

Housing News

Summer 2024

The magazine for Ealing Council tenants

Homes



Neighbourhoods



Opportunities



Scooter battery fires on the rise

Faulty e-bike and e-scooter chargers are now a leading cause of fires in London. Find out how to keep your home safe on page 8.

Make sure you're registered to vote and have photo ID



If you are not registered to vote or your details have changed, then you will not be able to vote in the upcoming general election on Thursday 4 July.



You can register to vote and change your voting details online. You will need to register by Tuesday 18 June to vote in the election. Everyone registered will be able to vote for their preferred candidate.

Photo ID

Photo ID is now required when voting in person at polling stations across the borough. This is because of a change in rules introduced by the government.

Voters will only need to show one form of photo ID, but it must be the original - copies will not be accepted and you will not be able to vote. You may also be able to use expired photo ID if you are still recognisable from the photo.

Acceptable forms of photo ID:

- a passport issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, a British Overseas Territory, an EEA state, or a Commonwealth country
- driving licence issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state (this includes a provisional driving licence)
- a Blue Badge
- older person's bus pass
- Oyster 60+ card
- Freedom Pass
- PASS card
- biometric immigration document
- national identity card issued by an EEA state
- voter authority certificate issued by a local authority.

Postal votes

If you do not have any of the forms of ID shown above, or you are not sure your photo ID still looks like you, or you are worried about using an existing form of ID for any other reason, you can apply to vote by post instead.

You will not need to provide photo ID if you choose to vote by post. Apply for a postal vote online or download a postal voting application form by visiting [Ealing elections online](#).

The deadline to apply for a postal vote for the general election is 5pm on Monday 19 June.

Where do I vote?

Details of your polling station, including a map, will be on the polling card sent to you through the post.

Alternatively, you can search for your local polling station on the council website. The polling stations will be open for voting on Thursday 4 July between 7am-10pm.

How does it work?

To vote in the general election you must be 18 years or over on 4 July, and be a British, Irish or Commonwealth citizen.

In Ealing there are three constituencies – Ealing Central and Acton; Ealing North; and Ealing Southall – and each constituency is represented by one MP.

When you vote, and you will have one vote for one of those candidates.

The election will use the same voting system as usual for general elections, which is called First Past the Post. This means you get one vote and the candidate with the most votes in your constituency will become your Member of Parliament (MP). The ballot paper you are given when you arrive at the polling station will show the name of all candidates standing in your constituency. Make sure you're registered to vote, and don't miss your chance to have your say.

Need help?

Advice is available from the council's electoral services team on **020 8825 7777** between 8.30am–5pm (Monday – Friday) or by email at elections@ealing.gov.uk.

Pledge to help residents feel HouseProud

Ealing Council has signed up to the national HouseProud Pledge scheme, which aims to help lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans residents feel able to enjoy their homes without fear of discrimination.



The HouseProud Pledge scheme was developed in 2019 in response to the University of Surrey's 'No place like home' study, which explored the experiences, concerns, and preferences of LGBTQ+ social housing residents. It calls upon housing providers to engage with residents and shape their policies and practices to promote true inclusivity.

Signing up to the pledges means the council has committed to:

- ensuring that LGBTQ+ residents can have an input at executive and strategic levels
- increasing LGBTQ+ visibility across the council's housing service
- providing a programme of staff training that will improve understanding of LGBTQ+ lives

Over the coming months, the council will work towards attaining full HouseProud Pledge Pioneer accreditation. In a year's time, the council will need to show evidence that these measures have been applied successfully to achieve this accreditation.

The council is encouraging residents to share their experiences and is particularly keen to hear from LGBTQ+ residents who are willing to work together with the council on delivering the commitment. For more information or to register your interest in getting involved, email Jon Maxwell on maxwellj@ealing.gov.uk

Come to our housing race and inclusion event



Help us understand what is most important to you by coming to our housing race and inclusion event.

Do you or your family face barriers or difficulties accessing our housing services? What are your top 3 housing priorities for your neighbourhood? How can we help you get the best out of your lives?

We want to understand your housing and neighbourhood priorities to help shape the way we provide our housing services.

Join us from 6pm on Monday 24 June 2024 at Perceval House to share your thoughts and experiences. Booking is required to secure your place. Maximum capacity of 100-150. Refreshments will be provided.

Book your place today! Contact us on residentinvolvement@ealing.gov.uk or 020 8825 6535.



