

Talk Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

WELCOME

Welcome to Issue 16 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.

SUMMER 2021 ISSUE 16

Have your say on our new draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy



Inside

3. Our housing plans for the coming years 4. Our housing capital repairs programme 6. New builds

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www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housing


ROYAL borough of
GREENWICH



As someone whose family has experienced homelessness, I know first-hand the importance of safe, secure, affordable and comfortable housing.

Tackling the housing crisis remains one of the most urgent priorities for the Royal Borough of Greenwich and although we've helped prevent 8,000 families from becoming homeless since 2014, more work needs to be done.

That's why we're asking Royal Greenwich residents to have your say on our new draft Housing and Homelessness *Strategy 2021-2026*, so that your needs remain at the heart of our plans and policies.

Many Greenwich residents have benefited from the safety net that our council provides. They have relied on our housing service to put a roof over their head, and to help them start a new chapter in their life. I became a councillor because I know first-hand the value of our borough's housing service, and I want to ensure that the safety net remains in place, when residents need it most.

To have your say on our plans, visit housingstrategygreenwich.commonplace.is

Cllr Anthony Okereke,
Cabinet Member for Housing

The Five Strands

1 Ensuring the supply of high-quality homes

2 Tackling homelessness and ending rough sleeping

3 Support for specific housing needs

4 Safe and sustainable homes for all

5 Building resilient and *vibrant* communities and neighbourhoods



Our housing plans for the coming years

We have lots of new and exciting plans for housing over the next few years, from new ways of engaging with tenants and residents, to digital transformation of our services, huge investment in repairs and renovations of our council homes, and testing smart technology.

COVID-19 has forced us to change and adapt some of our plans, with some big projects delayed and carried over into 2021. Last year, we started a digital listening programme which we will continue to build on, alongside more traditional face to face meetings.

The most important thing for us is to listen to our tenants and residents, and build our services around your specific needs. We've already had lots of conversations with you about what we could be doing better, but we will also use data collected from our satisfaction surveys to make sure our services are easy and accessible for everyone to use.

We will continue to invest in digital technologies, making life easier for residents and staff alike. We will improve the way we use data and learn from it.

What else are we doing this year?

- Asking for your input on our new draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy.
- Reviewing and improving our complaints and customer service processes.
- Introducing a new Community Protection Team to better tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Rolling out new and modernised CCTV across the borough and a new digital evidence & enforcement approach.
- Building on the success of our digital listening programme which we piloted during the first lockdown last year.
- Supporting our tenants in financial hardship with universal credit advice and discretionary housing payments.
- Addressing the repairs backlog delayed by the pandemic.
- Relaunching the Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy with a greater focus on tackling perpetration.
- Improving our approach to Counter Terrorism & Extremism, including better links with 'Prevent, Protect and Prepare.'
- Improving digital connectivity across the borough.
- Improving fire safety in high-risk premises through engagement with management companies, private owners and developers.
- Finalising a five-year plan for investing and improving our council homes.
- Developing our strategy to tackle climate change and move towards zero carbon by 2030.
- Bring garages into better use.
- Deliver lower cost, higher quality Temporary Accommodation for people experiencing homelessness.

To have your say on our plans for the future of housing, take part in our consultation at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housingstrategy



Our housing capital repairs programme

Key achievements in 2020/21



398 new
boilers installed



6 communal boilers renewed
at Clockhouse, Defiance Walk,
Antelope Road, Plantagenet
House, Sovereign House and
St Domingo House



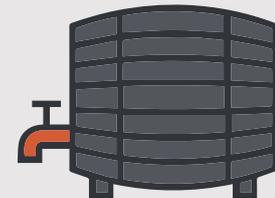
44
roof renewals



88 bathrooms and
16 kitchens renovated



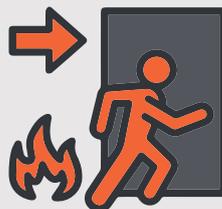
140 homeless
people housed



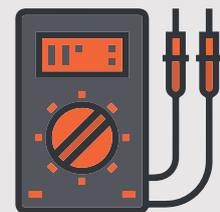
636 asbestos
water tanks replaced



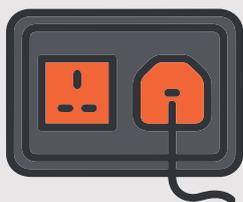
72 homes adapted to suit
people with disabilities



177 fire
doors installed



462
electrical upgrades



1,607 electrical
testing completed



305 lateral mains
(electrical system) renewed



Environmental improvement
works to **583** properties

Are you experiencing domestic abuse? You are not alone – help is available

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of age, background, gender, religion, sexuality or ethnicity.

