

Talk

Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

WELCOME

Welcome to Issue 22 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

WINTER 2022 ISSUE 22



**Our £3million investment
promise: 12 pledges to
support you**

Inside

3. Damp and mould in your home 4. Greenwich Supports 6. Greenwich Builds 11. Towards Zero Waste

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royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housing

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

5 minutes with Pat Slattery



Sadly, London has a housing crisis. In Greenwich, we have some 26,000 households on our housing waiting list and 1,700 in temporary accommodation waiting whilst we try to find them somewhere permanent to live. Of those on our waiting

list, several thousand are families in overcrowded accommodation. We are reviewing our rules for who gets priority to Council housing in the next few months so please look out for the invitation to let us know what you think.

It is a difficult subject to raise but it is the case that some of our existing tenants are 'under-occupying' their properties – i.e. they have more bedrooms than they strictly need perhaps because children have grown up and moved away. If you are in that situation and are ready to think about down-sizing, perhaps because of the rising cost of energy bills, we can help you do that and can pay you some money for the inconvenience. Please do understand, if you have a secure tenancy we will not require you to move out. Please contact housing-allocations@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

We learned of the death of little Awaab Ishak in Rochdale. He lived with his family in a housing association flat. The Coroner's report linked his death to severe damp and mould in his home. Alongside our sadness for his family, we have been urgently looking again at cases in Greenwich Council homes where damp and mould have been reported a number of times and are making contact with those residents to check the current position. It is sometimes impossible to fully get rid of mould but we've included some ways in which you can seek to prevent it in this newsletter and don't hesitate to contact us for help.

Pat Slattery

Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness

Time for Reflection and Change

The winter months can be difficult for many. But the New Year can also be a time for reflection and change.

- 1 Explore Greenwich Learns courses, for personal development, employment, and life skills: greenwichlearns.org.uk



Follow a walking route such as The Line, London's first dedicated public art walk, or visit the Royal Observatory and have an Evening with the Stars (rmg.co.uk)

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- 3 Start or join a resident's association, or become a housing champion and represent the voice of your community by emailing community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or calling **020 8921 5149**.



If you are experiencing poor mental health and need support, take a look at the many services and advice on offer at Bromley, Greenwich, and Lewisham Mind: blgmind.org.uk.

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Preventing condensation and keeping your home warm

We know that damp and mould is a big concern for our tenants and leaseholders, and is something that we take extremely seriously. If you spot signs of damp and mould, please report it to us immediately by calling **020 8921 8900**.

Caused by leaking roofs, pipes or a build-up of condensation, damp and mould is most common in the winter months. Some of our properties, along with thousands across Britain, suffer from damp and mould – sometimes because of the structure and design of the property.

Following the tragic case of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale, we are redoubling our efforts to tackle damp and mould in our homes.

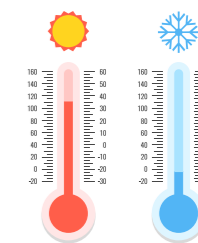
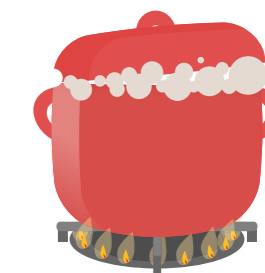
What we have put in place:

- prioritising and inspecting all reports of damp and mould
- provide a quick mould cleaning service which manages the problem temporarily before an investigation into a longer term solution can be made
- specific assessments of damp and mould in homes with repeat problems

What can you do?

We understand that this is an extremely difficult time for many residents who may be avoiding heating their homes. But there are some simple steps that you can follow to help reduce condensation and prevent damp and mould.

- when you're cooking, put lids on saucepans
- dry clothes outside, where possible. If you need to dry your clothes inside keep windows open to allow for air circulation
- leave trickle vents open in your windows
- ventilate your bathroom after a shower or bath
- do not block any air vents in your home
- try to heat your house even if it's only for a couple of hours a day or on a low setting – please see page 4 & 5 for help you may get towards your energy bills
- continue to ensure your home is always well ventilated and clean any new spores you see.



