

Talk Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

WELCOME

Welcome to Issue 27 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 2024 ISSUE 27

Changes to communal heating systems

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royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housing

To opt out of receiving Talk Housing, please contact: community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk


ROYAL *borough of*
GREENWICH

5 minutes with Jamie Carswell



Alongside this edition of Talk Housing is your rent statement which shows an increase in your rent and services charges.

If you are worried about paying your rent, we will do everything we can to support you so do get in touch – see page 12 for details. Rents are going up because our costs have gone up. When we spoke to you about this rent rise, over 1,000 of you got back to us and asked us to be clearer about how we spend your rent. So, here's three ways we are making things better:

Firstly, for 18 months now, we have been working to improve the Repairs Service – which you tell us repeatedly is the single thing that matters the most to you. There are now more and easier ways to report a repair and chase it up. We are also aiming to get your repairs done more quickly and right the first time we visit.

Secondly, we are working on a major programme of improvement works, including to kitchens and bathrooms, to some of our council homes and estates. We are prioritising blocks and properties that are in the most need of improvement with more to come over the next few years.

Lastly, this year we are taking a good look at our Tenancy Service to check we are doing everything we can to keep your neighbourhood and estate as safe and clean as possible.

If you have any feedback on how we can continue to improve our housing service, then please get in touch.

Jamie Carswell

Director of Housing and Safer Communities



Say no to:

Racism

Homophobia

Transphobia

Disablism

#LoveGreenwichHateDiscrimination



Standing Against Racism Campaign

We are running a Standing Against Racism campaign in Housing that promotes racial equality and equity for all our residents to be able to live and thrive in our borough without the threat of racial abuse or harassment in your home or neighbourhood.

If you have experienced racial discrimination and harassment, please contact your Tenancy Enforcement Officer on **Tenancy-Enforcement-Teams@royalgreenwich.gov.uk** for help and advice.

Alternatively, you can contact the Greenwich Inclusion Project (GRIP) who will offer support and advice regarding your situation.

Suite 7, Equitable House, 7 General Gordon Place, Woolwich, London SE18 6FH. Tel: 020 3747 9862

If you are, or people you know are at imminent risk, please dial **999** and report this incident to the police.

Join our House Proud Working Group



The Community Participation & Diversity Team warmly invite you to join our House Proud Working Group to collaborate with us on key areas affecting the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) community.

Our House Proud Working Group is a welcoming, safe and inclusive place to share your experiences and help influence and shape key policies.

You can sign up today by emailing YourView@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Census 2021 data for Greenwich shows the largest proportion of social rented households who also have a higher LGBTQ+ population are from:

- Charlton Riverside and Woolwich Dockyard
- Woolwich Common and Glyndon
- Abbey Wood North
- Plumstead and Thamesmead have the highest proportion of trans and non-binary people compared to their LGBTQ+ population.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has signed up to achieve Pledge Pioneer status with House Proud to demonstrate our commitment to LGBTQ+ residents. We want to continuously tackle the housing-related issues experienced by the LGBTQ+ community.

The Pledge asks us to evidence our work across three strands:

1. Increasing LGBTQ+ visibility in the organisation
2. Offering a programme of training for staff to improve awareness of LGBTQ+ lives and interactions with residents.
3. Ensuring that LGBTQ+ residents can have input at executive / strategic level.

To find out more about the House Proud Pledge, visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/houseproud or stonewallhousing.org/houseproudpledge



ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT RISING BILLS?

The Royal Borough of Greenwich is committed to supporting residents through the ongoing cost of living crisis.

Through Greenwich Supports, our cost of living campaign, we're working to protect our communities so they can access the right support, advice and opportunities to improve their situation.

People should not have to choose between heating their homes and feeding their families.



How can we help

Welfare Rights team – Our in-house team provides in-depth advice to ensure you are getting the benefits to match your circumstances. They can also support you with a move to Universal Credit if you have received a letter from the Department of Work and Pensions. Visit: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/welfare-rights

Council Tax Support – we have one of the most generous schemes in London for households on low-income, you can apply whether you are in or out of work.

Help with your health and mental wellbeing – through livewellgreenwich.org.uk or via the free phone **0800 470 4831**. They can also support you with worries around debt, being unable to afford food, or high energy prices.

