

JULY 2024

H*in*oming

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

Join the Housing
Matters webinar

WEDNESDAY
17 JULY 2024
at 6pm

WIN
£30
See inside

WHAT RESIDENTS SAID P16

WEEK OF ACTION

MEET UNITED LIVING, OUR NEW REPAIRS CONTRACTOR P3

LAUNCH OF THE ONLINE HOUSING ACCOUNT P4

HOW WE PERFORMED IN 2023/24 P7



LONDON BOROUGH OF
HARROW

Photo CORNER

Tony said, "This is Poppy saying this is my bed now"

£10

for every
printed picture



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

HELLO FROM CLLR MINA PARMAR



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



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

Welcome to United Living



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

They 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



New Online Housing Account now launched

We 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



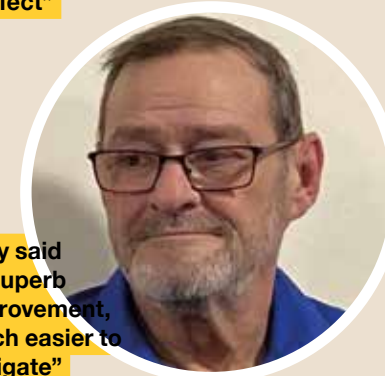
Scan the QR code on your phone to register or sign in to your account



We currently have around 800 tenants using the Online Housing Account in the first 10 weeks and 255 repairs forms have been submitted



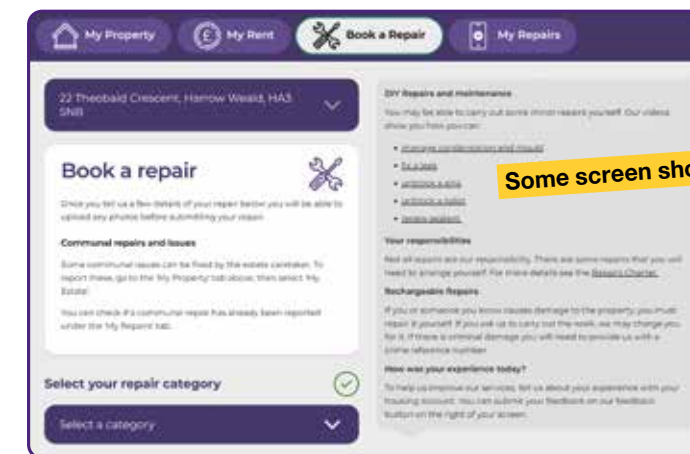
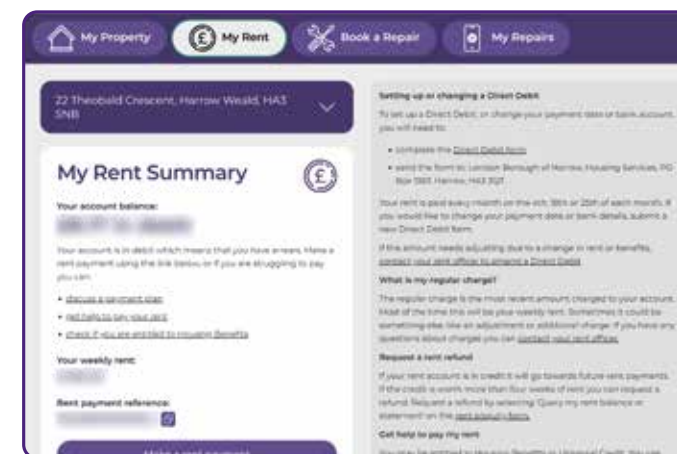
Sharleen said: "It's lovely and easy to navigate and in terms of repairs its great, but not perfect"



Tony said "A superb improvement, much easier to navigate"



Erica said "Being able to access more services including real time rents and repairs is a much needed improvement".



Some screen shots

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

BEAM 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.