If after following all the tips the advice given, you are still experiencing damp and mould, please get in touch with us by calling **020 8921 8900**.



MORE THAN £3MILLION WILL BE INVESTED ACROSS 12 PLEDGES TO SUPPORT RESIDENTS.



The Council will be making targeted cash payments to the most vulnerable people in our borough - including children on free school meals, care leavers and those excluded from the benefits system.

Some of the ways in which the Council will be acting is by allocating **£150,000** to supporting food clubs, groups and foodbanks, **£300,000** to help renters from being made homeless, and **£50,000** to create warm spaces in community buildings across the borough among others.

The pledges would not have been possible without input from residents, through our public survey and partners, charities and housing associations feeding back at our Cost of Living summit, run by our Overview and Scrutiny Committee and led by Cllr Clare Burke-McDonald.



Interested in seeing what we learnt at our Cost of Living Summit?

View our video playlist at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/cost-of-living-summit

GREENWICH SUPPORTS



Scan me

You can find what support is available to you at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/Greenwich-Supports

ACTIONS THE COUNCIL WILL BE TAKING TO TACKLE THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS AND SUPPORT RESIDENTS:



1. £100 for every child eligible for free school meals - estimated to help 12,000 children



2. £250 payment for care leavers to help with winter food and other costs

3. £150,000 towards supporting food banks and food club initiatives

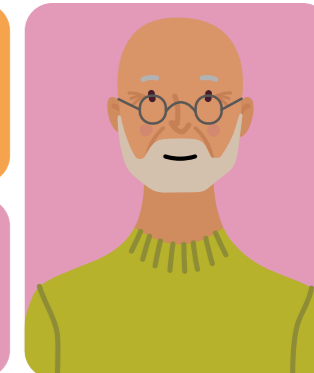
4. £150,000 for vulnerable residents, as part of the Council's annual Stay Warm, Stay Safe initiative

5. £150,000 grant scheme for local community groups

6. £300,000 funding for unexpected hardships through our Emergency Support Scheme

7. Launching our consultation to help low-income working residents through widening the eligibility of the Council Tax Support scheme

8. Giving up to £50 extra towards school clothing payments for families with children on free school meals, and up to **£25** for winter clothing payments



9. £50,000 fund to support the creation of warm and welcoming places around the borough



10. £300,000 of additional funding for Discretionary Housing Payments, to help struggling renters short-term, from the threat of being made homeless



11. Launching a Community Supports initiative where residents can donate goods, money or volunteer their time

12. Launching a Business Support Grant to help make local businesses become Real Living Wage Accredited employers

Greenwich Builds teaches the next generation of green home builders



With 1,750 Greenwich Builds council homes being created across the borough, there's a lot of construction going on; providing a great opportunity for young people to learn how homes are built.

We require all Greenwich Builds contractors to provide *value* to the community, and this can take many forms, from apprenticeships and jobs for local people to engagement with nearby schools.

Pupils from Alderwood Primary School benefited from this when our contractor Blakeney Leigh invited them to see two new zero-carbon family houses being built in Avery Hill.

The schoolchildren visited twice, seeing the homes during and after construction, while learning about

sustainability features like solar panels and heat pumps, and helping to fly a drone as part of a site survey.

On their second visit to see the now complete homes, the pupils were joined by Royal Borough of Greenwich Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Councillor Aidan Smith, and Cabinet Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness, Councillor Pat Slattery.

When finished the three-bedroom semi-detached houses will be made available to local people on the housing waiting list. They are an example of larger family homes with up to five bedrooms that are being created by Greenwich Builds, responding to the requirements of those in housing need.

All the pupils gave a big thumbs up to the completed homes, with many asking when they could move in!



