

HOUSING *news*

News and information for our tenants

Winter 2023/24



Improving your neighbourhoods and estates

In 2022, we made the commitment to invest £300 million into improving the quality of our estates.

Our ambitious estate improvement programme is driven by the vital feedback provided to us by residents and the fantastic work of our 13 estate improvement volunteers, who conduct inspections to ensure repairs are captured and carried out as quickly as possible. This helps us to prioritise the projects that matter most to our residents on each estate.

Estate improvement projects come in many forms, and many are now coming to life across the borough.

This summer, for example, we opened our very first community garden on the Heston Farm estate. This vibrant communal area is now giving residents of all ages and abilities the opportunity to grow herbs and vegetables while connecting with their neighbours.

We have been making neighbourhoods greener and boosting biodiversity by creating orchards and installing 21 bug hotels to complement our 'no mow' sites all year round.

Shortly, we'll be installing over 31 new bike sheds on estates across the borough, giving every tenant a safe and secure place to store their bikes and make active travel choices.

After listening to resident feedback, we are also working on a project to upgrade bin storage units; this will help to keep our estates clean, prevent pests and make it easier for everyone to recycle and dispose of their waste correctly.

There is a lot of work taking place across the borough. If you'd like to find out exactly what is happening in your area, scan the QR code:



GET IN TOUCH

You can check who your estate improvement officer is, and when the next inspection is taking place on your estate noticeboard.



Cllr Sue Sampson,
Cabinet Member
for Housing
Management and
Homelessness

Welcome to the first edition of our dedicated newsletter for Council tenants. This new quarterly update will allow us to share important information and update residents on improvement works taking place across our estates in Hounslow. More importantly, it will provide residents with greater opportunities to get involved and provide feedback on our work to improve properties and estates.

We have a bumper first edition packed with important advice and guidance from disposing household waste correctly, preparing for the winter months financially to top tips from our Healthy Homes team on how to tackle damp and mould during the colder period.

I'm also delighted to share some of the fantastic improvement works we've made so far across our estates thanks to resident feedback on what was needed most.

It's important to us that each year we are transparent about our investment into our Council estates and provide tenants with the right ways to shape that investment in the future.

To keep up to date with regular news, important information and when estate improvement works will take place on your estate scan the QR code below.

Finally, I wish all our Council tenants a joyous festive season, a Merry Christmas for those who celebrate and a Happy New Year.

Cllr Sue Sampson
Cabinet Member for Housing
Management and Homelessness



BETTER HOMES *for tenants*



New secure fire doors installed at Fauconberg Court, in Chiswick

Earlier this year, we set out our six-year plan to invest £210 million into improving the quality of Council homes across the borough. Since then, we've been working hard to rollout a range of projects across the borough.

We are committed to making sure tenants' homes are not just safe but are of high quality and decent to live in with modern and efficient kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems.

The programme of work includes the replacement of approximately 500 kitchens each year, upgrade to new, more secure door entry systems and the replacement of old and worn-out windows on properties.

There are many other benefits to the programme including the renovation of green areas on estates, improving the energy efficiency of homes and reducing carbon emissions.

To keep tenants up to date with the investments, the information will be regularly updated on our website, highlighting where, when and what estate improvement works will be taking place.

It has been designed to help you understand the changes that are happening to your home and estate.



Investment this year (until end of March 2024):

£2.5M

on structural repairs

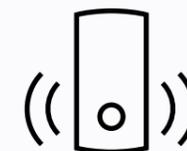


£3.5M

on kitchen and bathroom upgrades

£400K

on lift upgrades or installations



£602K

on door entry system upgrades



£2.4M

on energy improvement works

£5.7M

on building safety works - including fire risk assessment

Avoid being a dumper!

Fly-tipping is the illegal dumping of unwanted items, whether that's large-scale dumping such as by illegal waste carriers or even smaller scale dumping such as leaving household items or even unwanted carrier bags by bins. To report fly-tipping visit www.hounslow.gov.uk/report



Getting rid of large items?

Did you know that we have a bulky waste collection service?

We realise it can be difficult to get rid of large household items such as broken furniture and fridges.

