

Talk

Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

WELCOME

Welcome to Issue 25 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

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More council homes completed

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royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housing

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ROYAL borough of
GREENWICH

5 minutes with Pat Slattery



Good news seems rare at the moment but here is some news which I hope gives you some cheer.

The Council has now approved a quarter of a billion pounds of spend on improvements to council homes over the next five years. This is the largest Capital

Programme (as it is known) for many years. It is funded through a combination of money received through the Right to Buy scheme, long-term loans and rents and charges to those who have bought their homes (leaseholders).

The money will be spent on the highest priority work needed which will include new roofs, new windows, lifts, kitchens and bathrooms, insulation

and decorations to the communal areas like staircases and the like. Apart from being a much-needed improvement to the condition of our homes and their environment, many of these improvements will lead to better insulation of our homes. This means they will cost less to heat and will help in tackling the climate crisis by cutting down on what is known as carbon emissions.

Like all major building works, it will take a while before there are 'boots on the ground' as our contractors gear up to deliver the work. However, I hope soon you and your family will experience some of these improvements.

Pat Slattery
Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness



A day in the life!

We caught up with Katie to ask her about her role as a Tenancy Enforcement Officer. Read more about what it is like for her to work in one of our busy tenancy teams.

Why did you decide to work in this role?

I have worked for the Royal Borough of Greenwich for 21 years. I started off as an apprentice at the Birchmere Depot when I was 17.

I applied for my current role as I have always worked in Customer Service / Housing teams and I wanted to make a difference on the estates for tenants.

What is your typical workday like?

My typical day is hectic! My calendar is set beforehand, but on the day, there may be an emergency that takes place where I am expected to respond and support emergency services or other departments. This could take me out of the office for hours.

What do you love about your job?

When there is a successful outcome, and I know that the outcome has caused a difference to residents or the estate. We get to meet the residents – not as much as we would like to – as we manage many properties. I enjoy working with partner agencies including emergency services, mental health services and internal departments which I have not done in previous roles. I enjoy working with a supportive team. In one case, I worked with the Police and the Repairs and Investment team to arrange for gates to be placed around an estate in Plumstead High Street to deter crime and disorder.

What has been your biggest challenge?

When I first started my role, my biggest challenge was getting to know my colleagues on my patches including caretaking staff, meeting residents for the first time and familiarising myself with the areas.

Quick fire questions!

Hobbies? As a full-time working single mum, I don't have many hobbies. I enjoy watching my son grow up as he is growing up fast and I am trying to make every moment count!

Favourite all time film? The Colour Purple. I studied this at secondary school and loved the film.

Music you could listen to all day? Garage music & drum and base. However, I can't listen to it in the office, as much as I would like to!

Favourite food? Pizza



What is the Repairs Transformation programme?

The Repairs Transformation programme is a long-term project set up by the Council to make the Repairs Service better for residents and staff. We want to improve the quality of repairs, get more repairs right the first time, and reduce call waiting times for residents.

What have we been doing over the past few months?

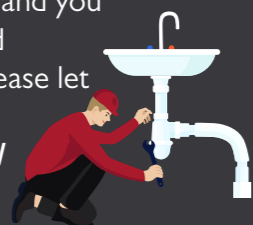
Two of our main priorities have been to understand how we can improve the way we communicate with you as a resident, and how we can improve the way we prevent and treat cases of damp and mould.

We have heard from residents that sometimes they do not get enough information about what is happening with their repair, and that this can be frustrating. We have been carrying out research to find out what information people need at different points, and soon we are going to pilot some improvements to see what works best: for example, giving more specific information when a repair is booked to make sure you know exactly what is going to happen and when.

We have also been carrying out research with staff, residents and other councils to see where we can improve our support around damp, mould and condensation. Over the next few weeks, we are going to share some of our ideas with residents (for example, better ways to help residents tell the difference between damp, mould and condensation so that we can fix the root cause more quickly) and collect feedback to develop the ideas further.

How can I get involved?

If you are a tenant or leaseholder, and you are interested in taking part in paid research to help us to improve, please let us know by completing the online form at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/repairs-survey.



Firework safety tips this autumn

Colourful firework displays will bring some much-needed sparkle to the dark November evenings.

Here's a few words of warning to help you enjoy this time of the year without any accidents!

Sparkler safety

- It's really important to supervise children around sparklers, making sure they keep them at arm's length and don't wave them in each other's faces or drop them onto anything flammable.



