

Talk

# Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

## WELCOME

Welcome to Issue 28 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](mailto:community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk)

SUMMER 2024 ISSUE 28



## Improving our homes

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## 5 minutes with Jamie Carswell



In the last issue I told you about our capital works programme to improve some of our existing council homes. Initial work to upgrade some kitchens and bathrooms and a major roof replacement has taken place, and vital energy efficiency improvement works are nearing completion on some street level homes in the south of the borough.

Over the next few months, you may start to see some of our contractors setting up at various locations across the borough and preparing to start on further elements of this programme which we will keep you updated on.

We've made it a requirement for our contractors to deliver additional benefits for our residents through the provision of apprenticeships, jobs, training and a range of community engagement and development initiatives, as part of their social value commitments.

I'm pleased to say that 11 residents have started domestic energy and retrofit training with Wates, who are working to make some of our older street properties more energy efficient. Additionally, some residents have secured work in a variety of roles with Mulalley, who are one of our contractors working on our kitchen and bathroom refurbishment programme.

These are just some of the early positive outcomes of the programme so far with more to come which we look forward to giving you updates on in future editions. If you're interested in finding out more see page 4.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a very enjoyable summer.

**Jamie Carswell**  
Director of Housing and Safer Communities



## Is your home cluttered?

**The Council has a friendly support group for local people who struggle with hoarding. This group is free and is open to anyone.**

We are keen to help de-stigmatise hoarding behaviour by creating a safe, confidential space where people who hoard can meet other people who struggle with clutter and who want to reclaim space in their homes. It is confidential and judgment-free with people who know what it is like.

Also supporting our work are the London Fire Brigade, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, and the Woolwich Service Users' Project (WSUP).

The support group is free, and you don't need to be referred by a professional, you can just turn up and you'll be more than welcome. It will be confidential and a judgement-free atmosphere.

**For more details about the hoarding support group please call 020 8921 2446 or email [hoarding-support@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:hoarding-support@royalgreenwich.gov.uk).**

You can also contact us if you have any questions or would like to discuss your situation or whether the group might be appropriate for you.

## #ChargeSafe - e-scooter and e-bike safety

**E-bikes and e-scooters can help people get more active and travel more easily. However, they have also become London's fastest growing fire risk.**

In 2023, there was a fire on average once every two days. Three people have sadly died and around 60 people have been hurt in fires believed to have been caused by a failure of an e-bike or e-scooter lithium battery.

Lithium batteries are used safely by millions of people every day, and when used properly they are not dangerous.

However, following a recent serious incident involving an e-scooter fire within the borough we are issuing some helpful guidance below to ensure our residents stay safe.



### Safely charging your e-bike or e-scooter

- Don't charge e-bikes and e-scooters in bedrooms or where escape routes within your property can be blocked, for example, hallways
- Don't leave your battery charging unattended when you are out or while asleep
- Don't cover chargers or battery packs when charging
- Don't overload sockets or use inappropriate extension leads
- Don't charge or store batteries in direct sunlight or hot locations
- Don't charge batteries close to combustible materials or hazardous substances
- Unplug your charger once the battery has charged
- If your battery can be removed from your e-bike or e-scooter and charged separately, it should be charged on a hard flat surface where heat can disperse and in an area with good ventilation

### When buying an e-bike or e-scooter

According to the London Fire Brigade you are far safer if you buy your bike or scooter from a reputable seller where you can be more confident that the product has been built to the required safety standard.

E-bikes or e-scooters that have been fitted with batteries or other parts bought separately online pose a far greater risk.

### Buying e-bikes and e-scooters

- Only buy e-bikes, e-scooters, chargers and batteries from reputable retailers and manufacturers
- Check the product is marked with a **CE** or **UKCA** mark to ensure they comply with UK product safety standards
- Check product reviews before buying
- Register your product with the manufacturer to validate any warranties and make it easier for manufacturers to contact you in the event of a safety issue, for example, a product recall.
- Check if products have been recalled by visiting the government Product Recalls and Alerts website at [gov.uk/guidance/product-recalls-and-alerts](https://gov.uk/guidance/product-recalls-and-alerts)

London Fire Brigade have been running its #ChargeSafe campaign to raise awareness of the fire risks and outline what Londoners can do to protect themselves and their livelihoods.

Find out more at [london-fire.gov.uk/safety/lithium-batteries](https://london-fire.gov.uk/safety/lithium-batteries)



## Improving our homes

**Our work to improve some of our existing council homes, blocks and estates as part of our £430 million capital repairs programme is well underway.**

This extensive programme covers internal (e.g. kitchens and bathrooms) and external improvements (e.g. roofs, windows, lifts, balconies, walkways), energy efficiency upgrades (e.g. UPVC windows, external and cavity wall insulation) and includes fire safety improvements, electrical testing, and individual and communal heating upgrades.