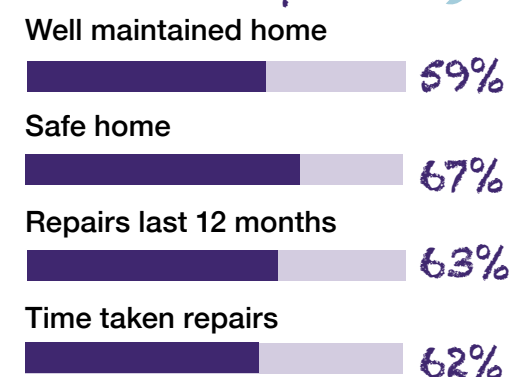
beam

Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey

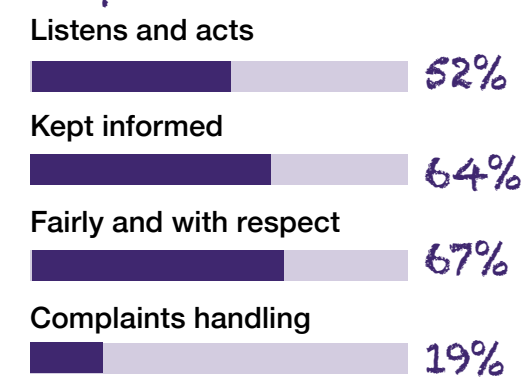


Here are the results of our 2024 Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey that we carried out with a sample of 585 tenants in January 2024. Thank you to everyone who responded.

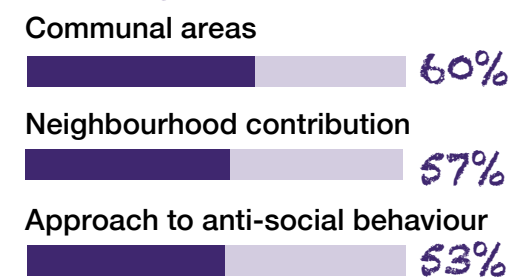
Keeping properties in good repair



Respectful and helpful engagement

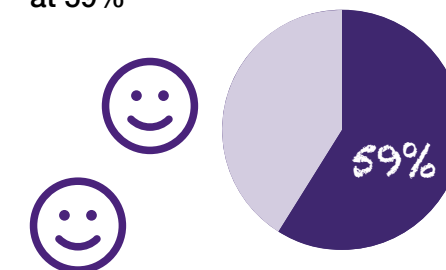


Responsible neighbourhood management



Overall service provision

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



Worried about damp and mould?



Regularly wipe away moisture on your windows to reduce condensation

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

Actions 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

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

Keep the lid on your saucepans wherever possible



Open a window in the bathroom to help reduce condensation from steam



Promoting safer neighbourhoods



Our 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 of life.

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 law-abiding 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

1078
Tenant Audits

In the 12 months to March 2024, front line officers carried out a total of 2,261 tenant home visits

1001
Vulnerable Tenant visits

182
6 weekly visits for new tenants



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.



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 Champions

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



Erica Fontaine, Chair of Residents' Board, attended this year's Housing Conference

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

Leasehold Improvement Group
6pm-7pm

■ Tuesday 3 September

■ Tuesday 5 November

Estate Champions Meetings
6pm-7pm

■ Thursday 5 September

■ Wednesday 16 October

■ Thursday 28 November

For further details please contact:

✉ rinvolve@harrow.gov.uk



RESIDENTS' WALL



Sunrise at Northolt Road taken by Chandrika Patel



Spring is on its way in the Bee Garden at Harrow Weald Park – these lovely daffodils were planted by Terry Mackin



Cherry blossom at Hornbuckle Close by Chandrika Patel



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

PLEASE SEND ANY NEWS ARTICLES, PHOTOS, OR JOKES TO

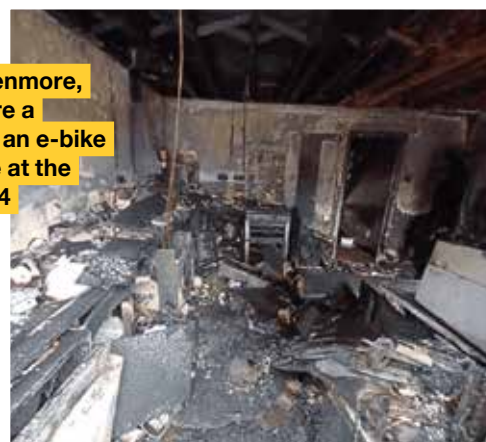
✉ ANTHEA.WATKINS@HARROW.GOV.UK

AND IF IT IS PRINTED, WE'LL SEND YOU A £10 SHOPPING VOUCHER.

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.

A home in Kenmore, Harrow where a battery from an e-bike caused a fire at the end May 2024



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.
- 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 temperature.



