

# Housing News

Autumn 2024

The magazine for Ealing Council tenants

Homes



Neighbourhoods



Opportunities



## Stay savvy on scams

Every year more than 3 million people in the UK fall victim to scams. We don't want you to be one of them. Find out more on page 6

# Good and well-paid jobs in all of our 7 towns

Councillor Louise Brett  
cabinet member for safe and genuinely affordable homes



As the new lead member for genuinely affordable housing at Ealing Council, I look forward to helping to meet the challenge of Ealing's affordable housing crisis head on.

Growing up in a good quality, affordable home in a thriving neighbourhood is one of the clearest determinants of how our lives pan out later on. That's why it has long been a key priority for us to deliver the new homes the borough so desperately needs. We aren't just looking to put a roof over people's head – we want to create communities where everyone has the chance to flourish.

Creating good jobs is also a top priority for the council. And the local need for good and well-paid jobs is clear.

Average earnings in our borough are some of the lowest in London, ranking 28th out of the 32 London boroughs. And 2 in every 5 jobs in Ealing are in typically low-paid industries, like in retail, hospitality, and social care. This represents around 50,000 workers across the borough.

This landscape of low pay, paired with the ever-present cost of living crisis that has seen the prices of everyday essentials like the weekly shop, utility bills, and rent or mortgage payments shoot up, making necessities unaffordable for many working families.

A cocktail of rising costs and stagnant wages means that some of our most financially vulnerable residents are left at higher risk of needing to use a foodbank, take out costly loans, or fall behind on their rent and mortgage payments. We have seen a huge spike in the number of families in the borough who have no choice but to approach us for emergency help with housing and financial support.

Our Council Plan, which we published in 2022, illustrates the ways that we will work towards our main goal – making sure that everyone can live a long, healthy, happy life, in communities full of pride and identity.

Key to this goal is ensuring that everyone working in the borough has the chance to earn a decent living income, locally, so they don't need to rely on in work benefits and food banks to get by. We want to make sure that those good and well-paid jobs are available in all our 7 towns, so that everyone can benefit from the economic prosperity that we are looking to create.

We've already made great progress over the last 2 years, creating almost 5,000 good and well-paid jobs, and we're aiming to hit 10,000 by 2026. Later this year, we will publish our new jobs and skills plan, which will set out how we will maximise employment opportunities by getting the most out of the borough's outstanding transport links and talented workforce.

Our campaign to drive up the number of employers in the borough that pay their staff the London Living Wage has already helped to boost the pay packets of almost 800 residents.

We are creating a borough where local people can change their lives for the better by accessing the decent living incomes that they need and deserve.





## Building a better housing service



We are working hard to improve the services we deliver to our residents.



Our priorities continue to be ensuring that our homes, specifically in blocks and high-rise buildings, are safe in terms of fire and building safety. Our inspection, repairs, and maintenance regimes are constantly ongoing. They focus on important aspects, including fire, gas, electrical, and lifts, to ensure you are safe in your home.

We have an improvement programme in place focused on ensuring that all our homes are safe and offer quality housing, that we listen to complaints and act quickly to put things right and that we treat all residents fairly and with respect. This means that we need to know more about your homes, which is why we are undertaking stock condition surveys. This information will help us invest in the most appropriate maintenance works.

As we continue to improve the housing service, we want to ensure that you are well informed about how we are performing. We are creating a resident's annual report which will be published on the council website later this year.

## Waste not, want not: revolutionary new insulation



A remarkable new kind of roof insulation made from recycled farm and food waste will be keeping people extra cosy in sheltered housing in Hanwell this winter.

The new 'ECO FF' insulation, made by construction materials provider Bauder and installed by council contractors Greyline, is made of 80% recycled organic raw material from farm and food waste. Yet it is every bit as effective as traditional insulation at keeping buildings warm.

It has been carried out as part of the council's 5-year, £42million programme to improve its housing. The work includes significant upgrades to roofs, bathrooms, and kitchens in council homes across the borough.