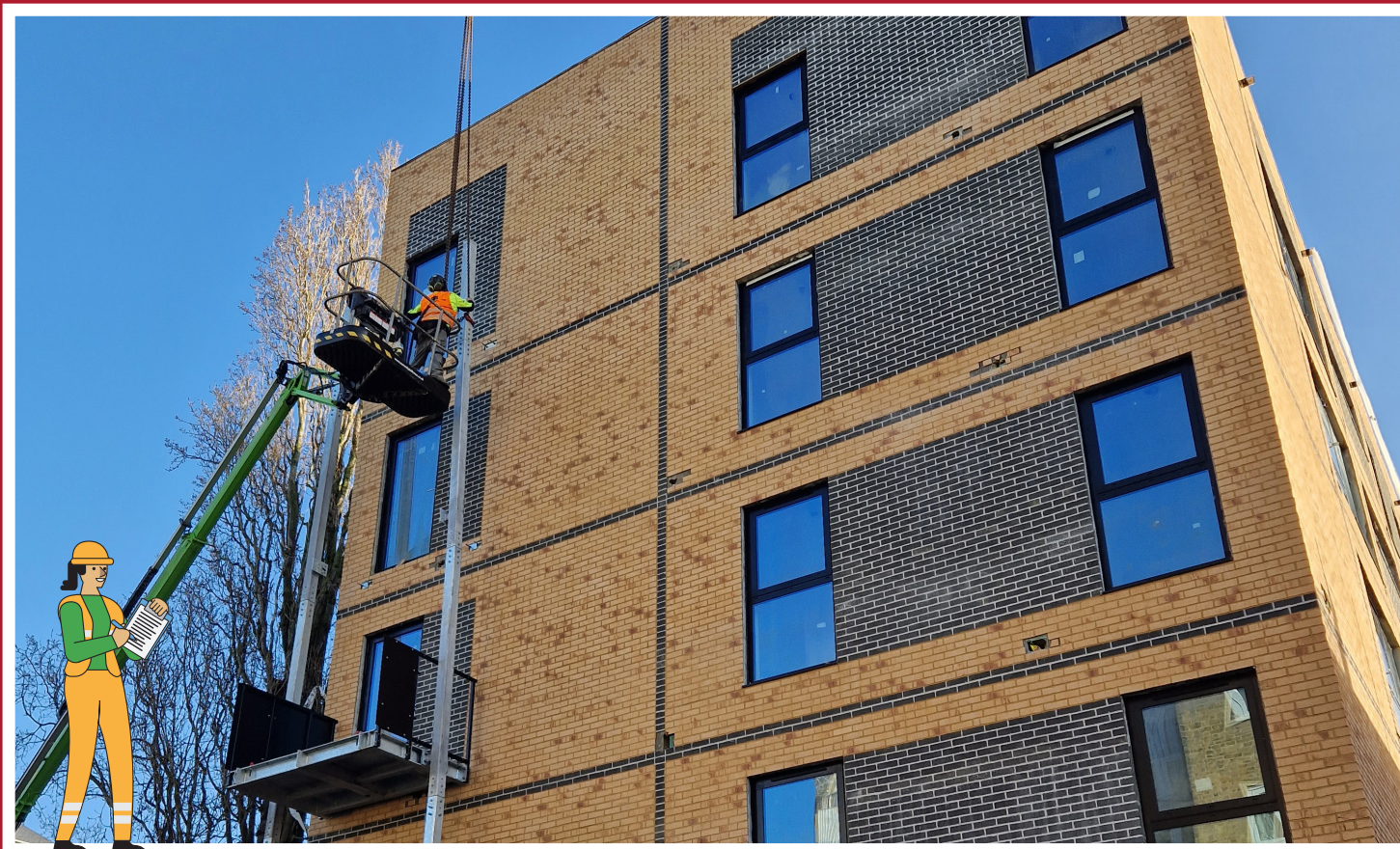
Advice Hubs – offer free face-to-face advice at community centres in East Greenwich, Eltham, Glyndon, Thamesmead, Abbey Wood, Greenwich Park, Eltham Page, Coldharbour, Middle Park and Woolwich. Find your nearest hub: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/advicehubs



GREENWICH 
SUPPORTS

Whichever estate or council home you live in, advice is on offer for anyone who needs it. Find out more by visiting: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/Greenwich-Supports

Hundreds of council homes building towards completion



We're building 1,750 homes for people on our housing register, and with over 690 currently under construction, there are lots of exciting developments in the world of Greenwich Builds!

Scaffolding has been removed from 15 new homes in Plumstead.



