

Talk Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

WELCOME

Welcome to Issue 30 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 issues we would love to hear them.

Please email community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

WINTER 2025 ISSUE 30



Transforming our Repairs Service

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ROYAL *borough of*
GREENWICH

5 minutes with Councillor Pat Slattery



We are moving mountains to improve our Repairs Service for you and you can read an update on this on page 4. I'm pleased with the progress we've made so far, but we know we still have some way to go.

I am very proud of another initiative we've just launched, which is our improved under-occupancy scheme. We have increased the financial incentive offer to people living in Council homes with more bedrooms than they now need. We have a new member of staff to help especially older people who wish to downsize but feel overwhelmed by the idea of moving.

If you are in this position, or know someone who is, please email housing-allocations-downsizing@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or call **020 8921 2941**. You will have the choice of where you move to, have the highest priority when bidding, and no one will be forced to leave their existing home or take whatever is available.

Finally, another area I want to make sure we have right, is the role of your tenancy officer. They currently have a large number of residents to look after (around 1,000 households each) and are pulled in many directions. They tackle anti-social behaviour such as noise nuisance, help where tenants are struggling with their mental health which can cause issues such as hoarding, they deal with the legal aspects of our landlord role...and numerous other things that arise every day.

I am so grateful to them for their work and keen to support them. We'd love to hear from you about what you think their priorities should be.

Look out for a consultation at some point in the first half of the year.

Councillor Pat Slattery
Cabinet Member Housing Management,
Neighbourhoods and Homelessness

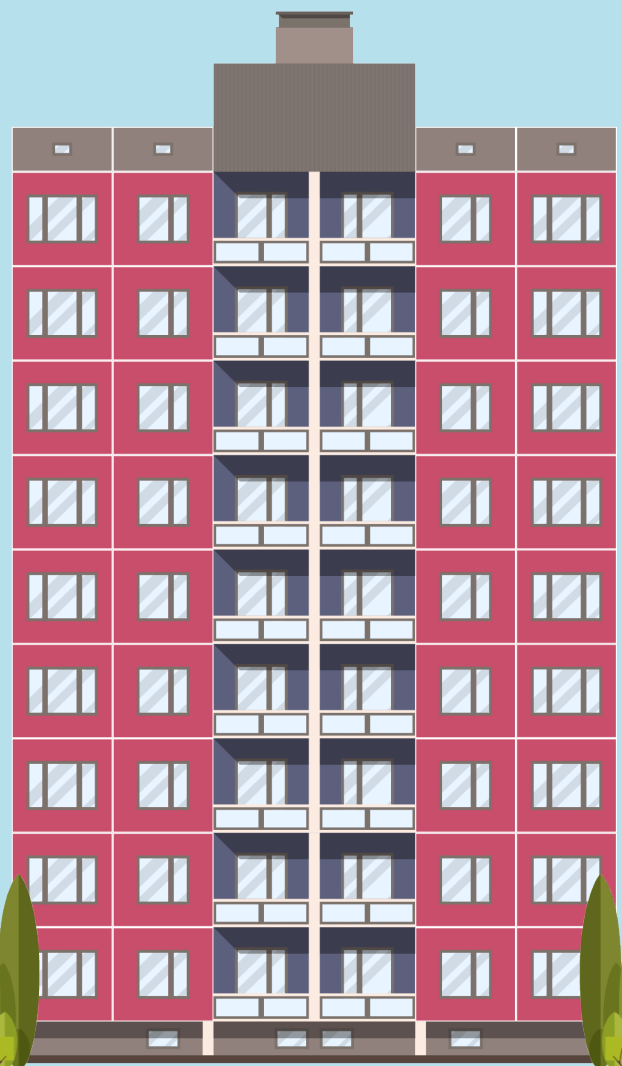


Get involved in our Tenancy Service

Currently tenancy officers look after a large number of residents and handle a wide range of issues including anti-social behaviour, noise, hoarding and legal issues. They work closely with our own social care and children's services teams, as well as with a huge variety of partners, including the police, NHS and more.