It's our biggest investment in council homes for a generation, to make sure people in Greenwich have access to a safe and secure home.

We've already started to transform over 600 council homes in the south of the borough, with new double-glazed window replacements, cavity wall insulation, ventilation upgrades, external wall insulation and loft insulation. Initial work is due to complete in the summer.

We've prioritised works based on homes and blocks that are in the greatest need of repair or refurbishment, following an extensive survey of our buildings.

Work to upgrade some kitchens and bathrooms and carry out vital roof replacement work in some parts of the borough has taken place and some of our first street properties to receive energy efficiency upgrades are nearing completion.

Over the next few months, you may start to see some of our contractors - Axis, Equans, United Living, Wates, Amber and Mulalley – and their sub-contractors setting up at various locations across the borough.



## Giving back to the local community

Contractors are working with us to deliver additional benefits for our residents through apprenticeships, jobs, training and a range of community engagement and development initiatives.

### Some early highlights:

- 11 residents have started the Level 3 Domestic Energy Assessor and Level 4 Retrofit Assessor course with Wates, who are working to make some of our older street properties more energy efficient. This course will give them with skills to work on a range of energy efficiency projects.
- Six residents have secured work with Mulalley, who are one of our contractors working on our kitchen and bathroom refurbishment programme. This includes Fehime Kamanoglu and Gary Woods who have started work as site managers, Janice Trotman who has secured a role as a resident liaison officer and Harry Woods is now a labourer and storeman

Look out for more in-depth case studies over the coming months.

If you are interested in finding out about jobs or training opportunities in your area, please email [israel.aguirre@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:israel.aguirre@royalgreenwich.gov.uk) or call **020 8921 5157** to register your interest.



## Are you an experienced tradesperson?

Our Repairs & Investment Team is looking for experienced tradespeople to join us on our journey to improve our council homes.

If you are experienced in plumbing, electrics or other construction trades and are looking for work please check our recruitment website regularly at [royalgreenwichcareers.com](http://royalgreenwichcareers.com).



## New council homes for Woolwich



**Happy tenants have moved into our latest development of new council homes, part of 1,750 being created for people on our housing register.**

The 33 one, two and three-bedroom flats and houses in Woolwich were bought by the Council to provide long-term social rented housing for local people. Around half the properties have been let to those who were living in insecure temporary accommodation.

New tenant Selena explained: *“I was in temporary accommodation before which wasn’t pleasant, it had black mould. I’ve got a little boy who’s getting bigger and was having to share a room with him. Having this permanent home is much better, it’s spacious, it’s clean, it’s tidy... It’s lovely!”*. She loved that her son now has *“his own room, the way likes it”*.

Another new resident had moved in after nine years spent living with his three children in a one-bedroom flat affected by black mould. He said, *“it’s amazing, there are no words for it, it’s everyone’s dream to have a brand-new build house, and we’ve got it!”*



## Modular moves on 80 new council homes in Kidbrooke

To create 1,750 much-needed council homes across the borough we’re using some of the newest building techniques.

One of these methods is modular construction, where homes are built in sections (or modules) in a factory before being delivered and installed on-site. This speeds up the process while reducing both pollution and disruption to neighbours.

Recently, modules were installed at a site of 80 zero carbon council homes in Kidbrooke.

As well as the new homes, which are spread across three sites on Rochester Way, we’ve invested £750,000 to improve the local area, with upgrades to playgrounds and open spaces as well as the planting of 180 new trees.





## Have you heard about the Housing Ombudsman Service?

The Housing Ombudsman Service is a fair and impartial service that looks at complaints about the housing services we provide to our residents.

Their service is free of charge to all residents in social housing. You can contact them at any time and they can independently investigate your complaint once you have completed our complaint process.

The Housing Ombudsman just released a brand-new Complaint Handling Code for 2024. It sets the standards for how we tackle complaints. It's all about making sure your voices are heard and problems are solved effectively and fairly.

More information on how the Housing Ombudsman service can help you can be found at [housing-ombudsman.org.uk](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk).

To stay up to date, we are updating our complaints policy to follow the new code. You will be able to access the new policy once published on our website [royalgreenwich.gov.uk](https://royalgreenwich.gov.uk).

Stay informed, stay empowered.



## Improved incentives to downsize to smaller homes

New and improved incentives to help under-occupying council and housing association tenants downsize to a smaller home that meets their current housing needs were agreed at a Cabinet meeting on 13 March.

The changes will come into effect later in the year when a new dedicated post-holder is in place. The changes will then be subject to a one-year pilot.

