

NOVEMBER 2023

Home *in* ming

The magazine for London Borough of Harrow's tenants and leaseholders

SEE P14

PHASE 1 OF GRANGE FARM REDEVELOPMENT

**WIN
£30**

See p15

Join the Housing Matters webinar
**WEDNESDAY
22 NOVEMBER 2023
at 6pm**



NEW REPAIRS CONTRACT P3

DEALING WITH ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR P10-11

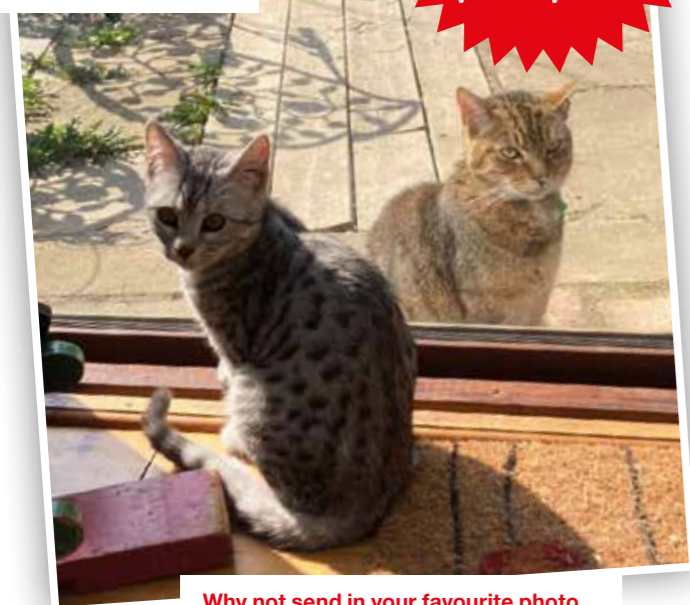
SEE NEW DAMP AND MOULD LEAFLET ENCLOSED



LONDON BOROUGH OF
HARROW

Photo CORNER

Jade from HA3 sent in a photo of her cats Jasper and Nala: 'I wish I were out there. I wish I were in there. The grass is always greener on the other side!'



Why not send in your favourite photo of Harrow or a photo of your pet to anthea.watkins@harrow.gov.uk and receive £10 shopping vouchers when printed

£10
for every
printed picture

HELLO FROM CLLR MINA PARMAR



Hope you had a lovely summer and enjoyed the mild autumnal weather.

I am delighted we will be appointing a new contractor for repairs and maintenance next June and we are working hard to get the best provider.

I am pleased to see that we have a new Mould and Damp leaflet – I hope that you find it a useful reference tool during the winter months.

If you do have financial hardship and need help with energy bills, please see pages 6-7 for support and some organisations that might be able to help.

Have you noticed our new London Borough of Harrow branding? I am so excited we have a new image to reflect the borough's ambitions – we are slowly phasing out the old branding.

With the current legislation (Consumer Standards) going live in April 2024, the housing team is working hard to ensure that we meet the new standards and one of our goals is to give residents a bigger role in scrutinising services.

We encourage you to contact the council if you need any adjustments for aids and adaptations in your home, please see page 9 for details.

I hope you stay safe and I look forward to more participation in resident groups going forward, as we are one team.

Cllr Mina Parmar
Portfolio Holder for Housing
✉ mina.parmar@harrow.gov.uk

Grange Farm walk about with the local Neighbourhood Police team



Front cover: Grange Farm estate, the inner courtyard in phase 1 with Met Officers, Council staff and Cllr Mina Parmar

HOUSING MATTERS WEBINAR

Please join us in the Housing Matters Webinar on Wednesday 22 November 2023 at 6pm – 7.30pm via MS Teams
To get the meeting link contact:
✉ rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk



YOUR STORIES, YOUR MAG



6
Cost of living advice

13
Erica Fontaine's Local Hero award

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Puzzle



CHANGING OUR REPAIRS CONTRACTOR IN 2024

We will be reviewing our repairs service standard as part of this re-procurement process

The new Repairs and Voids contract will allow the Council and residents to re-shape the responsive repairs service and to appoint new contractors to ensure housing repairs are carried out effectively and in a timely manner. The procurement will help ensure that the new contract offers a good quality service and good value for money.

