# Housing News

## The magazine for Ealing Council tenants



Neighbourhoods 🎬

Opportunities

## Get winter ready

Tips to get your home ready for winter. Find out more on page 9.



## Introduction



Councillor Mahfouz, cabinet member for safe and genuinely affordable homes

#### Dear Residents,

I am really pleased to welcome you to the latest edition of the Housing News magazine. The festive season is a time to celebrate and come together with friends, family and neighbours. So much is celebrated throughout the borough at this time of year – Diwali, Bandi Chhor, Black History Month and Christmas.

#### **Our priorities**

The council's housing team has been incredibly busy in the few months since the last edition of Housing News. Being open and including residents in the decisions that affect them are very important to us, and I really hope that you are starting to feel and see the difference that our new approach is making.

Our teams are out and about more across our housing estates, doing regular inspections and supporting residents with repairs and payments. We have increased the number of contractors on our books for repairs and maintenance, to help keep you safe and improve the quality of our homes. We are working hard to improve how we work with you to make our council homes great places to live.

We cannot do this alone, and we would love to hear from you. Please help us to improve by sending us your thoughts via the surveys that we regularly send out and get involved in helping to shape our priorities and how we do things.

#### **Borough of Culture**

Elsewhere in the council, there is a huge amount of exciting work going on. We are improving our parks, speaking to residents about a brand new leisure centre, and we have entered the running to be London's next Borough of Culture.

Cultural life in Ealing is vibrant, diverse and unique, just like our people. Creativity can mean different things to different people – it could be singing along to the radio, cooking up a storm, or doing arts and crafts with the kids. We are all creative, and we want to be the Borough of Culture to build on our cultural heritage and strengthen local cultural life for the future.

We are competing against other London boroughs, so we need as many people as possible to get involved to support our bid and help us secure the additional financial support that comes with it. Please go to https://ealing2025.org/ and be part of it.

I wish you a delightful and safe festive season.

Warm regards,

Bassam Mahfouz

**Councillor Bassam Mahfouz** 





## Festive season in the borough

#### Celebrate the festive season.

Christmas in our seven towns is here. There is something for everyone with festive lights, seasonal markets, family activities and carol singing. Scan below for the full festive line up.



#### Warm and welcome spaces



## With the days darker and colder, winter can be a tough time for some but there is support out there.

Ealing Council and the NHS are working with local community, voluntary and faith organisations to coordinate and promote the 'warm and welcome spaces' programme for autumn and winter 2023 to 2024.

A 'warm and welcome space' is a place where people can go, keep warm and connect with the local community. Providing a warm and welcome space for residents not only reduces social isolation but will also improve individual's overall health and wellbeing and support them to address inequalities they may be experiencing because of the rising cost of living.

You can find your nearest warm space on www.dosomethinggood.org.uk

There are also a number of council run buildings across the borough that are open to visitors during the day. You can visit any of our:

**Libraries -** get online, use the free wifi, borrow a book, attend courses or events. Find out more at www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201219/libraries

**Leisure centres -** access a vast range of facilities and activities including swimming, badminton, dance classes and female only gyms.

Find out more at www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201142/sports-facilities

**Community centres** - community centres across the borough offer a variety of activities for people of all ages. Your local community centre will have a programme of events.

Find your local centre at www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201128/community\_venues

**Children's centres** - there are 25 children's centres each providing a range of activities aimed at children aged 0-5 and their families.

**Day care centres** - the council's day care centres provide tailored activities to older people and those with learning disabilities.

## Neighbourhoods

### **Tenant satisfaction measures**

A new way of asking you how we are doing.

From 1 April 2023, the Regulator of Social Housing has asked all social landlords to carry out an annual survey asking residents to rate how they feel their landlord is doing using new tenant satisfaction measures (TSM's).

The TSM's will allow us to collect your feedback on various service areas we provide. The information you provide will allow us to understand how you feel about the services you receive, recognise areas that are performing well and identify areas for improvement.