Coming to Woolwich: 352 homes for people on the housing waiting list

Work has started on a 766-home housing regeneration project in Woolwich, which includes 352 homes to be made available at truly affordable rents to local people on the housing waiting list.

The new developments, Trinity Park and Trinity Rise, will also offer 76 shared ownership homes, with the remaining 338 properties for private sale.

Sustainable technologies like air source heat pumps and solar panels will help reduce environmental impact

and running costs, and one in ten of the homes will be wheelchair adapted.

All will meet or exceed the Nationally Described Space Standards and there are a high number of family houses being built, which is good news as these are in high demand.

Trinity Park and Trinity Rise will take six years to complete, and once finished the homes will be available via Choice Based Lettings.

YOURVIEW HOUSING CHAMPIONS

A warm welcome to all of our newly recruited Housing Champions who attended our launch event and induction training last month.

Please get in touch with the Community Participation & Diversity Team if you would like the details of a YourView Housing Champion on your estate or area. Alternatively, if there are no YourView Housing Champions in your area could YOU consider taking a role and representing the voice of your community?

Please email: community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk



Say no to:

Racism
Homophobia
Transphobia
Disablism

#LoveGreenwichHateDiscrimination



Standing Against Racism in our Community

We are aware of a series of racist graffiti offences that have occurred in SE9 and SE3 with a particular focus on street furniture, walls, and residential fencing with the perpetrator affiliating themselves with a Far Right-wing group.

Racist graffiti is a Hate Crime and RBG will not tolerate hurtful, racist, or bigoted graffiti targeted towards our residents and communities. We urge anyone with any information regarding the identity of the suspect to please contact Prevent@RoyalGreenwich.gov.uk, where your identity and any information will be held in the strictest confidence, or the Police via 101.

The council has launched a campaign of Standing Against Racism (STAR), to promote equality, diversity and opportunity for all in the workplace and the community. We want individuals and communities from different backgrounds to thrive together and tackle racism. To support STAR, we are working to achieve accreditation for our work through SHARP (Social Housing Anti-Racism Pledge) which we will endorse in the delivery and accessibility of our services to residents in tackling racism and hate crime in housing.

Mottisfont Operation

On March 23 this year, the Council and Met Police officers raided a block of garages in Abbey Wood following complaints that suspected illegal mechanics were running activities on site.

Officers found nine vehicles at the premises, including SORN vehicles, cars with no tax or MOT, others likely being used for scrap, and even an old caravan and a pick-up truck.

There was evidence the garages were being used to run a mechanics business. Neighbours had previously complained of noise disturbances late at night.

The operation, led by the Council's tenancy and repairs, environmental crime within street services, and safer spaces teams, with key support from the Met Police, took over four hours to complete and led to the arrest of a man in his 40s.

You can watch Episode 2 online at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/car-pound-cops.



Top tips to keep your valuables safe

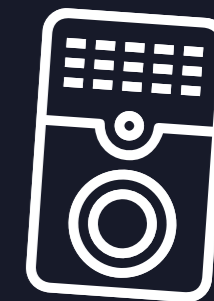
You may have received lots of new gifts for Christmas or may have been shopping the online Christmas sales. But beware of burglars and thieves as they may still be lurking.

Here are some top tips to stay safe:

- close and lock all your windows and doors – even if you're going out for a few minutes
- keep valuables out of sight and away from windows
- keep handbags away from the letterbox or cat flap and hide all keys including car keys - a thief could hook keys or valuables through even a small opening
- if going out or going away, please be careful about publicising where you are, especially if you're away from home. You never know who is watching



- if you are having parcels delivered, make sure you redirect them to a local shop or neighbour if you're not going to be home. Many sweet shops and family food stores now take parcels for you to collect
- consider installing a video doorbell or CCTV to help you know who's outside your property
- make sure you have a good lock on your shed and outside storage cupboards, or have a camera fitted



The Council has a range of information and support to help residents stay safe at home. Head to royalgreenwich.gov.uk/safety-at-home.

