

Talk Housing

News for Royal Greenwich tenants and leaseholders

SUMMER 2025 ISSUE 32

WELCOME

Welcome to Issue 32 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



New council homes named in honour of late councillor

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community-participation@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

ROYAL borough of GREENWICH

5 minutes with Cllr Pat Slattery



I am pleased that this edition of the newsletter includes articles on how the roll out of our new kitchens and bathrooms is going and our success in reducing our use of hotels to put folk in temporary accommodation (no good for families and expensive for the council tax payer). We also seek your help in spotting and reducing fire hazards.

What I want to focus on now summer is here is keeping the area outside of our homes – in our blocks, estates and streets – clean and clear.

I think our caretaking teams do a really good job – but there are not enough of them and so we all need to do our bit. We can all help by putting our household rubbish in the right bins (not by the side), wrapping our food waste, picking up after our dogs (there seems to be more dog poo around these days!), not feeding the pigeons and using the bulky waste service to take away large items (it's free for council tenants and reduces fly-tipping). Even picking up bits of litter if you feel able to do so will make such a difference. It's not always someone else's job – it's ours too.

Most residents are great at this - really thoughtful - but some are not and they make our neighbourhoods less pleasant places to live. If you are not already doing this, why not step up and follow these simple rules to respect each other, our areas and our caretakers?

You can book a bulky waste at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/bulkywaste

If you have any feedback, or would like to meet your local caretaking supervisor email housing-caretaking@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Pat Slattery
Cabinet Member Housing Management,
Neighbourhoods and Homelessness



New repairs contractors

We have appointed four new contractors who will be responsible for supporting us to provide an efficient and effective repairs service.

T Brown, Purdy, Axis and Gilmartins will support our in-house repairs team to carry out routine and urgent repairs to our council homes. They will also be working to prepare empty properties so they can be let to new tenants.

If you have a repair, you should report by visiting royalgreenwich.gov.uk/repairs.

If you have a new housing repair this should be reported on **0808 175 6915** which is a free phone line, from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

If you have an urgent repair, you should call **020 8921 8900** during working hours and **020 8854 8888** outside of normal working hours.

All repairs staff, including contractors, will always carry identification with them.

Hotel use for temporary accommodation drops by 84%



We have successfully reduced our use of hotel and Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs) as temporary accommodation by a staggering 84% in only 18 months and reduced the pressure on our finances by around £5.88million.

Increasingly the only option for councils dealing with homeless households - many of whom are families - has been relying on hotels or B&Bs. This is the least desirable form of temporary accommodation as living in a hotel can be extremely difficult. Families may be sent out of the borough, and with stays limited to 28 nights, there's little chance to settle.

Last April, we hit a record high of **280** hotel rooms used in a single night.

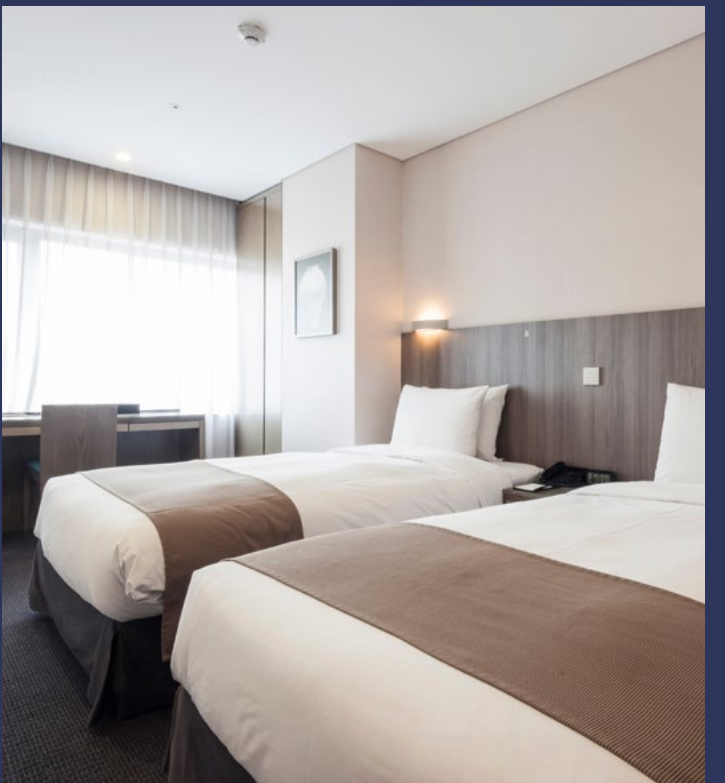
Thanks to a joint effort, we have been able to use data and innovation to cut hotel and B&B use and focus on early support, including:

- dramatically **speeding up** the administration of homelessness assessments (prioritising families)
- using **50% of 133** newly acquired social homes (at Sandy Hill Road in Woolwich and Greenwich Millennium Village), along with a proportion of our existing homes as they became empty, to provide **100** direct offers for people spending the longest time in temporary accommodation
- using **100 more** of the council's own homes as in-borough temporary accommodation
- **targeted support** to help older people and our own council tenants living in temporary accommodation move into settled homes, and
- **preventative use of incentives** to help private sector tenants at risk of homelessness retain their tenancies.
- Latest figures show that there are **just three families** currently in **hotel temporary accommodation** as of the 30 April.