We are looking at procuring an updated version of our

'Schedule of Rates' specification with a view to tackling some of the key issues including the Decent Homes Standard, damp and mould, disrepair and decarbonisation (more energy efficient homes).

We aim to go live in July 2024 and are currently going through

the procurement process including market engagement to attract the best contractors to Harrow.

We will actively be seeking input from our residents as we embark on this journey to provide a modern and up to date repairs service.

Please provide access to your home so we can complete all electrical tests that are due

Some useful self-help DIY videos:

- fix a leak
 - unblock a sink
 - unblock a toilet
 - renew sealant
 - help prevent mould
- 🌐 tinyurl.com/HarrowDIY

The new housing portal improves the customer journey such as reporting and tracking a repair - full details about the portal will be in the Spring Homing In edition



CONSUMER STANDARDS AND OUR RESPONSE

PREPARING FOR CHANGES TO THE REGULATION OF SOCIAL HOUSING

The way social landlords (councils and housing associations) are regulated is changing. A new law was passed in July called the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. Its purpose is to deliver the proposals set out in the Social Housing White Paper in 2020 by introducing measures to give tenants greater powers, improve access to redress when things go wrong, and strengthen the Regulator of Social Housing's powers.

The Regulator of Social Housing is consulting on new Consumer Standards, a Code of Practice, and the fees that they will charge registered providers of social housing. You can find out more here:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/regulator-of-social-housing

The new approach to regulation, including collecting Tenant Satisfaction Measures from social landlords and a programme of inspections, will start in April 2024.

We are reviewing the feedback we received from residents through the satisfaction survey earlier this year and we have an action plan in place to make improvements. Six working groups have been set up to deliver the improvement plan and they report to an Improvement Board which meets regularly to monitor progress.

The resident satisfaction survey identified areas for improvement including the ease of dealing with the council, how anti-social behaviour is dealt with, how the council listens to tenants' views and acts upon them, and how complaints are handled.

We carried out nearly 17,000 repairs in 2022/23 which generated a small number of repairs complaints (152) <1%.

NEW ASSET MANAGEMENT PANEL

The Head of Asset Management, Rukshan Kariy, kicked off an online Panel in August to talk about repairs and maintenance, particularly in light of the forthcoming re-procurement of the repairs contracts. 20 residents attended the online meeting, though most of the discussion centred around personal repair issues rather than looking at common themes.

Future meetings will need to focus on:

- Repairs contracts – service standards/Repairs Charter
- Capital investment programme – homesafe, new roofs, windows, doors, boilers, kitchens
- Social housing decarbonisation programme – improving the energy rating of the worst performing homes

If interested, contact :

✉ rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk



COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

Cost-of-living payments

Millions of low-income households will receive the next instalment of cost-of-living payments between 31 October and 19 November.

Eight million people on means-tested benefits, such as Universal Credit, will receive £300 directly into their bank account, without the need to make a claim.

It is the second of three instalments that will eventually total £900.

At some point in the winter, over eight million pensioners will receive an extra £300.

Among those eligible for the £300 payment in the coming weeks are those who receive Pension Credit, and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is urging pensioners on low incomes to check their eligibility for the benefit.

🌐 www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payment

Household Support fund

Citizens Advice Harrow are distributing Household Support Fund supermarket vouchers, worth £200, on behalf of the London Borough of Harrow.