The new insulation is more environmentally friendly than traditional insulation, while also helping to prevent loss of warmth from homes during the winter – keeping them cosier and less need for high energy bills. The council has made significant progress in reducing harmful emissions in the borough since it launched its ambitious climate action strategy in 2021.

Councillor Louise Brett, the council cabinet member for safe and genuinely affordable homes, visited Benjamin Court to see the work and speak with residents.



# Help with your finances



Although inflation has come down, bills are still high and households all over the country are continuing to feel the pinch.

We know that many of you could be struggling with basics. Our financial inclusion team can help you to take control of your finances.



## Claim what you are entitled to

**Many working people are eligible for help but don't claim it.**

If your income has been reduced because you are unable to work or you are working fewer hours, you can apply for Universal Credit (UC) at [www.gov.uk/how-to-claim-universal-credit](https://www.gov.uk/how-to-claim-universal-credit) or by calling **0800 328 5644**. UC has replaced Housing Benefit and includes financial help towards your rent.

You can find out what benefits you could claim and how they would be affected by changing the hours you work by using this simple calculator: [www.betteroffcalculator.co.uk](https://www.betteroffcalculator.co.uk)

## Welfare assistance

**Local welfare assistance is a discretionary support scheme. The fund is there to help people to try to maintain an independent life or for those facing an immediate financial crisis.**

If you receive UC and you are still struggling to pay your rent, you can also apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment, which are made at our discretion in cases where we consider that extra help with housing costs is needed. You can find out more and apply at [www.ealing.gov.uk/discretionarypayment](https://www.ealing.gov.uk/discretionarypayment).

## Help with your water bill

**If your bill is more than 5% of your net income or you are on low income, you may be eligible for the WaterHelp scheme.**

This scheme is available for Thames Water and Affinity Water customers. To qualify for WaterHelp you must be able to verify your income. For more information visit [www.thameswater.co.uk/waterhelp](https://www.thameswater.co.uk/waterhelp) or call **0800 980 8800**.

## Carers support

**There is a wide range of support and advice available for carers. Care Place is a directory of support and advice available for carers in Ealing. For more information visit [www.careplace.org.uk](https://www.careplace.org.uk)**

Ealing Carers also provides both practical information and emotional support for carers, including benefits and form filling support, health and wellbeing activities, peer support for carers and carers breaks.

To find out more visit [www.ealingcarers.org.uk](https://www.ealingcarers.org.uk), telephone **020 3137 6194** or email [info@ealingcarers.org.uk](mailto:info@ealingcarers.org.uk).

## Be aware of loan sharks



Money lenders who aren't authorised or regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) are breaking the law. They are known as loan sharks.

Illegal money lenders aren't always obvious and can pose as a friend or even family member. They work illegally and lend money often with very high interest rates and little to no paperwork to confirm loan arrangements.

Loan sharks often take other illegal action to collect the money they have lent you, such as threats of violence or taking away your credit cards or valuables. In extreme cases, they have been known to force non-payers into prostitution and drug dealing.

If you have borrowed money from someone who isn't FCA-authorised, you haven't broken the law - they have. If you have borrowed from a loan shark or are worried about someone else, please report them to the organisations below. You can do this anonymously.

Report them to the Illegal Money Lending Team

Web: [www.gov.uk/report-loan-shark](https://www.gov.uk/report-loan-shark)

Report them to Stop Loan Sharks

Phone: **0300 555 2222** (open 24/7)

Web: [www.stoploansharks.co.uk](https://www.stoploansharks.co.uk)



If someone who has lent you money threatens you or is violent, contact the police. You can do this even if it's an informal loan from someone you know, such as a friend or family member.

## Are money worries affecting your mental health?



Struggling with money and debt can be a stressful and lonely experience.

Some people feel guilt or shame, or they worry about what others will think. This can be distressing and it's important to remember that you are not alone, and that this is a challenging time for many people. Sorting things out might feel overwhelming, but you should know that there is support available.

Whether you would like to feel more in control of your finances, or would like specific support for your mental health, there are options available to help you feel better.