We've used modular building on many of our council homes to speed up construction and reduce carbon emissions. The final modules for 32 new homes at Tuskar Street were delivered recently.



122 new homes are nearly complete at Kidbrooke Park Road North, with a further 322 homes underway at Kidbrooke Park Road South.



More new council homes approved

As well as the hundreds of Greenwich Builds council homes now being built, there are more being designed and submitted for planning approval.

Among the designs recently approved by the Planning team are nine apartments at Lemonwell Court in Avery Hill.



Another scheme of 24 homes approved on the Barnfield Estate includes new landscaping and children's play facilities.



The 15 homes approved for Middle Park Avenue feature a communal outdoor space and a children's play garden.

Talk Housing



Addressing challenges together on the Woolwich Common Estate

As a Council we want to ensure that our services are designed around the needs of our residents, and we can develop networks with communities and partners that address challenges together.

As part of this commitment, last July a pilot for a community cooperative initiative was established on the Woolwich Common Estate with a primary focus on improving the local safety, security and the look and feel of the estate.

This community cooperative initiative approach empowers estate residents to prioritise a range of activities to improve the estate for the benefit of everyone that lives there. It then enables them to gain support from several Council teams, partners and integrated contracted services, to work collaboratively to develop proactive solutions together.

One of the early priorities identified by residents was the need to tackle fly tipping and reduce the amount of rubbish on the estate so that the neighbourhood could feel safe and attractive.

Working alongside the Council's caretaking team as well as volunteers and staff from the Council-commissioned Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency (GCDA), residents took part in a series of clear-up days last autumn to clear rubbish, litter and tackle overgrown hedges. The clear-up days were an overwhelming success and have resulted in a noticeable reduction in littering on the estate. And since the first event, a group of residents

– calling themselves the Woolwich Warriors – have worked alongside the caretaking team to continue the estate clear up and post 'before and after' photos on the board in the main foyer of the Woolwich Common Community Centre.

Up and coming opportunities

Later this year there will be more opportunities for residents at Woolwich Common including, volunteering to take part in a new community growing garden in Ritter Street and applying for one of two new gardening jobs on the estate to help with designing and maintaining gardens. These jobs will be supported by a GCDA dedicated gardener (this will include equipment and training).

Community meetings

Residents are welcome to drop-in and participate at regular community meetings at the Woolwich Common Community Centre, 17 Leslie Smith Square, SE18 4DW

- Tuesday 23 April, 3pm to 5pm - speak to different Council services and key partners working to improve the estate
- Tuesday 23 April, 5pm to 6pm - find out how to get involved in other initiatives

Get involved

If you would like to help shape a brighter future for the Woolwich Common Estate email livia@gcda.org.uk or pop into the Woolwich Common Community Centre and speak to Jane, Centre Manager.



Voting in the next election? Don't lose your voice!

The Mayor of London and London Assembly elections are coming up on 2 May. Are you ready to vote? Make sure you are registered to vote and bring a valid form of ID with you if you're voting in person.

Accepted forms of ID include a UK, European Economic Area (EEA) or Commonwealth passport; a UK or EEA photo driver's licence; and some concessionary travel passes, such as an older person's bus pass or an Oyster 60+ card. Voters will be able to use expired ID if they are still recognisable from the photo.

No ID? No problem! Register for a free Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) by 5pm on 24 April.

If you need to register to vote or apply for a VAC, make sure you do this before the final deadline.

Important dates

16 April 2024 – deadline to register to vote

17 April 2024 5pm – deadline for new postal vote applications and for changes to existing postal or proxy votes

24 April 2024 5pm – deadline for receiving new proxy vote applications

24 April 2024 5pm – deadline for receiving Voter Authority Certificate applications.

You can apply for registration, a VAC, a postal vote or a proxy vote online at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/elections