We are grateful for their work and are keen to support them better. We want to make sure their work and our service is fit for the future so we would love to hear your priorities for your neighbourhoods.

If you're interested in hearing more about this or sharing your thoughts, please sign up to YourVIEW via royalgreenwich.gov.uk/yourview for updates and future opportunities to get involved.



Congratulations to Candice McQueen - our new Resident Chair of the Borough Wide Housing Panel

We spoke with Candice to hear her thoughts on her new role, the goals she hopes to achieve and challenges she expects as her time as chair.

What are you most excited about in your new role?

I'm looking forward to gaining new experiences in my new role as chair. I'm excited to see what the future holds as well as the outcome of the capital works. I'm also excited to be working with the council as well as residents on a different level.

What key goals do you hope to achieve during your time as chair?

I would like to increase resident attendance at meetings and gain more publicity for the Borough Wide Housing Panel. I aim to achieve more positive outcomes for residents such as improvements in repairs.

What challenges do you anticipate facing in this role, and how do you plan to address them?

I think there will be many – I can't give any specifics yet, but the plan is to address them as they arise, one by one.

What skills or qualities do you bring to your role?

I have been a previous housing rep for many years so I am aware of the issues that residents face and my former experience in that role will be helpful as the new chair. I have good communication skills and I'm not afraid to say things how they are. I also think I am good at holding people to account and following up with others. I'm approachable and friendly and happy to have a conversation with anyone.

How do you envision the future of housing in Greenwich?

I think it is going to become very digitalised which I think will be difficult for those that don't have access to the internet or technology or aren't able to do so without additional support in place.

I am worried that local housing meetings are going to disappear. Where the new builds are being built on the outskirts of the area, it is becoming increasingly difficult for residents to attend. It would be good if the local housing meetings were held in smaller areas which would be more beneficial for all residents.

Quick fire questions:

How long have you lived in the Royal Borough of Greenwich?

All of my life

What is something that not many people know about you?

I'm very indecisive! (For most things).

What's your favourite season? Summer – I like the warmth!

If you could have any superhero power, what would it be and why?

Invisibility – Then you can be a fly on a wall and people wouldn't know you were there.

What was your least favourite subject at school? Maths

What's your favourite way to relax? Listening to music and watching the TV whilst curled up with the cat.

What is your favourite colour? Purple



Transforming our Repairs Service

Our recent performance

In our most recent quarterly satisfaction survey carried out independently last October, we were pleased to note the following:



However, we know that we don't always get it right and we need to make improvements to the service we provide for our residents.

Making our service better for you

We have been working on an ambitious four-year change repairs transformation programme to radically improve, modernise and transform our service to ensure we can meet the needs of our residents and staff.



Below is a summary of three of our current main priorities:

Addressing communication gaps

We've heard that you sometimes lack information about what is happening with your repair, especially when more work is needed, and that this can be frustrating. To address this, we've piloted a dedicated phone line with some of our trades staff, which allows them to schedule 'follow-on' jobs while on-site, so you know exactly when we'll return. This pilot has been successful so far, with around 3,500 residents now staying informed about the next steps in their repair.

Improving our damp, mould and condensation offer

We've also completed a research and co-design project with staff and residents to improve our support around damp, mould and condensation offer. This led to us creating a dedicated, specialist team that responds

more quickly to cases of damp and mould in residents' homes. We are also prioritising our most vulnerable residents and high priority cases so that they receive a targeted and faster response.

Tackling our approach to leaks and leaks from above

This is a significant issue for our residents, who have told us we need to improve how we handle leaks, especially from above. We are starting a new project to explore leaks further and would like your help in designing a service to resolve them more quickly and accurately.

Take part in research

If you're a tenant or leaseholder and interested in paid research to tell us about your experience, please let us know by completing this form at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housing-repairs-research



How building our new council homes provides value for everyone



Building 1,750 new council homes for people on our housing register is a top priority for the council, and as we build, we want to make sure we're getting as much value as possible for everyone in our borough.