If you want to talk to someone about how you are feeling, you can call an emotional support helpline. The Samaritans provide a confidential support service for anyone experiencing distress or despair. Call **116 123** for free.

The mental health charity Mind also offers advice on a huge range of mental health topics. Visit [www.mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk) or call **0300 123 3393**.



# Be aware of repairs scams



Some residents have told us that scammers posing as repair contractors have attempted to gain access to their homes.



When you report a repair to us, we will allocate one of our approved contractors to the job. Our contractors for repairs are Axis Europe and Wates. We may on occasion also use specialist subcontractors.

When a repairs operative is allocated to your case and visits your home, they will always carry photo ID and will be able to provide the details of your repair case when requested. If the person at your door is unable to give you the case reference number, do not let them into your home.

If you are at all unsure, you can phone our call centre on **0208 825 5682** to confirm the person at your door is genuine.

## Top tips on avoiding repairs scams:

- if you are a council resident and have arranged a repair through the council, you will not be charged. Be cautious of anyone who asks you to pay money to complete a repair
- be cautious of anyone who claims they work on behalf of Ealing Council and cannot provide details of your repair request or show valid photo ID

## Claim farming

We have heard stories in the housing sector of fake companies approaching residents and encouraging them to make claims for things that need repairing in their home. This is known as 'claim farming'.

Claim farmers operate by cold calling, leaflet drops, and on social media. These companies often claim they are calling from the 'repairs team' or 'on behalf of Ealing Council'.

When asked, they will refuse to provide an authentic company name, and any call back number provided will be a false number. Their calls may be from unknown numbers or even local lines. Residents' personal information is often sold to 'no win, no fee' solicitors for a profit. In many cases, residents will find themselves with legal costs to pay even if they later withdraw their claim.

## Report scams

We encourage residents to be wary of any individual, cold call, or leaflet with an offer that sound too good to be true.

Speak to a member of council staff at your local housing hub or seek genuine advice from Citizens Advice before signing any documents.

You can report scams to help stop the criminals responsible and protect others. Call the Citizens Advice consumer service on **0808 223 1133**. They will provide advice and pass on details of the scam to Trading Standards.

## Accessing your home

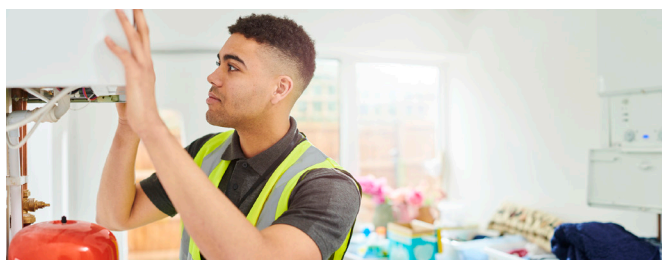


Allowing us access to your home for vital safety checks is a condition of your tenancy agreement.

Inspections of gas appliances (referred to as an LGSR) and electrical equipment (referred to as an EICR) are essential for your safety. These inspections must be carried out annually and are free of charge to residents.

So far this year we have spent £200,000 in legal fees to get access to homes for vital safety checks. This is money that we could be spending on making life on estates better.

Only a tiny minority of tenants fail to respond to our requests to enter their homes to perform these simple checks. Failure to respond puts you in breach of your tenancy agreement and we will seek a court order to gain possession of your property. You could be liable for legal fees and could lose your home.



### How do I know an access request is genuine?

If we need to access your property for a safety check, you will receive a letter on council headed paper letting you know what check is required and the name of the contractor we have appointed to carry it out. The letter will be signed electronically by a member of council staff. You will also receive a letter from our approved contractor.

If you are unsure whether a request for access is legitimate, get in touch with your neighbourhood housing officer or local housing hub.

## Fighting tenancy fraud



Tenancy fraud limits the number of affordable homes for those with a genuine need and costs the council thousands of pounds every year, diverting money which could be invested in our estates instead.

Currently in Ealing there are over 7,000 families on the waiting list for a council home, so we do everything in our powers to claim back council homes that are being fraudulently used. Last year, we successfully recovered 27 council properties which were not occupied by the lawful tenant. These properties have been made available to residents in genuine need of housing.