Bonfire and firework safety

- Always buy fireworks that are stamped with the safety standard BS 7114. Store unused fireworks in a closed box and keep dry.
- Carefully read instructions on each individual firework and make sure there's plenty of space and clear sky for the fireworks to be let off, directing away from people, trees and overhead cables.
- Never go back to a lit firework or try to re-light it, once the fireworks have been used, put them into a tub of water, and dispose of them in a bin the next day. We understand that most of this is common sense, but if not used correctly can cause real damage, but if used safely, can provide an evening of fun and entertainment for the whole family.



Identify damp, mould and condensation

As the autumn months are now upon us and many people will soon be looking at how to keep their homes warm, we thought we would remind you about how you can help keep damp, mould and condensation at bay in your home.

It can be hard to tell if you have damp or mould or know what to do if you do have it. The information below (including pictures) will help you to identify whether you have damp or mould.



Condensation and mould

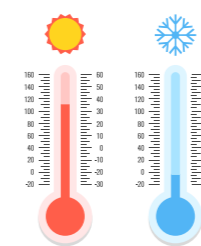
Condensation happens when warm or moist air touches a cold surface; for example, if you have a hot bath and the steam does not escape. Every home has some condensation.

If there is a lot of condensation or it happens repeatedly, it can settle and cause mould on walls or ceilings. Mould can also affect furniture, clothes and curtains.

Damp

If you can see patches of moisture with a 'tidemark' effect, this has probably been caused by damp rather than condensation. Damp could be caused by rainwater damage or plumbing leaks.

If you want to find out more, visit the council website at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/dampandmould for information on how to identify damp, mould and condensation, as well as how to prevent and treat it.



Families settle into new East Greenwich council homes



Councillors stopped by to visit families at new zero carbon council homes in East Greenwich, the latest to be completed as part of our 1,750 home Greenwich Builds programme.

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Ferrier Terrace provides four high-quality three and four-bedroom homes designed for larger families on our housing waiting list.

Cabinet Member for Regeneration Councillor Aidan Smith and Councillor for East Greenwich Maisie Richards Cottell met with tenants Ms Jamila and Mr and Mrs Mensah, all of whom said they are thrilled with their new homes.

After eight years on the waiting list, Ms Jamila said her new house was an improvement in every imaginable way on the previous temporary accommodation she and her children had been living in.

Mr and Mrs Mensah said their family loved having features like the upstairs and downstairs bathrooms, brand new kitchen and roof terrace.

Each home has its own garden and incorporates the latest sustainability technology such as heat pumps and solar panels to achieve zero carbon emissions. Cabinet Member for Regeneration Cllr Aidan Smith said: *“The homes at Ferrier Terrace are a great example of the larger properties we are creating in response to demand on the housing waiting list. We wish our tenants all the very best in their new homes.”*



Topping out ceremony for 122 new council homes in Kidbrooke

A celebration has been held to mark the final concrete pour on 122 new Greenwich Builds council homes in Kidbrooke.

The event, known as a topping out ceremony, was attended by Leader of the Royal Borough of Greenwich, Councillor Anthony Okereke; Deputy Mayor of London for Housing, Tom Copley; Greater London Authority Members; ward Councillors Sandra Bauer and Dave Sullivan and Managing Director of developer Durkan Limited, Tim Carpenter.

Guests were guided to the top floor of the structure where they took in panoramic views before the last section of cement was trowelled off by Cllr Okereke, Deputy Mayor Copley and Tim Carpenter, who each said a few words in praise of the scheme, which is creating much-needed homes for people on the Council’s housing waiting list.

Part-funded by the Mayor of London’s Homes for Londoners programme, the development at

Kidbrooke Park Road is spread over four buildings and will achieve high sustainability standards through the use of ground source heat pumps, solar panels and efficient insulation.

One in 10 homes will be specifically designed for wheelchair users, in line with the Council’s commitment 10% Greenwich Builds council homes to be wheelchair adapted.

Two large landscaped communal outdoor areas and a tree-lined corridor with 69 newly planted trees will provide amenity space, and the design includes a nursery for both new tenants and existing local residents.

Kidbrooke Park Road North will be followed by a second, larger development of council homes to the south. When both are completed they will provide over 440 council homes for local people on the housing waiting list, together with more landscaping, trees and a retail unit.



Standing Against Racism in our Community

The Housing and Safer Communities Directorate has signed up to the SHARP Pledge (Social Housing Anti-Racism Pledge).

We are also running our own Standing Against Racism Campaign which has the following aims:

- To be committed to anti-racist practices within the housing directorate.
- To develop an understanding as a landlord of any issues of racism faced by our tenants.
- To develop a better form of cultural competency around our BME (Black and multiple ethnicity) residents and where possible adapt our services accordingly.
- To identify through accurate data collection any instances of systemic racism within housing policy and practice and link back into the Housing Strategy for service improvements.