If you are experiencing violence from a partner or family member, help is out there.

Remember, domestic abuse is a crime.



Support services:

- Greenwich Domestic Violence and Abuse service (GDVA) confidential helpline - **020 8317 8273** / gdva.org.uk
- The Her Centre - **020 3260 7715** / info@hercentre.org
- Men's Advice Line - **0808 801 0327** / info@mensadviceline.org.uk / mensadviceline.org.uk/
- **In an emergency, always call 999.**



HouseProud Pledge

HouseProud was set up in 2015 as the nationwide network for



HouseProud

LGBTQ+ people working in social housing.

The Royal Borough of Greenwich signed the HouseProud Pledge in April 2021, to demonstrate our commitment to support LGBTQ+ residents. We want to continuously tackle the housing-related issues experienced by the LGBTQ+ community.

One of our commitments from the pledge is to better understand LGBTQ+ experiences of council homes, looking specifically at residents' trust in our services. The HouseProud pledge provides guidance for landlords to take action and demonstrate their commitment to LGBTQ+ equality.

As part of our new draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy, we want to ensure that you have equal access to appropriate long-term homes and housing services designed to meet your specific needs. It's really important that our services are built on an empathetic understanding of residents' experiences and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

If you have any experiences you would like to share with us, whether it's positive or negative, we would like to hear from you. Please email us at:

YourVIEW@royalgreenwich.gov.uk



How our new council homes meet resident demand



It's no secret that after years of under-investment and restrictions from central government, demand for council homes is far outweighs the amount of housing available. In fact, it was only in 2018 that government rules stopping councils from borrowing money to build large numbers of homes were lifted. So until recently we could not start the large-scale construction needed to meet the needs of over 20,000 households on our housing waiting lists.

Thankfully, those restrictions are now lifted and our Greenwich Builds programme, which will see the creation of over 750 sustainable council homes for local residents, is well underway. We've taken care to make sure the homes we're building respond to the needs of those on waiting lists. For example, many of our schemes include wheelchair-accessible homes, and there are lots of smaller apartments for one or two people

included in our largest development at Kidbrooke Park Road, as we're aware this is a group that is under-served by current housing supply.

There's also demand for larger family homes, so finding sites to build four- and five-bedroom homes has been a priority. Greenwich Builds developments approved for Charles Grinling Walk, Pendrell Street and Blithdale Road all feature generously sized five-bedroom family homes. Four-bedroom properties feature in a number of our larger developments, for example Bournbrook Road and Ridgebrook Road, as part of a variety of new homes to suit all needs.

We're aware that many residents have been waiting a long time to move into a new home, and are working as fast as we can to get these developments complete and available for tenants as soon as possible. Watch this space!

Tenants move into new zero-carbon Greenwich Builds homes

Despite the difficulties of the past year, more sustainable new Greenwich Builds council homes are now reaching completion and tenants are starting to move in.

New residents at Kyle Mews in Coldharbour, the first development to be completed this year, were visited on 8 June by Cabinet Member for Housing Councillor Anthony Okereke. Touring the eight family homes, Cllr Okereke praised the sympathetic design and sustainability features including solar panels, heat pumps and green roofs, which both help the environment and reduce running costs for tenants. He was particularly impressed by the scheme's three-bedroom wheelchair-accessible home, which exceeds required space standards. Cllr Okereke also met with a number of Kyle Mews' new tenants including Leni and Jurgita, and spoke to another resident Doug about how he had downsized from a nearby four-bedroom property to a new two-bedroom home for him and his son James. All the tenants expressed appreciation for the features included in their new homes, from extra bathrooms to the rear gardens. The homes at Kyle Mews are among over 300 now approved or under construction, and 750 new council homes will be built in total by 2024.



Greenwich Builds: our progress so far...

GREENWICH BUILDS

JUNE 2021 UPDATE

We're building over 750 sustainable council homes for local people. This is the progress we've made so far:



royalgreenwich.gov.uk/greenwichbuilds

Talk Housing

Our playgrounds are reopening!

As the weather improves and with lockdown restrictions easing, we've been reopening our 50 playgrounds and play areas on housing estates across the borough.

Over the last 15 years, the number of play areas in our borough has grown by around 30%, giving thousands more children and young adults opportunities to improve their physical and mental health.

We've built our new playgrounds using naturally sourced and sustainable material, and offer a wide range of equipment from swings, slides and roundabouts to ball courts for larger groups to play sports like football and basketball.