Collections are available five days per week (Monday - Friday) anytime between 7.00am and 3.00pm on your chosen collection day.

The cost is £41 for up to five items, with any additional items charged at £8.20 per item. Residents in receipt of Council Tax Reduction are eligible for the discounted rate of £15 for up to five items, with any additional items charged at £3 per item. You will need to provide your six-digit reference number when making your booking.

If you live in a flat, please note items will only be collected from a communal area. We will only accept items that are in a clean, dry condition.

Bookings can be made by calling **020 8583 5555**, selecting **option 1**. When you are ready to book a collection, please have your payment details to hand.



Information

HUB ON YOUR ESTATE

Did you know we have a range of noticeboards across our estates?

These noticeboards help us regularly share important messages with residents about what is happening on the estate and in the borough. Every block has a physical internal noticeboard, and we also have 64 electronic noticeboards and 20 external boards across the borough.

The noticeboards are currently the best way to find out which Council officers manage and work in your area, but we are also exploring new ways to keep you up to date.

For example, you can easily find out who is your Assistant Service Manager, Housing and Tenancy Services Officer, Estate Improvement Officer, Caretaking Team Leader or even out of hours estate enforcement. These noticeboards will also detail when the Grounds Maintenance Team will carry out duties such as grass cutting on your estate.

Alternatively, if you contact the Council's Customer Service team on **020 8583 2000** or by emailing customerservice@hounslow.gov.uk and they will help to redirect your enquiry to the appropriate team and officer.



OPENING HOURS:

Monday to Thursday:
9am - 5pm

Friday:
9am - 4.45pm



WARM AND SAFE WINTER FOR EVERYONE

Homelessness can happen to anybody for many reasons ranging from financial difficulties, relationship breakdown, an unexpected eviction or mental health issues. Unfortunately, the rise in the cost of living means many people are facing issues that could lead them to having to leave or lose their home.

No one should have to spend a single night on the streets. If you know someone, or have spotted someone sleeping rough on your estate, then please visit www.streetlink.org.uk or call **0300 500 0914**

Reports are sent to outreach teams, who will connect people sleeping rough to local support services available in the area.

Call 999 if the person needs emergency help or is under the age of 18.

If you are worried about your own situation, are experiencing difficulties and feel at risk of homelessness then please get in touch with the Council by calling **020 8583 3942**.

COPING WITH CHRISTMAS

The festive season is a great time of year, but it's not without its stresses and strains.

The pressures can have a big impact on people who are already living with mental health issues. Help is available for anyone who finds it difficult to cope at this time of year.

And that help starts with you.

Tips that may help you over Christmas.

- Put yourself first - think about what you need to cope and how you are going to get it
- Plan - think about what you will need if you are going somewhere new that may make you uncomfortable or if you will be in difficult social situations
- Know what help is available - make a list of the services you might need and their opening hours
- Talk - It's also ok to ask for help

More info and support: www.hounslow.gov.uk/healthandwellbeing



Help us crack down on ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR



Anti-social behaviour (ASB) comes in many forms. It includes a range of unacceptable behaviours, from everyday incidents such as noise nuisance to serious criminal acts. The types of behaviour considered anti-social include:

- Intimidation and harassment
- Domestic abuse
- Violence or threats of violence
- Rowdy behaviour and drunkenness
- Pet nuisance / uncontrolled animals
- Dealing or taking illegal substances
- Damage to property
- Dumping rubbish (fly tipping)
- Abandoned vehicles
- Noise nuisance: e.g. loud music, shouting
- Graffiti

We take all acts of anti-social behaviour seriously as we know it can affect your quality of life. We're here to help.

Action we can take depending on the circumstances:

- Issue warning letters
- Serve a legal notice for breach of the tenancy conditions
- Seek a civil injunction
- Seek a Criminal Behaviour Order
- Issue a Community Protection notice
- Seeking possession of the property

If you or a member of your household is proven to be a perpetrator of ASB, this is a breach of your tenancy agreement.

REPORTING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

You can remain anonymous; however, we encourage residents to provide their contact details as this helps to make the investigation quicker and more effective. We will not divulge any personal details. You can also get support as a victim of crime from several local agencies. Visit www.gov.uk/get-support-as-a-victim-of-crime to find support.