### What is tenancy fraud?

- subletting – when a tenant rents their home without permission
- non occupation / abandonment – when a tenant stops living at their home and leaves it without informing us
- false application – not telling the truth when applying for a home or falsely claiming to be homeless
- wrongly claimed succession – succeeding a tenancy on the death of a previous tenant by falsely claiming to be living at the property for some time

**TENANCY  
FRAUD**



### How you can help

Your knowledge and support is vital to help us stop tenancy fraud.

Here are some things to look out for:

- do you know who the tenants should be?
- does a property seem lived in or abandoned?
- do you know someone has another home that we don't know about?
- do you know that someone has provided false information on their housing application?
- do you keep seeing different people in a home nearby?
- are you aware that a tenant is no longer living in their home but residing with a partner elsewhere?

### Report it

If you suspect tenancy fraud, you can report it anonymously by calling the fraud hotline on **0800 328 6453** or emailing [fraud@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:fraud@ealing.gov.uk).

All information will be treated with strict confidence. All reports or information will be investigated.

# Your safety

## Fireworks and bonfires: what you need to know

Fireworks and bonfires are only allowed in private gardens or as part of an organised display. They are not allowed in parks or in communal areas of housing estates.

It is a criminal offence to use fireworks between 11pm and 7am. There are a few exceptions which are Bonfire Night when the cut off is midnight and New Year's Eve, Diwali, and Chinese New Year, when the cut off is 1am.

If you are being disturbed by noise from fireworks, other than organised events, you can report it to us:

By phone: 020 8825 8111 (you may experience longer call waiting times during busy periods)

Online through MyAccount. Please note that council officers will not visit if they are unable to speak to you by phone first, so make sure you include a phone number.

You can also report firework misuse to the police. In an emergency, call 999, or in a non-urgent situation call 101 or report it online.

### Safety tips from London Fire Brigade for bonfires and fireworks:

- only buy fireworks which carry the CE or UKCA mark
- keep fireworks in a closed box and use them one at a time
- read and follow the instructions on each firework using a torch if necessary
- light the firework at arm's length with a taper and stand well back
- keep naked flames, including cigarettes, away from fireworks
- never return to a firework once it has been lit
- don't put fireworks in pockets and never throw them
- direct any rocket fireworks well away from spectators
- never use paraffin or petrol on a bonfire
- build your bonfire clear of buildings, sheds, fences, and hedges
- make sure that the fire is out, and surroundings are made safe before leaving
- do not leave bonfires unattended. An adult should supervise it until it has burnt out. If it must be left, damp it down with water
- always keep a bucket of water or a hosepipe nearby in case of emergency







## 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 barbeques, gas cylinders, petrol, diesel, or oil cans must never be stored anywhere in the building.



## Keeping children fire safe at home

Smoke alarms help save lives, but did you know that some children under 10 are unable to hear the noise of a smoke alarm?



It might be a scary topic, but it is vitally important to discuss fire safety with your children. They should know what to do in an emergency.

Here are some other top tips to help keep your children safe from fire at home.

### Kitchen

- never leave children alone in the kitchen when cooking
- if you are cooking and need to leave the room, take your pans off the heat. Many kitchen fires are caused when pans are left unattended
- when using the hob, keep your saucepan handles turned in so they can't be knocked off

### Electronics

- if using a heater, always use a childproof fire guard. Do not let children play or leave toys near a fire or heater
- do not let children play with electrical items. Use plug guards in sockets and unplug appliances that children could trip over
- remember hair straighteners and driers can get extremely hot – always switch them off and leave them to cool on a heatproof surface out of children's reach

### Living areas

- do not leave lit candles or incense unattended or in a place where a child could knock them over
- keep matches and lighters out of sight and reach of children

### Balconies

- make sure you don't have things on your balcony which your toddler can climb on, such as pushchairs

Please remember that escape routes including balconies, hallways, and communal areas must be clear at all times. This includes toys and pushchairs.