#### What does this mean for me?

We are eager to understand how you feel we are doing and where we can improve. We want to deliver a first-class housing service that supports and encourages everyone to live their most healthy and prosperous lives, achieve their potential and to be proud to live in Ealing.

We are working with The Leadership Factor (TLF) who will carry out the survey on our behalf, beginning in November 2023.

TLF have extensive service in carrying out research and surveys for social housing landlords. Most surveys will be carried out by phone by TLF research advisors. Other methods will be available to take part if a telephone survey is not convenient.

Not everyone will be contacted – we expect to be surveying 1500 in total, including council tenants, leaseholders, and shared owners. If you are not contacted, there are still plenty of other ways to get involved and share your thoughts.

#### What will we be asking?

There are 22 areas of information being collated by the survey. 12 of these areas will cover your satisfaction with the following:

- · Your overall satisfaction with the council as your landlord
- Repairs, maintenance and safety in your home
- · Listening to you and treating you with respect
- Dealing with complaints about services
- Keeping communal areas clean and well-maintained
- · Making a positive contribution to neighbourhoods
- · Dealing with anti-social behaviour

There may be additional questions on how easy it is to access help and support with living in your home and how we could encourage more residents to get involved to influence and scrutinise how the housing service works.

#### What happens next?

The survey will mainly be carried out during November and December 2023 and will continue until we complete the required number.

The results of the survey will be shared with residents by the end of March 2024.

Nicky Fiedler, strategic director for housing and environment at Ealing says: "The council is committed to changing the way it works with its residents to shape and run our housing services. Your satisfaction with the safety of your home and our services is of paramount importance, along with giving residents a clearer role in deciding on housing priorities and projects that will improve our communities".

## Statutory Off-Road Notification (SORN) vehicles

Did you know you need permission from the landowner to keep your SORN declared vehicle on council owned land.



There has been a significant increase in SORN declared vehicles being stored indefinitely on council owned land. When you declare your vehicle as SORN you are not automatically permitted to keep the vehicle on any piece of land. Your vehicle is only classed as off road if it is kept in a garage, on a drive or on private land.

If your vehicle is sited on land owned and maintained by the council, it is not on private land and needs to be removed unless express permission has been granted. Vehicles that are on council owned land will be given a notice by the council. Vehicles that remain on council owned land following a notice may be removed and destroyed.



## Copley fun day

In October, Ealing Council hosted a fun day at Copley Close. A great day was had by all.



People enjoy a fun day of activities in the sun at Copley Close.

## **Beware of bogus callers**



Most people who call at your home will be genuine. However, occasionally, criminals posing as someone official may turn up unannounced and try to trick their way into your home to steal valuables or money.

Criminals might pretend to be a police officer, are from the council, or say they work for a gas or electric company. They often do not work alone. The story and background information they will tell you are very convincing.

Examples include: police officers entering your home to look for a wanted offender, attending to take a meter reading or checking the water pressure as they are working locally.

They may use intimidation and pressurise you into make quick decisions.



## METROPOLITAN POLICE

#### How to protect yourself

- Always ask for and check their identification, even if they have made an appointment to see you. If you are unsure, call their company yourself (not on a number they provide) – if you do this, shut the door while you are doing so.
- Ask questions to check the story they are telling you
- Use a spy hole, ring doorbell or door-chain to check who the caller is
- If you are still unsure, ask the caller to return another time when someone you trust can be with you. If in any doubt, do not open the door and invite them in

Remember: take your time to consider your options; don't be pressured into making a quick decision.

If you have a bogus caller and they are still at your door call 999. If they leave, you can call the police on 101 to provide officers with information.

For more crime prevention advice visit: www.met.police.uk/crimeprevention

## Neighbourhoods



## **Visions for Northolt: Art Stops**

In 2022, Ealing Council invited local creatives to submit their ideas to activate and celebrate public areas around Northolt through a series of art installations.