How you said we are performing



At the end of 2023, we conducted a survey of over 1,000 residents asking them to rate how they felt we are performing.

The survey asked residents to rate how they feel we are doing using the new tenant satisfaction measures (TSM's).

The information provided allows us to understand how you feel about the services you receive, recognise areas that are performing well, and identify areas for improvement. We want to deliver a first-class housing service and we are committed to being honest with you about our performance.

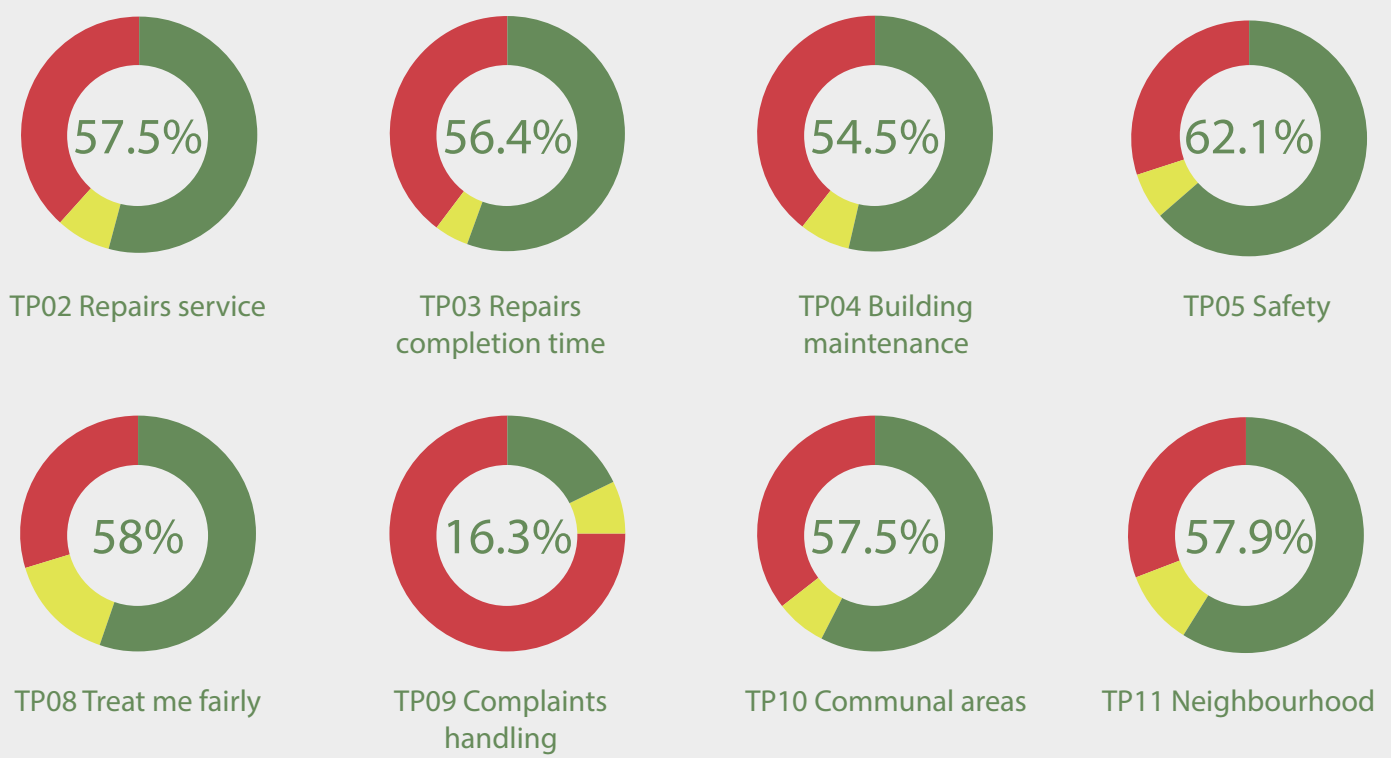
We are delighted to share our TSM results for 2023/2024 with you.

The results show most customers are satisfied with feeling their home is safe and that we keep you informed, but we have some work to do on improving our repairs service, maintaining communal areas, and how we handle complaints.

The full results of the survey will be shared in an annual report, which will detail how we are taking your views into account and what we are doing to improve our services. The annual report will be published soon.



- Red is very dissatisfied or dissatisfied.
- Yellow is neither agree or disagree.
- Green is satisfied or very satisfied.