The Small is Beautiful scheme

Are you living in a two, three, four or five bedroom council property that is now too big for you? The Small is Beautiful scheme can help you move to a smaller home and allow your property to be used to help other families in housing need

The benefits of downsizing include:

- lower rent
- reduced energy costs
- a manageable home which effectively meets your needs
- the chance to move to another part of the Borough and closer to support networks

We will pay:

- all your removal and disturbance costs
- £350 for each room you give up

You can apply if you:

- need to downsize because you are under-occupying your council home by at least one bedroom and you are affected by the under-occupancy charge

- are not affected by the under-occupancy charge but are willing to move to a home with at least two bedrooms less than you have now

Please note:

- we cannot consider moving you into a house if you currently live in a flat or maisonette
- a second living room (or parlour) is counted as a bedroom

How do I apply?

Please contact the Access and Allocations Service at housing-allocations@royalgreenwich.gov.uk



House Proud Pledge



The Royal Borough of Greenwich has signed up to the Pledge to better understand the experiences of LGBTQIA+ residents living in social housing.

Help us to maintain our commitment and achieve our aims by getting involved. We are looking for residents who are interested in:

- Sharing experiences, whether positive or negative
- Interested in finding out about being an ally
- Signing up to be a YourView Housing Champion with an interest in LGBTQIA+ equality

Please get in touch at

YourView@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Free Gas safety checks

As your landlord it is our legal obligation to carry out a Gas Safety check annually in properties with a gas supply. It is a condition of your tenancy agreement that you allow access for this check to take place. Help us to keep your heating system energy-efficient, and safe for you and your neighbours. If the appointment you get is inconvenient you can contact us on, **0800 317 715** or gas-section@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

WE'RE MOVING

TOWARDS ZERO WASTE

BLUE & GREEN BINS WILL STILL BE COLLECTED WEEKLY.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR YOU?

From February 2023, we'll collect general waste – your black top bin – from properties with wheelie bins every two weeks. Recycling and garden and food waste – your blue and green bins – will still be collected weekly.

We won't be collecting any bags of additional waste that aren't contained within your wheelie bin. Approximately 53% of rubbish put into our general waste bins could be recycled, so if we all recycle as much as we can, we'll have plenty of space in our black top wheelie bins.

BUT WHY?

We're facing a climate emergency and by making this change, we can all play a part in shaping a greener future. Reducing the number of waste collections our crews make will lower our vehicle emissions and more recycling means less waste is incinerated; which is kinder to the planet.

IF YOU CONTAMINATE IT, WE CAN'T TAKE IT

To help us become a zero-waste borough, we no longer collect contaminated recycling. You'll need to remove the incorrect item so that your bin can be

emptied the next time the recycling crew visit. You'll also receive a letter explaining why. If your bin is contaminated three times, we'll remove it permanently.

WHAT IS CONTAMINATION?

Contamination is when the wrong items – such as nappies and dirty fast-food packaging – are put into a blue top recycling or green top food and garden waste bin.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Putting the wrong thing in the wrong bin means that none of the items in it can be recycled and have to be incinerated instead. Don't let everyone's efforts to recycle go to waste.

IF COMMUNAL BINS ARE CONTAMINATED:

When recycling bins are shared, it can be difficult to know how the wrong items end up in your bin.

If you live in a block of flats and your communal recycling bins are often contaminated, we'll advise residents about recycling.

If it keeps happening, we'll consider removing the bin. We'll give you free clear sacks so you can continue recycling.



For tips on recycling and how to minimise waste, visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/towardszerowaste.

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. You can also use the online form at **royalgreenwich.gov.uk/xfp/form/530**

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 21.



They were: Supplier, Signpost, Reuse, Rebate, Advice, Affordable, Condensation, Mould, Transform, Foster

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

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