

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



THE ONLINE HOUSING ACCOUNT P4

HOW WE PERFORMED IN 2023/24 P7





shopping vouchers when printed





Hope you are enjoying the summer weather.

We have had a busy few months with the Housing Staff Conference in May; the general election; progressing our Improvement Plan and London Borough of Harrow flagship actions; the launch of the Housing Online Account in April and onboarding United Living, our new repairs contractor. You will see the operatives about Harrow - please don't forget to ask to see identification, as there is a new scam involving fraudulent calls claiming to be from London Borough of Harrow's Housing Repairs department.

In the last few weeks we have taken the following policies to the Residents Board for their comments, and soon all 4 will be available on the website.

- Customer Access Strategy
- Complaints and Compliments Policy
- Vulnerable Persons Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy

We are proud that housing colleagues carried out their first Week of Action w/c 17 June 2024. Thank you to all the housing staff who participated, it was great hearing about the conversations during the week of activity.

Early feedback from you about the new Online Housing Account is very promising. It will make it easier to check on the status of your repairs. Please do sign up for an Account.

We do take all reported cases of mould and damp seriously, especially if you report respiratory vulnerabilities in your household. Please see the Green Doctors leaflet enclosed. I hope you stay safe and I look forward to meeting some of you as part of our resident engagement programme.

Cllr Mina Parmar Portfolio Holder for Housing

☑ mina.parmar@harrow.gov.uk

HOUSING MATTERS WEBINAR

Please join us in the Housing Matters Webinar on Wednesday 17 July 2024 at 6pm-7.30pm via MS Teams. We were delighted that over 55 residents joined us in May. To get the meeting link contact: rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk



WEDNESDAY

JULY

Front cover: Housing colleagues ready to start door knocking in the heart of Harrow Weald



United Living won the tender and are delivering our repairs and voids service from 1st July 2024. They are a leading infrastructure, construction, and property services company

hey help residents and communities they serve benefit from resilient infrastructure, affordable homes, and improved living spaces that are fit for the future and they employ over 1400 people throughout the UK. We ask for your patience as we switch over from Wates and Slade to United Living - there will be delays to getting repairs booked in for a short transition period.

Working with United Living our priorities are to:

- 1 Work towards 100% Decent Homes – currently at 93.1%. 2 Improve the flow of communication around repairs services, such as rolling out and promoting the Online Housing Account.
- 3 Review the Repairs Charter with the Residents' Board, update it and publish it on the website Autumn 2024.
- 4 Check each mould and damp report and carry out relevant work, linking priorities to respiratory vulnerability.

Always ask to see identification – beware of a new scam involving fraudulent calls claiming to be from London Borough of Harrow's Housing Repairs department





9 **I**

New Online Housing Account

Sharleen said: "It's lovely and easy to navigate and in terms of repairs its great, but not perfect"

Tony said

navigate"

Erica said "Being able to access

more services including real time

rents and repairs is a mu

needed improvement".

now launched

e launched the long-awaited Housing Account in April 2024, giving all Harrow council tenants the ability to self-serve 24 hours a day.

We are introducing a service to cater for leaseholders in the borough as part of phase 2 development.

You can access your Housing Account via your MyHarrow Account. Register or sign into your MyHarrow Account before linking it to your Housing Account.

www.harrow.gov.uk/housing

To link to your housing account, you will need your activation code - sent by post and on your quarterly rent statement (this is not your rent payment reference number). You can also attend a monthly drop-in and ask for help to register - see page 10 for information about the drop-in dates.

Benefits of using the Online Housing Account

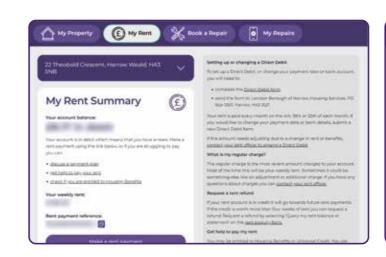
- Report, track and follow up on home and communal repairs
- View your rent balance in real time and view 12 months of payments history
- View tenancy information
- Request a rent statement
- Get in touch with your housing and rent officer for any questions or queries
- One account for all your Council services, including Council Tax and Housing Benefit

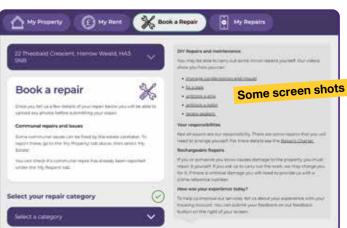
Please note that the email address: housing@harrow.gov.uk has now been closed for rent queries. Please access your Income Officer via the Online Housing Account at www.harrow.gov.uk/housing

If you experience any issues with linking your account you can check out our support page at

harrow.gov.uk/housingaccount







We welcome your feedback to improve the account offering. You can submit feedback using the pink button the on the right-hand side of the Online Housing Account page.