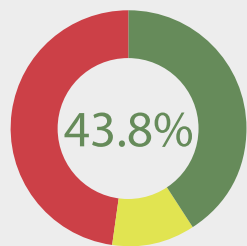


Our updated council housing complaints policy is live

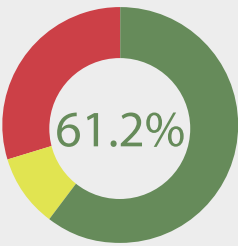
In the last edition of Housing News, we covered how we are responding on your complaints. To remain as open and transparent as possible on how we manage and deal with housing complaints, we have made our complaints policy live online.

You can also read our self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code. The code enables landlords such as us to identify areas for improvement to ensure complaints are dealt with efficiently.

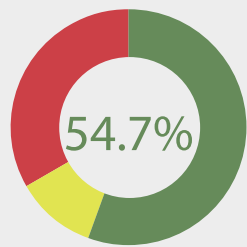
Search ‘council housing complaints’ on our website or scan the QR code.



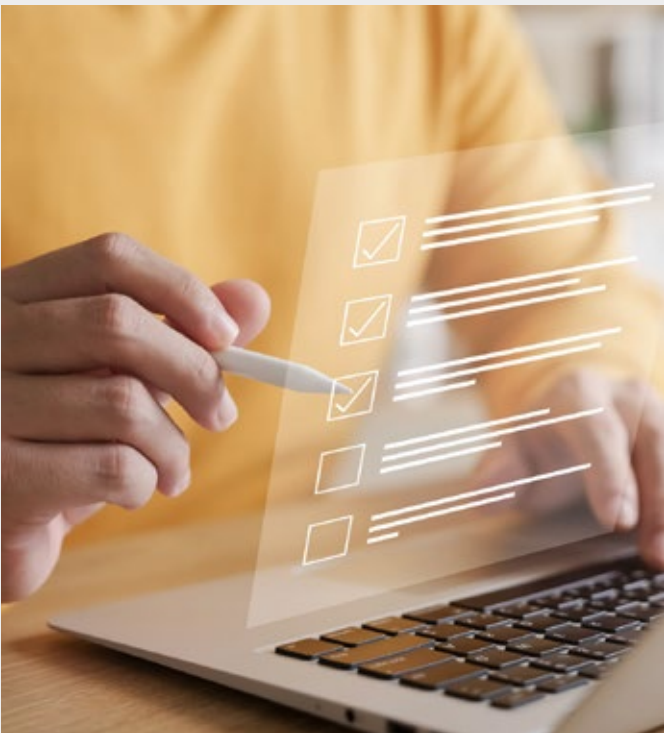
TP06 Listens to me



TP07 Keeps me informed



TP12 ASB





Although we took the difficult decision to increase your rent by 7.7% from April, it remains one of the cheapest social landlord rents in the country.

Our rent is now £105 a week on average for a two-bed home, compared to a national average for social landlords of £111. That means it is comparatively very affordable for a London borough.

But with 40% of tenants on full benefits, we know that every penny counts. Unfortunately we have no choice here. High inflation, years of reductions in government funding, and higher demands placed on the council by regulators have put severe pressure on all councils' budgets, and Ealing is no exception.

We have followed other social housing providers and increased the weekly rent you pay us by an average of £7.87. This follows four consecutive years to 2020 where we reduced the amount you pay. The increase will help us to invest millions in our existing housing stock, to build more homes, and to continue improving the quality of our services.

The increase is in-line with the national approach set by the government. Even after the increase, our rents are still well below those charged by other social landlords in the borough and at least 75% less than equivalent private sector rents.

Service charges will also increase to reflect the increased costs of utilities, which have been subsidised for the past two years. Last year, to balance the books, we had to dip into our reserves, which is not sustainable.



Struggling? Speak to our financial inclusion team



Don't be embarrassed to ask us to help if your circumstances have changed – particularly if your finances have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis.



If you're struggling, our financial inclusion team can help you to take control of your finances.