That's why every company we work with to help us create our homes must agree to provide what is called "social value" - extra activities and services that benefit the wider community.

This can take many forms: improvements to parks and public spaces, hosting school visits so children can learn about construction and - perhaps most importantly - training, apprenticeships and jobs for local people.

A perfect example of this was a recent 'Get Ready for Construction' bootcamp held at the Greenwich Local Labour and Business Work and Learn Centre

by two companies working on our new homes: Durkan and OHB.

Thirty-five keen Royal Greenwich residents attended an information session before being interviewed for the eight slots available on the bootcamp.

The successful applicants learned essential construction skills such as groundworks, steel fixing and formwork, over the week's course which took place at OHB's Training Academy and onsite at Kidbrooke Park Road, where we're building 452 new council homes for local people.

Four of the eight attendees were offered jobs at the end of the course, and due to the success of the first bootcamp more will be offered in 2025.

This is just one example of the many benefits our new council home-building programme has for the wider community.



Sneak a peek at more new council homes

These computer-generated images show how the latest council homes will look once completed. The latest sites will offer a mix of housing options from one-bedroom flats to four-bedroom houses. In total we're creating 1,750 council homes for people on the housing register.



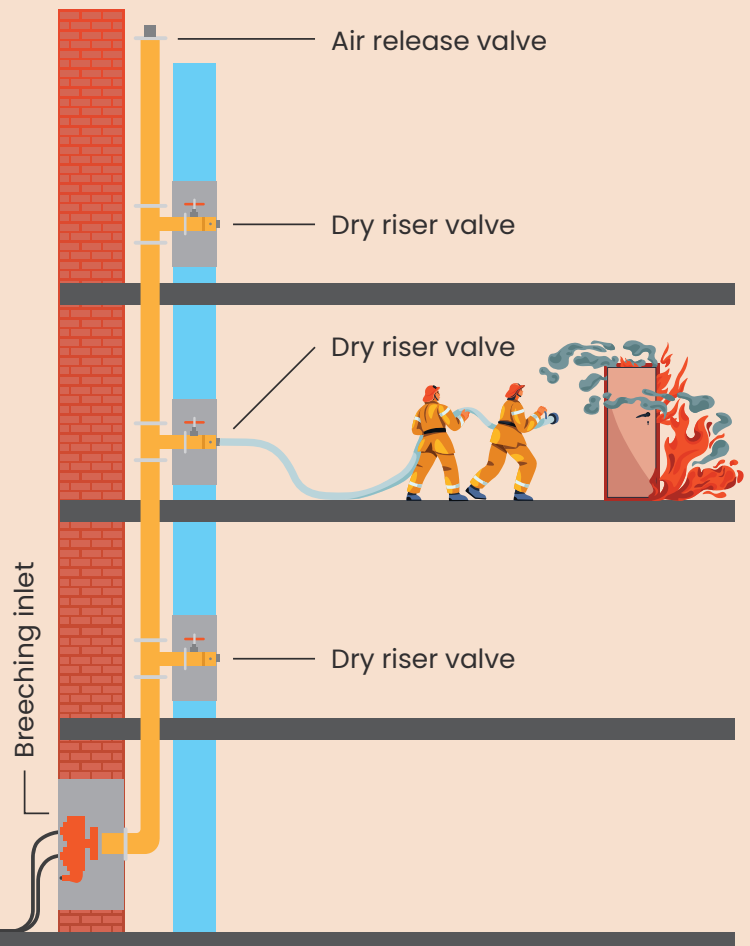
Check the fire safety of your home

Protect your loved ones from fire with the London Fire Brigade's Home Fire Safety Checker. It's quick, easy, and could save lives. Visit london-fire.gov.uk/home-fire-safety-checker to assess your home's fire risks and get tailored safety advice.

Report dry riser valve thefts

Dry risers provide water to fight fires in high-rise buildings. If a valve is stolen or damaged, the entire system fails, posing a serious fire risk. Report thefts to your landlord immediately and to the police (**999** if ongoing, **101** if already stolen). Let the London Fire Brigade know too, on **020 8555 1200**.

