

Talk

Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

WINTER 2019 ISSUE 6

WELCOME

to Issue 6 of Talk Housing newsletter. 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:

community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk



Splashing out in Pauline's new bathroom

Inside

- 4. New homes for the borough
- 6. Royal Greenwich partners with Battersea Cats and Dogs Homecentre
- 8. Your Universal Credit questions answered

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Five minutes with Chris

Cabinet Member for Housing
Cllr Chris Kirby answers
Talk Housing's questions

Why are you interested in housing?

Housing is such an important factor in people's life chances. Where you live or grow up can affect the opportunities you have and how you take advantage of them. Having a secure roof above your head makes a huge difference to people's lives.

What does the Cabinet Member for Housing Actually do?

I set the political direction of the service. Working with tenants, I'll make decisions about how many homes we need, what our repairs priorities are and how we become a first class landlord.

What does your typical day look like?

I've got a two year old, so there's no such thing as a typical day! Usually I get to the town hall by about 8.30am and then attend meetings throughout the day. I'll finish up in the evening with a council or public meeting before finishing at around 10pm.

What's your favourite bit of the role?

Meeting and working with tenants. And seeing change for the better.

What's the one thing you can't do without?

My phone. I know how terrible that is!

What do you do to relax?

Reading and watching football. I'm a Spurs fan!

If you could live anywhere, where would it be?

North Devon. It's where we have our family holidays and it's the only place other than South London that feels like home.

News in Brief



New Year, new you – five things to do to make this New Year great.

- 1 **Look out for neighbours who may struggle in the colder weather.** Call the Live Well Greenwich line to talk to Stay Warm, Stay Safe on **0800 470 4831**. For more information visit livewellgreenwich.org.uk/winter

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has come top in the 'Good Food for London' league table for the second year! Join one of the Council's free cooking clubs to learn how to cook a range of healthy and cheap dishes. For more information visit gda.coop/cookery-clubs

- 2 **Make 2019 your most social year yet by trying a new activity.** Check the Greenwich Community Directory to find events and classes in your area. greenwichcommunitydirectory.org.uk

Get involved, shape housing services in your housing community and watch our video. Email community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk, phone **020 8921 5585** or visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/yourview to find out how you can make a positive change in your community.

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- 5 **In the colder weather your local community centre offers you a chance to meet new people and socialise while keeping warm.** Whatever your interest you will find something suitable. To find your nearest community centre visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/communitycentres

Recycle your electrical items

Electrical items can be recycled at bring sites or by collection.

Small electrical goods which fit into a carrier bag can be collected. Make an appointment by calling **020 8921 4661**.

Once you've booked, leave the items on top of your black wheelie bin or rubbish sacks on your normal collection day. Make sure they don't block the footpath. royalgreenwich.gov.uk/recycling



Gritting and snow removal

The Royal Borough of Greenwich runs a winter road gritting service between November and March to keep the borough's roads in a safe and passable condition during periods of severe weather.

In the event of snow settling on footpaths, caretakers' usual cleaning schedules are suspended and they begin clearing footpaths according to priority. Shops, slopes and paths outside entry doors are gritted before the wider estate.

If there is a problem concerning road gritting or footpaths on your estate please contact contact-centre@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or phone **020 8921 4661**.



Request an estate walkabout near you

Residents from Kidbrooke Estate noticed an alley needed additional lighting and raised it on a walkabout. After the lighting was installed, Hilda a resident on the estate commented, "It has made a huge difference to the area... I feel confident walking through as I can see to both ends."

Is there an area of your estate which you think can be improved?

To request an estate walkabout in your area phone **020 8921 5585** or email community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk. We can't promise to cover every estate, but where a number of residents request a walkabout on a particular estate we will arrange one.

Minimise damp this winter

1. Try to keep your house at least 15°C to minimise condensation.
2. Remember to cover pans with a lid.
3. Turn on the extractor fan or open a window to remove steam and moisture.
4. Close doors to bathroom and kitchen to help contain moisture in those rooms.

If you are concerned about damp or mould in your home phone **020 8854 8888** or email AMDampTeam@royalgreenwich.gov.uk





The Council's capital works programme

Over the past year, we've been continuing our ambitious plans to upgrade homes and estates.

We're on track to deliver a range of projects across the borough, including new kitchens and bathrooms, new individual boiler replacements and communal heating systems, new or upgraded roofs and environmental and estate improvements. In all, we'll have spent £28 million on improvements. Now it's time to begin planning what to do next.