There are also six outdoor gyms for older children and adults to improve their *fitness* and strength, using equipment with instructions on how to safely use them.

We regularly check all our play and outdoor fitness areas to make sure they are safe and in good condition. If you see any damage to the equipment, fencing, play surfaces or broken glass, please report this by calling us on **020 8854 8888**.



Fire safety in your home: top tips for keeping you and your family safe

- **Plugs:** Turn off appliance plugs when not in use.
- **Doors:** Do not leave a fire door open and never disconnect an automatic closer.
- **Appliances:** Do not leave appliances running when no one is home.
- **Smoking:** Do not smoke in bed and always put out cigarettes fully.
- **Smoke alarms:** Test your smoke alarm weekly and do not cover or remove.
- **Candles:** Do not leave candles unattended and always put out fully.
- **Electrical:** Do not overload *electrical* sockets and switch them off when not in use.
- **Flammable:** Do not store anything flammable such as petrol in your home.



Is your home severely overcrowded?

Demand for council homes is outstripping supply, and we do not have enough properties available to immediately help all families that need to be housed. However, if you are living in a severely overcrowded property, we can still help you. Apply for a council home and you may be placed on our waiting list as a priority for social housing.

The following factors determine whether your home is overcrowded:

- The living conditions require unrelated families to share a living room, kitchen or bathroom.
- The household is statutorily overcrowded according to legislation.
- The moving group lacks two or more bedrooms.

If overcrowding in your home is caused by friends or lodgers moving into a council property, the housing officer will be informed and the application will be suspended pending investigation.

If overcrowded conditions at home are causing problems for your family relationships, mediation might be able to help, at least while you look for longer term solutions. For guidance on mediation please visit:

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/housingdisputes

How the Mutual Exchange Scheme could help

Want to move to a different size property or to another area? The mutual exchange scheme allows tenants to swap their home for another tenant's home.

The scheme is open to council tenants, housing association and private tenants - but all landlords must give their consent before an exchange can go ahead. Applicants should be aware that tenancy conditions and rights vary with different landlords. To apply for the scheme, tenants must complete a mutual exchange registration form available from the Service Centres.

Applicants can find another tenant to swap using the council's website. You can also visit the Housing Exchange website:

houseexchange.org.uk For more information: royalgreenwich.gov.uk/mutualexchangescheme

Estate Walkabouts - we want to improve your estate!



Royal Greenwich tenancy team with councillors on a socially distanced estate walkabout on the Coldharbour Estate in April.

We are asking residents from across the borough to join councillors and staff for a series of online virtual events.

The meetings are your chance to tell us about issues or problems on your estate including:

- Communal repairs
- Caretaking issues
- Improvement to green spaces
- Anti-social behaviour

The meetings will be followed by estate walkabouts to look at these issues with council officers and councillors. Residents can also be present, as long as COVID-19 restrictions allow.

We've already held two successful meetings with residents from Coldharbour and Woolwich Common Estate. Coming up next:

- Shooters Hill
- Abbey Wood
- Meridian

Thank you to those residents who have already taken part, we really appreciate your feedback on how we can improve our estates! if you would like for us to consider carrying out an Estate Walkabout in your local area, please email us at community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or call **020 8921 5149**.

A year in review

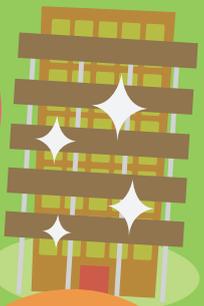
Target 100%
100% of Fire Risk Inspections on high rise blocks have been completed



We have dealt with **799 complaints**



Target 95%
99.6% of urgent repairs were completed by the target time



Target 50 days
The average time to re-let a council property is **136 days**

Target 99%
99.6% of rent was collected



Target 93% and 92%
We have kept **93%** of our appointments for responsive repairs and have **completed 85%** of non urgent repairs on time



Target 95%
93% of caretaking inspections have met the required standard



Target 100%
99.6% of Gas Safety Inspections have been carried out on time



We work hard to maintain our standards.

For more information contact the Community Participation & Diversity Team.
Phone 020 8921 5149 or email community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk



News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

We have kept 93% of our appointments for responsive repairs and have completed 85% of non-urgent repairs on time.

The average time to re-let a council property is 136 days.

This will remain high for a few more months as the empty homes which built up during first lockdown are re-let. The overall position is improving steadily.

93% of caretaking inspections have met the required *standard*.

The pandemic meant services have had to be altered to ensure essential works was covered and as a result scheduled work in some areas did not go ahead as planned. If one cleaning task was incomplete in a block, it fails the inspection.