Help keep your building safe!



Help us keep your community clean

We're asking for your help to ensure our waste crews can do their job efficiently. Unfortunately, poorly parked cars are making it difficult for them to access and empty your communal bins.

Please park responsibly by:

- parking in designated parking bays
- keeping access roads to bin cupboards clear
- avoiding parking in front of bin cupboards
- observing road markings (yellow lines, hatched areas, no parking signs)
- avoiding parking on tight corners
- reminding your visitors to park responsibly.

Your cooperation will help prevent blocked chutes, overflowing bins, litter and fly-tipping.

Thank you for your help in keeping our community clean and tidy.

Home window safety

Falls from any height can be serious particularly if children fall a distance or land on something that is hard or sharp. However, there are plenty of simple steps that can be taken to reduce the risks.

Windows

- Keep a watchful eye on toddlers and younger children and keep windows secured when toddlers and younger children are unsupervised
- Make sure toddlers and younger children can't reach windows that can be easily opened.
- Never place furniture or items that can be climbed near windows or on balconies. Toddlers and younger children could use furniture or items as 'ladders' to reach windows and to climb over balcony edges.
- Check to make sure that your windows are fitted with window restrictors that limit window openings to 100mm or 4 inches. Restrictors let fresh air in but prevent children opening windows further and falling out. Window restrictors should enable windows and 'means of escape' windows to be opened in an emergency without needing to find keys or using tools.
- Don't show younger children how to open windows or use window restrictors.
- Make sure that window restrictors are working properly and haven't been removed. If window restrictors aren't working properly, please contact the Repairs Service at **occupied-repairs@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**
- If you think that a window should have a restrictor but doesn't, please contact **occupied-repairs@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**
- Don't rely on window screens to keep children safe. Window screens are designed to keep insects out but will not stop toddlers and younger children falling out.

For more information and advice visit:
rospa.com/keeping-kids-safe-hub/falls
capt.org.uk/falls-from-open-windows



Window blinds

Since February 2014, all blinds sold in the UK must comply with child safety standards.

GOV.UK advises that;

- Changes to standards for blinds in 2014 have led to improved product safety.
- New blinds with looped cords must have child safety devices installed at the point of manufacture or sold with the blind.
- However, blinds installed earlier may not have these features and millions of households could be affected. Our advice will help you make your home safer for your children and young visitors.
- Fit a tidy, tensioner or a cleat: tidies and tensioners should be firmly fixed to an adjoining surface so that the cord or chain are permanently held tight.
- Cleats should be positioned out of children's reach on an adjacent surface, at least 1.5 metres from the floor.
- Cords should be fastened in a figure of eight after every use of the blind, making sure all the spare cord is secured on the cleat.
gov.uk/government/news/check-your-blind-cords-and-keep-your-home-safe
- The same safety advice applies to corded curtain tracks

For more information and advice visit the following websites:

rospa.com/campaigns-fundraising/current/blind-cord

capt.org.uk/blind-cords

tradingstandards.uk/news-policy-campaigns/public-information/blind-cords-campaign

makeitsafe.org.uk

Feeling overwhelmed by rising costs? Don't let financial stress take over

Here's three tips to regain control:

1. Master your money

Create a realistic budget to track income and expenses.

Use this free budget planner to stay on top of your finances:
moneyhelper.org.uk/budget-planner

Prioritise essential costs including rent, council tax, gas, electricity, water and food.

2. Protect your home

Pay rent first, and on time

Contact creditors to negotiate affordable payment plans if you're behind on your payments.

3. Seek free debt help

Seek free debt advice to explore solutions: **debtfreeadvice.com**

You don't need an appointment to get free face-to-face advice about debt at our Advice Hubs. Visit **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/advicehubs** for more details.