Try to log everything accurately for your report so that the information is available as evidence in court (if needed) by:

1. Keeping a diary of events, taking photographs or videos of incidents
2. Keeping a record of witnesses



Make a report to us by calling **020 8583 4000** or scan QR code.

If a problem is serious, please report it to the police. In an emergency always call 999. For non-emergencies call 101.

Paying your rent at christmas

Christmas can be one of the busiest and most expensive times of the year. Whether it's present or food buying, planning for family visits or organising treats for the children, the cost can begin to rack up. Paying your rent can become just another worry in the back of your mind.

It's important to not let the costs of celebrating the holiday season take over your priorities.

We understand that Christmas can be a difficult time financially, even more so in the current climate. We have a dedicated team of Housing Income Officers along



with a Welfare Benefit and Money Advice service that can help.

We will soon be contacting tenants who have previously missed payments over the Christmas period to discuss their current situation and whether they need any support to maintain their rent payments.

If you are struggling, please contact us early and we will work with you to find solutions to prevent your rent account falling into arrears. Scan the QR code to arrange for your Income Officer to call you to discuss your circumstances.

Paying your rent must remain a priority, to make a payment online visit: www.hounslow.gov.uk/pay-your-rent

There is also a range of financial support available to residents that can be found on www.hounslowconnect.com

You can also work out entitlement to welfare benefits with our calculator www.hounslow.gov.uk/benefits-calculator



How can we support you?

Our dedicated tenancy sustainment team provides free, person-centred support to tenants experiencing difficulties, such as financial issues, mental health difficulties or support understanding your tenancy rights and responsibilities. From time to time, we all struggle, and it is important to reach out for help early to prevent problems getting worse.

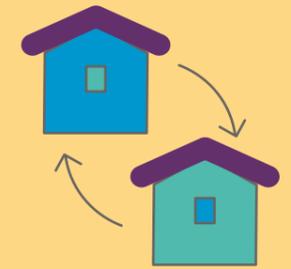
They can provide support and advice to ensure you remain in your home and regain your independence.

To get in touch, contact your housing officer to ask for a referral to the team.

If you are still unsure, please send an email to: tstreferrals@hounslow.gov.uk

HOUSE SWAP

Time to escape to the country



Have your children left home? Do you want to reduce the running costs of your household? Or is your home simply too big to manage?

Answered 'yes' to any of these questions then we might be able to help.

Tenants with one or more spare bedrooms, could qualify for our downsizing scheme, which provides support and financial assistance for those who wish to transfer to a smaller, more manageable, and affordable home.

As a voluntary scheme, tenants have the choice to move if they want to. It doesn't just help those wanting to transfer to a smaller home – it also means more homes become available for families that need them most.

The added benefit of downsizing is that you don't have to stay in London – the Seaside and Country Homes scheme is open to households where at least one member is aged 55 or over, who wishes to move outside of their existing borough. From Cornwall to Norfolk and Lincolnshire to Dorset, Cambridgeshire or Shropshire, opportunities are available.

For more information:

Visit www.hounslow.gov.uk/downsizing

Call **020 8583 4452**

Email downsizing@hounslow.gov.uk

SAFETY FIRST - building update

Following the new building safety standards and legislation from the Government, we're doing everything we can to ensure tenants feel safe and secure in their homes.

We are currently working in partnership with Kier Construction to replace flat entrance doors in high-rise blocks with specialist fire doors. These doors have been tested and are purpose-built to prevent the spread of fires for as long as possible.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT FOR TENANTS?

The programme is progressing well, and it's essential that you work with us, to ensure that we can enhance the safety of your home. Kier Construction is working across the borough and will contact you to request access to your home, along with your preference regarding style and colour choice options for your new door. It is important you respond to this letter immediately, so that we can programme the work effectively. Failure to comply with this work will mean that you are in breach of your secure tenancy agreement.

Under the new regulations, the Council is required to conduct a yearly safety check on each door. We will update you when this begins.