Cllr Pat Slattery, Cabinet Member for Housing Management, Neighbourhoods and Homelessness said: "Living in a hotel room can have a real impact on families' wellbeing during an already vulnerable time in their lives. It is also very expensive for the council.

"At our peak in 2023, we were one of the local authorities in London with the highest reliance on this type of accommodation and I am so proud that this innovative new joint working has allowed us, in a short space of time, to drive down our use of hotels to virtually nothing (it may never be zero as in some instances there is not another option).

"Our success means that families are in much better accommodation, and we're saving millions on what should only be reserved for absolute emergencies. The housing crisis hasn't ended, but we've made great strides in this area - and we'll continue to work to end other forms of temporary accommodation that aren't suitable for families, by April next year."





“It’s all worked out beautifully”

Delivering more housing improvements for residents

We are delivering more improvements to council homes as part of our £430 million pound housing investment programme.

In the first 12 months of the programme, we spent over £48 million enhancing over 12,000 council homes through improvements including new roofs, kitchens and bathrooms, electrical wiring and heating upgrades, lift renewals, door entry systems, as well as fire, electrical, gas and water safety improvements.

We recently visited two residents who have had new kitchens installed as part of this work. Sheila received a brand-new kitchen installed by Mulalley, who is contracted to make improvements in the south and west of the borough.

Councillor Anthony Okereke said: “We’re investing millions of pounds to not only improve the conditions of our council homes, but more importantly the experience of the people living in them - as part of our Housing Our Greenwich plan to improve council homes in the borough.

Councillor Pat Slattery said: “It’s Our Greenwich mission to make sure everyone has access to a safe and secure home that meets their needs. Investing in our homes benefits everyone, and my thanks to the teams involved who are helping us deliver for our residents so that our residents can have homes they can be proud of.”

Sheila, who has lived in her Blackheath home for 37 years, said: “I love my new kitchen! I needed a new kitchen for a while, as I’d had my old one for years, so it had served me well, but this is so much better, and I even got to choose the colour scheme.

“The contractors kept me up to date, and they were polite, clean and tidy – nothing was too much trouble for them, I can’t praise them more highly. I think the council’s doing a great job with improving these, and it’s all worked out beautifully - so I’d like to say thank you.”



“I’m over the moon with it”

Graham has lived in his Woolwich council home for 18 years and received a new kitchen installed by Amber Construction Services.

He said: “When residents see the council upgrading their existing stock, it reassures the local population that the council are active in encouraging a better environment and investment in the local people, because at the end of the day, it’s the people that are the most valuable asset of the borough.

“My new kitchen is great – the contractors took into consideration my disability issues and I was directly involved in the process as I was able to see and envisage the end product which I found really reassuring. Overall, I was really impressed, and the end product speaks for itself – I’m over the moon with it.”

We are continuing to work to make more council homes warmer, greener and cheaper for residents right across the borough.

We have set aside over £50 million to respond to important legislative requirements around safety and compliance. We will also prioritise improving the energy efficiency and decarbonisation of our homes, which will help us reduce carbon emissions.

We will keep you updated on work starting in other areas of the programme later this year.



We are the top council home builder for the third year running



The Royal Borough of Greenwich had the highest number of new affordable homes started of any London borough last year, repeating our success from 2022-3 and 2023-4.

Work began on 608 council homes across the borough in the last financial year, and we also completed the second highest number of affordable properties, with 790 finished and handed over to the tenants who now call them home.

Over 400 of the new homes are to be let at social rents to people on our housing register, easing the pressure caused by London's housing crisis.

In total we are committed to creating 1,750 new, low or zero carbon council homes across Royal Greenwich. Of these, ten per cent will be wheelchair accessible and a large proportion will be family homes, with some five-bedroom houses included in the programme.

We are also working closely with a variety of other housing providers in the borough to maximise the creation of non-council affordable housing, using every tool at our disposal to build as many homes for local people as fast as possible.

Our largest new council home scheme is shortlisted for prestigious awards

Our largest council housing scheme in Kidbrooke has been shortlisted for the 2025 Housing Design Awards, with the council also shortlisted for an AJ100 Award as 'Client of the Year' in relation to its work on the scheme.