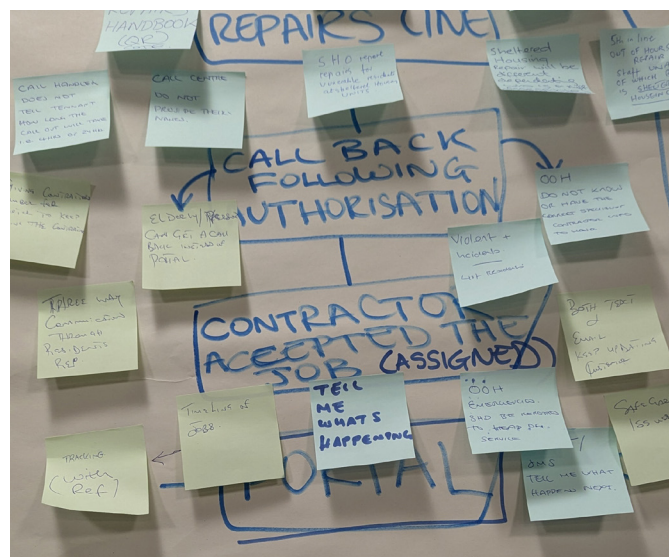
# Resident empowerment workshops



## Giving you a greater say in your housing service.

In the spring edition of Housing News we told you about the progress we are making on resident empowerment and what it will look like in the future.

In the past months we have held 2 workshops with residents to jointly produce new service standards across several housing services.



These workshops are an opportunity for residents to tell us what improvements they would like to see us make. We want to empower our residents to be involved in the entire process of improvement. Your ideas and suggestions will help us make a service **you** want to see.



The latest co-production workshop on the repairs service standard was held in August. We know our repairs service needs improvement, and this is one of our key priorities. This workshop involved 11 residents and council staff from the housing management and repairs teams. In this workshop, residents were asked to provide their opinions on our repairs service and ideas on how we can improve it.

We will be holding more workshops like these to help us draft service standards before they go out for public consultation.

If you would like to get involved, contact the resident involvement team on [residentinvolvement@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:residentinvolvement@ealing.gov.uk) or 020 8825 6535.

## Connecting culture



Have you seen the website supporting the borough's brilliant creative community and showcasing local arts, music, and culture events?

On the Ealing Culture website you can find news and information about the wealth of arts and culture events on offer across the borough.

It has been set up by Ealing Council and local organisations will be able to list their events for free on the website so that more people can find out what is happening in each of our 7 towns.

From festivals and gigs to free film screenings; art exhibitions to craft fairs; carnivals to calligraphy classes; dance lessons to comedy shows. Whatever you love there will be something for everyone to enjoy. Go to [www.ealingculture.org](http://www.ealingculture.org)

**Arts, music,  
film, dance,  
festivals  
and more...**

[www.ealingculture.org](http://www.ealingculture.org)

News, information and events

**Ealing**  
www.ealing.gov.uk



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## Help stop drain blockages



A build-up of materials in drains can cause pumps to fail and create a stink.

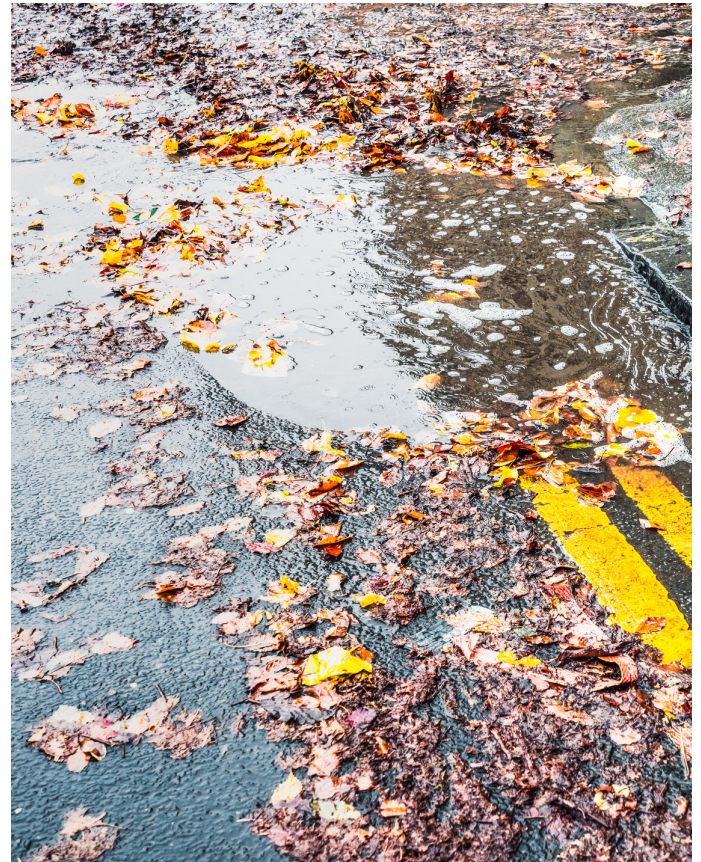
Blockages are often caused by things which should never have been put into the sewage system in the first place.

