

Talk

Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

WELCOME

Welcome to Issue 23 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

SPRING 2023 ISSUE 23



Welcoming our new Housing Champions

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royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housing

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5 minutes with Pat Slattery



I am really delighted to tell you that we have achieved our first two improvements under our Repairs Transformation work.

For those who are happy to report or chase repairs using our online webforms, there's some news here too. We've redesigned the forms so that, for the first time ever, when you order a repair, you can upload some photos of the problem. This should help us to send out the right trade people first time.

We know we still have a long way to go in terms of speed and quality of repair but we've made a good start. We'll keep you posted on other planned improvements.

We have had to increase rents by 7%. I know this is a lot for some tenants in these difficult times, especially those not getting any help through Universal Credit. Unfortunately, real inflation is running at over 10% and that is what we as a department are having to pay for materials and to sub-contractors (often more). To have increased rents any less would have meant cuts in caretaking, tenancy officer time and other important front line services. If you are in danger of falling into arrears please, please make early contact with our income teams. The earlier we can start discussions about methods of payment with you, the less likely you are to fall into serious arrears which would take you years to pay off or could lead to legal action to repossess your home.

Pat Slattery

Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness



Our update on your rent

From Monday 3 April 2023, rents, service charges, and other charges will be increasing. You will find details of the exact increase in the letter you will have received. Despite the increase, which is in line with government guidelines announced last year, our rents will still be the lowest in London.

The Council is facing huge increases in costs, including the price of the materials, goods and services we use. We have calculated the increase on what we believe is a fair balance between residents' contributions and the amount we need to continue essential services. This includes ensuring building safety, caretaking, tenancy services, and improving our repairs service.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties, we can help provide **information, advice, and support** with maximising your income and benefits, and **agree with you a payment plan**. Please get in touch with us as soon as possible, by contacting your Income Officer by emailing rent-account-enquiries@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or call **020 8854 8888** and ask to be placed through to the Income Team.

YOURVIEW HOUSING CHAMPIONS LAUNCHED

We are pleased to announce the launch of our new YourVIEW Housing Champions initiative.

On Tuesday 7th February, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness Cllr Pat Slattery presented the first cohort of *Champions* with their certificates upon completion of their training.

Housing Champions will play a key role on their estates and within their communities; signposting their neighbours to ensure that they can access the services that they need. Housing Champions will also provide a crucial link in representing the views and experiences of their neighbours to help the Housing & Safer Communities Directorate understand any gaps in service provision and strive for improvements.

The Community Participation & Diversity Team have an extensive programme of training and support that Housing Champions can access so that they are equipped for this voluntary role.

If you are a Council Tenant or Leaseholder and would like to find out more about becoming a Housing Champion please get in touch with the Community Participation & Diversity Team by emailing YourVIEW@royalgreenwich.gov.uk



Are you a council tenant looking to move into a smaller home?

In our Winter 2022 edition of Talk Housing, we ran an article about our downsizing scheme and the incentives we offer to those interested.

We want to change our incentive package, but first we want to hear your suggestions on what would help you to make the move to a smaller property. This could include financial as well as practical support.

Let us know your thoughts to be in with a chance of winning a £50 voucher! Find out more by visiting royalgreenwich.gov.uk/downsizing-survey



Repairs and investment transformation programme

The council is running a housing repairs transformation programme, to make the Repairs Service much better for both residents and staff over the next four years. We will reduce call waiting times, improve the quality of repairs, and get more repairs right the first time. There will be other improvements too, all of which seek to address the pain points that residents have told us they are experiencing with the service.

We are 6 months into the programme, and the first improvements have been delivered, including new information about damp and mould on the website.

There are also two new Housing Repairs webforms that you can use to contact us quickly and easily:

1. 'Request a repair': to report a problem with your council home, or to report on behalf of someone else (like a family member). You can upload pictures to help us see what the problem is.
2. 'Request an update': to get an update about the status of a repair that you've already told us about. See below for a step-by-step guide on how to submit the webforms.