To qualify for a payment, the applicant must meet the following criteria:

- Is a Harrow resident
- Has not received a cost-of-living payment from the Government in 2023
- Must be liable for energy/fuel costs for the property in which they live
- Need support with meeting their day to day living expenses including food and utility bills, as evidenced by 3-months of bank statements

■ Has not received an award from the Household Support Fund application scheme in the last 6 months

■ Is willing to comply with any reasonable conditions concerning the payment award, including for example, receiving support from advice agencies

Contact

✉ hsf@citizensadviceharrow.org.uk. Your email should include: full name, full address including postcode and contact number.

For further information

🌐 www.harrow.gov.uk/householdsupportfund
🌐 www.citizensadviceharrow.org.uk/household-support-fund/

Could you claim Pension Credit?

If you are over State Pension age, you may be able to claim Pension Credit, even if you have savings. People who claim Pension Credit may also be able to get:

- additional Cost-of-Living Payments
- help with heating costs
- free TV licence if over 75

You could be eligible for Pension Credit if your weekly income is below £201.05 or, if you have a partner who lives with you, £306.85. The qualifying income level may be higher in some circumstances.

To apply

www.gov.uk/pension-credit
☎ 0800 991 234

SHINE can help you with your energy bills

Get a free SHINE assessment and access a range of services with one call if you are over 60 or have a disability or a long term illness, on low income or have children:

- Energy and bills advice
- Water discount
- Energy Dr home visit
- Energy debt support
- Supplier comparisons
- London Taxicard

Contact

✉ shine@islington.gov.uk
🌐 www.shine-london.org.uk
☎ 0800 923 1221

Harrow Energy Advice and Support with the Cost-of-Living Project

The Harrow Energy Advice and Support with the Cost-of-Living project offers a free service to households and eligible organisations to help with reducing energy usage and bills.

This service is managed by Groundwork London who provide telephone, online and face to face visits with a qualified energy advisor also known as a 'Green Doctor'. The Green Doctor can carry out an energy efficiency assessment on homes and buildings to identify cost saving measures to reduce bills. The service can also help;

- With accessing the Warm

Homes Discount or Priority Services Register

- Support with applications for energy or water debt relief
- Refer households for the installation of larger energy saving measures if needed
- Install FREE small efficiency measures, such as LED lightbulbs and draught proofing

To register an interest as a household, please fill in our online referral form

🌐 groundwork.my.salesforce-sites.com/enquiry/
or call
☎ 0300 365 3005.

Opportunities for council tenants to move



Under-Occupation Scheme



If you have spare bedrooms in your property, which you no longer need, the Under-Occupation Scheme could help you with a move. The scheme is intended for council tenants who wish to downsize (move to a smaller property). The benefits can be paying lower rent and bills and / or having a smaller manageable home and moving closer to family.

- dedicated officer to oversee the move
- help with arranging your removals
- a cash incentive depending on how many bedrooms you are freeing up.

Subject to terms and conditions. **Some Housing Associations who are partners with Harrow have their own Under-Occupation Scheme and both the Council and Housing Association tenants have broader choices of bidding for housing association and council properties advertised on Locata.**

☎ 07927548346

Under Occupation Officer,
Ms Sital Shah

✉ underoccupation@harrow.gov.uk

Mutual exchange

Swapping your home with another tenant is known as a "mutual exchange". As one of our tenants, you can swap your home with another home managed by London Borough of Harrow or with another housing association or council. You can't exchange with someone in private rented accommodation. You must agree to accept the new property in its current condition.

If you're looking to move to a new area or want something smaller or bigger, mutual exchange could be the answer. We're registered with Homeswapper, which is free and can help you find a mutual exchange partner and guide you through the process of swapping your home.

Visit <https://www.homeswapper.co.uk/>

If you want to discuss this with your housing officer contact:

✉ housing.residentservices@harrow.gov.uk

Homefinder UK Scheme

Homefinder is a scheme that matches people looking for social housing across the country. It is a letting scheme that gives applicants opportunities and more choices of where to live. Through the Homefinder UK website, you can find available social housing advertised across the country.