For more support, advice and guidance: Contact GRIP (Greenwich Inclusion Project) at griproject.org.uk.

Report it: Contact your Tenancy Enforcement Officer on **020 8854 8888** and ask to be put through to the Tenancy Team, email **Tenancy-Enforcement-Teams@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**, or call the police on **999** if you are at immediate risk.

Get involved: Sign up to become a Housing Champion by emailing **Community-Participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**

Social Housing Anti-Racism Pledge: Visit sharpledge.org/sharp

Parking by numbers

Here is a flavour of our estate parking schemes by numbers.

These schemes were launched last autumn to provide effective enforcement across many estate locations across the borough.

2,544 

resident permits issued to help residents park closer to their home

£4.75 

is the cost per month (£) for a monthly resident permit to help spread the cost of the permit for people

387



is the average number of Penalty Charge Notices issued through April to July 2023 – helping to keep valuable spaces available on estates for resident parking and supporting efforts to maintain emergency vehicle access at all times

£0 

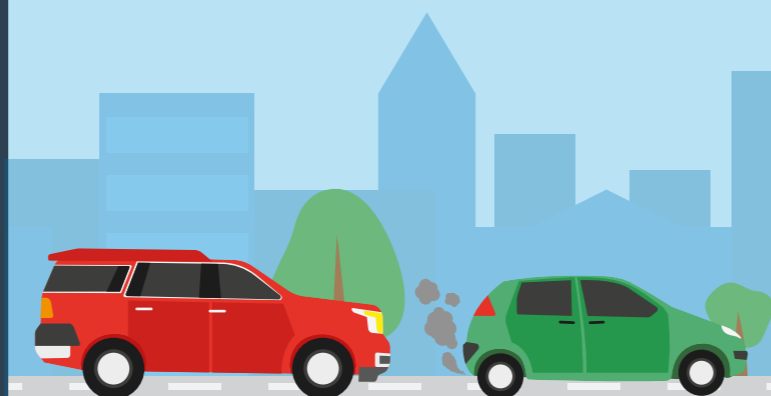
the cost for a disability permit or carer permit to ensure that we support residents who have particular needs

890 

visitor permits issued to enable visitor parking where we can

A few additional locations will be added in October 2023.

To find out more info visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/estateparking



New Restons Crescent play area!

At the end of June, the play area at Restons Crescent on the Avery Hill Estate in Eltham was reopened following a £80,000 improvement project.

These improvements included landscaping some areas and introducing new equipment, pathways and safety surfacing, so that both infants and junior age groups would benefit.

As a part of our commitment to maintain and improve play provision across all our sites, there will be another £420,000 investment over the next two years to improve another eight play areas in the following locations:

- Vanbrugh Park Estate
- Maitland Close
- Flamstead Estate
- Polthorne Estate
- Gilbert House
- Lamb Lane Estate
- Woolwich Common Estate
- Thornham Street.



In the meantime, all 50 housing sites across the borough will continue to have regular health and safety inspections to ensure that all the current equipment and safety surfacing is kept in good condition and safe for children to use. This includes the six outdoor gyms that improve the health and wellbeing of adults.



Don't lose your voice in future elections

Did you know that you need photo ID to vote at a polling station even if you are a registered voter? Don't worry if you don't have a valid form of voter ID – apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate today.

Check if you have a valid form of photo ID before the next scheduled elections on 2 May 2024 – don't lose your voice!

Apply for a Voter Authority Certificate: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/voter-id

Register to vote: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/register tovote



Charge Safe

Did you know that it is currently illegal to use an e-scooter on the road, pavement or in any public space? No? then you'd be forgiven for thinking that they could be, as private e-scooters are widely sold and regularly used by people all over the UK. In recent years, there has been increasing concerns over illegal and unsafe e-scooter sales after a spate of home fires caused by defective e-scooter batteries.

We are backing the London Fire Brigade's (LFB) 'Charge Safe' campaign to raise awareness of the fire risks involved when charging batteries for powered transporters, like electric bikes or electric scooters at home. The LFB has launched the campaign because the service has been called to an average of two e-bike or

e-scooter fires every day since the start of 2023. And last year, fire fighters attended 116 house fires in London that were mostly caused by unsafe or damaged lithium powered transporter batteries.

To help keep us and our homes safe, the Royal Borough of Greenwich has collaborated with the LFB to offer a list of dos and don'ts on how to reduce the risks of fire if you have an e-bike or e-scooter.



