

HOUSINGnews

News and information for our tenants

May 2024



Cllr Sue Sampson,
Cabinet Member
for Housing
Management and
Homelessness

REACH FOR THE STARS

with our search for local heroes



Do you know someone who goes above and beyond for their community?

It could be a selfless individual who gives up their own time to help others or a local group, organisation or business that is working to improve the quality of life for everyone in our borough.

In Hounslow, we are fortunate that we have so many public-spirited people who are making a positive impact on the lives of others.

And each year we shine a light on these everyday heroes through our One Hounslow Community Stars Awards. The awards allow the stories of these wonderful people and groups to be shared on a wider stage and celebrated in the manner they truly deserve.

Which is where you come in...

We are asking residents to nominate their very own local heroes to join our stellar selection of Community Stars. There are no set categories for the awards. All that matters is the outstanding contribution these people and groups make.

However, you can visit our Community Stars webpage to get more of an idea of what we are looking for and how to make a nomination.

Nominating an inspirational individual or group for a Community Star is a great way to say 'thank you' for what they do.

So come on Hounslow, visit the webpage, find out more and get nominating: www.hounslow.gov.uk/communitystars

Hello and welcome to the third edition of Housing News, the newsletter that is aimed directly at our Council tenants. We have another packed edition this time, filled with articles on the issues that we know are important to you.

The big issue of us in this edition is safety. Every tenant on our estates has the right to live in safety. Free from the threat of crime and anti-social behaviour and safe in the knowledge that we're working hard to make sure your homes meet all the necessary safety standards.

Turn to page 2 to find out more about all the things we are doing to keep our tenants safe.

On the subject of safety, recently I was lucky enough to go out and about and meet some of the members of our new Housing Police Team. Read all about the team on page 4 of this edition.

Summer is nearly upon us and we have some exciting activities taking place aimed at improving the environment. You can read all about how we're supporting Hounslow's Natural Summer and building more Bug Hotels on page 6.

We hope you find this edition of Housing News interesting and informative. I would like to thank you all for your continued support.

If you have any questions or issues you would like to raise, then please get in touch with our team or myself. We are happy to help.

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



Preventing fire in Council homes

As a landlord, we have to carry out Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) to identify how to best protect residents from the risk of fire.

Scheduled FRAs are carried out on all council properties with communal areas, and the frequency of visit varies according to the assessed level of risk.

Please note:

- If you live in a house and a fire occurs, you should leave immediately and call the fire brigade.
- If you live in a flat or maisonette, there will be a 'Fire Action Notice' within the communal areas of the building. You should follow the advice on this notice in the event of a fire. Please familiarise yourself with the contents of this notice and if you are unable to locate, or have difficulties understanding the notice, please contact your housing officer.
- If your home is in a purpose-built block of flats or maisonettes, the Fire Action Notice will advise you to stay put in your home in the event of a fire occurring elsewhere in the building as long as it is safe to do so.

The building has been designed to contain individual fires within individual homes and provide enough time for the fire brigade to attend and deal with the fire.

Please remember, you are the best judge of your safety and in all cases, if you see fire or smoke within your home you should leave, close the fire door behind you, and call the fire brigade.

For more information about fire safety, visit: www.hounslow.gov.uk/grenfell



SAFETY FIRST for residents

The wellbeing and safety of our tenants is our number one priority. That's why we carry out regular checks on all homes to look at their condition and see if work is needed to reduce risks.

However our commitment to safety doesn't end there. Soon we will be launching some new guidance with lots of information to help you keep your home safe.

We are also holding engagement sessions across the borough, starting this summer, to raise awareness of home safety, and to listen to your concerns.

We need you to get involved. Safety involves all of us and we all need to work together to keep each other safe. So, if you do have any concerns, please share them with us.

WE NEED YOU!



We carry out regular checks on our residents' homes, including gas servicing, electrical tests, and fire safety reviews.

To help us successfully undertake these, we need your help in allowing us access to your home. We need to carry out these actions to confirm that your home is safe and to meet our obligations as your landlord. Please note that failure to provide access

would be considered a breach of your tenancy agreement.

For general home safety matters, The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) offers lots of advice and information resources on all aspects of accident prevention in and around the home: rospa.com/homesafety

DOMESTIC ABUSE

Don't suffer in silence



Domestic abuse can take many forms and affect various groups of people. It can involve threatening behaviour, psychological or emotional abuse, controlling behaviour, physical abuse, and violence. It can impact adults, children, older people, vulnerable individuals, as well as those with learning disabilities and physical disabilities.

No two cases of domestic abuse are the same, and every survivor has a unique story to tell. However, the one constant, when it comes to Hounslow Council's social housing tenants, is this: if you are experiencing domestic abuse in any of its forms, help is available.

The Council's Housing team has produced new guidance for tenants who are suffering at the hands of an abusive partner, family member or anyone else.