The Homefinder continues to provide security to diverse groups of people such as the homeless or those threatened with homelessness, victims of abuse, violence, or people whose circumstances may have changed or members of overcrowded households.

You can register at www.homefinderuk.org

☎ 020 8424 1093 (Option 2)

Housing Register Officer, Robert Povey

✉ robert.povey@harrow.gov.uk



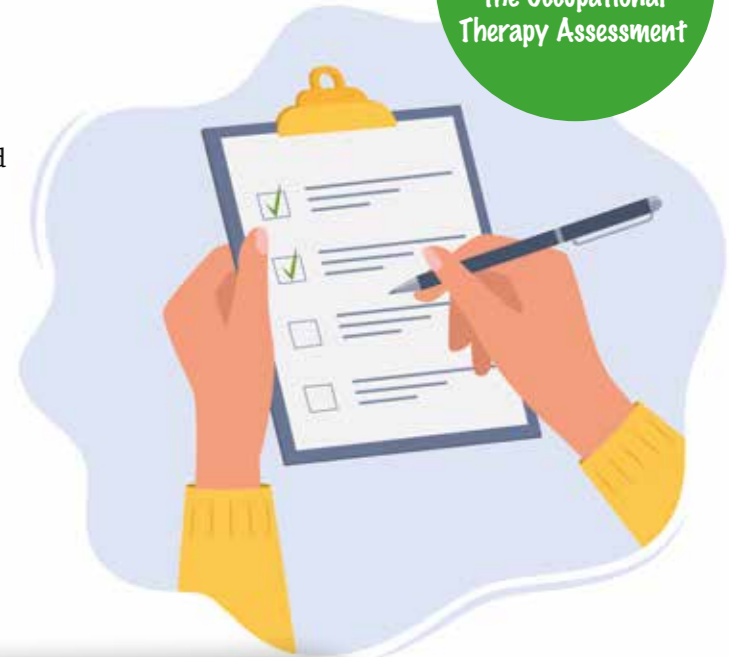
How to contact our Aids and Adaptations service

Please be aware there is a waiting list for getting the Occupational Therapy Assessment

London Borough of Harrow operates an Aids and Adaptations service for Harrow residents who live in all tenures across the borough who are experiencing difficulties managing in or outside of the property and who would benefit from the property being adapted, to aid independent living.

The process

Call Access Harrow on 0208 901 2680 and request an Occupational Therapy Assessment. Once the assessment is completed, a referral will then be forwarded to the Council Adaptations Team who will arrange for the property to be adapted to meet the needs of the disabled person in the household if this is deemed beneficial and necessary. Examples of adaptations provided are level access showers, stairlifts, ramps and hoists but to name a few.



Planned improvements to our sheltered accommodation

Following the commissioned review by EROSH (Emerging Role of Sheltered Housing), which took place in March 2023, including a resident survey, they made some recommendations. These are our agreed actions:

Service description

- Publish an updated Sheltered Housing Handbook
- New Tenancy checklist -explains all aspects of the service
- Documentation and notices to be translated into main languages per Scheme.

Staffing level

- Employed an additional Scheme Co-ordinator to allow more flexibility in covering schemes, ensure members of staff can be

present for half a day at each scheme and to reduce travel times.

Reviewing support needs

- Service Charge roadshow took place 2023
- Scheme Co-ordinators completing six-week visits for new tenants and attending Estate Inspections.
- Recording issues raised and solutions offered following resident meetings.
- Discuss learning points from complaints to improve the service.

Communication / Resident Engagement

- Keep notice boards up to date and purchase additional noticeboards - one for council messages and one for community information.
- Get feedback about

Residents enjoying tea and coffee in the lounge at Goddards Court Sheltered Scheme



activities and resident engagement.

Facilities

- Priority list of guest rooms for refurbishment
- Hold monthly meetings with repairs team to discuss communal repairs
- Clean garden furniture
- Wi-fi / broadband installation taking place.

