

# HOUSING *news*

News and information for our tenants

February 2024



**Cllr Sue Sampson,  
Cabinet Member  
for Housing  
Management and  
Homelessness**

So here we are again! It's so nice to welcome you to the second edition of our dedicated newsletter for Council tenants.

I'd like to thank everyone who got in touch with us about the first issue. It's been fantastic to listen to what you want us to address and we hope that we have begun to do this in the future.

Please feel free to contact us with your comments and feedback. We want you to help keep us on our toes, keep us informed about what we need to know about what you want and need us to do, and help us all make our service as good as it can be.

On page eight you will find all the different ways you can get in touch, including how you can put questions direct to me.

Many of you will have been contacted before Christmas by researchers for our Tenant Perception Survey. Thank you all for responding, you can the initial findings on page two.

We're very happy that on some key indicators a majority of you are happy with our service, but we're also very much aware that we cannot be

complacent and need to address the areas where we are not matching your expectations of us.

I'm also proud of the Community Hubs that we are continuing to roll out across the borough. These connect residents to a variety of services and activities, as well as somewhere to find information, or get help or advice.

We have also had to make some big decisions about our housing service this year. We are committing to long-term funding towards our estates and their regeneration, which will benefit all residents.

However, due to the cost-of-living crisis which has affected us all, as individuals and organisations alike, we have had to increase rents for tenants. Many people will be covered by their benefits, there are details of this on page five – and we will support tenants as well as we can.

I hope your new year is going well, and please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

**Cllr Sue Sampson**  
Cabinet Member for Housing  
Management and Homelessness

## GET IN TOUCH

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



## COMPETITION

*Send us your  
best snaps*



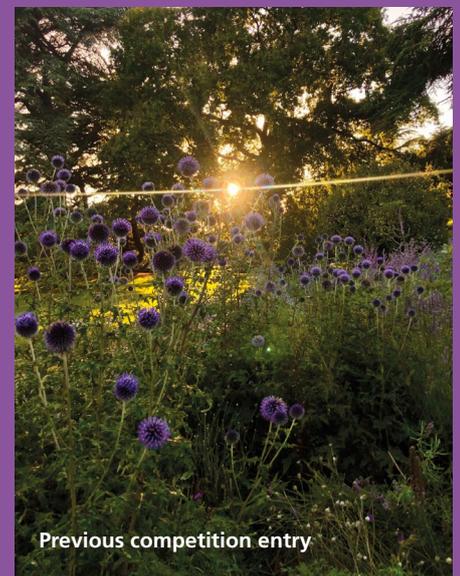
**Are you a budding photographer? We want you to send us your best pictures of where you live, shots that reflect your pride in your neighbourhood and the people who live alongside you.**

It could be a particularly extravagant garden feature, artistic ways in which tenants have chosen to beautify their estates, or just pictures of you and your fellow tenants enjoying where you live.

To enter, email your photographs to [engage@hounslow.gov.uk](mailto:engage@hounslow.gov.uk) by April 5.

The top three winning entries will be chosen by Councillor Sue Sampson, Cabinet Member, for Housing Management and the Mayor of Hounslow, Councillor Afzaal Kiani, and the winners will be invited to tea in the mayor's parlour.

Also, winning and commended entries will be put on display in the lobby of Hounslow House so that every tenant in the borough can appreciate your photographic skills!



Previous competition entry

# TENANT SATISFACTION in Hounslow Housing RISES



We'd like to thank everyone who filled in the Tenant Perception Survey late last year and gave us invaluable feedback on how we're performing in managing your homes. The findings were encouraging for us, with two-thirds of tenants expressing overall satisfaction with our service – but we're not going to be complacent despite the favourable results.

The survey is very important for us – and tenants – because it gives us an insight into issues that you may have about the services we provide which aren't necessarily picked up through other channels, such as staff on estates or through our helplines.

We carried out this year's survey just before Christmas – many of you will have been contacted by independent researchers who asked you questions about the 12 measures relating to your perception of the services that we provide through Hounslow Housing.

In all, just under 1,000 households out of 13,000 across the borough were

surveyed – which means that the results we got came from around eight percent of tenants.

We've had the provisional results of the survey back, which we'd like to share with you now before devoting a future issue of Housing News to a deeper dive into them later this year.

