

Talkback

Newsletter of Keniston Housing Association

Autumn 2019

A warm Keniston welcome to our Bickley residents

We recently acquired three housing schemes at a site in Bickley: Whites Meadows, Southwood Close and Robert Whyte House.

Among our new residents is Mrs Stratton-Collins, who first came to Southwood Close in 1980.

Originally from Scotland, Mrs Stratton-Collins has had a varied and adventurous life, living and working in London, Madrid and South Africa. She first left Scotland to start a career with the Ministry of Aviation and eventually settled abroad with her South African husband.

Return to the UK

Mrs Stratton-Collins came back to the UK, when her young child needed urgent specialist help from Great Ormond Street Hospital.

Having moved back in with her parents, she found a job with the British Red Cross and they recommended applying for housing through the Women's Royal Voluntary Service. As a result, she came to live in Bickley with her son – and she has never left since.

"I did think at the time that Bickley was quite far out, as I didn't really know where it was. I then realised it was actually quite close to my

parents in Croydon and it was ideal. Nowadays, looking out from my windows makes me realise how lucky we are here to live in such lovely surroundings. I really love my flat."

The Bickley site was gifted to the British Red Cross to be used as a military hospital during the war to treat Belgian soldiers. Mrs Stratton-Collins has discovered that there was once a lake where Southwood Close is today, while the surrounding area was farmland.

Moving in when she did, Mrs Stratton-Collins first got to know Bickley in the 1980s.

"Life then was certainly different. Fewer cars, no computers, very few televisions and Bickley felt like a little village.

"During the summer, I remember bags of apples would be left by your door from the orchard at Whites Meadow. I assumed the resident caretaker or the gardener was responsible for such kindness, which was truly appreciated. There were many delicious apple pies made in those days!"



Love of antiques

After a busy work and home life, Mrs Stratton-Collins opted to become an antiques dealer instead of simply retiring. "I always had an interest in antiques and my brother was a collector too. I loved silver and glass, but my favourite piece was an antique hand mirror that I purchased at an auction where they were selling off heirlooms belonging to the Tate & Lyle family in Scotland. For a time, my friend and I shared a unit in 'The Beehive' shop in Petts Wood, until we moved into Gray's Antiques in Bond Street. I still keep an interest and go to the occasional antique fair just for fun."

These days, this well-travelled lady makes good use of her freedom pass – often travelling to London for Civil Service reunions or to meet friends for lunch.



Fun day at Lyham Road

We held a fun day for the residents at our scheme in Brixton.

There was food, drink and plenty of bouncing and bubbles. A big thank you to Bounce is the Word for donating the castle for the event.



Tenants consulted on domestic abuse

Members of our Resident Panel took part in a recent Government consultation about how best to support victims of domestic abuse and their children.

The Government is planning to introduce a legal duty on local authorities to provide support for victims. It also wants to define what counts as support

or accommodation-based services for victims.

Panel feedback

Our panel thought councils could make more of a difference by re-housing victims in areas where they would get more support.

We submitted their feedback through the National Housing Federation.

If you are a victim of domestic abuse, you can get confidential advice and information if you contact your Housing Officer.



Taking action

Sadly, we had to evict two households in the last quarter – for rent arrears and anti-social behaviour.

High rent arrears and anti-social behaviour are major problems for social landlords. Your rent is our only source of income, while anti-social behaviour can cause extreme distress to neighbours and wider communities.

Nevertheless, we are reluctant to evict residents and only do so in serious cases. We aim instead to identify people who might be at risk of eviction, so that we can support them early on.

We know how annoying nuisance behaviour can be and that we don't always meet your expectations in resolving it. Some situations won't meet the threshold for legal action and remain difficult to resolve. To go to court, we also need support from our complainants and their accurate accounts of the incidents they witness.

Universal Credit update

If you claim Universal Credit, you must report the recent change in your rent as soon as possible, using your online journal.

It is now your responsibility to tell the Department of Work & Pensions. It is no longer automatic.

If you have problems, contact your Rent Income Officer.

Estate improvements

£30,000 budget for fence replacement

As part of our ongoing stock reinvestment programme, we are replacing boundary fencing at Darrick Wood.

Last year, in the survey on the future of Darrick Wood, you told us you care about the condition of the fencing.

As a result, we doubled our reinvestment budget for the current financial year, so that we can complete these works more quickly.

