windows or central heating
- Removing/building walls
- Replacement or renewal of any Landlord's original fixtures or fittings (e.g kitchen, bathroom, electrics).

You should request permission from the Home Ownership Service via home.ownership@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or by calling Leah MacLeod on **020 8921 4036**.

If you carry out work without consent, you will be breaching the terms of your lease and you may need to obtain retrospective consent.

You may also be required to reverse the alteration with all costs being your responsibility. You could also have difficulty selling your flat if you cannot show that you received written consent.

If you are a council tenant you also need to ask for permission before carrying out any alterations. Please contact central-neighbourhood@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

For more information telephone **020 8921 2692** or email shelteredhousing@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Alternatively write to the Royal Borough of Greenwich Extra Care Sheltered Housing Scheme, The Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, Woolwich SE18 6HQ



Can you fix it? Yes you can!

Broken shelf? You don't know how to fix it? For Royal Borough tenants and leaseholders who have ever found themselves in this situation, there are free and fun DIY courses available to them.

Re-tiling, sealing around the sinks and bath, home decoration, unblocking a u-bend, and using a tool kit are some just some of the easy tasks residents will be able to undertake after this DIY course.

One-day and two-day DIY and Decoration courses are on offer to novices hoping to build confidence in maintaining their home and

carrying out basic tasks. The courses cover topics such as plumbing, sealants and silicone, electrical safety, painting and decorating, and general health and safety; they give tenants invaluable skills while also reducing the demand on Council services.

The free DIY and decorations courses are delivered in partnership with London South East Colleges at the Greenwich Park Centre, King George Street, SE10 8QB. Places are allocated on a first come first serve basis, so please make sure to book in advance at www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housingdiycourses

Tackling fraud

The Council's Unauthorised Occupation Team and Anti Fraud Team have been working with the makers of BBC's Council House Crackdown television series.

The shows have highlighted some of the cases the Council's team have been working on to uncover illegal tenancy cases and right-to-buy frauds.

The programmes were screened over the summer but you can still

catch them on BBC iplayer. To report any concerns regarding unauthorised occupancy of council homes contact the team on via unauthorised-occupation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

If you suspect someone of committing fraud against the Royal Borough please call **0800 169 6975** or email fraud@royalgreenwich.gov.uk. Any information you give will be treated in confidence.

Here to help

Tenancy Enforcement Officers (TEOs) work to ensure that our estates and neighbourhoods are safe and peaceful for residents to enjoy.

TEOs identify and tackle issues that have a negative impact on the places where tenants live.

Every tenant has a named TEO to contact if they need assistance. They deal with issues of anti-social behaviour which includes noise, graffiti, dog fouling, intimidation and drug dealing and also cases of hate crime and domestic violence by working with Police and support agencies.

The officers spend the majority of their time on the estates and in the neighbourhoods they manage; look out for your TEO, or you can make an appointment for a home visit if you want to discuss issues relating to your tenancy.

For details of your Tenancy Enforcement Officer, please contact our Tenancy Support Team on **020 8921 6371** or email central-neighbourhood-office@royalgreenwich.gov.uk





Have your say

Do you want to have a say in the services you receive from us?
If yes then read on!

We value your input and look forward to working together with tenants and leaseholders to discuss housing matters and improvements to services.

Key housing services you receive include:

- Repairs and improvements to Council homes
- Caretaking, cleaning, gardening and grounds maintenance
- Tackling anti-social behaviour
- Rent collection.

We offer residents a range of ways to share any suggestions and concerns about where they live. Residents are increasingly contacting us through electronic means and we are supporting this by providing more digital ways to talk to us. So, if you are short of time and can't attend meetings, we would welcome your views online (e.g. by completing online surveys). Have your say on caretaking services at www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/haveyoursay

Contact options on offer include:

- Online options (e.g. completing online surveys)
- Face-to-face meetings (Local Housing Panels and a Borough Wide Housing Panel)
- Estate inspections
- Mystery shopping
- Caretaking inspections (spot checks)

- Focus groups
- Events

Gary Wells the Chair of the Borough Wide Housing Panel, said: *"If you have an interest in where you live it costs nothing but a bit of your time to get involved. It's important for tenants and leaseholders to know what's happening in their areas and to have a say and that's exactly what happens at the Local and Borough Wide Housing Panels. You will get a friendly welcome and a cup of tea at meetings, or if you can't get to meetings give us your views by filling out on line surveys or attending estate inspections. I hope you will join us."*

Sign up for latest news direct to your email inbox at www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/ealerts

Useful numbers:

Repairs: 020 8921 8900

or report online at:

www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/repairs

Alternatively, email:

housing.repairs@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Contact Centre out of hours emergency:
020 854 8888



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

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