Four brilliant artists came forward and worked closely with the Visions for Northolt team to produce unique art murals that have now been installed across Northolt. These artworks capture the artists individual perspectives of the area and celebrate Northolt's diversity. In October 2023 an artist led walk took place to celebrate the launch of Art Stops. Artists talked about their creative backgrounds and inspiration for their artwork.

You can find updates on the project and let us know your thoughts at: visionsfornortholt.co.uk/projects/art-stops.

#### The artists



Errol Donald



Jane Ruhland



Levi Richards



Samira Mian

## Golf Links estate regeneration update

In March 2023 we appointed Hill Partnership Limited to deliver phase 3 of the regeneration of the Golf Links estate. The existing blocks of flats at Portrush and Alnmouth Court will be replaced with 3 new blocks of flats which will provide 143 new homes plus a flexible commercial space.

Alnmouth Court has been demolished and demolition of Portrush Court has commenced. The demolition phase is due for completion before Christmas.

The project is forecast for completion in July 2026.





## Keeping in touch via SMS

## We are re-introducing our SMS texting service.

If you have provided us with a mobile number, we may use this to provide you with important service updates. You may receive messages about:



- · Rent
- Service charges
- Appointment confirmations
- Surveys

This is an additional service to ensure that we can contact you when phone calls are not convenient. It is a one-way automated service, and you will not be able to reply to our messages.

This service will help us to keep you informed and allow for services to be delivered more efficiently.

If you would like to opt-out of this service, please contact your housing hub in writing or via email. You can find contact details for all hubs on the back page. You will continue to receive letters and phone calls from us as normal.



For full details on how we use your data, please scan here to see our privacy notice:

## Neighbourhoods



### What you need to know about bed bugs

#### You may have heard about the rise in bed bugs cases around Ealing in recent weeks.

Since the Paris outbreak in October, we have been monitoring the bed bug situation closely. Bed bugs are not uncommon in the UK and a seasonal increase in numbers is not unusual due to people travelling during the summer months. However, numbers are increasing across Ealing, and we are dealing with several reported cases. Here is what you need to know:

#### What do bed bugs look like?

Bed bugs are small and oval shaped. They can be red, brown, or dark yellow and have 6 legs.

#### Where do bed bugs appear?

Although they have the name 'bed' bug, as well as mattresses, they can appear on clothing, furniture, behind loose wallpaper and on bed frames.

#### How do I know I have bed bugs?

The main thing to look out for is bites. Bed bug bites are often grouped together or in a line and are usually raised and itchy. On white skin, bed bug bites usually look red whilst on brown and black skin they could appear purple and harder to see.

Also keep an eye out for spots of blood on your bedding which could be from a bite or where a bed bug has been squashed. Another sign to look out for is spots of brown on bedding or furniture which could be bed bug poo.



#### What can I do about bed bugs?

Unfortunately, bed bugs are generally spread by bad luck. Whilst you cannot stop an infestation, here are some tips to reduce the likelihood of an infestation:

- Check items and soft furnishings in your home
- Check suitcases or bags you have used for travelling
- Clear clutter around your bed
- Clean and vacuum your home regularly to easily spot bed bugs
- Regularly clean your bedding and soft furnishings on a wash of at least 60 degrees
- Check second hand furniture and clothing before bringing into your home.

Whilst prevention will help reduce the likelihood of bed bugs, treating an infestation should be left to the professionals. It is important to note that treatment can only be carried out after bed bugs have been confirmed as there are regulations controlling the use of insecticides without evidence.

Whilst bed bugs can travel through cracks and crevices between homes this is not common as they like to stay close to a host for feeding. Leaving a home with an infestation empty is not a solution as bed bugs can remain dormant for up to a year and will emerge when a host re-enters.

The most common way bed bugs travel is by hiding and being carried by a host from one place to another. If you know you have bed bugs in your home, it is a good idea to limit visitors until the issue has been resolved. If you do have visitors whilst dealing with an infestation, it is a good idea for them to check their clothing and bags before they leave to ensure they are not taking bed bugs with them.