The headline figure is that your overall satisfaction with Hounslow Housing is 67%: this compares to a figure of 64% when we last conducted the survey in 2021, which was of course during lockdown; to get a better comparison, in 2018 the level of satisfaction was 64%.

On repairs, there was a large rise in satisfaction – from 62% in 2018 to 70% in 2023 – and seven in 10 tenants said they were happy with the time that it had taken for their most recent repair to be completed.

In terms of communication with tenants – both listening to you but also keeping you informed about what was going on – you felt that we had improved. Almost 60% felt that the housing team listened

to their views and acted upon them, which was up from 54% in 2018.

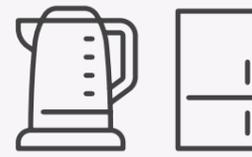
When it came to satisfaction with how well we kept you informed about the things that mattered to you, 74% were happy, up almost 20% from the survey in 2021 during the pandemic (56%).

Asked whether they felt that the housing team was treating them fairly and respect, a figure which we don't have comparable statistics for from previous surveys, just under three-quarters of tenants (74%) felt that they were being treated with respect.

And on maintaining your spaces, keeping them clean and safe, seven in ten were satisfied, with 62% happy about Hounslow's approach to antisocial behaviour – up from 28% in 2018.

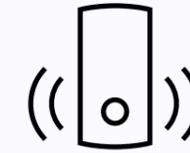
Some these numbers show us that we're on the right track, and it's a direction of travel we aim to keep going in, but we're not going to be complacent and will continue to work for all our tenants every day.

*Investment this year  
(until end of March 2025):*



**£1.9M**

*on electrical upgrades  
(domestic and communal)*



**£4.5M**

*on statutory and regulatory works  
(i.e. building safety and fire safety)*



**£3.5M**

*on kitchen and bathroom upgrades*



**£2.5M**

*on energy improvements  
(retrofit works)*



**£3.25M**

*on upgrading heating systems  
(domestic and district/communal heating systems)*



**£1.2M**

*on adaptations to help independent living and catering for care needs*

**£1M**

*on estate improvements*

**£2M**

*on structural works*

## *Council supports youth groups and housing tenants with Thriving Communities Funding*

The Council has announced the award of almost £300,000 to 13 local voluntary groups.

These will include five projects geared towards young people, making up more than half of that total disbursed.

Hounslow will work with Capture Minds, a youth-led, not-for-profit organisation providing training programmes and digital content to empower young adults and break the cycle of poverty.

The 'New Hope' mentoring project with Capture will take place on the Ivybridge Estate in Isleworth.

Free arts projects will also be offered to 7-12-year-olds across estates by Feltham Arts.

There will also a financial inclusion project for Convent Way Estate residents in Heston, provided by charity GOS&D.

This will feature multilingual financial support and advocacy, one-to-one sessions, and the training of residents to become financial inclusion mentors.



A project by GOS&D

## SAFE HOMES

Fires can start suddenly and spread quickly, damaging your home and furniture and putting lives in danger. Here are some simple things you can do to help prevent one in your home.

- It is safer not to smoke in your property and isn't permitted in communal areas. Please smoke outside and ensure cigarettes are put out.
- Keep candles and portable heaters away from furniture and curtains. Position them safely where they can't be knocked over and place them on inflammable surfaces.
- Make sure your smoke alarms work and check they do so on a regular basis.
- Many fires start in the kitchen, so never leave a pan unattended when doing things such as deep fat frying or cooking with an open flame.
- When charging electrical items, such as phones, e-cigarettes, only use chargers that come with the device, or are certified for this use, and follow instructions carefully.
- Ensure extension leads are undamaged and not overloaded, or plugged into other extension leads.
- If you have a balcony, please keep it clear and clean.
- Please keep all corridors and communal areas clear of all obstructions.
- Please familiarise yourself with emergency arrangements for your home, so you know what to do in the event of a fire.

If you feel you would need support to escape, please contact your Housing Officer to agree a "Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan" (PEEP).



Visit: [www.hounslow.gov.uk/council-tenants](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk/council-tenants)



# 2024 AND BEYOND:

*At the council's monthly Cabinet meeting in January, a series of decisions were taken which will impact upon all tenants across the borough. Here is what was decided, and how it will impact upon you and your neighbours.*



The Everglades, Hounslow

## *what we are planning for the future*

Hounslow committed at its January Cabinet meeting to enact policies that will allow us to continue to provide the highest levels of service for all our tenants, as well as to invest well in our 16,200 housing units and to push forward on plans to build up to 1,000 more council properties in the borough.