To help us get better, please sign up for our paid research panel by emailing your name and contact details to amy.rainbow@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

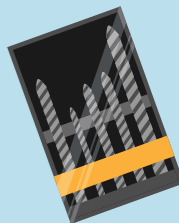
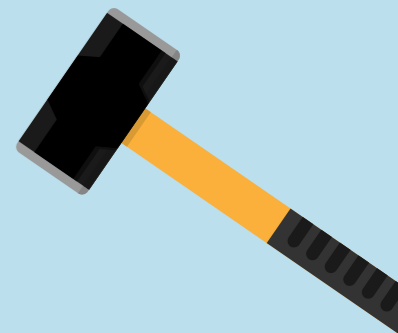
To report a new repair

- 01 Open the Royal Borough of Greenwich Council website.
- 02 Go to the 'Building Work, Repairs, and Improvements' page.
- 03 To report a new repair: Click on 'report a problem in your home' title.
- 04 If you are a tenant: Click on the 'repairs information for tenants' tile.
This will take you to the 'tell us about a problem in your home as a tenant' web page.
If you are a leaseholder: Click in the 'repairs information for leaseholders' tile.
This will take you to the 'tell us about a problem in your home as a leaseholder' web page.
- 05 Scroll down and click on the red button titled 'report your problem online.'
This will take you to the 'request a repair for your council home' web page.
- 06 Read the information on the 'request a repair for your council home' web page. Then press the red button titled 'begin this form'.
- 07 Fill in and submit the form. You will receive an email within working 5 days to let you know we have received your request.



To get an update on a repair

- 01 Open the Royal Borough of Greenwich Council website.
- 02 Go to the 'Building Work, Repairs, and Improvements' page.
- 03 To get an update on an existing repair: Click on 'waiting for us to fix your problem' tile.
- 04 Click on the 'Get an update on your problem tile'.
- 05 Scroll down and click on the red button titled 'get an update online.'
This will take you to the 'Request an update about your repair' web page.
- 06 Read the information on the page and click the red button titled 'begin this form'.
- 07 Fill in and submit the form. You will receive an email within working 5 days to let you know we have received your request.



One in ten new council homes designed for people who use wheelchairs



Councillors recently visited a family in their new wheelchair-adapted home in Eltham, to see how our Greenwich Builds programme is transforming life for residents on the housing waiting list who have a physical disability.

Naman, Shumaila and their children moved into the four-bedroom, carbon neutral council bungalow last year. Their son Muhammed Affan uses a wheelchair, and councillors were shown the design features making life as easy as possible for him and his parents.

Councillor Aidan Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, said: "One in 10 of the 1,750 council homes we have committed to build is wheelchair-adapted. It was fantastic to visit Naman, Shumaila and their children in their new home and see how its accessibility features have improved their lives."

"The corridors are wider to allow wheelchair access, with adjustable height kitchen surfaces, and winches

throughout the home help Muhammed Affan move in and out of his chair. An accessible parking space allows the family to use their car easily and safely."

"This home is also carbon neutral, reducing bills for tenants helping with the commitment set out in our Carbon Neutral Plan to reach net zero carbon by 2030."

Councillor Anthony Okereke, Leader of the Royal Borough of Greenwich, said: "We are responding to the needs of everyone on our waiting list, whether they require a large family home, a one-bedroom flat, or, as in this case, a wheelchair-adapted bungalow."

"This is just one of the ways we are making good on the mission laid out in our corporate plan, for all residents to have access to a safe and secure home that meets their needs."



Over 700 Greenwich Builds properties are now either complete or underway, and will be fairly allocated through Choice Based Lettings when complete.



The innovative building methods used in our sustainable council homes

We showcased the cutting-edge modular construction techniques being used in Greenwich Builds homes at a visit by councillors to a 32-home development in East Greenwich.

Leader of the Council Cllr Anthony Okereke and Cabinet Member for Regeneration Cllr Aidan Smith were impressed by a show home newly installed as part of the build.

The *modules* are manufactured in a controlled factory environment before being installed on-site, allowing for

much faster build times, reduced carbon emissions and less disruption to neighbours.

Production under factory conditions also makes for higher quality standards than traditional buildings, with better air-tightness and energy efficiency.

The development on Tuskar Street is comprised of eight houses with private gardens, 12 duplex apartments, and 12 apartments with a shared garden. Three apartments are adapted for wheelchair use, with three accessible parking spaces.

£ FREE SIM CARDS WITH DATA AND MINUTES FOR RESIDENTS

As part of Greenwich Supports, we have partnered with GLL and the Good Things Foundation’s national scheme to provide 7,200 free mobile sims to residents on a low-income, with no contracts required, residents will not be tied in or expected to pay any money towards keeping the sim open.



Cllr Ivis Williams, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Social Value said:

“Homes across the UK have struggled to pay TV, internet and phone bills in the last year, with some having to cancel services to afford essentials such as food and fuel bills.

“This is something that has been reflected locally, with residents telling us in our cost of living survey that they are cutting back on mobile and broadband payments, entertainment subscriptions and leisure activities due to rising costs.

“This is an incredible partnership we are proud to be a part of, offering a lifeline when our residents need it the most.”