The Future

- Infrastructure investment
- Update the website and launch the housing portal
- Update policies and procedures
- Modernise laundry.

Dealing with anti-social behaviour



We are committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB) at an early stage, to ensure tenants and leaseholders feel safe and secure.

What are examples of anti-social behaviour?

- Neighbours causing a nuisance
- Inconsiderate or loud behaviour
- Abuse, harassment, or intimidation
- Drug-related activities taking place in or around the property
- Threats of violence or harm
- Domestic abuse.

Our promise and commitment

Over the last 12 months, we have seen a consistent decrease in disorder calls from all sources. We will continue to measure people's concerns and we hope that this positive trend continues.

We will:

- Target the most prolific offenders and undertake appropriate intervention
- Use informal outreach and diversionary activities to prevent ASB
- Continue to use behaviour contracts (ABC/ABA) to reduce the risk of young people formally entering the youth justice system
- Promote the positive contribution to the community and engage residents in discussion
- Follow up every report with a visit and agree an action plan.

Priority ratings for dealing with ASB

A. High - Hate related 24 hours (or next working day)

- a. Domestic abuse 24 hours (or next working day)
- b. Physical violence 3 working days.

B. Medium - Verbal abuse 3 working days

- a. Vandalism and damage to property
- b. Drugs/substance misuse/ drug dealing
- c. Alcohol related
- d. Prostitution/sexual acts/ kerb crawling
- e. Criminal behaviour/crime
- f. Pets (status or dangerous dogs)

C. Low - Noise 10 working days Housing Officer

- a. Pets and animal nuisance.
- b. Nuisance from vehicles
- c. Litter/rubbish/fly tipping
- d. Garden nuisance
- e. Misuse of communal areas

- We will usually visit or contact anyone who makes a call to report ASB within a maximum of three working days
- The officer making the visit will provide his/her name and contact details
- We will provide diary sheets with guidance to record incidents. We will regularly review this information and agree on what action can be taken
- We will contact you in the way you prefer.



Report anti-social behaviour to your Housing Officer
✉ housing.residentservices@harrow.gov.uk

Report of Housing ASB Cases for April 2022 – June 2023

- Number of of ASB cases: 132
- Warning letter issued: 58
- Notice seeking Possession: 9

Case Study

Alleged noise nuisance perpetrated by Mr Joe Blog

Mr. Joe Blog moved into one of our properties immediately after the covid-19 pandemic. The nuisance started almost immediately following Joe moving into the block of 10 flats in West Harrow. Some of the residents witnessed Joe's behaviour and felt that he was trying to bully or intimidate other residents in the flats.

Although the antisocial behaviour and intimidation started early in Joe's tenancy, the situation became intolerable after 6 months when Maxine finally reported the matter to us. Her complaints related to loud noise, music, television and hammering from inside the property at all times of the day and night. Maxine also complained about Joe's hostile behaviour, namely using foul and abusive language and singing loudly outside his flat when he was on his phone – half the block complained.

The ASB continued on and off for almost 10 months. Despite a verbal warning and letters from us, Joe continued. We carried out an in-depth investigation and found out that Joe was hard of hearing.

When we were aware that Joe was not perpetrating the alleged ASB deliberately, we arranged a meeting with all the residents to talk about the problem. To resolve this situation, the Housing Officer used a restorative approach to resolve the issue.

Mr Joe Blog agreed to change his behaviour and to always wear his hearing aid and the residents agreed to talk to each other about issues in the future. The meeting ended with the neighbours' shaking hands, with a more positive feeling for the future. The lesson from this is that matters don't always need to go to court – talking it through can really help.

Fire safety



Fire doors are essential for keeping residents safe

You are responsible for maintaining the good condition of your flat entrance fire door

Most flats are fitted with fire doors or fire door sets. Fire doors are a critical safety feature, as they prevent a fire spreading throughout a building. If a flat door fails to work correctly, it will let smoke and flames move around the building and could prevent residents from escaping.