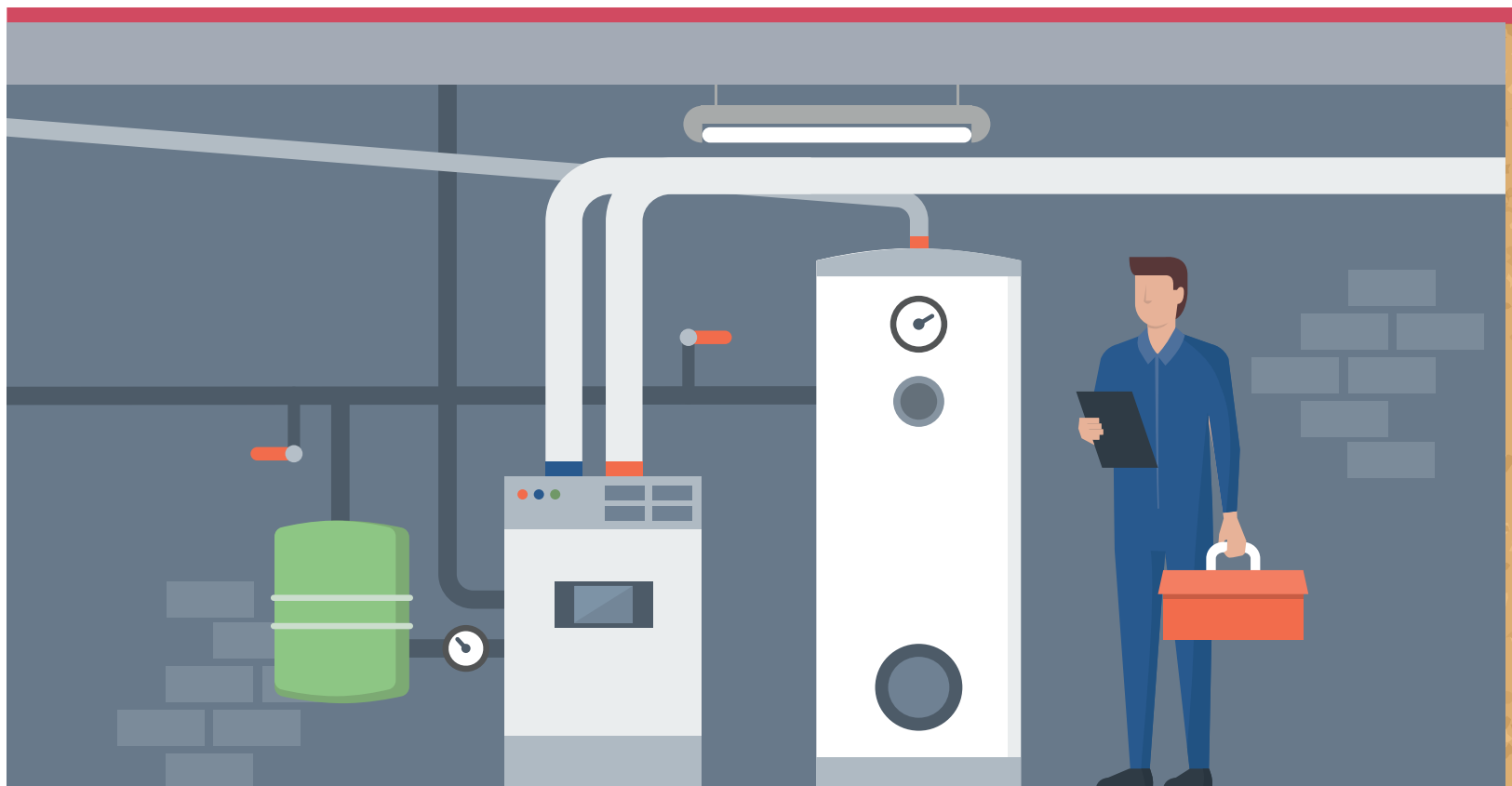
To register for a VAC, you will need to have your date of birth, National Insurance Number and a photograph for your application. You can use most mobile phone cameras for the photo.

If you need help with registration, email elect@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or call **020 8921 5882**.

You can also get help signing up at your local library or community centre.

Find out more at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/voter-ID





Changes to communal heating systems

The Council manages communal heating systems across our housing stock with around 3,200 residents receiving heating and hot water from a central plant or boiler room within their respective blocks.

These tenants currently pay a fixed weekly charge for heating and hot water, rather than paying for the exact amount of heat and hot water used. We collect these charges alongside rents, and for leaseholders these charges are collected through their service charges.

New government regulations require the Council to provide individual metering and billing (M&B) for all residents and for heat meters to be installed within homes to monitor and calculate how much energy is used so residents only pay for what they use.

The Council has appointed switch2 as our M&B provider and they will write to residents with more details as this five-year programme is rolled out in 2024.

There will be a new heating tariff consisting of a variable and fixed charge element. The tariff has not been finalised, but early indications show that charges will be similar to existing communal heating charges, and in some cases, they could be lower depending on behavioural and lifestyle factors affecting usage.