We also updated our Housing Revenue Account's Business Plan, which details how the council will use its income – coming from rent, service charge, grants and borrowing – to best manage, maintain and develop our housing stock.

This was the first update since January 2023 and reflected the delivery of programmes over the last 12 months – as well as the adverse economic conditions, including high inflation and increasing interest rates, which have led to rent and service charge rises.

The update also makes clear our commitment to ambitious housing plans – including the building of 1,000 homes across the borough and investment in the quality of our estates and improving the energy efficiency of our housing stock.

The business plan also covered our proposed Estate Investment Programme

in capital works, which will see us committing to investment of at least £30 million a year over the next five budgets – coming to a total which could top £150 million by 2029.

These funds will be spent on core works, ensuring that homes are safe and well-maintained; and enhancement works, improving our estate across the borough and helping to decarbonise our housing stock.

We're very happy to have committed to high levels of investment in our housing stock, and to have made a long-term decision ensuring that we can plan housing improvements until practically the end of the decade.

It's tremendously important that we have been able to commit to longer-term thinking around our responsibility for provision of current council housing and future projects in the borough.

Our ongoing commitment is to provide all tenants with the best possible housing in the short term – and to work towards higher standards in the longer term, and we believe that the decisions which we have taken will have an immediate and meaningful impact on everyone who we serve.

## *Why rents are rising*



Cabinet was also forced to take the difficult decision to increase rents across its housing stock. Over the last year, as you'll all be aware, the cost of living for individuals and organisations has increased to such an extent that we have all had to re-examine our spending.

In the face of high inflation and rising costs for goods and services that we rely on, as well as the Government's proposed settlement to local authorities which is squeezing the budgets of councils across the capital and England, Hounslow has had to look at ways that it can maintain the level of its public services without impacting too much on residents' own household budgets.

To this end, in order to continue to provide safe and good-quality homes to tenants, rents across the council's housing stock will rise by 7.7% – the rate set by central government, which is September 2023's consumer price inflation (CPI) rate plus one percent. Service charges for tenants will also rise, by 6.7% on average, the CPI rate.

We haven't taken this decision lightly – we know how hard life has been for many recently, with costs soaring and wages not keeping pace. Indeed, last year we chose not to raise rents by the full amount that we were allowed by law to because we recognised just how hard the cost-of-living crisis was hitting tenants.

Unfortunately, this year we have to take that option because we feel that it is essential to maintain the services we provide for you. Many tenants will be able to apply to fully cover the additional costs through their benefits, and only a small minority of council tenants who are on higher incomes will be financially impacted.

You can find out more about support with rent and service charges here:



## HOW WE SET RENTS



The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which oversees local government in the UK said earlier this month that social housing providers in England will be able to raise rents by up to 7.7% next year.

This will apply to new and existing tenants from April 2024.

This rate is based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1% permitted rent increases, set at the September 2023 CPI figure, which was 6.7%.

Last year, this would have meant we should have raised rents by 11%, but we took the decision to raise rents by 7%, feeling that in the teeth of the cost-of-living crisis, we needed to protect tenants from the full rate.

Given the funding challenges that we face as a result of a year of high inflation and rising costs, we have made the difficult decision to take up the full possible increase. We will ensure there will be support for any tenants who are at risk of financial problems due to this rise.

# OUR PLAN FOR YOUR HOMES

*We continue to invest in our homes and estates, so that they are well maintained, warm, safe, and attractive to residents, managing them within available resources. The estate investment programme that was recently approved by Cabinet (January 2024) focuses upon:*

## Statutory and regulatory works:



- All health and safety compliance areas – including building safety and fire safety;
- Works to address structural issues.

For example – the Council has worked hard to take appropriate steps to improve the safety of council housing – particularly focusing on upgrading flat entrance doors. Such significant improvements have been possible due to residents' cooperation.

## Minimum condition and efficiency standards:



- Meeting necessary standards (i.e., the Decent Homes Standard);
- Delivering on the Council's ambitious decarbonisation targets.

For example – the Council's planned maintenance and improvement programmes of work have included replacing component parts when in poor condition or beyond repair (kitchens, windows, heating systems, roofs) as well as programmes to modernise, decarbonise and remodel homes to meet housing need and better fit the needs and aspirations of residents.