A fresh start for homeless Harrow families

Homelessness prevention officers work hard to support private rented tenants remain in their current accommodation

EAM and London Borough of Harrow have been working in partnership on a programme to help households move on from temporary accommodation, where the council identifies larger families in emergency accommodation and BEAM helps them seek affordable private rent accommodation.

Outcomes in first 10 months:

- 18 households have secured private rented accommodation in and outside Harrow
- 69 people housed in total (including 37 children)
- All tenancies are within budget for the household, to ensure long-term sustainability.

How BEAM operate:

43 applicants have been approved as safe and ready to join the service and started receiving Beam casework support,

following an initial assessment and budgeting exercise and agreeing an action plan to support them to secure private rented housing.

Beam makes rapid same-day payments to secure tenancies, paying for: first month's rent and deposit, help with moving costs and furniture essentials and securing a guarantor agreement if needed.

Purchasing 50 new homes

In addition, in March 2024,
Cabinet have approved the
purchase of an additional 50
properties with a £4.2million
grant to use as private rent
accommodation for families living
in emergency accommodation.
This builds on the existing 160
properties purchased over the
last few years.

- £93,105 Crowdfunding contributions for residents so far
- BEAM is also working with Harrow to support homeless individuals with a prison record. So far 2 individuals have been supported into tenancies, and 2 have secured employment as a key first step towards being able to afford private rented accommodation. A further 11 individuals in this group have started receiving Beam's casework support.

Together, we can make a difference to support Harrow residents facing homelessness. To support Beam's work, go to www.beam.org/donate.



Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey



Here are the results of our 2024 Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey that we carried out with a sample of 585 tenants in January 2024. Thank you to everyone who responded.

Keeping properties in good repair

Well maintained home

59%
Safe home

67%
Repairs last 12 months

Time taken repairs

Respectful and helpful engagement

Listens and acts

52%

Kept informed

64%

Fairly and with respect

Complaints handling

19%

Responsible neighbourhood management

Communal areas

60%

Neighbourhood contribution

57%

Approach to anti-social behaviour

53%

Overall service provision

Satisfaction with the overall service provided by Harrow's Housing Service is currently at 59%



B <mark>Homing</mark>



Keep the lid on your

nossible

In the year up to

April 2024 we have

recorded 973 council

housing repairs relating

to condensation, damp

and mould and we have

completed 98%

so far

saucepans wherever

Open a window in

from steam

the bathroom to help

reduce condensation

Damp and mould is often caused by condensation. **Condensation can be reduced** by increasing ventilation and by heating your home

ctions that can help improve ventilation include using extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms, opening windows and closing internal doors when showering, bathing and cooking, drying clothes outside, covering pans when cooking, and wiping down windows and tiles.

If you need help with damp and mould in your home, you can report this through your new Housing Online Account.

We are taking action to prevent damp and mould, such as clearing gutters and cutting back tree branches.

If you need advice on energy usage and costs you can contact Groundwork's Green Doctors - see the enclosed leaflet for details (*) london.greendoctors.org.uk

(?) 0300 365 3005

Find out more about support and guidance available

www.harrow.gov.uk/dampandmould

Promoting safer an eighbourhoods

ur Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO's) introduce powers to deal with anti-social and nuisance behaviours identified as causing annoyance and distress to others and considered detrimental to the local community's quality

Regularly wipe away

moisture on your windows to reduce condensation

> Harrow's Cabinet approved the implementation of the orders which went live in February 2024.

> PSPOs operate by imposing conditions on the use of a public area which apply to everyone. They are designed to ensure the lawabiding majority can use and enjoy

public spaces without experiencing anti-social behaviour.

Housing Estates And Housing Land PSPOs

- Disperse from an area when asked
- Causing an obstruction which prevents or hinders the free passage of pedestrians or vehicles
- Leaving waste outside the bins

Leaving food exposed for wildlife and attracting vermin

You can read more about it and learn how to report a breach on the council website: www.harrow.gov.uk/pspo

> Please report anyone you see dumping rubbish outside of the bin





Housing Officers make more home visits in 2023/24

Housing Officers have been working hard in the last 12 months to increase the number of face-to-face Tenancy Audit home visits and check in visits with vulnerable tenants.

A Tenancy Audit is necessary to make sure that the limited stock of properties owned by Harrow Council is used appropriately, so we carry out a rolling programme of tenancy checks during your time as a tenant. We call these "tenancy audits".