Installing CCTV, a doorbell camera or other surveillance outside your home

Council tenants and leaseholders need to request permission before installing domestic surveillance equipment, such as CCTV or doorbell cameras, if the device is to be fitted to the building or door using screws, nails or hooks or if fixed wire installation is required.

We will not give you permission if the following applies:

- That you have asked permission under Section 3.8 of your Tenancy Agreement, which states:
- You must have our prior written permission, which we will not unreasonably withhold or delay, before doing any of the following work: *repairs and decoration which involves drilling into or otherwise disturbing the surfaces or fabric of the property...*

The device should be fitted using the fixings supplied with it and not installed in such a way that could affect the integrity of the door and invalidate any associated safety certification.

You can request permission by emailing: **tenancy-enforcement-teams@royalgreenwich.gov.uk** or calling **020 8921 6383**

We will not provide consent or may withdraw consent if you are not meeting these conditions, or if you didn't ask permission before installing CCTV/video doorbell:

- If you have cameras that are clearly focussed on neighbours' homes or property as this can be considered as causing a nuisance or annoyance and is a breach of your tenancy agreement.
- We will ask you to remove the equipment; and may take legal action if necessary.

If you do not keep to these conditions, permission to keep the device might be revoked and you could be asked to immediately remove the device. If you do not comply, the council will remove the camera, and all costs will be recharged to you.



Tenancy Enforcement officer – could you work with us?

We're looking for tenancy enforcement officers, who will be responsible for the day-to-day management of tenancy and neighbourhood issues in respect of a designated group of dwellings.

You will ensure the proper and appropriate use of accommodation and ensure that residents receive an efficient and effective service in respect of tenancy and related issues.

Specifically, you will provide a pro-active approach to dealing with all forms of nuisance and anti-social behaviour and will be responsible for taking robust enforcement action against breaches of tenancy conditions.

Please contact **tenancy-enforcement-teams@royalgreenwich.gov.uk** for more information on the role.

April 2025 rent increase

A decision about the rent increase which will be effective from 1 April, will be made by Full Council on 26 February following a recommendation by Cabinet on 12th February. All tenants will be written to soon after this date.

Please see the back page to find out about what financial support is available.

Is your home too big for you?

Under-occupying tenants who want to downsize to a smaller home can now apply for a bigger cash incentive of £1000 per bedroom to move to a home that better meets their needs.

These changes are intended to free up larger homes for families living in overcrowded conditions and is one of the ways we're tackling the housing crisis.

They will now be subject to a one-year pilot having been agreed at a Cabinet meeting last March.

Here is a summary of the new changes that came into effect from 1 October 2024 for under-occupying tenants:

- We have created a new, dedicated Under Occupation Adviser role for the scheme. This officer will be supporting under-occupiers who want to downsize, with a particular focus on older tenants.
- Tenants can receive £1,000 per bedroom released to downsize to a smaller property. This is £650 more than the previous payment of £350. An additional £500 will also be offered to for those who downsize by mutual exchange.
- Older tenants that claim Pension Credit will be eligible for a room for themselves plus one extra bedroom.
- A non-dependent adult living with an under-occupying tenant who wants to downsize and is their parent, can be offered their own one-bedroom flat, providing the Council can gain back an additional bedroom.

If you would like to know more, please email the Allocations Team on: **housing-allocations-downsizing@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**, call **020 8921 2941** or visit **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/move-to-a-smaller-home**



Do you need support with your rent arrears?

If you have rent arrears and want more support, speak to your Income Officer.

It's not too late and we want to help.

Our Income Officer can work with you to sort out an affordable repayment arrangement for your rent and can give advice and refer on to other support agencies such as Money Advice Team.

Call us on **020 8854 8888** or email **rent-account-enquiries@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**.



Universal Credit

Universal Credit managed migration advice sessions. At our advice session, our advisers assist residents who are affected by the move to Universal Credit, also known as Managed Migration. Our advisers can provide specialist advice on making the move to Universal Credit once you receive a Migration Notice letter inviting you to claim. Find out more about our advice sessions at

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/uc-advice