Our Housing Tenancy Management team and other staff members can become aware of incidents of domestic abuse by picking up on some common tell-tale signs.

It could stem from complaints about anti-social behaviour or noise problems, damage to property or a

high number of repairs. Sometimes victims of domestic abuse will confide in our team members in a bid to get help.

In every case, our new guidance states what action the team needs to take to ensure the physical, mental and emotional safety of our tenants.

This can be through working with other agencies that provide support for victims, ensuring our officers can make safeguarding referrals for children and adults at risk and knowing what to do in an emergency.

The Council runs a Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Outreach Service where you can talk to someone about the issues you are experiencing and find support.

You can contact the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Outreach Service at: 07810 031 780 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm) or you can email: domesticabusesupport@hounslow.gov.uk. Find out what other support is available here:



Safe as Houses

We have been doing a lot of work around building safety, following the Grenfell Fire tragedy in June 2017.

As a result of this event, specific recommendations and changes to the law have been introduced. We are developing a web page on the Council's website, to provide additional information and guidance, along with a link for residents to report safety concerns in any one of our high-rise residential buildings.

The Council also has a programme to replace all front entrance doors to properties within our blocks. This will include applicable leaseholder homes.

Please note that all front doors will have a door closer fitted and these must not be removed or adapted. As these front doors are essential for restricting the spread of fire, residents must report any faults promptly, via the repairs call centre on 020 8583 4000 (between 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday). Visit www.hounslow.gov.uk/housing-repairs or email repairs.team@hounslow.gov.uk.

TAKING ACTION on anti-social behaviour

At Hounslow Housing, we believe that all our tenants have the right to live in peace, and safety and free from the misery of anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Our commitment is to take all reports of ASB seriously and work with the tenants who are suffering to develop an action plan to tackle the problem.

We will investigate all reports of ASB from our tenants and work to resolve the issues as soon as we can.

You can report complaints about ASB on 0208 583 4000 or through the Council's website.

Find out more here:



JOINING FORCES TO IMPROVE LIFE ON *our housing estates*

When it comes to making our housing estates safer places to live, we work with our partners in the fight against crime and anti-social behaviour.

The Council is funding a dedicated police team to respond to our tenants' concerns and help them with safety issues.

The team is funded through the Housing Revenue Account and serves the Council's stock of 13,600 properties.

Working alongside Council staff, the team makes welfare checks on tenants and makes contact with young people on our estates. The team targets criminal activity within the estates including drug use and cuckooing which is where criminals take over someone's home for criminal activities.

The Housing police team operates outside standard hours and works closely with your Housing/ASB teams, so jointly they can respond quickly to residents' complaints.

Hounslow Council's Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Homelessness, Cllr Sue Sampson said: "We take safety and wellbeing on our estates extremely seriously, which is why we are excited to be working closely with our partners in the police team to give our tenants the reassurance they need."

Meet the team - PC Caroline Baxter

Working in partnership to make our estates safer is one highlight of being part of the LBH-funded Housing Police Team.

PC Baxter believes that working with residents jointly to tackle issues before they become a bigger problem is one of the keys to crime prevention. Working more collaboratively and with a joint approach: "gives us a greater oversight of the ongoing problems and allows us to improve safeguarding and community safety across the borough. It also helps to build trust with the tenants." said PC Baxter.

She added: "The most rewarding thing is when residents come forward to advise us of complex issues that are seriously affecting their lives and by working together we can move quickly in our attempts to restore safety to their lives by utilising the resources and powers of both the police and Council."

A great example of this is how the funded police team with PC Baxter being the lead officer for the operation, worked with the Council to target a criminal network that had moved into West London and was preying on vulnerable tenants by taking over their homes to sell drugs.

Following some complex work, including intelligence gathering and working with victims and residents, the team, with extensive help from the Council and the police senior leadership team they were able to dismantle the gang by arresting a large number of suspects identified through the investigative work.

They were later charged with a number of serious offences including modern-day slavery, GBH, false imprisonment,

perverting the course of justice and drug offences.

The outcome saw these individuals receive long prison sentences, including the first conviction for modern slavery in West London.

PS Neil Witcombe from the LBH Funded Team said: "The estate has seen a dramatic change since the team working with Hounslow Council's Housing and ASB teams intervened, with families and tenants back feeling safe in their own homes and once again enjoying their open spaces and parks."

"I am extremely proud of the work that the LBH Team completed with this operation and a large number of other cases they have expedited by working closely with Hounslow Council."

To find out more about this team, and learn how the local police-funded team can support HRA-related criminal activity, please make contact with your local housing officer who will be able to make the referral to the team for their joint support.



May the force be with you: Housing Police team members PS Neil Witcombe and PC Caroline Baxter.