It is therefore important residents don't:

- Remove or tamper with the closing device
- Change their flat door without our consent
- Damage their flat door, which includes:
 - Damaging the frame by forcing it open
 - Changing the lock, letterbox or hinges
 - Installing additional items to the door, such as extra locks, a

viewer or door chain

- Installing an external security gate
- It is unlikely your flat has a fire door if:
- You access your flat directly from the street
 - It is on the ground floor and you don't walk through an enclosed building entrance area
 - You live in a purpose-built block of flats and access your home from an open balcony walkway, and on leaving your home you could turn left or right to reach a staircase or exit door
 - We may not have yet installed your fire door if you live in a two-storey block, but it is programmed in

You are responsible for reporting damage to your flat fire door or communal door to repairs maintenance.

- 📍 www.harrow.gov.uk/repairs
- ☎ 020 8901 2630

RESIDENT MEETINGS

Come and talk face to face with Housing and Repairs Officers at resident drop-in sessions – open to all council tenants

- Northolt Road Community Centre on Tuesday 7 November: 10am-12.30pm
- Julie Cook Community Centre on Wednesday 6 December: 4pm-6.30pm
- Pinner Hill Community Hall on Thursday 18 January 2024: 10am-12.30pm

2023/24 online Resident Group Meetings

Residents' Board hybrid meetings at 6-7.30pm

- Thurs 16 November 2023

Asset Management and Repairs - online at 6pm

- Thurs 7 December 2023
- Thurs 8 February 2024
- Thurs 11 April
- Thurs 13 June
- Thurs 15 August
- Thurs 10 October

Leasehold Improvement Group – online at 6pm

- Tues 7 November 2023
- Tues 23 January 2024
- Tues 5 March
- Tues 7 May
- Tues 9 July
- Tues 3 September
- Tues 5 November

Complaints Panel – hybrid meetings at 6pm – 7.30pm

- Tues 14 November
- Tues 12 December

RESIDENTS' WALL



Raju Patel from South Harrow running in the Berlin Marathon September 2023, running for the charity Get Kids Going – sport and mobility for disabled children – thank you Chandrika



Erica Fontaine a Harrow council resident receiving her Harrow Heroes award for her voluntary work on Grange Farm estate



Cherry blossom at mid-summer in the Hornbuckle estate communal garden – thank you Chandrika



Grange Court sheltered scheme tea party to celebrate the national Older Persons day – thank you to the resident engagement team for providing the cake

PLEASE SEND ANY NEWS ARTICLES, PHOTOS, OR JOKES TO
 ✉ ANTHEA.WATKINS@HARROW.GOV.UK
AND IF IT IS PRINTED, WE'LL SEND YOU A £10 SHOPPING VOUCHER.

Tamarind Court and Harrison Court flats at Grange Farm, part of the phase 1 regeneration scheme



Residents move into their new homes on Grange Farm

Residents are busy moving into the newly completed flats and town houses on phase 1 of the regeneration of Grange Farm.

Amita said, "I have recently moved into my new 3 bed house with my children aged 24 and 18. The house is lovely, I like the living area the most as it's cosy and there's a balcony off the bedroom with a view of the courtyard and greenery. It is the first time in 15 years that I feel at peace knowing the kids have their own rooms and it's a nice clean amazing house".