The Housing Design Awards were established in 1948 by Nye Bevan in the same sitting of Parliament which launched the NHS, making them the longest-running housing awards in the country.

Kidbrooke Park Road North is the first phase of a scheme that will eventually deliver 452 one, two, three and four bedroom council homes to be let at social rents to people on our housing register. It will also feature a new nursery, retail space, 169 new trees and an innovative sustainable energy centre.



New council homes named in honour of Councillor Christine Grice

Part of a new development of Royal Greenwich council homes has been named in honour of the late Councillor Christine Grice, who sadly passed away five years ago.

Councillor Christine Grice was elected in May 2014 and served as Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources from 2018 before being named Deputy Leader of the Council shortly before her death in 2020.

Among her achievements was developing a Fairness Commission, helping to establish the Council Tax support scheme and serving on multiple panels and boards, including the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel and the Planning Board.

Christine Grice Gardens is part of The Brooks development, which will eventually provide 80 zero carbon council homes, among 1,750 properties being created by the council for local people on the housing register.

The Brooks also incorporates £750,000 worth of improvements to the local area including the creation of two new parks and an overhauled and upgraded local play area.



Report a fire or structural safety issue

As part of our responsibility as a landlord and “Principal Accountable Person” it is our duty to report any fire or structural safety issues in our high-rise buildings (these are buildings seven storeys or more or over 18 metres in height) under the Building Safety Act 2022.

What do we need you to do?

If you are in or around one of our high-rise buildings and notice a fire safety or structural problem before we do, you must report it immediately.

Why is this important?

- keep building safety a top priority
- act fast to manage risks
- give the Building Safety Regulator full oversight of any incidents and how we respond



What would be a fire or structural problem?

- Anything that you might use in or outside your home that could lead to the spread of fire such as charging e-scooters, flammable liquids, gas cylinders or barbecues (we deal with combustible items in communal areas in other ways).
- Total or partial collapse of the building
- Defective building work
- Unexpected failure or the degradation of construction materials
- The discovery of structural defects
- Failure of a critical fire safety measure, such as an automatic opening vent, smoke extraction or fire doors

This can be reported directly to fire-safety@royalgreenwich.gov.uk or via our online complaints form at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/report-fire-or-structural-issue

If you are not sure, please report it and we will assess it. You can also call the Fire Safety Team on **020 8921 6139**.

Thank you for continuing to work with us.

Window safety

As we enter the summer months, more and more people are opening the windows to let fresh air and a cool breeze in.

Nationally, one child under five is admitted to hospital every day after falling from a building, often from open windows but also balconies. Small children are curious and want to see what's happening outside but have no real understanding of danger.

Here are some tips so that you can prevent accidents this summer:

- Make sure you have fire safety catches, locks or window restrictors to stop your windows from opening too wide.
- Move furniture away from windows so a child cannot climb up.
- Have a barrier of at least 110cm high around a balcony and keep balcony doors locked so children cannot get out unattended.

Council tenant caught defrauding the council

A Woolwich resident who sublet his council home for almost three years was sentenced to six months in prison after pleading guilty to fraud.

Mr Yussuf Alejo pled guilty to one offence of fraud under the Fraud Act 2006 at Woolwich Crown Court on Thursday 1 May 2025.

Mr Alejo was caught subletting his Woolwich council home from July 2021 to June 2024.

Councillor Denise Hyland, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Social Value said: “The misuse of our council homes is a serious offence that undermines the integrity of our housing register, which currently has over 25,000 people waiting for safe and secure housing.

“We hope this acts as a warning to residents who take advantage of council housing that we will work with the justice system to prosecute any fraud committed against us.

“We urge all residents to respect council homes and report suspected fraud. Together, we can ensure fair and accessible community support for everyone.”

Subletting is when you are renting a property but choose to rent the home or room to another person without the permission of the landlord or owner, in this case the council.

If you suspect someone of committing fraud against the Royal Borough of Greenwich, please call **0800 169 6975** or email fraud@royalgreenwich.gov.uk.

Any information you give will be treated in confidence.



Have your say on our resident engagement policy

Earlier this year, we worked with some of you to produce a draft resident engagement policy that explains how we will inform and liaise with you about the tasks, actions and key decisions which affect you and the place you live.

The policy involves decisions related to:

- work in and around your home
- support for anti-social behaviour, hate crime or domestic abuse;
- how we manage parking on our estates;
- how we collect rent, service charges and leaseholder charges and
- the types of channels we use to communicate with you

We now want your thoughts and feedback to help us finalise the resident engagement policy for tenants and leaseholders.