Public Health Walks

Being active means getting your heart rate up, breathing faster and feeling warmer. Doing something is better than nothing, but the more you do, the more you benefit.

Make a start today, repeat and get involved with walks with your local community:

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/getwalking



Date for your diary

This year's big summer event will be held in Charlton Park on Saturday 21 August – keep eyes peeled on our website and social media channels for updates nearer to the time. We hope to see you there!

Greenwich in Bloom

We know that spending such a long time at home hasn't been easy. As it gets warmer, *gardening* can be a fantastic way to relax, move around and soak up some sun.

If you have green space near you or need help with a community garden initiative, please contact the Community Participation Team: Telephone: **020 8921 5149**

Email: community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk



Please pick up after your dog!

Help us keep your estate clean by always picking up your dog's poo! Dog waste is both a human health hazard and pollutes the environment. Along with the designated dog waste bins, you can also dispose of it in the general waste bins.



Make sure your balconies are safe all year round

Keep your balcony clear of any dangerous items such as:

- Tables and chairs which children can climb on
- Loose plants or plant pots
- Suitcases and other items of furniture
- If you smoke, ensure that cigarettes are fully extinguished
- No barbeques are permitted on balconies



Rent advice during the pandemic

We understand that the COVID-19 crisis has created financial difficulty for many people.

We want to do all that we can to support you, so if you are unable to pay your rent, please contact us immediately to discuss your situation and we will work with you to address any issues.

You can email **rent-account-enquiries@royalgreenwich.gov.uk** to explain your situation and we will get back to you. You can also speak to your Income Officer, whose telephone number is on your rent statement and arrears letters.

If you are currently experiencing financial difficulties, we can renegotiate payment plans and help you claim financial support and benefits that you may be entitled to. If your income has been reduced, you may be entitled to Universal Credit and/or other benefits. This may include help with your rent payments. If you think you are entitled to any support, take action straight away.

The courts are now open for serious arrears, anti-social behaviour and other cases. If you have high arrears and have not discussed this with your Income Officer – contact us now for advice and to make a repayment plan otherwise you could risk eviction.



Benefits advice and hardship support

If you need advice on your benefits entitlement, support to manage your claim or to complete an application, contact our Welfare Rights and Universal Support Team on **0208 921 3333** (Monday – Friday, 10am – 4pm) or visit

royalgreenwich.gov.uk/benefitsupport

The team is experiencing a very high volume of queries. If asked, please leave a message and they will get back to you as soon as possible.

Employment and financial support can also be found at: **gov.uk/coronavirus** and **turn2us.org.uk**.

Universal Credit (UC) claimants – Don't miss out on help with your rent!

If you pay housing charges and claim UC – have you updated your new housing charge details on your UC online journal? If not, sign into your UC online account and do it today. To get up to date details of rent and service charges email or telephone your Income Officer using the contact details on your rent statement. If you do not have an online UC account, you should contact the UC Service Centre on **0800 328 5644** to tell them about your new charges.

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 with your full name, contact number or email and return this to the Community Participation & Diversity Team at the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, SE18 6HQ.

Thank you to those of you, who sent in your answers from Issue 15, we received nearly 90 responses!

Congratulations to **Roy Seaton** for winning the last wordsearch!

The words from the last wordsearch are: Beginning, Vaccination, Compassion, Impact, Awareness, Protect, Free, Clean, Family, New

We noticed within our last newsletter there was a little bit of confusion around the words which some of you noticed!

The correct word was 'impact' which was not highlighted in bold but was within the wordsearch. Just to reassure you, you would have been entered if you saw the words 'inclusive' or 'impact' on this occasion.

E	D	M	A	U	G	R	E	E	N	S	Y	Y	R
D	S	K	X	W	W	R	X	L	D	T	R	S	Y
V	T	I	Y	M	L	C	G	F	B	R	W	S	L
S	C	R	D	V	H	Y	M	V	C	A	X	E	S
I	E	J	U	A	L	C	H	G	A	T	U	N	O
Q	P	E	N	V	I	R	O	N	M	E	N	T	I
V	S	G	F	U	D	U	Q	J	R	G	U	I	N
R	E	W	V	I	B	R	A	N	T	Y	M	F	Q
M	R	K	O	S	K	F	A	C	T	L	C	Y	D
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F	X	T	D	F	K	B	O	E	N	E	O	T	Y
L	A	C	I	R	T	C	E	L	E	A	H	U	D
J	T	G	A	R	D	E	N	I	N	G	T	H	D
U	D	R	Y	D	C	E	Q	I	X	Q	Y	S	H