Ultimately, the new heating tariff will mean that residents will be in control over their heating for the first time and how much they use.

If you live in a block with a communal heating system and have any views on how we can best communicate the changes to you or if you have any queries, please contact **heating.enquiries@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**.

YOUR VIEW

Give us YourView

YourView is 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.

For more info and to sign up, visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/yourview

Asbestos contractors

We have entered into a new five-year contract with two licensed asbestos removal contractors - Erith and Cablesheer. Both contractors have considerable experience in working in social housing as well as local knowledge of the borough.

Each of the contractors will be working in different areas with Erith carrying out all asbestos work in the west and central areas of the borough and Cablesheer in the south and east.

For further information please email occupied.repairs@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Report hate crime

Do you know how to report hate crime in your estate or area?

If not, please visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/hate-crime where you will find all the info you need. If you are a council tenant, call or email your Tenancy Officer (**020 8921 6383** or **Tenancy-Enforcement-Teams@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**). In an emergency, please **call 999**. If it's not an emergency **call 101**.

Rent arrears and debts

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 – Income Officer, details at top of your rent statement.

Debt – nationaldebtline.org or royalgreenwich.gov.uk/benefits-and-financial-help

General help and advice – royalgreenwich.gov.uk/greenwich-supports

Universal Credit – help managing or understanding - Universal Support Team **020 8921 3333** on Monday –Friday, 10am - 4pm

Benefits or challenging benefit decisions – Welfare Rights **020 8921 6375** Monday, Wednesday or Thursday 10am-1pm

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

Electrical safety checks

We are in the process of carrying out vital electrical inspection safety checks on all council homes. These checks are a thorough inspection of the electrical wiring in your home and are carried out by a qualified electrician working for one of our contractors.

If you receive a letter about an electrical inspection, please book an appointment as soon as possible to allow our contractor to carry out these checks in your home.

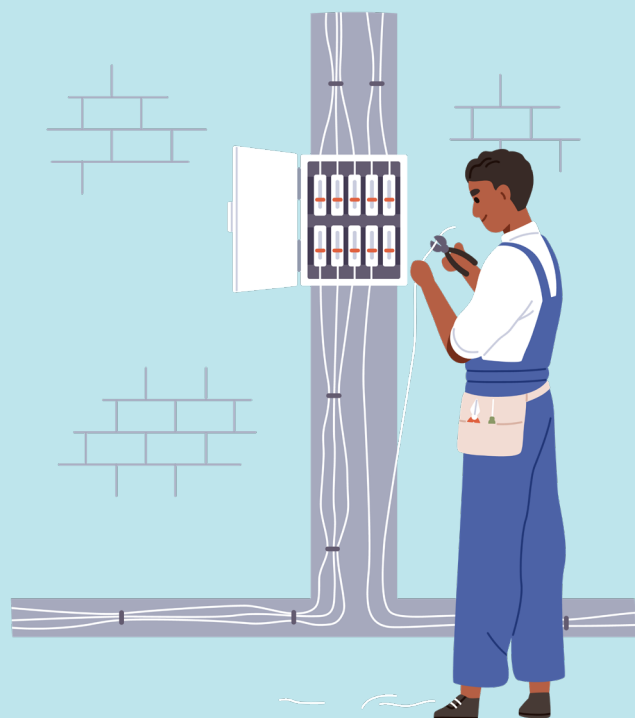
The check will normally take around two hours and the electrical supply to your home will need to be disconnected while the check is being carried out. If any further work is needed to ensure that the electrical installation in your home remains safe for you and your family, our contractor may need to arrange a further appointment with you.

It's important that we are able to carry out electrical safety checks in the council homes we manage. This is to help keep you safe and to meet our obligation as your landlord to ensure these checks are undertaken. We do these checks within a five-year period.

If you or a member of your household has a need for a constant supply of electricity due to a disability or

medical need, then please let us or our contractor know as soon as possible so we can accommodate your needs.

If you need any more information, please contact **020 8921 8900** or email Housing-Safety-Questions@royalgreenwich.gov.uk



Competition winner!

Thank you to those who entered our last competition in Issue 26 of the Talk Housing Newsletter.

The question was 'please tell us how much is the Council's capital repairs programme worth?'
The answer is £430m.

Congratulations to the winner **Jennifer**, and thank you to all those who entered.