## Investment in line with the Corporate Plan:



- Supporting the drive for a greener, healthier, cleaner, thriving, safer, and liveable borough;
- Putting residents at the heart of what the Council does and delivering estate improvements that benefit our communities;
- Making best use of Council assets.

For example – the Council's estate improvement schemes have sought to improve the quality of the tenant's homes, and of the estate environments. Early, open and meaningful engagement with those residents affected by such projects has been vital to the success of these projects and in realising their full benefits.

*Have a question?*

*Come along to our drop in sessions where you will be able to meet with your Housing Officer and Tenancy Sustainment Officer. No appointment needed.*

## ESTATE DROP IN SESSIONS...

**Flaxman House**  
Devonshire Street,  
Chiswick, W4 2JP  
Tuesday 10am-12pm  
Friday 2pm-4pm

**Oriel Centre**  
6a Chamberlain Walk,  
Feltham, TW13 6YG  
Wednesday 10am-12pm

**Haweswater House**  
Summerwood Road,  
Isleworth TW7 7QS  
Monday 2pm-4pm  
Friday 10am-2pm

**Feltham Library**  
210 The Centre High Street  
Feltham TW13 4GU  
Thursdays 1pm-4pm

**Feltham Hub**  
Feltham Assembly Hall,  
Hounslow Rd, Feltham  
TW14 9DN  
Tuesdays 2pm-5pm

*“Our caretakers are extremely resilient”*

**CARETAKERS:**  
*the unsung heroes of our estates*

*Cllr Sampson with caretakers from the Ivybridge Estate*

“Our caretakers are extremely resilient,” explains Andrea Tidy, Estates Services Manager at Hounslow Council. “No day is the same and they often have to deal with a number of reactive issues.”

During the pandemic, caretakers were the only frontline staff who interacted with residents – face to face – within housing services.

“I remember talking to an elderly woman who was so frightened by the pandemic,” Andrea says. “When she saw one of our caretakers still carrying out his daily duties she felt reassured and realised everything was going to be OK.”

Along with being a reassuring presence during the pandemic, one of the Caretaking Team Leaders, Tina Memory, was recognised in 2022 for her continued delivery of the British Institute of Cleaning Sciences cleaning training, which led to her winning an award for BICS Assessor of the Year.

“Previously, I think the caretaking service has often been perceived as a ‘Cinderella service’. Since the pandemic, we really have a powerful voice. Our caretakers have one of the strongest, and closest, relationship with our residents – it is important they play an important role in ensuring estate pride.”

And estate pride is the cornerstone of Hounslow Council's housing priorities.

Cllr Sue Sampson, Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Homelessness, believes caretakers play an integral role on the borough's estates – having lived on the Worple Road Estate for most of her life. “They often go about their daily work without complaint or any need for recognition for their tireless work,” she says.

“They truly are the unsung heroes of our council and are the bedrock of the communities they serve.”

# Your community needs you

## Estate Improvement Volunteers

Our tenants carry out regular spot checks to ensure estates are clean, safe and well-maintained. If you're interested and would like to have an initial chat about the role please contact Haveena Judge at [engage@hounslow.gov.uk](mailto:engage@hounslow.gov.uk). Volunteers will receive full training and a gift voucher as thanks for their time.

## A call out for block representatives

Block representatives work alongside Estate Improvement Volunteers to look at the standards of the communal areas of the block they live in. 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. If you are interested in this voluntary role for your block, please contact the Housing Engagement Team on [engage@hounslow.gov.uk](mailto:engage@hounslow.gov.uk) if you would like an initial chat about the role.

# WHAT'S ON?

## Social Café

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



Tenants and staff enjoy the Over 60's Christmas Tea Party at the Danehurst Centre. Watch this space for future events.

# HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY



There are a number of ways that residents can get involved with activities near their homes, for example working to improve their environments or the services they receive.

Some, such as tenants and resident associations, are run directly by local people. However you want to get involved with your community, and to whatever level of time commitment

you can give, contact the housing engagement team through the details below.

We are particularly keen to catch up with people who would like to be communications ambassadors - you would help us to review how we speak to residents and also help share messages.



# 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 [sue.sampson@hounslow.gov.uk](mailto:sue.sampson@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](mailto:engage@hounslow.gov.uk)
-  Call **020 8583 4000**
-  Visit [www.hounslow.gov.uk/housing](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk/housing)