There are 69 social rented homes and 20 homes that are being marketed for sale as shared ownership properties by Connells agency. If you think you might be interested in finding out more about these properties, contact:

☎ 020 8103 1760

✉ grangefarmharrow@connells.co.uk



The central courtyard at Grange Farm with children's playground for the residents living there



Amita



Puzzles Page

Word Search

Try and find the 10 words below!
The clue is 'top 10 most spoken languages'

G	X	H	S	I	N	A	P	S	T
Q	I	V	H	M	P	Y	O	Q	C
J	L	G	G	S	T	B	R	V	H
Z	A	R	A	B	I	C	T	M	I
T	G	P	K	J	H	L	U	M	N
T	N	R	A	I	R	Y	G	P	E
R	E	F	N	N	B	B	U	N	S
X	B	D	Z	C	E	V	E	B	E
J	I	N	N	A	I	S	S	U	R
L	A	H	N	D	A	K	E	Q	Y

Win
£30

TO ENTER

For your chance to win £30 Love2shop vouchers, send your 10 words with your contact details by 20 December 2023 to:
✉ Anthea Watkins, London Borough of Harrow, Housing Services, PO Box 1367, Forward Drive, Harrow, HA3 3QT
✉ anthea.watkins@harrow.gov.uk

Love2shop vouchers can be used at Iceland, WHSmith, Homebase, Boots, Superdrug, Matalan and many other stores.

Your name.....

Your address.....

Your phone no.....

WINNER: Congratulations to Dylan of Churchill Place who won £30 shopping vouchers for winning the July 2023 Wordsearch Puzzle.



**WIN
1 OF 2
£25
AMAZON
VOUCHERS**

When you rent from us, your rent payment does not include insurance for your home contents.

It is your responsibility to insure your furniture, belongings or decorations against theft, fire, vandalism and burst pipes.

Home contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions. No matter how careful you are, there's always a risk that your possessions could be broken, damaged or stolen.

The Council's pay as you go home contents insurance scheme provides cover for damage to, or loss of your furniture, belongings and decorations. This includes events that as a tenant you may be affected by and financially responsible for, such as damage to the Council's fixtures and fittings. Premiums can be paid weekly alongside your rent.

**For more information, request an application pack.
Contact Harrow Council on 0208 424 1064
or visit: www.harrow.gov.uk/homeinsurance**

Apply for cover and if your policy is accepted you will automatically be entered into a prize draw to win £25 Amazon Voucher.

Prize Draw Terms & Conditions

- Entrants must have taken out a valid home contents insurance policy with Harrow Council's home contents insurance scheme between 6th November 2023 and midnight 10th December 2023. Entry must be in line with the rules. The draw only applies to applicants completing a full application and being accepted onto the Council's scheme.
- Entrants who register their details with Harrow Council's home contents insurance scheme will be automatically included into a prize draw to win a £25 Amazon voucher.
- The draw will take place on 11th December 2023.
- The prize draw closes at midnight 10th December 2023 and after this date no more entries will be permitted.
- Two winners will be drawn at random on 11th December 2023 and notified within 7 days thereafter, by email or telephone.
- The winners will be sent the voucher by e-mail wherever possible. If this is not possible this will be posted to the address to be insured. If Harrow Council have not been able to make contact with the winners within 14 days, another winner will be drawn.
- The prize is a £25 Amazon voucher.
- The prize is non-exchangeable, non-refundable, non-redeemable for cash or other prizes.
- We will not take responsibility for any missing, lost or delayed entries.
- Our decision is final and no communications will be entered into around the results of the prize draw.
- Only one entry per person is permitted.
- We retain the right to substitute the prize for one of similar value (if applicable) or cancel the terms of the prize at any time.
- Harrow Council will use any personal data you provide to manage this prize draw. Please see our Privacy Policy located on our website for more information. By providing your contact details you consent to be contacted by us (in line with Privacy Policy).
- The winners may be asked by Harrow if they wish to take part in and co-operate with any publicity events taking place in conjunction with this competition and consent to their photograph being used for publicity purposes.
- The prize draw is only available to UK residents aged 16 and over.
- Entry into the prize draw is deemed acceptance of these conditions.
- The prize draw is governed by English Law.
- The promoter is Thistle Insurance Services Limited, Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB. The Prize Draw is not open to employees or agencies of PIB Group or Thistle Insurance Services Limited, its group of companies or their family members or relatives and anyone else connected with the Prize Draw may not enter.