Follow the instructions

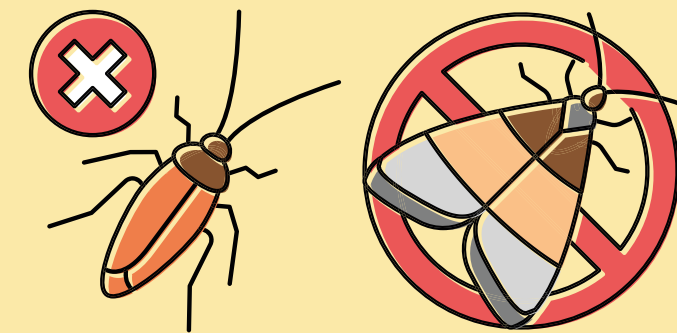
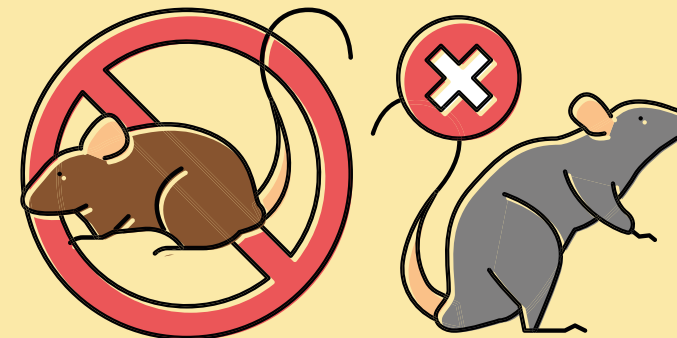
- 1 Always follow manufacturers' instructions when charging
- 2 Never leave it charging unattended or charge it while you are asleep
- 3 You should always make sure you unplug your charger once it's finished charging
- 4 Always use the correct charger for your batteries and buy any replacements from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



RIDDANCE PROGRAMME

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.

Tenancy News

Getting rid of fat, oil and grease

Putting fat or grease down the sink leads to blockage



Cooking 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

At 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 have 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 HANDLING CODE?

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



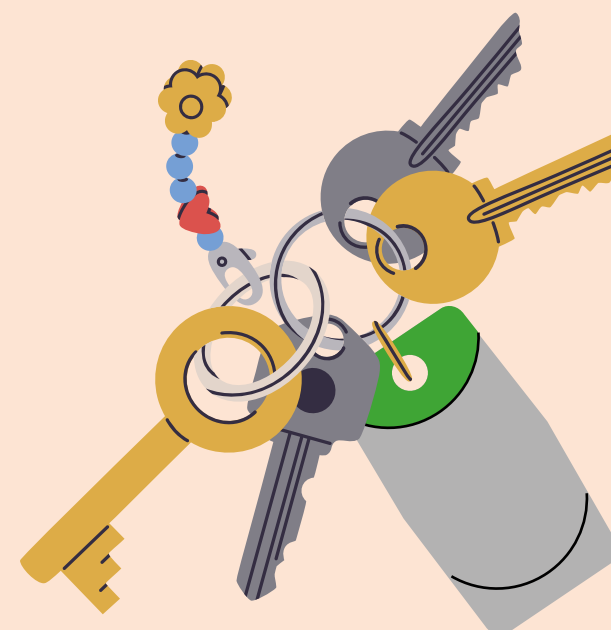
promptly, and to use the learning from complaints to drive service improvements.

It will also help to create a positive complaint handling culture and improve customer journey.

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.

Door fobs renewal programme



We 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 process
- 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
☎ 020 8901 2630

WEEK OF ACTION

From 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

Funmi and Natasha on their way to the next address



Karen and Tecklar asking Shpresa for her feedback about Housing Services



Our first morning of the Week in Action where staff and Housemark's Zack Hodge get ready for action (we used Photobook for the online survey)



Sharon talking to David McNulty and Luke during the 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."

New Domestic Abuse Service Provider

Following 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

☎ 020 8129 5438

✉ harrowdass@cranstoun.org.uk

🌐 cranstoun.org/help-and-advice/domestic-abuse/harrow-dass/

CRANSTOUN
Empowering People, Empowering Change

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

Puzzles

Page

Word Search

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

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

Win
£30

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



Harrow 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)

✉ hart.hart@harrow.gov.uk