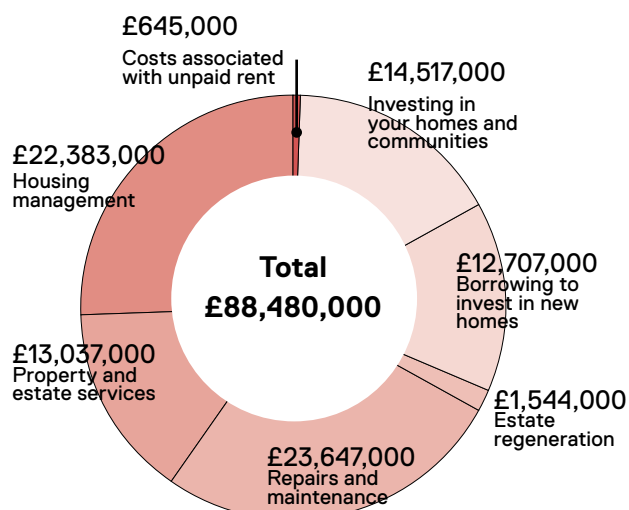
They can talk you through things like:

- help to claim welfare benefits
- support with accessing grants and loans for people on low incomes
- budgeting tips
- access to independent debt advice
- advice on other ways to boost your income and save money on bills

If you would like to speak to a financial inclusion officer, please get in touch with your neighbourhood housing officer, who can arrange an appointment for you.

We've also put together a comprehensive list of ways you can get support with essentials, which you can find at www.ealing.gov.uk/costofliving.

What we spend your rent on



Considering a move?



Like many London boroughs, Ealing has a severe shortage of council homes. This means that even for existing council tenants who would like to move, we can only help a small number of people. Below, we have listed some options for finding a new home.

Looking to downsize?



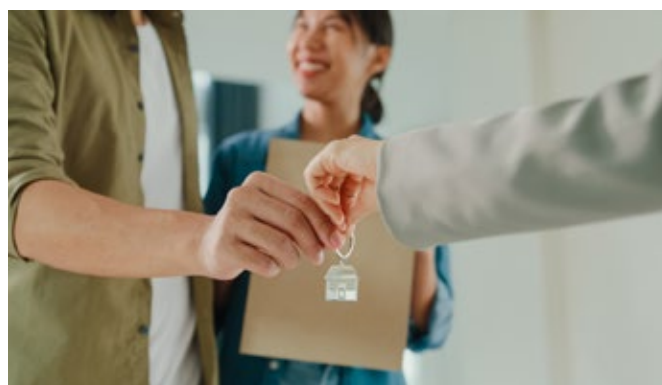
Moving to a smaller property can reduce your energy bills and the time you spend on housekeeping. If you have mobility difficulties, you may be able to move to a more suitable location such as a flat on the ground floor or with a lift, or a bungalow.

The 'under occupier scheme' is available to help those people whose homes are too large for them, move into a new property quickly. We will help you register to bid for a property using the Locata scheme. You can choose the type of accommodation and the area you wish to move to. You can move to a council property in the borough of Ealing, a housing association property in Ealing, or to another housing association property.

We will help you to register and bid for a new property, and make moving house as easy as possible, with help arranging and possibly paying for a removals company, including all boxes and packing, and a £1,000 payment for each bedroom you gave up.

Email the housing initiatives team to find out more: housinginitiatives@ealing.gov.uk

Mutual exchange



You can apply for a mutual exchange with another Ealing Council tenant. If you have found a tenant that you want to swap homes with, you can apply for a mutual exchange online via our website.



You can apply to swap homes to a bigger property by signing up at www.homeswapper.co.uk. You will need to make an application and manage the swap independently.

Options outside of London



Homefinder UK allows council tenants to move to parts of the UK where you are more likely to be allocated larger homes than you would be in London. Register online at homefinderuk.org

If you are overcrowded

If you need a larger home, you can register for rehousing online at www.locata.org.uk/ealing. Please note that you are likely to wait a long time for this.



Your safety

Another house fire caused by a faulty battery

In April a serious fire broke out in one of our sheltered schemes, caused by a faulty electrical bike battery. Thankfully, this time, no one was injured.

Four fire engines and around 25 firefighters tackled the fire in the shared building. London Fire Brigade confirmed extensive fire and smoke damage in the flat.

This is not a one-off event. Fires involving lithium batteries are the fastest growing fire risk in London. While lithium batteries are used to safely power millions of devices every day, they can present a significant fire risk when overcharged, tampered with, submerged in water, or damaged in any way. They are susceptible to failure if incorrect chargers are used and there is a significant risk posed by e-scooters which have been converted.