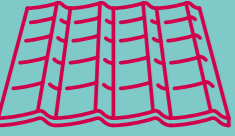
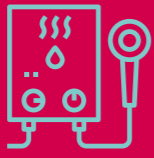


Our next programme of improvements will last for five years - and in the first year alone we have more than £43million to spend on improving your homes and estates. It's our largest investment in a decade, so we need to make sure it's well spent and your home continues to be a safe and healthy place to live.

Last year we carried out a survey on the condition of council homes, and we'll be using this to help us decide the types of work we should focus on. But we also want to hear what you think. We'll contact you in

spring to ask for your views, which we'll use to shape the plans. Working with the Residents Focus Group, we are creating a new customer charter that sets out what you can expect from our housing service and our contractors, and how you can get involved and help shape our work. We will be publishing this shortly.

In the meantime you can share your views on any part of our housing service by signing up to YourVIEW at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/yourview

This year's Housing Capital Programme includes:

 <p>New roofs and upgrades to 4 blocks, benefitting 210 homes</p>	 <p>Individual boiler replacements to 218 homes</p>	 <p>New door entry systems and upgrades to 8 blocks benefitting 157 residents</p>	 <p>Kitchen and bathroom upgrades to at least 500 homes</p>
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I know that sometimes having work done in your home can be a bit of an inconvenience, but for me it definitely was worth it.

One tenant's experiences of improvements

Royal Borough of Greenwich resident Pauline, had her bathroom renovated earlier this year. After living with the same bath for over 30 years, she tells us what a difference her new bathroom has made to her.



"I am very happy with my new bathroom - I love it!" she said, adding that while it took a little time to get things moving, once installed, her new bathroom has made a real difference to her home. Pauline said: "I know that sometimes having work done

in your home can be a bit of an inconvenience, but for me it definitely was worth it." Pauline's improvements to her house are part of a wider programme of capital works for our council homes.

New homes

By 2020, the Council will have started building 750 new homes for our tenants. It's an ambitious commitment, but it's one we're confident we can stick to.

Not least because last autumn we were awarded £32 million from the Mayor of London's Building Council Homes for Londoners fund. Added to this, the government has lifted the council borrowing cap. This means that we can borrow more money to help build the houses that are so desperately needed. Increasing the number of council homes will help to bring down the waiting list, which currently has

around 17,000 people on it. This means if you have family members or friends waiting to move, they're more likely to find a home quicker. The Council's commitment to affordable homes also plays an important part in our housing strategy. By helping council tenants onto the housing ladder; we can free up more social rent properties for those who need them.

The housing crisis is not something that can be solved overnight, but with the resources to create 750 new homes and more borrowing power, we can start to make a real difference for people who need our housing support.





Who's a good boy?

Are you pet ready for 2019? Royal Greenwich is partnering with Battersea to bring expertise in all things dog to our tenants.

Research shows that owning a pet can improve your physical and mental health. Yet getting a dog is also a huge responsibility and is not something that should be entered into lightly. Battersea's Head of Canine Behaviour and Welfare Ali Taylor said, "You need to think about how a dog would fit into your life and if you have the time to dedicate to their needs. You should consider who will look after the dog if you're working, and how much exercise and mental stimulation your pet will require. It's important to make sure you

find a pet with the right personality to match your lifestyle."

If you're considering getting a new four-legged friend, Battersea is offering a Pet Ready Training Programme. This course will include practical training advice and helpful information about preparing your home for a new dog.

Councillor Chris Kirby said, "We want tenants to be able to enjoy all the benefits of having a dog, but owners need to be considerate of their neighbours. We're working with Battersea Dogs & Cats Home to provide free training and advice to any tenants struggling with their dog."

If you've already got a dog, but you're struggling with issues such as barking,

Remember, if you live in council accommodation you must ensure that you have permission from your Tenancy Enforcement Officer before getting a pet.

Speak to us by phoning the Tenancy Team on **020 8921 6371** if you have any questions or would like more information.

safety off the lead, or over-excitable behaviour - Battersea is here to help.

If you are considering getting a dog, or recently acquired one over the Christmas period, and you want to find out more about Battersea's free course, please contact communityengagement@battersea.org.uk

You can report non-urgent incidents to the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team. Email: contact-centre@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or phone **020 8921 4411**.

You can find the dog registration form on our website royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/200178/council_tenants

? **The big question:**
Who checks that council blocks are clean?

