

Talk Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

WELCOME

Welcome to Issue 14 of the Talk Housing newsletter, packed with information for tenants and leaseholders. We hope you enjoy it and if you have any feedback or ideas for future editions we would love to hear them.

Please email community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

WINTER 2020 ISSUE 14



Keeping You Safe

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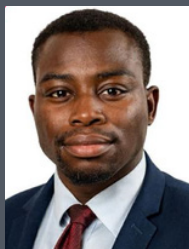
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www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housing


ROYAL borough of
GREENWICH

Happy New Year!



“As we enter the new year it is always a good opportunity to reflect on what we have achieved in the past one. Last year was particularly difficult for all our residents and staff but I’m extremely proud of everyone’s efforts in such an unprecedented time.

We’ve all had to learn how to adapt to new ways of working and engagement and one of the ways we have done this is through our digital listening campaign. The campaign was a series of online meetings held over the summer, as I wanted to hear about your experience of housing and the housing services in your area. It was incredibly important for me to hear directly from residents as your new Cabinet Member for Housing. We had over 100 residents take part in the campaign and we are looking forward to more sessions with you in the future.

I am pleased to say we are already acting on your feedback!”

Cllr Anthony Okereke,
Cabinet Member for Housing

YOUR VIEW

It is very important to us that we continue to listen to your views. Sign up to YourVIEW at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/yourview to receive information about ways you can get involved. You may also be asked to take part in our quarterly Kwest surveys so that we can learn from your experiences and improve our services.

You said, we listened

As a follow up to the digital listening campaign, we have been recording your feedback and acting on it. We hope to have more updates later on this year.



You said...

“I think the council needs to be better at communicating information and transparent on its timelines for building new properties.”



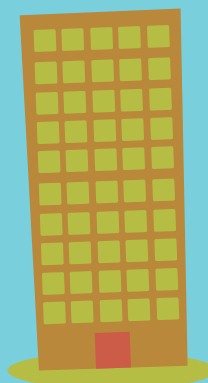
We listened...

“Talk Housing now includes new build as a regular feature. See pages 6 and 7. We also have a dedicated new build team that will update residents within their area.”



You said...

“There have been issues in my area with grass and bushes being overgrown.”



We listened...

“We recognise that the standards for our grounds’ maintenance have not always been met, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis. We have a target for grass on our estates to be no longer than 3 inches (7.6cm).

We want to develop more projects with you to improve the look and feel of your estate. For example, five sites have been identified for planting wildflowers and bulbs, with a further five sites each year for the next five years.”



You said...
"I feel that leaseholders have received poor customer care."



You said...
"I have experienced long wait times on the phone when contacting repairs."



We listened...
"At the request of leaseholders who attended the digital listening campaign sessions, we have established a leaseholder working group. The group will work on customer care issues and a refresh of the website."

We listened...
"We acknowledge that our wait times have not been good during the COVID-19 crisis and apologise for this. We have already put more staff on the phones to answer calls, and we are also improving our repairs telephone system, which will allow us to monitor calls and put more staff on calls quickly during busy periods."



You said...
"I can't book weekend repairs appointments and times can be inflexible for me."



You said...
"Some communal repairs in my area have not been completed to the required standard."



We listened...
"We aim to roll out more flexible appointments in 2021. Gas servicing appointments are already offered at the weekend."



We listened...
"We inspect 20% of completed communal repairs. Where concerns are raised we will do a bespoke post-work inspection. We are looking to make more improvements to communal repairs next year."



You said...
"I live in Abbey Wood; my local area attracts a lot of anti-social behaviour and illegal activities."



You said...
"Repairs officers are not calling me back."



We listened...
"We have introduced a new integrated enforcement model to improve our response to crime and anti-social behaviour. Abbey Wood is an area that is regularly patrolled with a focus on partnership problem solving. We will work with local residents to make better use of public spaces and promote Neighbourhood Watch."

We listened...
"We have recently reminded our repairs staff that we expect a call back to residents within 24 hours, and we are improving our systems to monitor this."





Keeping you safe

We have been working really hard to ensure essential home maintenance and improvements can continue in a COVID-secure way. You rely on us to provide essential services in your home and we have introduced a range of measures to keep you as safe as possible.