We have now replaced fencing at 15 properties.

Merrow Street play area

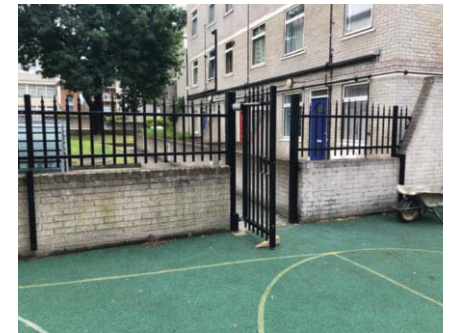
At Merrow Street, we are working with residents to redesign and improve the play area.

We are completing the project in phases, using the Better Homes, Better Neighbourhoods fund.

In the first phase, we installed secure gating around the play area (pictured). We are now working with residents on phase two.

We will be:

- creating a small allotment area with planters
- resurfacing what remains of the play area, and



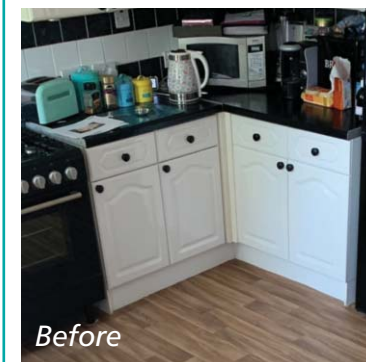
- painting the main wall around the area.

A group of young people tell us they are keen to use their artistic skills to create a stunning mural. If you would like to help, please call the office to let Lynn Russ or Sharon Hobbs know.

Residents have been giving us some excellent feedback on their new kitchens.

Silver Court

"Overall, I am happy with the work carried out in my kitchen by the contractors. They were very friendly, helpful and kept me up to date with the work done on a daily basis. Everything was done as planned. The kitchen looks amazing."



Before

We love our new kitchens!

"Contractors were very friendly and helpful. Jane from Keniston has been more than helpful explaining and sorting out my electrical problem and getting my bathroom sorted out with damp, as she said she would. What a lovely person. I have had no problems with the work or workmen who attended the property, as they have always been polite. Thank you, Jane. You're a star."

Perryfield House

"The contractors are excellent. Nothing is too much trouble. They have made a beautiful job. I am very pleased. It looks stunning."

"All the works were carried out with minimum disruption and everywhere clear and tidy at the end of each working day. Very professional and a great, friendly, two-man team! Thank you."



After

Darrick Wood

"Absolutely thrilled to bits. Workmanship amazing. Barry and Luke were so lovely – very professional, polite and make a great team. I can't praise them enough. They are an asset to Keniston." (Kitchen pictured left)

Getting online

In partnership with Barry and Justine from Bromley Experts by Experience, we have been hosting drop-in sessions for residents to get advice and support about getting online.

A resident told us: "I have thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon and really learned a lot. I can't wait to come back next week."



Annual Report

Our 2018-19 Annual Report has now been published. You should have received your copy and it is also available to view on our website.

The annual report also includes a more detailed summary of the 2018 resident satisfaction survey results.



Meet Soraya

Hello everyone, I am Soraya and I joined Keniston in April, as the new Property & Compliance Officer.

My job has two parts: dealing with everyday repairs and making sure we are fully compliant with the servicing we have to do to keep residents safe and Keniston within the law. For servicing, we rely on your support to give us access to your homes.

Part of my role also involves regular review meetings with our contractors, to make sure that performance levels are maintained and that we always get best value and best practice.



Reporting non-urgent jobs

- Call customer services on **01689 889 700** during office hours (9am to 5pm), to have your repair logged.
- Text **07376 617 616** and type REPAIR, together with the details of the fault.
- Report online via **MyTenancy**.

Bromley Well wellbeing talks

Dean and colleagues from Bromley Well have been visiting the Darrick Wood sheltered scheme to provide regular talks on health, wellbeing and independence.

Bromley Well help people to stay emotionally and physically well.



Our residents really appreciate these talks, which have covered topics from dealing with finances to keeping good posture.

Prepare for your annual gas safety inspection

- Add credit to your gas and electricity meters.
- Call Clairgow Heating on **0800 074 8055** if you can't meet their appointment – or risk being charged for the missed call out.
- Move items away from the front of the boiler.
- Make sure your meter cupboard isn't locked.



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