

Talk

Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

Autumn 2018 ISSUE 5



WELCOME

to our new look Talk Housing newsletter on the first anniversary of publication.

We have packed the newsletter with information for our tenants and leaseholders and hope that you find it enjoyable to read. We would love to have your feedback and ideas for future editions.

And if you have got a story you would like to share in Talk Housing, email:

participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

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www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housing


ROYAL borough of
GREENWICH



Welcome to the new-look Talk Housing

There are 17,000 people on our housing waiting list and more than 800 households in temporary accommodation. Those figures are stark, but are by no means unusual in London.

We believe in council housing and we know that building genuinely affordable, social-rented homes is the only way out of the housing crisis. However, the Government has provided no money to build social housing, we can only spend 30% of the money from right to buy sales on building new homes, and there are stringent restrictions which prevent us from borrowing against the value of our properties to build new homes.

So, what am I planning to do about it? Later this month I'll publish a full plan with proposals to increase the number of socially rented homes in the borough. We will ask the Mayor of London to increase our borrowing limit so we can start building 750 new council homes by 2022. This is in addition to the 300 affordable homes for local working families that will be built by our partners, Meridian Homestart. We are also looking to establish two community land trusts which would be set up and run by local people to develop and manage homes which remain genuinely affordable.

Of course, it's not just about new homes, but making sure our 23,000 existing homes are in the best possible condition. In July we agreed further investment which means we will spend £92m up until 2022 on major improvements such as fire safety measures, electrical works, insulation, bathroom upgrades and lift replacements.

I hope this provides a flavour of our ambition to build and maintain the homes our residents so desperately need and the size of the challenge that we face in doing so.

Thank you to everyone who took part the #QuizKirby online Q&A last month. It was great to hear from people about the issues they face and I hope you found it useful. You can follow me on Twitter @ccakirby

Councillor Chris Kirby
Cabinet Member for Housing

News in Brief

Five great things to enjoy this Autumn in Royal Greenwich

1 **Join in the celebrations for Black History Month.** There is a host of free events during October to celebrate the contribution black and Asian residents have made to the community.

2 Events to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War are set to be held in November including remembrance services and special performances.

3 **Get active and improve your wellbeing.** The Greenwich Community Directory has a list of great activities on offer across the borough and lots of healthy tips. Check it out by visiting greenwichcommunitydirectory.org.uk

4 **Attend your Local Housing Panel** to share your views on housing services and meet new people in your area. Check the panel dates on royalgreenwich.gov.uk/councilmeetings

5 **See your town centre become illuminated to mark the start of the festive season** and enjoy a host of free performances and entertainments. Events kick off with Eltham Lights Up in Eltham High Street on 15 November.

Visit royalgreenwich.co.uk/events for more details about events



New Council website

The Council has launched its brand new website making it easier than ever for residents to do a whole range of tasks online, including:

- requesting repairs
- paying Council rent
- ordering recycling bin liners

The upgrade was carried out to make sure residents can have access to Council services twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Check it out by visiting: royalgreenwich.co.uk

Green Paper consultation

The Government is currently holding a consultation on its new Social Housing Green Paper which aims to rebalance the relationship between social housing residents and their landlords. One of the aims is to tackle the stigma often experienced by residents and to make sure social housing continues to be both a safety net and a springboard to home ownership. Views and questions in the Green Paper have been influenced by the Government's consultation road shows with residents.

If you want to give your view on any of the issues, email participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or visit the Government website: gov.uk/government/consultations/a-new-deal-for-social-housing



Launch of YourVIEW campaign at the Great Get Together

The Council launched its new YourVIEW campaign to encourage more tenants and leaseholders to have their say and help shape housing services, at the Royal Greenwich Get Together in June. Thousands turned out for the annual event held in Woolwich Town Centre and the Royal Arsenal which featured a carnival parade, live performances, a veterans parade and children's activities. Many residents visited the YourVIEW stall and took the opportunity to sign up. The stall is set to pop up again at many more events soon.



Sign up now

Get involved in shaping the Royal Borough's housing services by signing up to YourVIEW online.

Residents who sign up can get involved with a range of activities including spot checks of services, estate walkabouts, surveys and attending Local Housing Panels. Participants are free to give as much or as little time as suits them and it's a wonderful chance for residents to make a positive difference to their neighbourhoods, learn new skills and make friends.

Signing up is easy.