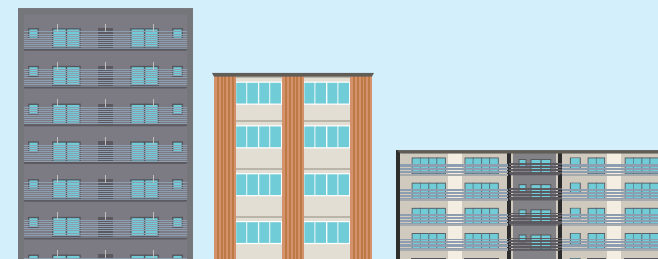
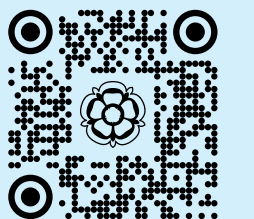
Get involved!

You can provide feedback by:

- Scanning the QR code
- Completing our survey at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/tenant-leaseholder-survey
- Coming along to meet staff and get help to complete the survey on Monday 21 July at The Forum at Greenwich, Trafalgar Road SE10 9EQ from 10am to 12 noon as well as on Thursday 24 July at The Woolwich Front Room, 105 Powis Street, Woolwich, SE18 6JB from 3pm to 7pm. Refreshments will be available at the Woolwich Front Room event only.

If you would like to discuss this policy in more detail or have any queries, please email YourView@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

The deadline for responses is 27 July 2025 at 5pm.



Want to give back to your local community?

Love Your Neighbourhood is a volunteer scheme for residents who want to help keep their area clean and well-maintained, through community clean-ups, taking care of our parks, and reporting issues like graffiti in public spaces.

Just ask Felicity, one of our brilliant Environment Champions: “By volunteering to take care of your area, you can have fun, meet people and get a bit of exercise, as well as feeling that you’ve done your bit for your local environment and made where you live a much nicer place.”

Sign up to Love Your Local Neighbourhood at royalgreenwich.gov.uk/love-your-neighbourhood



Are you blocking your bin collections?

Every week our waste crews come to your estate to empty your communal bins. Unfortunately, in some areas, safe access to the bins is becoming increasingly difficult and, in some cases, impossible. This is because of poorly parked cars and vans in areas that should be kept clear.

When we can’t empty your bins, it causes a whole range of issues. Chutes get blocked, bins overflow, bags are dumped and fly-tipping occurs. We are asking all our residents to please be mindful when parking your vehicle to make sure our crews can get to your bins.

This means:

- parking in the designated parking bays
- keeping access roads to the bin cupboards clear at all times
- not parking in front of the bin cupboards
- observing road markings such as yellow lines, yellow hatched boxes, no parking signs
- avoiding parking on tight corners
- making sure your visitors also park responsibly.

With your help, we can maintain a welcoming and clean-living environment by ensuring your waste is cleared regularly.

You can help us by:

- parking in the allocated bays
- parking close to – but not on top of – the kerb
- making sure your wheels are straight
- not parking on yellow lines



Thanks for taking part in our building safety survey

Thank you to all tenants and leaseholders who live in our high-rise buildings who recently took part in our survey around building safety.

We are now in the process of reviewing everyone’s feedback to ensure we understand your thoughts and your feedback will help us shape our new resident engagement strategy around building safety.

The final strategy will detail how we will liaise and work with residents who live in high-rise buildings that are above seven storeys or 18 metres high.

We will share the analysis of the survey with you as soon as we can along with the draft strategy later in the year.

Don’t put off getting home contents insurance

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

Benefits can include:

- pay-as-you-go
- no excess to pay
- low-cost premiums
- choice of payment methods paying monthly or annually

Visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/contentsinsurance to find out more about the home contents insurance scheme for council tenants.

More foster carers needed



We urgently need more foster carers for our local children.

Foster carers receive 24-hour support, council tax exemption and financial benefits. You can also foster if you rent, own your home or are in permanent social housing.

If you have the time and care to give, you could change a child’s life.

Call **080 0052 1499** or visit royalgreenwich.gov.uk/fostering to find out more.

Get help with rent arrears

If you already have rent arrears and want more support, speak to your Income Officer. It's not too late and we want to help.

Our Income Officers may also be able to refer you to the Money Advice Team. They can work with you to sort out an affordable repayment arrangement for your rent.

Face-to-face and telephone appointments are available so call your Income Officer on **020 8854 8888** or email **rent-account-enquiries@royalgreenwich.gov.uk**



Are you affected by the move to Universal Credit?

At our advice sessions our advisers assist you if you are affected by the move to Universal Credit – this is 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. The drop-in sessions will end in December 2025.

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**

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SUPPORTS