All our repair teams are equipped with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including:



We also:

- complete a home risk questionnaire and clinical vulnerabilities check before home visits
- provide COVID-safe training and updates for employees
- thoroughly clean our vehicle cabs and touch points at the start and end of each shift
- ensure employees have details of the NHS Test and Trace app.

You can *play* your part to help keep all of us safe. A few simple steps can make a lot of difference.

Before we visit your home please remember to:



clear the area where we are working



open windows so that there is good ventilation.

During the home visit, please remember to:



stay two metres away at all times



ask other members of your household to be in a different room



give us space to work, including space for our equipment



not offer us tea or coffee!

Each step makes a big difference, helping to keep us all safe and ensuring we can continue to provide essential services for you!



Safety in your home

There are many things that you can also do to help *improve* the safety of your home.

Do

- check your smoke and carbon monoxide detector every week
- keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed when you're using them, to stop condensation affecting the rest of your home
- in the event of a fire in your block, call 999 and close all doors. Stay put, it is usually safer to stay in your flat. During a fire you can't use the lifts and the stairs could be overcrowded with firefighters who need the stairs to be clear
- disinfect your shower head if you have not used it for a while, as the water in it may contain bacteria. You should also regularly clean and descale all your taps and shower heads to avoid the build-up of scale.

Don't

- never overload an extension lead by plugging in too many appliances as this could overheat or cause a fire.

117 new Greenwich Builds council homes approved for Kidbrooke

A major new social housing scheme in Kidbrooke has been given planning approval, boosting our Greenwich Builds programme to deliver 750 new council homes for local people across the borough.

The 117-home development on Kidbrooke Park Road is comprised of a mixture of one, two and three-bedroom apartments and maisonettes, twelve of which will be designed for wheelchair access. Also incorporated is a nursery for both new tenants and local Kidbrooke residents.

We're aiming for high sustainability standards through the implementation of features such as air source heat pumps and solar panels, while two large landscaped communal outdoor areas and a tree-lined corridor will provide amenity space for local residents.

Work is due to begin in spring 2021 after on-site remediation works are completed, with an anticipated completion date of late 2022, after which the homes will be advertised via Choice Based Lettings.

Cllr Danny Thorpe, Leader of the Royal Borough of Greenwich said: *"I'm absolutely delighted we have secured planning permission for 117 new council homes in Kidbrooke, a huge milestone in our Greenwich Builds programme. When I became Leader, I was determined to deliver the biggest council homes building programme we've ever seen, and I know what a real difference this will make to our residents to have secure home of their own."*

Cabinet member for housing, Cllr Anthony Okereke, said:

"This scheme joins dozens of others in our Greenwich Builds programme, which, despite all of the challenges of 2020 has continued to move forward to deliver much needed homes for local residents on waiting lists.

The incorporation of a nursery and landscaped amenity spaces to this development demonstrates our commitment to improvements that will benefit everyone in the surrounding area. We look forward to being able to welcome new tenants into these and our other Greenwich Builds council homes soon."





Greenwich Builds social value

To deliver the 750 sustainable council homes that make up our Greenwich Builds programme we're working with many companies, from construction firms and architects to surveyors and suppliers.

As part of our contracts with these companies, we stipulate that they must provide what is known as Social Value to the wider community. This can take the form of anything - from committing to use local supply chains to making environmental improvements – for example, one upcoming project will see Greenwich Builds contractors creating a vegetable garden for pupils at a local school.

Social value can also take the form of education and training, and already a number of apprentices have been taken on by the firms we're partnering with.



Cllr Danny Thorpe, Leader of the Council, met up for a video chat with one apprentice, Greenwich University student Laura, to find out more about her apprenticeship with our surveyor Blakeney Leigh. Laura is the first of a number of apprentices who will benefit from the social value locked into our Greenwich Builds delivery contracts. To find out more about how to apply for apprenticeships, search for “apprenticeships” at royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

High-tech perspectives: see Greenwich Builds homes from inside and out!

We're using new technologies so you can see Greenwich Builds taking shape from all angles, with a 3-D virtual walkthrough of a show home and drone video of one of our construction sites now accessible at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/greenwichbuilds

We need your help!

Get in touch to find out how you can assist us in *achieving* our goal of building hundreds of new council homes: greenwich.builds@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

Greenwich Builds: our progress so far...