If you are experiencing bed bugs in your home, report them to our pest control team on 0208 825 6644. You can also report to your neighbourhood housing officer.

## Notice: Ealing housing hub has moved

The Ealing housing hub can now be found at Everyone Active, High Street, Acton W3 6NE. The office is open Monday and Thursday 9am to 5pm for drop ins. You no longer need to book an appointment in advance.

If you are not able to drop in at the new location, your neighbourhood housing officer can conduct a home visit on request.

Contact the Ealing hub via:

Email: ealinghousinghub@ealing.gov.uk Phone: 0208 825 5387, option 2. Phone lines are open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

## Homes



### Damp and mould

Your safety and wellbeing are our top priority. All reports of damp and mould will be investigated.

#### What is damp?

Damp is the build-up of moisture. As well as causing damage, some types of damp can lead to mould growth. Mould is a type of fungus that grows in moist conditions and can cause health problems.

Damp can occur in homes for many reasons and affects both building materials (like walls, floors, ceilings, foundations) as well as fittings and furnishings (like carpets, curtains, wallpaper, furniture, clothing).

We will investigate all reports of damp or mould. We will identify and address the root cause of the damp or mould, not just remove visible signs.

#### Types of damp

**Penetrating damp** - penetrating damp is water that gets inside the property from the outside due to defects in walls, roofs, windows, or floors.

**Rising damp** - rising damp is moisture from the ground that rises up through parts of the building in contact with the ground mainly walls or floors.

Rising damp is usually found in older properties. Often it is due to defective damp proof courses and membranes. Rising damp is often associated with tide marks at the edge of the damp area which is caused by salt deposits.

**Traumatic damp** - traumatic damp can be caused by leaking water from waste and heating pipes, overflowing baths or sinks, burst pipes or defective water storage vessels inside the property.

Traumatic damp can also originate from outside the property, from another building or environmental flooding for example.

#### Top tips for reducing condensation

- When you notice condensation, wipe down affected surfaces with a dry cloth
- Keep your curtains open during the day
- If you have them, use extractor fans in the kitchen and bathroom
- Try not to block air vents or trickle vents
- Use lids on your pots and pans whilst cooking
- Hang wet washing outside to dry whenever possible or keep windows open when drying washing indoors
- · Open windows after a bath or shower



**Condensation** - condensation occurs when moisture generated inside the home cools and condenses onto colder parts of the building. This is why you often notice condensation build up on windows, window frames and in the corner of rooms.

Condensation is the most common form of damp. Normal day-to-day activities like cooking, showering and even breathing can add to condensation in your home. Condensation can often lead to mould growth.

#### What are we doing about damp and mould?

All damp and mould cases reported to us will be investigated thoroughly.

When we receive a report of damp and mould, we will call you and ask some questions to establish the amount of damp and mould and the risk.

We will then ask our specialist damp and mould contractor, ZapCarbon, to arrange a visit to your home to conduct a comprehensive assessment.

ZapCarbon will inspect your home and complete a clean and shield of affected areas to remove the risk to you. They will advise and support you on any changes that you can make to reduce damp and mould.

ZapCarbon will provide us with a detailed report with recommendations on any repairs or building issues that may need to be addressed to tackle the root cause of the damp and mould.

These reports and recommendations will be actioned by our dedicated damp and mould team. We will ensure that you stay informed every step of the way.

#### Report damp and mould to us

Email: dampandmould@ealing.gov.uk Phone: 0208 825 5682

Phone lines are open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 9am to 5pm and Thursday 10am to 5pm

## Homes



### Get ready for winter

Here are our top tips to get your home ready for the winter months.

#### **Check your boiler**

Make sure your heating and boiler are working properly before it gets too cold. If there is a problem, get in touch so we can book an appointment to fix it.

We carry out annual gas safety checks in your home. If your appointment is due, please keep it. These checks are a legal requirement and important for your safety. If you have missed an appointment, get in touch to rebook as soon as possible.