Most council blocks are checked daily by our caretakers as part of their work schedule.

In addition to the daily checks both the Caretaking Team Leader and Caretaking Supervisor carry out visual inspections on a random selection of blocks. Caretaking supervisors are required to carry out a minimum of two detailed inspections within a 12-month period for all council blocks. If you feel that the cleanliness in your block is not as you would expect it please email housing-caretaking@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

If you have a 'big question' which you would like answered email yourview@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Stay warm, stay safe during the cold weather
Stay warm, stay safe supports vulnerable people to live healthier, happier lives during the winter months, and is part of Live Well Greenwich.

Services available include advice on keeping warm at home, saving money on fuel bills, a benefit check, an energy efficiency assessment and advice on keeping active and healthy in the winter months. For more information, please visit livewellgreenwich.org.uk/winter
Call the Live Well Greenwich line to talk to the Stay Warm, Stay Safe team on **0800 470 4831** or visit livewellgreenwich.org.uk/winter for more information.

Skills for work

GLLaB offers residents of the Royal Borough of Greenwich access to free employment and skills programmes to prepare you for work.

20,000 residents have been helped into work and over 25,000 residents have been supported to gain new skills. To find out how you can be supported in your job search phone **020 8921 2440** or visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/gllab

Fire Safety



Update on fire doors

You may have heard that as part of the response to the Grenfell tragedy, the Government has been working with the industry suppliers of fire-rated doors.

We are following this work closely, and will ensure that any fire-rated doors we use meet the required standards.

In the meantime if you see any doors that are broken or not hung properly call **020 8921 8900** or email housing.repairs@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

London Fire Brigade Home Visit

Book a free home safety visit with the London Fire Brigade to keep your home safe from fire this New Year.

They can help you prevent accidents, give advice on high risk rooms and activities and keep you safe from fire in your home.

Call **0800 028 4428** to arrange a visit or email: smokealarms@london-fire.gov.uk or text on **07860 021319**



Thinking of moving...

Moving house can be a stressful experience, here our Tenancy Enforcement Officers share their advice on how to minimise stress when moving house:

Remember ...

- You must give the Council four weeks' written notice if you would like to leave your home. You can do this by sending us a signed letter or visiting one of our Service Centres to complete a Termination Notice. In the case of joint tenants, notice from one tenant will end the tenancy for everyone.
- Phone the Bulky Waste Team on **020 8921 4661** at least two weeks in advance of your moving date to schedule a

time for your bulky items to be collected free of charge.

- Ensure you are up to date with your rent and utility payments.
- You need to return your keys to the Service Centre before 12noon on Monday to prevent you from being charged additional rent.

Speak to us by phoning the Tenancy Team on **020 8921 6371** if you have any questions or would like more information.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT KEY FACTS

1

Universal Credit is applied for and managed online but I'm not good at using a computer – how can I get help?

Your Job Centre can help you to make a claim. Your Job Centre work coach can refer you for help to develop your computer skills so that you can manage your account online.

I won't get my first Universal Credit payment for over five weeks – without money how will I be able to pay for food and bills?

Once you are accepted, you can apply for an advance (loan) of Universal Credit through your online account or through your work coach. You will have to pay this money back from your future Universal Credit payments, so it's best to borrow as little as possible and spread the cost over 12 months to keep your repayments low.

2

3

I am being asked to agree housing charges that Greenwich Council has provided but the figure is wrong – why is that?

You can only receive help with housing costs for your rent and any service charge you need to pay. So it is only these costs that you are asked to confirm.

Other charges such as water and heating will not be included.

I don't have any money to pay my council rent until my first Universal Credit payment, what can I do?

You should get in touch with your Income Officer by phoning 020 8854 8888 or emailing rent-account-enquiries@royalgreenwich.gov.uk to talk about your situation. You may be able to arrange to pay your rent and any arrears from your first Universal Credit payment.

4

5

I am finding it really hard to make my Universal Credit payment last the month, what can I do?

It can be hard moving to monthly budgeting, especially with a very limited amount of money. Speak to your work coach who can refer you for support to help with your personal budgeting and also discuss different payment arrangements which may help you.

Your work coach at the Job Centre can help you with most of your Universal Credit issues or, you can put a message on your Universal Credit account.

For advice on rent issues you can visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/universalcredit, email universal-credit-rents@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or phone **020 8921 3129**.