Follow London Fire Brigade's safety tips for e-bikes and e-scooters:

- never block your escape route with anything, including e-bikes and e-scooters. Store them somewhere away from a main through route, in a safe location such as a garage or shed
- do not attempt to modify or tamper with your battery and always use the correct charger. Buy an official one from a reputable seller. Batteries that have been purchased from online marketplaces or online may not meet the correct safety standards.
- do not attempt to convert pedal bikes into e-bikes using DIY kits bought online
- check your battery and charger meets UK safety standards. Watch out for signs that the battery or charger are not working as they should
- let the battery cool before charging. Batteries can get warm during their use, and allow them to cool down before attempting to re-charge
- unplug your charger once it has finished charging. Always follow manufacturers' instructions when charging and try not to leave it unattended or while asleep

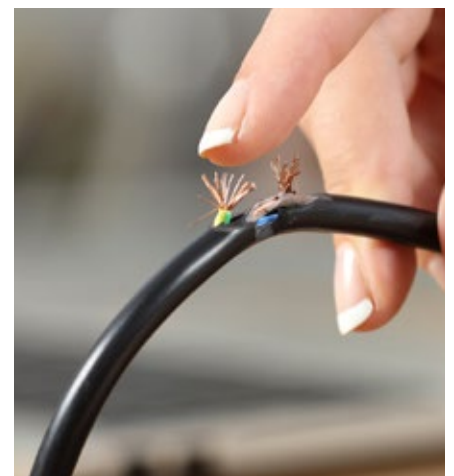
Electrical safety at home – know your responsibilities

Almost half of all domestic fires are caused by electricity.

As your landlord, we must ensure that electrical installations and wiring are maintained – but as our tenant, you should let us know about any electrical problems as soon as they appear. You are responsible for maintaining electrical items you bring into the house. You should never try to carry out your own electrical repairs. Always use a qualified electrician.

If you have bought any electrical products for use in your home, make sure that you register them with the manufacturer. This means that if there is a problem and the item needs to be recalled, they will be able to contact you. As most electrical products that are recalled have a risk of fire or electric shock, registering will give you the peace of mind that you are keeping your family and home safe.

You can find out more about product registration and other helpful electrical safety tips at www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk





Be safe on your balcony

Balcony fires are more common during the summer months, and can be devastating.

If a fire breaks out on your balcony, it could spread much faster than a fire inside your building. This is because walls and doors that help to contain fires, as well as limiting the supply of oxygen to keep a fire burning. Outside on your balcony, a fire can quickly be blown by the wind, spreading it upwards and outwards and putting flats around you at risk.

All barbecues, including disposables, are a serious fire risk when used so close to a building. They can stay hot for hours and smouldering debris can easily spit off the surface and land on another level of the building.

As well as never lighting a barbecue on your balcony, you can minimise the risk by keeping it clear of flammable and dangerous items like gas canisters, cables, glass bottles, paints, or anything that burns easily. Rubbish should never be thrown from balconies.



Zero tolerance on items in communal areas

Corridors and balconies could be vital escape routes in the event of an emergency.

If you live in a building with multiple flats, communal areas like entrances, stairwells, corridors, landings, and service cupboards must be kept completely clear of personal belongings.

In the event of a fire, items in communal areas can fuel a fire, block important escape routes, and obstruct firefighter access to emergency equipment.

Follow London Fire Brigade guidance by clearing any items that you may have outside your home, in communal areas, or in service cupboards, including:

- doormats
- bikes, including e-bikes
- pushchairs
- mobility scooters or e-scooters
- shoes and shoe racks
- plants and other decorations including picture frames, posters, and Christmas or other religious decorations
- furniture, including white goods
- household rubbish
- laundry
- candles or candle holders

We understand that you want your building to feel homely, but resident safety must come first. Just one person breaking these vital safety rules can put the whole of the block at risk. Highly flammable items like barbecues, gas cylinders, petrol, diesel, or oil cans must never be stored anywhere in the building.



We are surveying our housing stock



Surveys help us understand the condition of our housing stock and where to prioritise funds for improvements.

In the last edition of Housing News, we told you that we were about to start a 5-year stock condition survey programme.

Our contractor Rapleys LLP have begun surveying homes. We are committed to maintaining and improving our homes and are working hard to complete these surveys as soon as possible. Our goal is to complete the surveys of our entire housing stock by the end of 2024.

The surveys being carried out are collecting information on the age and condition of communal areas and both external and internal areas of homes. This information will help us to prioritise where we spend our budget.

We will also be undertaking other surveys on other specific aspects of our buildings. If you would be interested in volunteering your home for this free survey, contact Rapleys to arrange an appointment on freephone 01480 371 464, option 4, or ealingsurveys@rapleys.com.