You can read more about this on the council website: www.harrow.gov.uk/tenancyaudit

Tenant Audits

1078



1001 **Vulnerable Tenant**

6 weekly visits for new

Change to NHS 111 helpline

People in Harrow having a #mentalhealthcrisis can now call the 111 helpline and select the mental health option to talk to a mental health professional and get help 24/7.

visits

tenants

Residents' engagement

Opportunities to get more involved

We have 3 new opportunities to get involved in Task and Finish groups in the coming months, and these will be a mix of face to face and online:

Updating our Repairs Charter

⊠ rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk

■ Housing Annual Report 2023/24 ⊠ anthea.watkins@harrow.gov.uk

■ If you like analyzing data and investigating processes, please join us in scrutinizing housing services

⊠ rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk

Estate Champia (s

We are proud to announce that we kicked off the Estate Champions initiative in March 2024 and there are 8 Champions. They are from various estates across the borough.

An Estate Champion is a council tenant or leaseholder who cares about their estate and would like to work with us to help make our estates safer, cleaner, and more attractive places to live. They will play a lead role in engagement and form an important part in shaping services for their estate and community.

They are a point of contact for neighbours to raise estate issues, represent the resident voice and signpost people to important information on the estates they represent.

If you would like to learn more about this role, email: ⊠ rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk



Sunrise at Northolt Road taken by **Chandrika Patel**

Cherry blossom at

Chandrika Patel

Hornbuckle Close by



Bird of prey photo taken by Mr Rowley at Harrow Weald Park'





Spring is on its way in the Bee Garden at Harrow Weald Park - these lovely daffodils

were planted by Terry Mackin

RESIDENT MEETINGS

Regular resident drop in sessions

Come and talk face to face with Housing Officers and Repairs staff at resident drop-in sessions - open to all council tenants and leaseholders, no appointment is needed

Northolt Road Hall, Northolt Road, South Harrow, HA2 0LS 10am-12.30am

■ Tuesday 3 September

Julie Cook Hall, Augustine Road, Harrow, HA3 5NW 4pm-6.30pm

■ Wednesday 9 October

Pinner Hill Community Hall, Welch Place, Pinner, HA5 3TA 10am-12.30pm

■ Thursday 14 November

Residents' Board meetings at **Alma Court Sheltered Scheme** 6.30pm-8.30pm

- Thursday 18 July
- Thursday 19 September
- Thursday 17 October
- Thursday 21 November

2024/25 online Resident Group Meetings

Housing Matters webinars 6pm - 7.30pm Open to all tenants and leaseholders

- Wednesday 17 July
- Wednesday 18 September
- Wednesday 20 November

Asset Management and Repairs 6pm-7pm

- Thursday 25 July
- Thursday 12 September
- Thursday 24 October





Estate Champions Meetings 6pm-7pm

- Thursday 5 September
- Wednesday 16 October ■ Thursday 28 November
- For further details please contact:

☑ rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk

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

Safety warning when charging your e-Bike or e-Scooter

Most fires related to e-bikes and e-scooter have happened in homes. These fires are often caused when charging batteries. Please pay special attention to bike conversion kits. Do not attempt to modify or tamper with the battery. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.





Where to charge your batteries

- Never block your escape route with e-bikes or e-scooters or leave them in the communal areas of your block.
- communal areas of your block.

 Store and charge them somewhere away from a main through route or exit.

 Make sure you and your family have an escape plan in place in the event of a fire. Always call 999, never try to fight the fire yourself.

Reduce the risk of overheating

- Batteries can get warm during their use. Allow them to cool down before attempting to re-charge
- Batteries should always be charged on hard flat surfaces where heat can dissipate
- Batteries can also pose a risk if they have been damaged, so try to ensure they are not getting knocked around while in use or while being carried Batteries should also never be exposed to extremes of

Follow the instructions

temperature.

- 1 Always follow manufacturers' instructions when charging
- 2 Never leave it charging unattended or charge it while you are asleep
- 3 You should always make sure you unplug your charger once it's finished charging
- 4 Always use the correct charger for your batteries and buy any replacements from a reputable seller.



Our pest control strategy

PEST CONTROL

Estate Services were recently appointed to manage pest control treatment for Harrow housing estates and sheltered housing. We treat a range of pests including rats, mice, and cockroach infestations. Other pests such as, bedbugs, fleas, moths, beetles, and wasps are considered on a case-by-case basis, and pigeon netting where applicable. The pricing structure and policy will soon be published on our website.