#### **Avoid burst pipes**

Water freezing could cause the pipes in your home to swell and crack. When the water defrosts, it may come pouring out the pipes. To avoid this, you should:

- Repair or report any minor leaks before they have chance to develop
- Leave your heating on low if you are away from home in cold weather to avoid pipes freezing
- Fix dripping taps even a slow trickle can cause a burst pipe
- Ensure you know where your water stopcock is so that you can turn the water off at the mains in an emergency and limit the damage



#### Top tips for keeping your home warm

There are things you can do to keep your home as warm as possible:

- Use a timer to set the hot water and the heating to come on when you need them, rather than having them both on all the time
- Avoid drying clothes on radiators as this cools the room and your boiler will use more gas to bring the temperature back up
- Move furniture so it is not blocking radiators
- Close your curtains in the evening to make the room cosy and keep out draughts. Keep them open during the day to let in the sunlight
- Use draught excluders in front of doors to retain the heat

#### **Stock condition surveys**

#### We will soon be starting surveys of our housing stock

We are in the process of appointing a contractor to undertake condition surveys across our housing stock. We expect this project to be a 5-year programme to visit all our sites.

Stock condition surveys inspect both internal and external components of a building. The external survey – if your home is a flat – will look at the building structure. Surveyors will look at the condition of the building exterior, the roof, and the windows. They will also inspect communal components, such as lifts and bin shoots. The internal survey will look at internal components in your home such as the kitchen and bathroom. We will need access to your home to do this and will make arrangements with you before attending.

You will be written to separately to advise when a surveyor will be visiting. You may see surveyors out on the estate. They will always carry company ID so if you are unsure, please challenge them.

The results of these surveys will be used to prioritise future programmes of work.

## **Building safety**





Most fires related to e-bikes, e-scooters, and mobility scooters have happened in homes. The fires are often caused when charging batteries.

There are 3 main causes of fires involving batteries:

- The wrong charger being used
- Damage to the battery
- Manufacturing defects

Batteries can get warm during their use and should be allowed to cool down before plugging in to charge. Batteries should always be charged on a hard, flat surface.

Store your e-bike, e-scooter, or mobility scooter in your property on a flat, non-flammable surface near a smoke or heat alarm. Never block escape routes with e-bikes, e-scooters, or mobility scooters. Not only could they be targeted by thieves or arsonists, but they also create a physical hazard during a fire. They must be stored in your home.

## Top tips for charging e-bikes, e-scooters, and mobility scooters at home:

- Always follow manufacturers' instructions when charging
- Never leave the device unattended whilst charging
- Only charge your device when you are at home and awake - avoid charging when you are asleep
- Always unplug your charger once it has finished charging
- Always use the correct charger for your battery and buy replacements from a reputable seller
- Do not attempt to modify or tamper with the battery
- Check the battery for damage before charging. If there is any damage present, do not use it
- Do not dispose of lithium-ion batteries in general household or recycling waste

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## Why fire doors are important

Fire doors stop fire spreading from one room to another, or from a flat into the communal corridor, ensuring that you can leave the building safely if you need to.

The following are usually fire doors:

- Your flat entrance door
- The door between the communal corridor and the staircase
- The door to your storage cupboard or shed, if it is accessed from a communal corridor
- Doors to plant rooms or riser cupboards

Our staff routinely inspect communal and plant room doors as part of their block and estate inspection programme and any defects are reported to our repairs team for action. Our building safety officers also inspect the fire doors to homes as part of fire risk assessments and fire safety inspections.

If you think there is a problem with the fire door in your home, please call our repairs team on 020 8825 5682. You can also now book repairs online via My Account. Please visit www.ealing.gov.uk/myaccount to register.