Safety advice for e-bikes and e-scooters

DO

- buy e-bikes and e-scooters from approved/reputable suppliers;
- use only the manufacturer-supplied battery charger;
- check that e-bikes and e-scooters batteries and chargers meets UK safety standards and always buy an official item from a reputable seller.
- check that e-bikes and e-scooters batteries and chargers meets UK safety standards and always buy an official item from a reputable seller. Look for a product approval mark, e.g., a CE mark;
- replace e-bikes and e-scooters that have an unknown history or are from nonapproved/reputable suppliers;
- let the battery cool down before charging it and unplug the charger from the electrical supply when it has finished charging;
- replace the original manufacturer/supplier battery of e-bikes and e-scooters only if needed which should always be done by a competent supplier who has obtained replacements from the original manufacturer/supplier ensuring the same battery specification. Do not replace the batteries yourself.
- install fire/smoke alarms where you are charging e-bikes or e-scooters, and test the alarms regularly.

DO NOT

- use universal chargers;
- use anything other than the manufacturer-supplied battery charger;
- leave e-bikes and e-scooters unattended when charging, e.g., overnight, while at work or on holiday etc;
- charge or leave e-bikes and e-scooters in hallways, landings, stairs or emergency exit routes; never block or partially block escape routes;
- keep and charge e-bikes and e-scooters indoors unless unavoidable;
- modify e-bikes, e-scooters their batteries or chargers;
- convert bikes to e-bikes or scooters to e-scooters;
- charge e-bikes and e-scooters where this will result in trailing cables in walkways.



Check your home fire safety today by scanning the QR code or go to: london-fire.gov.uk/protect

New number for reporting housing repairs

There is a new freephone number for reporting new housing repairs. The number is **0808 175 6915** and can be called Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. The calls are answered by the Royal Borough of Greenwich contact centre. Please note: this number is only for reporting a repair for the first time.

Beware of bogus calls

We are aware that some residents have received calls about repairs to their property from people pretending to be from the Royal Borough of Greenwich Housing team.

Please note we will never ask for or take payment for repairs over the phone. Please do not give out your bank details if you are asked to do so.

If you are contacted about making a payment or receive any suspicious emails or calls, please report it by emailing fraud@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

Stay safe this autumn

We understand that autumn is the season of falling leaves, Halloween, Guy Fawkes Night, bonfires and fireworks. Please be aware that you can only hold bonfires or fireworks in your own private garden, and not on any other part of the council housing estate or communal area.

Are your home contents covered for unexpected loss or damage?

Find out how our home contents insurance – designed exclusively for you – can provide peace of mind at a much lower cost than you might expect.

Our Tenants Contents Insurance can work for you by providing:

- financial protection from the unexpected
- pay as you go cover – no annual renewal
- affordable monthly premiums
- contents replaced as new
- optional accidental damage cover.

Basic cover starts from as little as £1.13 a month for £4,000 worth of cover.

Find out more at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/contentsinsurance

Paying your rent, benefits and financial advice

If you need help managing or understanding your Universal Credit claim, please call our Universal Support Team on **020 8921 3333** on Monday to Friday, 10am to 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 to 1pm.

Are you ready for the switch to Universal Credit?

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will be changing the way some working age residents receive benefits.

Residents who are currently on the old system, known as legacy benefits, will be transferred to Universal Credit between August 2023 and 2029.

The process begins when the resident receives a Managed Migration Notice from the DWP. Residents do not need to move to Universal Credit before this notice.

Our teams can provide you with advice about these changes, or any other benefit matter at **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/universal-credit-switch**. Or you can contact Welfare Rights **020 8921 6375** on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 10am to 1pm, please select option 1.

Fire door inspections

Recent fire legislation came into force this year, which means that as your landlord we need to make sure that all fire doors across blocks that are 11 metres and above, are in efficient working order and in good repair.

Work to inspect and label front entrance doors to each home will start mid-October and all residents due to receive this inspection will receive a letter. For this work to be carried out effectively, our staff will need access to the area inside your front door – for approximately 5 minutes – so that both sides of your front door can be checked and labelled with a small sticker containing a QR code.

Once the stickers have been put on, please do not remove them. The stickers are simply a way for us to electronically capture important fire inspection data for that door and in no way will contravene the privacy in your home.

Our staff will always carry official Royal Borough of Greenwich identification. If you are not at home when we visit, we will try on subsequent occasions to complete this work. But please remember that you should never allow anyone into your home without checking their official identification first.

Please work with us to allow access to your home to complete this important work.

Find the missing item!

There is a golden spanner on one of the pages within this newsletter.

If you find this, please email the page number to **YourVIEW@royalgreenwich.gov.uk** with you full name, number and address' to be in with a chance of winning a prize.