Visit: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/YourVIEW
Call the participation team on **020 8921 5149**
or email yourview@royalgreenwich.gov.uk



Investing to improve homes and estates

As part of our Housing Capital Programme, we will be spending £43m in the coming year, delivering works to improve homes and estates, ensuring they are healthy and safe places to live.

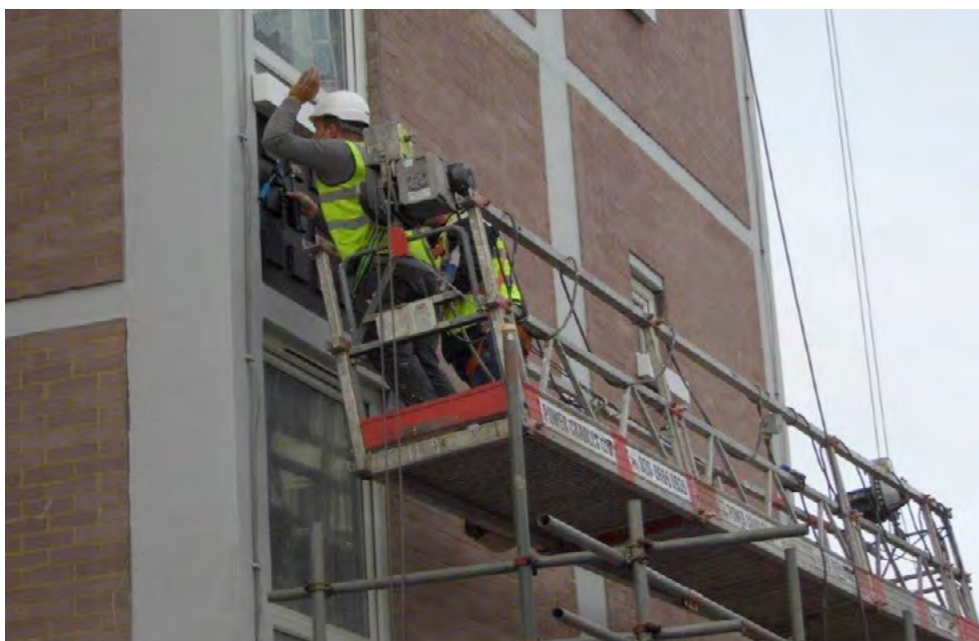
Next year's programme which will start from April 2019, is strongly focused on making sure tenants and leaseholders are kept safe in their homes. The programme also includes projects that will help to tackle fuel poverty and to ensure the Council's housing stock is sustainable for the future.

Our programme includes some

necessary upgrades to electrical installations such as wiring to 200 blocks, and some further investment in fire safety works to ensure we maintain our over and above approach.

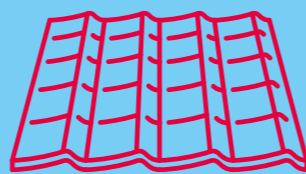
As part of our ongoing commitment to tackle fuel poverty, and eradicate damp and condensation issues, we will also be developing a pilot project that looks at improving the whole of a building in one go.

We will look at how we can best combine improvements such as external wall insulation, windows and roofs, and heating upgrades to help reduce fuel bills and tackle damp and condensation.

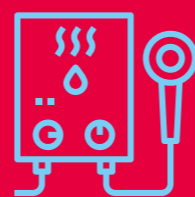


This year's Housing Capital Programme includes:

New roofs and upgrades to 4 blocks, benefitting **210 homes**



Individual boilers replacements to **218 homes**



New door entry systems and upgrades to 8 blocks benefitting **157 residents**



Kitchen and bathroom upgrades to at least **500 homes**



Fun in the sun

Families enjoyed a community fun day provided by Engie, a contractor which is delivering a £3.5m project for the council to renew kitchens and bathrooms.

The works at homes in Villas Road on the Glyndon Estate in Plumstead are being undertaken as part of the Council's Housing Investment Programme to improve the quality of homes for residents.

The free fun day, on Friday 31 August, featured a range of bouncy castles and sporting activities along with ice-cream and candy floss for all. Many attendees also took up the opportunity to sign up to YourVIEW which is the Council's new initiative to encourage residents to have their say on housing services.

Works to rejuvenate the Flowers Estate

Projects to improve the communal areas on the Flowers Estate in Abbey Wood are to be carried out in response to residents' concerns over damage from anti-social behaviour.