## What can you do to ensure your fire door works properly?

- Never disconnect the door closer from any fire door.
  This is the device that ensures the door closes after you
- Do not wedge open or put something in front of a door to prevent it closing
- Do not replace any part of your flat entrance door. The door is installed as a unit, so if you change anything on it or add anything to it, it may not work as required
- Always report any damage to your flat door or the communal doors in your building
- If you see a small QR code sticker on a fire door, leave it in place. These are there for managing ongoing maintenance



## **Building safety**



## Electric heaters: know the risks

Electric heaters can be a great way to keep warm – especially if you only want to warm up 1 room. However, they should be used with care.



Did you know that fires involving heaters have a particularly high fatality rate? Tragically, a third of electrical fires involving a heater result in death.

Electric heater fires typically start when bedding, blankets or clothes are placed too close to them causing them to catch. Some kinds of heater present a carbon monoxide risk which can make you drowsy and less able to escape. People with mobility issues are also at risk of tripping or falling onto a heater.

## Here are our top tips for staying safe when using heaters:

- Make sure you fit a carbon monoxide alarm in rooms with solid fuel, gas, or paraffin heaters
- Make sure heaters are well maintained and in good working order
- Never install, repair, or service heaters yourself. Make sure anyone who does so is registered and properly qualified
- Do not take risks with old heaters if it is electrical and getting older, get it tested by a qualified electrician or get a new one
- Where appropriate, secure heaters against a wall to stop them falling over
- Always sit at least one metre away from a heater as it could set light to your clothes or chair
- Turn off your heater and allow it to cool before attempting to move it
- Keep heaters away from clothes, curtains and furniture
- Never hang wet clothes over heaters to dry.

## Take care with extension leads

Most people have extension leads in their home to increase the number of appliances that they can plug into a wall socket, but overloaded electrical sockets are a leading cause of house fires.

It is vital that you take care when using extension leads. Only use one socket extension lead per socket and never plug an extension lead into another extension lead, known as daisy chaining. Use a multi-way bar extension lead rather than a block adaptor, as they put less strain on the wall socket. Some block adaptors also do not have a fuse which increases the risk of overloading and fire.

Check the current rating of the extension lead before plugging anything into it. Most are rated at 13 A, but some are rated at only 10 A or less - the rating should be clearly marked on the back or underside of the extension lead. Check regularly for these danger signs and stop using the item immediately if you find any of these:

- A smell of hot plastic or burning near an appliance or socket
- Sparks or smoke coming from a plug or appliance
- Blackness or scorch marks around a socket or plug, or on an appliance
- Damaged or frayed leads
- Coloured wire from inside leads showing at the plug or anywhere else
- Melted plastic on appliance casings or leads
- Fuses that blow or circuit-breakers that operate for no obvious reason



## **Opportunities**



## Free digital skills project

#### Ealing and Hounslow Community Voluntary Service (EHCVS) is proud to spearhead a free digital skills program.

The Digital Skills Project is a vital initiative that aims to promote digital literacy and connectivity in the communities of Ealing, Hanwell, and Brentford. This comprehensive digital literacy program is designed to provide people of all ages with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the digital world confidently and securely.

Participants will gain proficiency in using computers, laptops, and mobile devices, mastering the art of digital correspondence, and understanding online safety and security practices. The projects' ultimate goal is to bridge the digital divide, cultivate digital literacy, and contribute to a safer and more connected society. Participants will be well-prepared to navigate the digital world confidently and securely.

The course consists of four weekly sessions, with one session taking place each week. The initial course will be hosted at West Ealing library, Melbourne Avenue, West Ealing W13 9BT. Subsequent courses will be conducted in Brentford and Hanwell, ensuring accessibility and convenience for participants in various locations.



Scan now to book your place!

## **Floating community centres**

#### Be part of the floating community room programme.

Floating community rooms are a network of spaces in and around the Racecourse Estate in Northolt, open for locals to hire.

#### You can use these spaces to:

- Host a birthday party
- Hold a community event
- Bring your friends, family and neighbours together

## Scan here to find out more



#### **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: greenford<u>housinghub@ealing.gov.uk</u>

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 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