WINTER UPDATE

We're building 750 sustainable council homes for local people. This is the progress we've made so far:



Being designed/assessed: **431 homes**



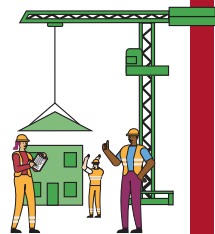
Awaiting planning approval: **108 homes**



Under construction: **207 homes**



Completed: **4 homes**



royalgreenwich.gov.uk/greenwichbuilds



Reporting a Hate Crime to your Tenancy Enforcement Officer

A hate crime is any criminal offence that is motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone's religion, race, sexual orientation, sex, disability, transgender identity or any other perceived difference.

If you are a victim of hate crime, here's how to report it to your Tenancy Enforcement Officer (TEO), and what they will do to support you. You can also report a hate crime if you witness it.



You report a hate crime to your TEO.
You can do this by emailing:
Central-neighbourhoodoffice@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or calling
020 8854 8888.

Your TEO will contact you within 24 hours of a referral.

Your TEO will complete a risk assessment with you to decide the risk level of the crime.

A plan of action will be discussed with you depending on your risk level.

If you are at high-risk, you may require help with Temporary Accommodation. Your TEO will assist you with applying for this, and they will also attend any hate crime panels and keep in contact with you.

Where a perpetrator is identified – enforcement action will only be taken if you are in support of this. Tenancy would use police convictions to take action against perpetrators of hate crime.

To support people who have experienced hate crime, we've commissioned a number of services that provide free support and advice:

- Call the Stop Hate UK 24-Hour helpline, available in more than forty *community* languages, on **0800 138 1625**.
- Contact Greenwich Inclusion Project on **020 3747 9862** or visit **griproject.org.uk**.
- Contact METRO by emailing **safer@metrocharity.org.uk** or call **020 8305 5003**.
- If it is an emergency or you are in immediate danger, always call **999**.



Getting out and about

Leaving the house is much more difficult during lockdown – with restrictions meaning that only essential trips and exercise are allowed. But getting outside and active in the fresh air can massively benefit both your mental and physical health.

There are around 300 open spaces in Royal Greenwich, totalling around 28 per cent of the borough's total area. We also have the Green Chain Walk - a network of walks across south east London which takes in dozens of woods and parks, as well as the Thames Barrier.

So why not become a local explorer and discover the green spaces on your door step.

You can find your local park on the Council website royalgreenwich.gov.uk/parks

Getting started

Not everyone feels like an exercise natural, but once you've got going it's much easier to keep moving!

If you need some hints about how to take the first step greenwichgetactive.com can help. Packed with ideas about overcoming any reluctance or nervousness you might have, it will guide you to becoming more active in the borough.

You should also keep an eye on the site for more safe, fun outdoor activities especially when Covid restrictions relax in the future.

Stay safe

Check the most recent government guidance about exercise and who you can walk with at gov.uk/coronavirus

Keep everyone safe and stay two metres away from other people.

Look out for advice signs at play areas.

Remember – Hands. Face. Space.



Talk Housing

Get Championing!

We're seeking community spirited people to join a team of champions.

We have partnered with the NHS to set up the Community Champions initiative.

Volunteers from across the borough will:

- share key information about coronavirus with friends, family and local community networks
- reduce the amount of misinformation
- signpost to the support available
- receive up to date information about coronavirus and related health and care topics
- feed back local information to us.

What it takes to be a Community Champion

Anyone can become a Community Champion and we welcome people from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures, faiths, ages and interests to reflect the diversity of the borough.

Training and webinars will be provided.

How to sign up

Find out more and register at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/communitychampions



A day in the life of... Community Participation & Diversity Officers Tony and Lynsey.

What do you do on a typical day?

It's really difficult to sum up! In a nutshell, we do housing engagement work with tenants and leaseholders. We encourage people to sign up to YourVIEW, a pool of tenants and leaseholders who provide their views and work together with us to shape and improve how we deliver our housing services. We are all about resident empowerment and engagement.

Equality, inclusion and diversity is at the heart of our work, we want to reach out to underrepresented and marginalised groups as much as possible, and make sure the residents we talk

to are representative of their communities.