BIN STORE GIVES RESIDENTS REASSURANCE



Bin there, done that: Cllr Sue Sampson inspects the new bin areas at Brentford Towers with MetroSTOR Director Nigel Deacon, Estate Caretaker Team Leader, Tom McCarthy, and local resident Garvin Snell.

Plans to replace out-of-date bin rooms and chutes in high and mid-rise Council blocks continue to provide tenants with safety and reassurance.

Acting on the recommendations from fire risk assessments and addressing the concerns of tenants, we have removed them from 15 housing locations across the borough, replacing them with modern, clean external bin stores.

It means that flat-dwellers now bring their waste and recycling out to a communal area away from their homes, ready to be collected by refuse teams.

The programme has been extended following the success of an initial chute replacement project at Brentford Towers.

Tenants were worried that the chutes posed a potential fire risk, while the bin rooms attract anti-social behaviour.

The Council worked with industry experts MetroSTOR to install the brand-new bin storage areas, which

are already proving to be a big hit with tenants, refuse collectors and the Council's caretaking team.

Feedback includes comments on how much more pleasant and free from odour and litter the areas have become.

Removing the chutes and bin rooms has freed up our estate caretakers' time to concentrate on other issues. The external bin areas have been designed to make it easier and safer for the refuse collection team to access and empty the bins, resulting in a quicker, cleaner service.

The project has also seen recycling rates soar by 30 per cent, with it now being easier than ever to separate the waste and place it in the appropriate bin.

Cllr Sue Sampson said: "We are delighted with the success of the new external bin stores. We have listened to our tenants' concerns and worked in partnership to come up with a safer, cleaner solution."

Did you know?

Since the project began in 2017, there have been:

Around
1,000
bins installed

250
bin areas upgraded,
across more than

8
large estates



A Bug's Life

Last year the Council gave the green light to build 26 bug hotels in selected housing areas to help improve the biodiversity of our borough.

These eye-catching constructions offer our valuable pollinators such as bees and butterflies handy hideaways and provide creature comforts for those bugs that help to control garden pests.

And we're happy to announce that these Bug B&Bs have been a big success. Based on the positive feedback we have received from tenants, we will be building more bug hotels over the summer to double the number we already have by October.



Hounslow's natural SUMMER

We're going back to nature this summer by giving a much-needed boost to the borough's wildlife. In keeping with what has become a Hounslow tradition over the summer months, we'll be keeping the strimmers in the shed for Hounslow's Natural Summer.

Together with our grounds maintenance partner Lampton Services, the Council is letting the grass grow in selected housing areas across the borough. Having a wilder space in these areas will help more 'mini-beasts' find the perfect environment to thrive and encourage greater biodiversity.

There are so many benefits to letting it all grow. When we put the lawnmower away we create these mini wildlife sanctuaries and it allows wildflowers, such as daisies, clovers and buttercups, to flourish.

Hounslow's Natural Summer began at the beginning of May and the selected

areas will be left to flourish until the start of October.

If you want to get involved, it's easy. All you have to do is lock up your lawnmower and let nature take its course. You'll be doing your bit for biodiversity and also for the environment by reducing the energy used for lawn maintenance, thus cutting your carbon footprint. If you don't have a lawn, then rest assured that you are still part of the wider community committed to our Natural Summer.

Leader of Hounslow Council, Shantanu Rajawat, said "This summer, let's embrace the beauty of nature and reclaim the green spaces on our estates. We want all our tenants to join in with our Natural Summer and watch the selected areas transform into ecosystems teeming with life."



No Win, No Fee

all you need to know...



With many No Win, No Fee solicitors and claims companies offering quick and easy solutions to resolve housing and repair issues, it may be tempting to approach them instead of your landlord.

Please be aware that taking this route may incur unnecessary costs and cause delays in getting your repairs fixed.

To help maintain your home, there are some repairs which fall under our responsibility as your landlord and there are some repairs that fall under your responsibility as the resident.

If you are concerned about any repair issues, please contact us as soon as possible and before considering alternative solutions. We are committed to working with our residents to resolve any issues as soon as we can.

Our Customer Service team is on hand to help. You can report housing repairs through our website at: www.hounslow.gov.uk/housing-repairs You can also report repairs by email to: repairs.team@hounslow.gov.uk or over by phone at **020 8583 4000**, from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday.

WHAT A PICTURE!

Estate Pride competition sends you snap happy



We asked you to send us your best photos of where you live so we could all share some estate pride... and you didn't disappoint.

Keen-eyed tenants from across Hounslow have emailed us their images of what makes the place where they live special.

Hounslow Council's Cabinet Member for Housing Management and Homelessness, Cllr Sue Sampson, was tasked with sifting through the selection of stand-out submissions to choose the top three.