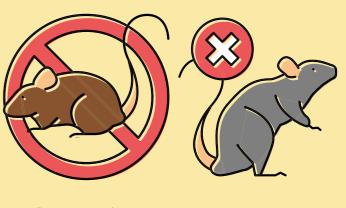


Resident Services have embarked on a borough-wide Riddance Programme to treat pests in communal parts of our properties, such as lobbies, hallways, staircases, landings of blocks of flats and bin stores. We will also deal with pest infestations that are present in the 'structure' of blocks of flats, such as drains, roof spaces, car parks, boiler rooms and refuse enclosures.

Brent Council have been contracted to apply their expertise to eradicate pests on estates. Their professional Pest Control Officers are not only laying poisons but are identifying risks, route causes, devising actions plans and proofing any ingress points, where possible. All sites require a survey before a Riddance Programme is approved to ascertain the current pest activity levels, hygiene standards and building structure condition. The Riddance Programme is taking place in various blocks and estates across the borough. The information will shortly be available on the Harrow Council website.

PREVENTION

We will shortly be publicising some helpful tips to prevent pest infestation within your home.













If you need pest control treatment, please contact Estate Services ☑ housing.estateservices@harrow.gov.uk. We will respond to your query within 48 hours.

12 Homing

Tenancy News

Getting rid of fat, oil and grease

ooking fat and oils will eventually turn solid and build up in your pipes. Instead of pouring them down the sink or toilet, collect them in a container like a jam jar or yoghurt pot. Leave them to cool, and once they've set, scoop them out and pop them straight in the bin.

Hot water and soap don't dissolve oils and fats. The soap may actually harden in your pipes, sticking to other items and adding to the problem.



IF A TENANT PERSISTENTLY POURS FAT DOWN THE SINK OR TOILET, WE WILL RECHARGE THAT HOUSEHOLD WITH THE COST OF UNBLOCKING THE SINK.

We all want to be treated with respect and courtesy



t the London Borough of Harrow we believe that all our staff, management, residents, councillors, and contractors have the right to work or live in an environment free from all forms of prejudice and abuse.

The Council considers all forms of diversity to be positive and enriching for the borough and should be celebrated. We take a strict zero

tolerance approach to any form of discrimination. harassment, victimisation. aggression or bullying including the prohibited conduct described in the Equality Act 2010. Any allegation of such behaviour will be taken seriously and investigated; and appropriate action will be taken where deemed necessary.

Unfortunately we nave had to take action in recent months for rude and/or aggressive behaviour towards staff and operatives and we have served 3 Notices

The new Complaint Handling Code

The Complaint Handling Code came into effect on 1 April 2024, meaning that landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements





WHAT IS THE **COMPLAINT**

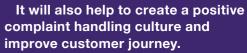
The Complaint Handling Code sets out a process for the Social Housing providers how they must respond to complaints effectively and fairly.

The purpose of the Code is to enable organisations to resolve complaints raised by individuals





promptly, and to use the learning from complaints to drive service improvements.



The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, places a duty on the **Housing Ombudsman to monitor** compliance with the statutory Complaint Handling Code.

We have reviewed the Housing's **Complaints and Compliments policy** which can be found on the website.

HANDLING CODE?





e have several council blocks in need of system upgrades to the front door

intercom system. This is because the system needs to switch from the old 2G system to the new 4G system. A number of systems will become obsolete or will need remedial work as a result. 'Offline' means that the intercom system no longer works, as it needs to be upgraded.

Staff have been busy distributing a total of 998 door fobs between the months of November 2023 to April 2024.

Programme

The Planned Investment team scheduled 42 blocks to have upgrades to the intercom system from January 2024

to March 2024. Every effort was made to ensure as little inconvenience to residents as possible:

Letters were sent to all affected residents and leaseholders explaining the

■ Weekly hubs were set up at Harrow and Wealdstone library twice a week from 1pm to 6pm for fobs to be collected

■ We reached out to vulnerable residents through a door knocking exercise

We have plans to continue the remedial work and this work forms part of a tender package.

If you identify a problem with your block, please report it here:

www.harrow.gov.uk/ housing

(f) 020 8901 2630

Door fobs renewal



WEEK OF ACTION

A staff member says:
"I believe the Week of Action is an excellent initiative. It allows tenants to see us and enables us to engage with them, providing the necessary support. It also presents an opportunity to improve the negative perception some tenants have towards us employees."

Feedback from staff and residents

"A resident in Whittlesea
Road advised us she is still waiting
for a new boiler and heating system.
After following this up with Liberty, the
resident has been advised her new
heating system will be
sorted this summer."