How has your role changed because of COVID-19?

We used to be more out of the office than in! We have now become digital. We have always wanted to promote online engagement which COVID-19 has propelled us to do. We have found that the flexibility that online engagement offers, attracts more people to our housing meetings and has made them more accessible for some of our residents.

How can residents get involved with your team more?

Sign up to YourVIEW! Residents can also sign up to YourVIEW training.

They can then find out a bit more about what we do and how they can get involved.

What is the best part of your job?

Tony: For me, it is making a real difference to people's lives and making changes according to what people experience.

Lynsey: I echo that, I love working alongside residents and seeing the changes from their feedback and offering people the real chance to make changes to services. I think our team is important, we make sure residents have a genuine impact on the services they experience.



Keeping warm in winter

Pensioners and some other people who are at risk of fuel poverty can get help towards their heating costs - don't miss out.

Take a look at:

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/heatingcosts for more information.

Energy Advice

SELCE (South East London Community Energy) is a not-for-profit social enterprise formed by Greenwich and Lewisham residents. Services include energy efficiency advice and help to reduce energy bills. Call **0808 169 1779**, email: energyadvice@selce.org.uk or visit: selce.org.uk.

Home Insurance:

Royal Greenwich tenants can obtain home contents insurance from as little as 0.89p a week which can be included with your rent payments.

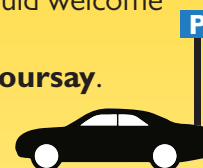
For more information go to the Royal Borough's website royalgreenwich.gov.uk/contentsinsurance or call us on **020 8921 6442**.



Improving Estate Parking

We are partnering with the Project Centre to develop proposals (Traffic Management Orders - TMOs) to improve parking management on our estates. We will shortly be writing to the residents affected with more details about our proposals so that you can tell us your views.

We are also keen to widen this consultation to all residents on estates and would welcome your involvement at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/haveyoursay.



Recycling – let's sort it!

Look out for our *helpful* leaflet that will be dropped through your letterbox soon, which will show you exactly what you should (and shouldn't) be putting in your recycling bins!

We may make temporary changes to our services because of COVID-19, so please remember to check our website for the latest updates: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/recycling.

Food support

During February half-term, children educated at Royal Greenwich primary schools will receive a free 'Take and Make' box if their family is on a low income/on free school meals.

For more information go to: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/together-forwinter.

Rent advice during the pandemic

We understand that the COVID-19 crisis has created financial difficulty for many people.

We want to do all that we can to support you, so if you are unable to pay your rent, please contact us immediately to discuss your situation and we will work with you to address any issues.

You can email rent-account-enquiries@royalgreenwich.gov.uk to explain your situation and we will get back to you. You can also speak to your Income Officer, whose telephone number is on your rent statement and arrears letters.

If you are currently experiencing financial difficulties, we can renegotiate payment plans and help you claim financial support and benefits that you may be entitled to.

If your income has been reduced, you may be entitled to Universal Credit and/or other benefits. This may include help with your rent payments. If you think you are entitled to any support, take action straight away.

The courts are reopening for serious arrears, anti-social behaviour and other cases. If you have high arrears and have not discussed this with your Income Officer, contact us now for advice and to make a repayment plan - otherwise you could risk eviction.

Benefits advice and hardship support

If you need advice on your benefits entitlement, support to manage your claim or to complete an application, contact our Welfare Rights and Universal Support team on **020 8921 3333** (Monday -Friday, 10am - 4pm) or visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/benefitsupport.

The team is experiencing a very high volume of queries and will get back to you as soon as possible. If asked, please leave a message and they will get back to you.

Employment and financial support can also be found at: gov.uk/coronavirus and turn2us.org.uk.



Wordsearch

Have a go at completing our wordsearch, and you could be in with a chance of winning a prize.

There are 10 words in the wordsearch below which will be in italics within this newsletter. You can either:

Email the 10 words to

YourVIEW@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or tear out the back page with your full name, contact number or email and return this to the Community Participation & Diversity Team at the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, SE18 6HQ.



Congratulations to **Efrosyni Hobbs** for winning the last wordsearch!

The words from the last wordsearch are:

Digital, Training, Vegetables, Generation, Construction, Nepal, Autumn, Music, Wildflowers, Financial