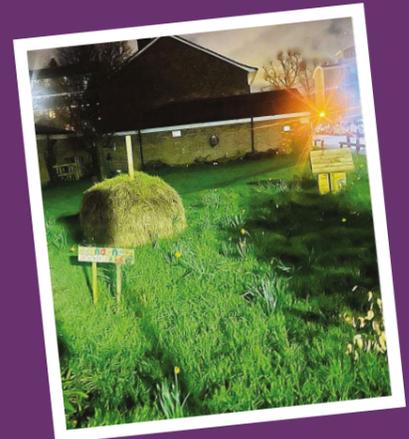
Cllr Sampson said: "We had a fantastic response to our photo competition with some really impressive entries. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to send us their photographs."

We would like to throw open the challenge to more of our tenants. It can be a shot of an attractive garden feature, a unique way you have chosen to make your estate look special, or possibly a shot of you with your neighbours. Whatever it is, we would love to see them.

In no particular order, our winning snaps this time are:

- A shot of the Abundance London display from the Hogarth Estate in Chiswick.
- A photo capturing the mural on the bin enclosures at Crane Lodge Road on the Redwood Estate.
- A selection of stunning vistas from Edensor Gardens in Chiswick, including this one of the estate trees.

To take part in our ongoing Estate Pride photo competition, please email your shots to engage@hounslow.gov.uk. Please mark the email 'Estate Pride Photo Competition'.



WHAT'S ON?

We have some great events coming up at our weekly Social Cafes aimed at all Council tenants.

Each week these drop-in sessions are a chance to meet Housing and Council teams along with outside organisations. There's lots of information on offer and our team will be on hand to answer your queries.

The first Social Cafe is held at Oriel Community Resource Centre, Creswell Road, Hanworth, TW13 6YQ each Tuesday between 10am and 1pm.

You can come along for a chat, meet the team and find out more. There is an intergenerational music-making session currently running as part of the cafe, which takes place between 12pm and 1pm and is free to join.

Our second Social Cafe takes place at The Mission Hall Community Centre, Mission Square, Brentford, TW8 OSD, every Wednesday between 10am and 1pm.

You can find out more about a range of support services available to you and each week there is a visit from Hounslow's Health Outreach Team, which offers a range of health services, including blood pressure checks, healthy weight checks, diet and healthy lifestyle information.

Make sure you make a date for your nearest Social Cafe.

Come and speak to our Housing Engagement team or contact us at engagement@hounslow.gov.uk

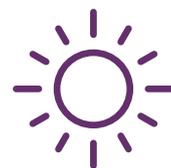
Safety First at our Community Event

We are holding a Community Safety Day on Saturday, 25 May at Heston Farm Estate Community Hall, 15 Biscoe Close, TW5 0UU between 12.30pm and 3.30pm.

Here you can find out more about personal safety, safeguarding, what to do about anti-social behaviour, support available for victims of domestic abuse and much more.

The event is free to attend.

Summer on the Green is back!



Our popular Summer on the Green events are back with a bang.

Last year, The Housing Engagement Team held three events on estates in the borough and this year we are holding four fun community events on green spaces in Heston, Chiswick and Hanworth.

These events will bring communities together with external partners, providing fun activities for all.

There will be opportunities for tenants to speak with housing teams about issues that matter to them.

The Housing Engagement team can also provide details on how you can get involved and work with the team and the Council to improve the Housing service.

There will also be plenty of opportunities to have fun, socialise and learn more about the range of services the Council and other agencies offer to promote thriving, health and wellbeing communities throughout the borough.

Light refreshments are offered for free! Come along from 1pm to 5pm with a surprise at the end!

Look out for the flyer with the Eventbrite QR codes for the last two events so you can register for your local Summer on the Green event.

Save the dates...

The Summer on the Green events all run between 1pm and 5pm and are on:

Saturday, 1 June, Bear Road Recreation Ground, TW13 6RB

Sunday, 2 June, Brabazon Road, Open Space, TW5 9LD

Wednesday, 7 August, Convent Way, Hounslow, Southall, Community Centre, UB2 5UG

Wednesday, 14 August, Edensor Gardens, Chiswick, W4 2QY



Green again: A scene from one of last year's Summer on the Green events.

SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK!

At Hounslow Housing, we're committed to providing our tenants with the best possible service. We always aim to resolve any issues promptly and to your satisfaction.

However, if you're not happy with our service, we have a new complaints process in place to help you.

Effective from 1 April, 2024, the Housing Ombudsman has introduced a new Complaints Handling Code that outlines how we, as the landlord, must handle your complaint.

This Code is designed to ensure that you receive a fair and efficient complaints process.

Compliments, comments and complaints...

We're currently updating our complaints policy to align with the new Code.

Our tenants are our top priority, and we take pride in delivering high-quality services.

However, if we fall short of your expectations, we want to know about it so we can fix the issue and learn from it.

To find out more about our complaints process, including how to make a complaint, please visit our website.