The £1.3m worth of works planned for the estate, which has 318 homes, includes repairs to the railings and glazing around stairwells and general redecoration of communal areas. The project also includes some external improvements to the properties and new door entry systems for around half the block.

Fire Safety



Royal Greenwich is working with Savills, an independent consultant who specialise in fire risk assessments of high-rise buildings, to carry out fire risk reviews of all the Council's 95 high-rise buildings. The Fire Risk Assessments will be published later this year on the Royal Borough's website.

Follow up work will be carried out by a number of teams, including repairs, caretaking and tenancy services.

The on-going investigation into the tragic events at Grenfell Tower last year is generating important discussions around fire safety and we anticipate changes in the way fire safety is managed across the country. We have set aside £4m to address immediate requirements while we develop our longer term plan.

Remember you can help with fire safety where you live by making sure you have:

- o A working smoke alarm installed in your home
- o Always ensuring that the door closers on your front door and on any communal fire doors in your block are working and not prevented from operating
- o Keeping escape routes clear of personal belongings.

Help a rough sleeper

The Council is urging residents to report the whereabouts of rough sleepers so they can be given the support they need to turn around their lives.

An organisation called StreetLink has now launched a website and mobile App for members of the public to report any sightings of people sleeping on the streets so they can be linked up with the services which can support them. The aim is to end rough sleeping by ensuring those forced to sleep on the streets get the help they need.

The service covers the whole of England and Wales and the details from reports of rough sleepers

are sent to the local authority or outreach service for the relevant area.

StreetLink would be grateful for the following information:

- The specific location for the rough sleeper – which can be via a map or description.
- Details of the time that the rough sleeper has been seen.
- Any information to describe the rough sleeper.

People making reports to StreetLink can receive an update on what has happened as a result of their alert. However if you see someone sleeping on the streets in need of urgent medical attention call **999**. Visit: streetlink.org.uk



Maximising recycling in Royal Greenwich

The Council takes great pride in how much its residents recycle and together we are working to reach the target of 50% of household waste being recycled by 2020.

Unfortunately sometimes our crews need to reject recycling bins because of contamination – this happens when people put the wrong items into the recycling which leads to good quality recyclable material becoming unusable.

So remember never put the following in recycling bins:

- black sacks
- take away boxes/pizza boxes
- food
- textiles
- nappies
- tissue, kitchen towel and wet wipes, even if clean
- polystyrene
- hard plastic
- wood

If in doubt use the general refuse bin instead. For more information visit: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/recycling



Reuse and recycling centre now only free for residents

It's all change at the Nathan Way Reuse and Recycling Centre in Thamesmead to clamp down on the number of free visits made by residents from neighbouring boroughs. The move will reduce queuing times for Royal Greenwich residents and make the site more efficient.

Residents will now have to produce a valid driving licence when they visit the centre as proof that they live in the borough. Any visitors who live outside the borough and those

who cannot produce the required identification will face a charge of £10 per trip. "Meet and greet" staff will be available on site to advise visitors on the new rules. In exceptional circumstances, visitors can present a current council tax bill or utility bill issued within the past three months, alongside another form of photo ID, to prove that they live in the Royal Borough of Greenwich. Some more restrictions have also been made on the amount of DIY waste which can be dropped off at the centre.

For more information visit: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/nathanway

From the Royal Borough's in-house Damp Team experts

Top tips for tackling mould and condensation

Condensation occurs when warm moist air meets a cold surface in your home.



What can you do to prevent condensation and mould?



- You will get less condensation if you keep your home warm most of the time – at least 15C degrees when you are out.
- Condensation forms on cold surfaces so make sure there is adequate heat and ventilation throughout the property to keep surfaces warm.
- Low background heating throughout the day maintains consistent temperatures inside. If used correctly it can also be a more efficient use of energy.



- When cooking remember to cover pans with a lid to reduce moisture being created from boiling water.
- Use an extractor hood or fan if you have one installed as these are designed to help remove moisture created from cooking.
- Open windows to increase ventilation and shut the kitchen door to ensure moisture doesn't spread to other rooms.



- When taking a shower or bath turn on your extractor fan to remove the steam and moisture.
- If you do not have an extractor fan contact the damp team for one. You can also ventilate and remove excess moisture in the bathroom by opening the window. Remember to close the door to stop moisture spreading to other rooms.
- After a bath or shower wipe all surface areas where condensation has formed including walls and ceilings if you can.