Improving our repairs service



We have onboarded a second contractor to improve our responsive repairs

In April this year, Axis joined us as our second responsive and specialist repairs contractor, to complement the work already being done by Wates. Having 2 day-to-day repairs contractors will help us to respond to your repair requests more efficiently.



Axis will deliver specialist programmed works to assist compliance delivery alongside existing contractors. They will also work on the following repair areas:

- communal electrical responsive repairs
- aids and adaptations
- Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) responsive repairs
- pest control
- damp and mould responsive repair remedial works
- voids



Library of Things coming to Ealing



From next month, residents will be able to borrow a range of useful household items from a Library of Things, helping to reduce waste and fight the climate emergency.

The Library of Things is a place where residents can hire items for a small fee and return them once they have finished using them, helping to tackle the climate crisis and avoid sending waste to landfill.

The Library of Things will be set up in Ealing Broadway Shopping Centre from June, providing almost 40 items ranging from carpet cleaners, jet washes, and drills, to wallpaper strippers and tents.

It works in a similar way to a normal library – you register, reserve the item online, borrow your item and then return it.

Register now to start reserving items on the Library of Things website from Monday 3 June, and collect from Tuesday 11 June.



Advice on insuring your home contents



We have teamed up with Aviva to offer a home contents insurance package for council tenants.

The council is responsible for insuring the structure of your home, but we do not insure contents. You are responsible for any loss or damage to your belongings (such as furniture, decorations, and any personal items) through theft, fire, flooding, vandalism, or accident.

We have teamed up with Aviva to provide home contents insurance for council tenants. Under the scheme you will not need to pay an excess to make a claim. The scheme is administered by Wessex Group, who work with the insurer Aviva to provide insurance cover for our tenants where required.



The contents in your home, including garages and gardens, will be insured against events such as fire, theft, or flooding.

The cover also includes things like:

- replacing door locks if your keys are lost or stolen
- accidental damage to audio, video or computer equipment in your home
- tenants liability

You can take out optional cover for:

- accidental damage
- theft, loss or damage of:
- personal belongings away from the home (includes things like mobile phones and jewellery)
- wheelchairs, mobility scooters and hearing aids

The insurance does not cover wear and tear (like worn carpets) or an appliance breaking down.

Find out more online at www.ealing.gov.uk/contentsinsurance.

Worried about someone sleeping rough?



If you are concerned about someone sleeping rough, directing help to them is easy.

Streetlink is run in partnership between Homeless Link and St. Mungo's. It ensures that the concerns you raise about a rough sleeper are referred to the most appropriate local outreach service, which in Ealing will be run by St. Mungo's. When you refer a rough sleeper to Streetlink, it is important to give as much information as you can. It is important to give a very specific location, rather than just a street or

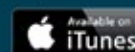
park. This will help the outreach team to find the person. It is also important to say what time of day you saw the person sleeping there and how often you have seen them. It would be useful if you can give a brief description and any other relevant information. All these bits of information will make contacting and helping the person easier.

Do not wait to report to the council's housing or social services staff, as this will delay our response. If the person needs urgent medical assistance, please call 999.

StreetLink Help someone sleeping rough in 4 easy steps



Tell StreetLink about rough sleepers in your area
Download the StreetLink app today



Useful contacts

Tenancy management and paying your rent
Please contact your local housing hub:

Acton

Phone: 020 8825 5387 option 1

Email: actonhousinghub@ealing.gov.uk

Ealing

Phone: 020 8825 5387 option 2

Email: ealinghousinghub@ealing.gov.uk

Greenford

Phone: 020 8825 5387 option 3

Email: greenfordhousinghub@ealing.gov.uk

Hanwell

Phone: 020 8825 5387 option 4

Email: hanwellhousinghub@ealing.gov.uk

Northolt

Phone: 020 8825 5387 option 5

Email: northolthousinghub@ealing.gov.uk

Southall

Phone: 020 8825 5387 option 6

Email: southallhousinghub@ealing.gov.uk

Repairs and maintenance

Phone: 0800 181744 from a landline

or 020 8825 5682 from a mobile

Safer communities (anti-social behaviour)

Phone: 020 8825 5994

For noise nuisance: 020 8825 8111

Email: safercommunities@ealing.gov.uk

Home ownership

Right To Buy enquiries:

Phone: 020 8825 5583

Email: homeownership@ealing.gov.uk

Caretaking services

Phone: 020 8825 8593

Email: caretaking@ealing.gov.uk

Compliments, complaints and suggestions

Phone: 020 8825 8855

Email: regenhousingcomplaints@ealing.gov.uk