Remember:

- Don't block emergency access routes to the estate – ensure your vehicle doesn't prevent the emergency services from reaching someone in need
- Keep emergency pathways clear- do not put plants, bicycles, prams, toys or any other obstructions in your way, keep the outside of your flat and communal hallways clear
- Please don't store items on your balcony, as this will create additional risk in the event of a fire
- Please report repairs and concerns promptly, so we can take action needed to keep you safe.

If you have any questions regarding this work, please contact hounslow.kier@kier.co.uk

Meet your Healthy Homes Taskforce



Cllr Sue Sampson with the new Lampton Services Healthy Homes taskforce who are supporting tenants to tackle damp and mould

We are continuing to tackle damp and mould concerns in our Council homes and pledged £1million to tackle this through 2023. This included setting up a Healthy Homes taskforce who have been working with residents across the borough. The team have worked diligently to clear a number of damp and mould or repair cases this year, and will continue to focus on this area throughout the winter.

As we enter the colder winter months, we would like to share some simple preventative steps you can take to maintain a healthy home and to prevent damp and mould in your home. With the potential to harm our health, early action is essential to protecting yourself and your loved ones.

Step-by-step guide for keeping a healthy home:

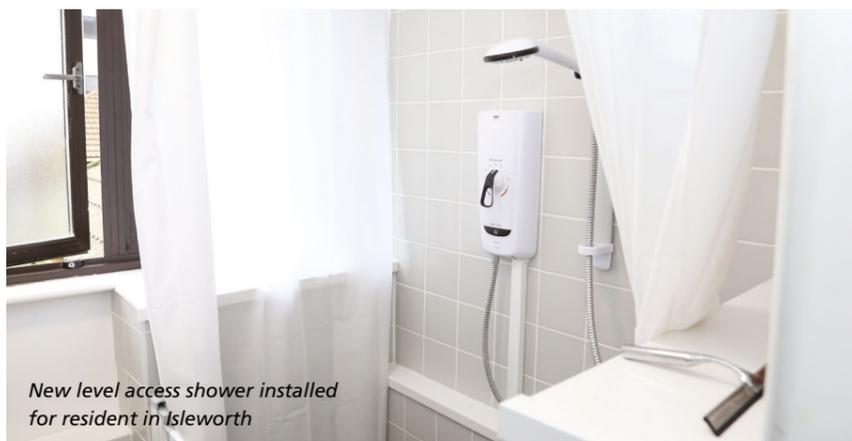


- Ventilate your home at regular intervals by opening windows and using extractor fans, and always in the morning, after cooking or bathing
- In colder weather, use your heating system to maintain a constant temperature in your home
- Always keep air ventilation ducts clean and clear of obstructions
- Do not dry clothes on radiators as the water evaporates out of the fabric, where it turns into moisture in the air and leads to condensation
- Wash off mould growth from walls and ceilings with suitable mould remover to avoid further growth
- Clean and wipe moisture from windows when it appears, to prevent mould growth
- Leave space between the walls and furniture such as beds and sofas, to allow air to circulate. Try not to overfill wardrobes, cupboards, or rooms as this will restrict air movement.

For more advice about tackling damp and mould and how to report it visit:
www.hounslow.gov.uk/healthy-homes

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE RESIDENTS

Adjustments or adaptations to improve quality of life



New level access shower installed for resident in Isleworth

Residents sometimes need adaptations to their homes to make it easier to live safely and independently. If you are physically disabled and find it difficult to cope, you may be entitled to some updates made to your property to make it easier to live in.

Adaptations may include:

- Grab rails located in the bathroom or at the entrance
- Widening doors for wheelchair access
- Level access shower
- Stair lift
- A ramp

Once a request has been submitted, the Council's Occupational Therapy Service will visit the property for an initial assessment and put forward any recommendations.

In some situations, it may not be feasible to adapt your home, in which case the Occupational Therapist will complete a Housing Needs Assessment which will be used to support a move to a more appropriate property.

All adaptations to council-owned property will be completed free of charge for the resident.



If you'd like to request an aids and adaptations assessment, get in touch today:

Telephone: **020 8583 3878**

Email: housingadaptationservices@hounslow.gov.uk

In person at: **Community Services, Hounslow House, TW3 3EB**

TACKLING TENANCY FRAUD

A major priority for the Council is to tackle illegal tenancy fraud and our dedicated housing fraud team use a number of techniques to identify cases for investigation.