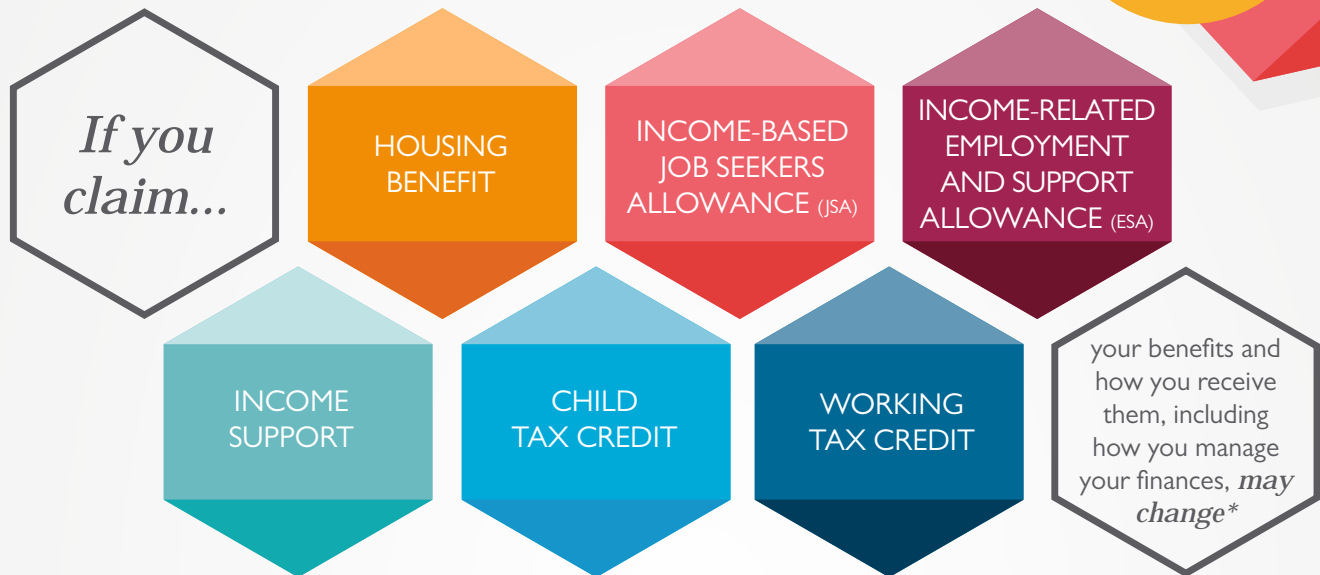
Due to differences in thermal performance on the built structure, surfaces may be prone to condensation. If you have attempted these steps and still get condensation/mould, get in touch with our Damp Team.

- We can give you tips to reduce the problem
- We can visit your home to carry out a full survey
- The surveyor can recommend if any works to improve the situation are needed.

Contact us: 0208 854 8888 or email AMDampTeam@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

UNIVERSAL CREDIT IS COMING

get the help you need



Anyone facing a change of circumstances, such as losing their job, having a baby, becoming too ill to work – may have to apply for Universal Credit.

MAKING A UNIVERSAL CREDIT (UC) CLAIM

What you will need:

- gov.uk/apply-universal-credit
- Access to the internet
- Email address
- Basic bank account
- Your full rent and tenancy details
- Identification and income documents
- Council Tax Support is not included in the UC claim and you will need to make a separate claim online at royalgreenwich.gov.uk

CHALLENGES FOR YOU

- Applying and managing your UC claim online
- Over five weeks until first payment received
- Monthly payments into your bank account
- Paying your full rent every month
- Keeping to your claimant commitment, avoiding sanctions

HELP WITH YOUR HOUSING CHARGES

- The UC Housing Costs Element is replacing Housing Benefit (UC claimants only)
- Housing Benefit was paid directly to the landlord. The UC Housing Cost Element will usually be paid directly to you
- You will need to pay your full rent every month
- Help is available if you struggle to pay your rent/arrears

ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Help with getting online, managing your Universal Credit claim, budgeting, paying rent and more, is available at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/universalcredit

Council tenants can speak to the UC Rent Verification Team on **020 8921 3129** or email universal-credit-rent@royalgreenwich.gov.uk. You can also speak to your work coach at your local Job Centre.