Cllr Adel Khariëh, Cabinet Member for Equality, Culture and Communities said:

“Initiatives like this ensure that everyone gets digital access to contact the Council and learn about support in their local community, no matter their finances. Beyond that, it allows residents to pay bills online and contact loved ones when they feel isolated.”

To be eligible for a sim-card, you must be over the age of 18 and from a low-income household. Three options will be available from Virgin Media 02, Vodafone and Three, all with different data and minute packages.

All 12 library branches will have a one-hour surgery each week for distribution. To find out more about collection times and check if you are eligible visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/free-sim-scheme

GREENWICH SUPPORTS



TOGETHER 23: SAVE THE DATE!

Free summer festival returns to Charlton Park on Saturday 10 June The Royal Borough of Greenwich will bring Together 23 to Charlton Park on Saturday 10 June. And the best part? Everyone's invited!

If you're a resident, get the date in the diary and bring the whole family along.



IF YOU'RE looking to make a big change this year, why not consider fostering?

We urgently need more foster carers in Royal Greenwich to give local children a home when they need one.

There are hundreds of children and young people who need a loving place to call home. If you have time and patience, you could step up and change a life.

All our foster carers get expert training, round-the-clock guidance and competitive allowances.

We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds, as long as you're over 21 and have a spare room.



Contact our fostering team today to learn more. Call 0800 052 1499 or visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/fostering

Can I get Sky Q installed?

We have noticed that some of you would like Sky Q installed.

At present there are no arrangements with Sky and Sky do not seek or have permission to adapt RBG IRS systems.

Allowing Sky ad hoc access to RBG's existing system with their current method of providing a service can lead to other issues for residents of the block.

Making an Impact: Caletock Estate Resident Association

The Caletock Estate Resident Association are seeking to secure a community centre space on the estate.



CERA are currently still holding events in partnership with local businesses and have had a huge positive impact on the estate over the last 12 months.

If you are looking to join this association, and get more involved in building a thriving community, please email CaletockEstateRA@outlook.com

Twitter: @CERA_London

Facebook: Royal Greenwich CERA Community

Fire Safety: Keeping Yourself and others Safe

While one buggy tucked away under a stairwell may seem harmless, in the event of a fire it can become a serious hazard.

Items such as furniture, prams, buggies, mobility scooters, rubbish, clothes drying facilities, bicycles are considered fire risks and must be stored safely.

Please keep common areas clear of any obstructions or fire risks.



Stay Connected and Visit Your Library

Whether you want to read, access the internet, or seek support or advice; your local library is always there to help and welcome you.

For more information, and to find your local library, please visit: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/libraries

Paying your rent, benefits and financial advice

If you are struggling financially - take action, sooner rather than later. If you have any concerns about your rent payments – contact your Income Officer who can offer support, guidance and a realistic rent and arrears payment plan. Your Income Officer can be contacted via the telephone number and e-mail on your rent statement. If you need help managing

or understanding your Universal Credit claim, please call our Universal Support Team on **020 8921 3333** on Monday – Friday, 10am - 4pm. If you need advice on any other benefits or challenging benefit decisions you can call the Welfare Rights Public Advice Line **020 8921 6375** on Monday, Wednesday or Thursday 10am - 1pm.

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 and return this to the Community Participation & Diversity Team at the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, SE18 6HQ.

Please submit with your full name, mobile/telephone number and email.

Thank you to those of you, who sent in your answers from Issue 22.



They were: Change, Pledges, Value, Exceed, Diversity, Role, Gifts, Help, Green, and Ally

Congratulations to **Jacqueline** for winning the last wordsearch!

R	U	Y	X	I	J	M	Z	G	I	C	Z	E	M
G	H	D	A	E	R	E	D	I	V	O	R	P	Y
N	E	M	O	H	P	V	G	S	D	L	J	X	I
I	E	Y	G	Z	F	U	N	Q	P	E	D	M	G
M	V	C	H	A	M	P	I	O	N	S	P	N	P
R	A	E	L	C	H	J	V	S	R	K	H	H	H
O	O	C	G	Y	Y	O	I	J	P	S	K	U	Q
F	Q	Z	K	R	Y	T	R	U	W	M	K	C	V
S	H	A	A	C	B	R	H	N	F	O	U	R	G
N	O	F	R	K	O	E	T	Q	Q	D	K	X	Q
A	D	A	X	D	L	W	T	L	K	U	J	I	Z
R	M	I	N	U	T	E	Y	C	H	L	P	V	B
T	Y	Q	M	S	M	R	O	F	B	E	W	K	V
N	W	S	P	Y	N	F	A	N	D	S	L	L	F