Clearing blocked drains is expensive and time consuming – and blockages can cause back surges of wastewater to flats in the area. The problem could be easily avoided if we all took more responsibility for what we put down our sinks and toilets.

Items that should not be put down drains include:

- food
- oil
- sanitary products
- wipes, including wipes which are described as being flushable as they do not break up easily in water. That includes cleaning, make-up, and toilet wipes

Please remember that only the three Ps should be flushed away – pee, poo, and paper. Any other items should be put in the bin.



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## Better training and certification for estate services



Our estate services teams will be training and certifying with the British Institute of Cleaning Science (BICSc)

We want to ensure our estate cleaning is top tier. BICSc is the largest education and training body within the cleaning industry. Senior caretakers will be the first to complete their training. They will then train up and certify their teams.

Our specialist cleaning team have also been busy training with BICSc. The specialist cleaning team manage jet washing, carpet washing, and low-rise window cleaning. Previously they have been doing window cleaning with a reach and wash pole-fed system. The team will soon be certified to use high pressure jet washing.



# Library of Things grand opening



Ealing's new Library of Things has now opened, where users can rent useful household items for a small fee, located in Ealing Broadway shopping centre.

It works the same way as a normal library, where users borrow an item and then bring it back, but in this case, items are borrowed for a small charge, starting from as little as £1.50 per day. You can borrow more than one item at a time.

There are more than 30 items available to borrow, including electric drills, carpet washers, a tent, and an ice cream maker. The items are stored in purpose-built lockers and renters are given a code to collect their item.

By allowing users to rent items instead of buying them, it reduces the risk of those items being wasted and never used again. Making small changes to your lifestyle can make a huge difference to the environment.

Create an account now to start reserving items online at [participate.libraryofthings.co.uk/ealing](https://participate.libraryofthings.co.uk/ealing)



## 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](mailto:actonhousinghub@ealing.gov.uk)

Ealing

Phone: 020 8825 5387 option 2

Email: [ealinghousinghub@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:ealinghousinghub@ealing.gov.uk)

Greenford

Phone: 020 8825 5387 option 3

Email: [greenfordhousinghub@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:greenfordhousinghub@ealing.gov.uk)

Hanwell

Phone: 020 8825 5387 option 4

Email: [hanwellhousinghub@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:hanwellhousinghub@ealing.gov.uk)

Northolt

Phone: 020 8825 5387 option 5

Email: [northolthousinghub@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:northolthousinghub@ealing.gov.uk)

Southall

Phone: 020 8825 5387 option 6

Email: [southallhousinghub@ealing.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto:safercommunities@ealing.gov.uk)

**Home ownership**

Right To Buy enquiries:

Phone: 020 8825 5583

Email: [homeownership@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:homeownership@ealing.gov.uk)

**Caretaking services**

Phone: 020 8825 8593

Email: [caretaking@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:caretaking@ealing.gov.uk)

**Compliments, complaints and suggestions**

Phone: 020 8825 8855

Email: [regenhousingcomplaints@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:regenhousingcomplaints@ealing.gov.uk)