Here is a summary of the new changes coming soon for under-occupying tenants:

- The payment tenants receive per bedroom to downsize to a smaller property will be increased from £350 to £1,000 and an additional £500 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, to be offered their own one-bedroom flat, providing the Council can gain back an additional bedroom.

We will let residents know as these changes take effect.

Find out more: [royalgreenwich.gov.uk/council-home-downsize](https://royalgreenwich.gov.uk/council-home-downsize)

## GETTING RID OF LARGE ITEMS?



## Getting rid of large items?

**Don't just dump it, call us to arrange a collection on 020 8921 4661. Bulky waste collections are free for residents living on a Council estate.**

We will collect furniture, white goods, bikes, computers and televisions, beds, large electricals, sofas, mattresses, wardrobes, and carpets (carpets need to be cut up and bagged so one person can carry it).

Note: We do not collect rubble or builder's waste, this should be removed from site by your builder or taken to the Reuse and Recycling Centre at Nathan Way amenity site if DIY waste.

Once a booking is made, items need to be placed outside the block on the agreed day of collection, ensuring footpaths and exits are kept clear. Under no circumstances are residents permitted to leave items within the block, as this is deemed a fire hazard and can block exit routes in the event of a fire.

We collect Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays. Items need to be put out by 9am on the day of collection. 24hrs notice is requested, collections for Mondays should be booked on Friday.

Please email [Housing-Caretaking@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:Housing-Caretaking@royalgreenwich.gov.uk) if you require more information.



## Watch out for grass and wild fires

During summer months, there is a substantial risk of grass and wild fires happening due to the heat. It's important to keep safe during the summer, here are a few tips to stay safe while having fun in the heat.

- Remember, you are not allowed to use a barbecue or have an open fire in any Royal Greenwich park or open spaces.
- Dispose of smoking materials such as cigarettes safely - don't drop cigarettes on dry ground and don't drop them out of car windows, as they may land on dry grass and lead to a fire.
- Explain to children the dangers of playing with and lighting fires.



## YOUR VIEW

### Sign up to YourVIEW!

Would you like to help us improve the housing services you receive?

If yes, YourVIEW is an exciting opportunity for you to voice your opinions and ideas, empower your community, work with us to shape your services and improve your skills and CV.

Find out more info by signing up to YourVIEW at [royalgreenwich.gov.uk/yourview](http://royalgreenwich.gov.uk/yourview)



## Is your home insured?

Having home contents insurance can't prevent floods, thefts or fires from happening, but it can help you get back on your feet.

Find out more about protecting your furniture and personal possessions.

Call **01962 844454** or go online to [royalgreenwich.gov.uk/contentsinsurance](http://royalgreenwich.gov.uk/contentsinsurance)

## Could you change a child's life forever

Now more than ever, Royal Greenwich needs foster carers for our children and young people.

We want carers from all backgrounds, as we want our children in happy, loving homes. Fostering is rewarding and you could make a real impact to a child's life!

We offer 24-hour support, generous allowances, excellent training and a wide range of support groups.

Contact us to find out more on **0800 052 1499** or visit [royalgreenwich.gov.uk/fostering](http://royalgreenwich.gov.uk/fostering)

# Rent arrears and debt

If you are struggling to pay your rent and other bills - don't delay, act today.

To start sorting things out and get advice, here are some useful contacts:

- Rent and arrears – Your Income Officer details are at the top of your rent statement.
- Debt - [nationaldebtline.org](http://nationaldebtline.org) or [royalgreenwich.gov.uk/benefits-and-financial-help](http://royalgreenwich.gov.uk/benefits-and-financial-help)

- General help and advice - [royalgreenwich.gov.uk/greenwich-supports](http://royalgreenwich.gov.uk/greenwich-supports)
- Universal Credit - help managing or understanding - Universal Support Team **020 8921 3333** on Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm.
- Benefits or challenging benefit decisions - Welfare Rights **020 8921 6375** Monday, Wednesday or Thursday 10am to 1pm.

REMEMBER – if you don't pay your rent you could lose your home.



## GET ADVICE ON THE SWITCHOVER TO UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Residents who receive one or more of the benefits listed below will be invited to claim Universal Credit:

- Income Support
- Housing Benefit
- Child Tax Credits and or/Working Tax Credits, including pensioners who receive working Tax Credits
- Income Related Employment Support Allowance
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance



### Universal Credit managed migration advice sessions

We are excited to announce a new advice session to assist residents who are affected by the move to Universal Credit, also known as Managed Migration.

The Universal Credit managed migration advice sessions run every Tuesday from **10am to 12pm at the Woolwich Centre, Wellington Street, Woolwich, SE18 6HQ.**

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](http://royalgreenwich.gov.uk/uc-advice)

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