Tenancy fraud can include:

- Giving false information when applying for a council property
- The tenant of a council-owned property sub-letting it to someone else, even for a short period
- Not living in a council property, when it should be your main home

These actions could be in breach of tenancy, could result in rejection of an application for housing or even lose the right to remain in a property. Serious cases may result in prosecution, which could result in a fine and even imprisonment. If you suspect tenancy fraud you can contact the confidential tenancy fraud hotline **020 8583 3777** or you can email tenancyfraud@hounslow.gov.uk or complete an online form by visiting www.hounslow.gov.uk/report.

SAFE AND SECURE HOMES FOR CARE LEAVERS

Local Authorities like Hounslow have a legal duty to support young people making the transition from being in care as a child to adulthood. As their Corporate Parent, the Council has a responsibility for offering ongoing support for those aged between 18- to 25-year-olds. This comes in many different forms including financial support, education and training, and safe and secure housing.

Since April 2023, we have placed 47 care leavers in permanent one-bedroom social rent homes to support their transition into adulthood.

Providing homes for care leavers is a key part of the Council's ambitious housebuilding programme. Many care leavers currently live in placements that no longer meet their needs or are unable to move on because of a lack of suitable alternative accommodation.

Your estate needs you

Estate Improvement Volunteers

Our tenants carry out regular spot checks to ensure estates are clean, safe and well-maintained. Let us know if you want to join the volunteers and work alongside the Estate Improvement Team. In this very important role, volunteers receive full support and a gift voucher for their time.

A call out for block representatives

Block representatives work alongside Estate Improvement Volunteers to keep a closer look at the communal areas of the block they live, keeping an eye on what needs to be done. The Heston Farm Tenant and Resident Association is looking at best practice in how to support block representatives so our housing blocks get the attention they need, and they will share this practice across the borough. If you are interested in this voluntary role for your block, please contact the Housing Engagement Team on engage@hounslow.gov.uk

WHAT'S ON?

Social Café and food bank

Every Tuesday 10am-1pm, drop in for tea and chat, meet with housing staff and other services.



Oriel Community Resource Centre, Cresswell Road, Hanworth TW13 6YQ

Over 60's Christmas Tea Party

Monday 4 December, 2 - 5pm - Please let us know if you want to attend for catering purposes



Danehurst Centre, Brent Lea, Brentford TW8 8HX

ASKING ABOUT THE SERVICE YOU RECEIVE



Between now and Christmas an independent review company will contact a sample group of tenants to check their perception of the housing service. This group will be selected by the company to reflect a good mixture of the estates, street properties and communities that make up our tenants. It is important that the reviewers hear about our services, good or bad. This information will help shape services moving forward. If you are contacted about a Tenant Perception Survey and want to check who is contacting you, email engage@hounslow.gov.uk or call **020 8583 4000**.

HELP SHAPE HOUNSLOW'S HOUSING SERVICE

Do you want to review the housing service you receive and help shape new services?

Some tenants are looking at how we can set up a tenant scrutiny model that will review services and ask for change. It will be a powerful, independent body led by tenants and supported by officers. In early October, tenants and officers took part in joint training around good practice in scrutiny and heard how it works elsewhere, the tenants are now considering how they want it to work in Hounslow. If you are interested in being part of tenant scrutiny or just want to know more, please contact the Housing Engagement Team on engage@hounslow.gov.uk.



Getting to know your Lead Member



Do you have a question for Cllr Sue Sampson, your Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Homelessness?

Why not share any questions you might have for Cllr Sampson with the Housing Engagement Team by emailing engage@hounslow.gov.uk or write to her c/o Members Services, Hounslow House, 7 Bath Road, Hounslow TW3 3EB.

Cllr Sampson will share answers in the next issue of Housing News.

CONTACT THE HOUSING ENGAGEMENT TEAM

- Email engage@hounslow.gov.uk
- Call **020 8583 4000**
- Visit www.hounslow.gov.uk/housing