"Liberty has been booked to sort out issues with a resident's boiler and TRV's in Bancroft Gardens."

"A resident living on
Honeybun estate informed us about a
property in Lascelles Avenue that is empty
and in a state of disrepair. Once the police
have moved off site, we will organise for the
property to be secured via sitex, and
arrange a structural survey."

"A resident who has not had hot water for some time in Churchill Place, the job has been fast tracked, and a service request has been logged with the Aids and Adaptations team about how to make day to day living easier."

rom Monday 17 June to Friday 21
June 2024 housing colleagues knocked
on residents' doors on many estates
in the London Borough of Harrow.
The aim was to have a conversation
and check in with you. It was also
an opportunity for staff who don't
normally have the chance to talk directly with
residents to get more actively involved.

We talked about:

- Updating information such as disabilities and vulnerabilities that impact you accessing services
- Promoting the new Online Housing Account
 Trying to understand better your perception about our customer service when dealing with service requests and formal complaints.

We acknowledge we cannot visit everyone during one week, so we offered four resident drop-ins on Wednesday 19 June and Saturday 22 June as an alternative.

How did we let you know about this?

- We wrote a letter to all tenants and leaseholders (living in their property) informing you about the initiative
- Put posters up in blocks on the estates we were calling on
- Left you a Checking-In card if you weren't in.

Over 180 staff called on 1900 properties across the Borough. Most residents welcomed the opportunity to talk to staff face to face and provide their feedback







Sharon talking to David McNulty and Luke during the Week of Action

New Domestic Abuse Service Provider

I ollowing a competitive tender process the new provider for the council's commissioned domestic abuse services is Cranstoun. taking over from Hestia.

The service, which launched on 1 May, includes:

■ Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service

Outreach support for survivors and their children

■ Safe accommodation, refuge provision and floating support

Maria Cripps, Assistant Director for Domestic Abuse Services at Cranstoun, said:

"We work across London supporting victim-survivors

of domestic abuse and this new work in Harrow will allow us to reach more survivors of domestic abuse and provide them with the comprehensive support they need to rebuild their confidence, independence and ensure their safety."

CONTACT THE TEAM

- (f) 020 8129 5438
- ranstoun.org/help-and-advice/domestic-abuse/harrow-dass/



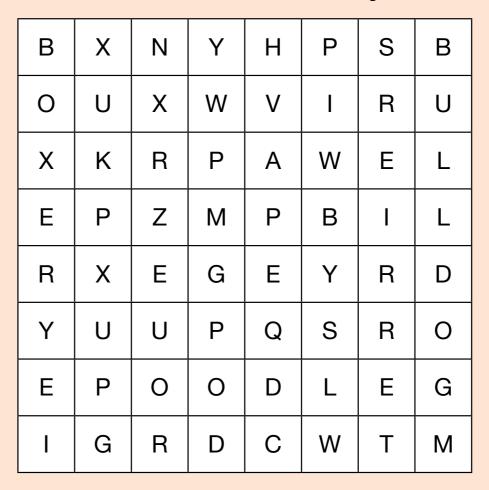


Everyone has the right to feel safe and to live free from physical violence, emotional abuse, financial abuse, or any other controlling or harmful behaviour

Puzzos Paue

Word Search

Try and find the 9 words below in the wordsearch puzzle! The clue is '9 well known breeds of cats and dogs.





TO ENTER

For your chance to win £30 Love2shop vouchers, send your 9 words with your contact details by 15 August 2024 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 Chhanya Rajyagor, Tapley Court who won £30 shopping vouchers for winning the March 2024 Wordsearch Puzzle. The answers to the March 2024 Wordsearch were: Pizza, Ramen, Burger, Paella, Moussaka, Rendang, Pierogi, Curry, Eisbein, Tom Kha Gai



Handypersons Scheme

Harrow Handypersons Scheme aims to offer a service to residents living in Harrow, who are without regular help and support from family and friends and unable to carry out the minor work themselves. The labour is free, but you are responsible for paying for materials.

Who is Eligible?

To qualify for assistance under the scheme, you must be:

- A person with Disabilities, and/or persons 60 years+
- And in receipt of one of the following benefits:
- Universal Credit
- Housing Benefit
- PIP
- Guaranteed Pension Credit
- Attendance Allowance
- Both partners and any household member must not be in paid employment

The service

The scheme is limited to a maximum of 6 hours work per year, with the 6 hours spread out over a maximum of 4 visits per year, including contractor travel time.

Contact

If you are interested and would like an assessment, contact:

- © 020 8424 1894 during office hours (9am 5pm, on Monday to Friday)

