

Talkback

Newsletter of Keniston Housing Association

Winter 2019

Another busy summer

Dozens of Keniston residents took part in activities around our schemes and estates this summer – enjoying fun days, improving their health and wellbeing, learning new skills and raising money for charity.

Darrick Wood fun day

The Darrick Wood Community group held another successful fun day for Keniston residents and families. Thanks to the group for their hard work.



Sweet memories café

Robert Whyte House residents meet monthly for afternoon tea, with a guest speaker.

A recent talk on postural stability was given by Dean from Bromley Well.



Fundraising for Macmillan

Perryfield House residents and staff, held a coffee morning for the Macmillan cancer charity – raising an impressive £336.

The event was organised by the 'Knit and natter' craft group, who meet up on Mondays.

Keniston office staff also held their own Macmillan coffee morning, raising £130.



Healthy eating course

Keniston teamed up with the Bromley Adult Education service to run a six-week healthy eating course for residents.



Massage course

Residents signed up for a five-week course in basic massage techniques.



First aid course

Residents took part in a one-day course provided by the St John's Ambulance service, learning basic first aid skills.



Just lounging at Tarling Close



When residents at Tarling Close asked us to spruce up their lounge, we gave it a thorough makeover.

The carpet and chairs had become rather shabby, after years of service, so it was time for an upgrade. We have now laid a new carpet and the chairs have been reupholstered.

We gave residents colour swatches to choose their preferred colours and design.

They tell us they are very pleased with the results.

"It's very nice and looks really clean."

"Made such a big difference compared to what it was like before."

"We like the chairs very much."



Christmas opening hours

Our office will close on Tuesday 24 December at 5pm and reopen at 9am on Monday 30 December. We will also be closed on New Year's Day.

Our contractors will only carry out emergency repairs when we are closed. To report an emergency, please phone 01689 889700 and follow the recorded message.

Successful action on anti-social behaviour

We need plenty of evidence before we can take someone to court for anti-social behaviour. In practice, we usually need your help.

This summer, we teamed up with residents in Crawley and Southwark to sort out problems at their estates.

The residents kept incident diaries. They also gave strong witness statements in court, explaining how the nuisance was affecting them.

As a result, we successfully gained injunctions against two individuals.

We would like to thank the residents who helped us – your efforts really made a difference for your communities.

Universal Credit update

If you are on a low income, you normally get help towards your rent.

If you are of working age and you currently get Housing Benefit, you will be moved to Universal Credit by 2023.

If your circumstances change or you make a first claim, you will be put onto Universal Credit. Make sure you claim as early as possible.

Under Universal Credit you get one payment into your bank account and it is up to you to pay your rent.

Your benefit is paid in arrears, with a six-week wait before payments start. You may be able to get an advance on your first payment, but you will need to prove you can pay it back within 12 months.

Universal Credit is mainly an online service. But if you can't access a computer, you can call the Universal Credit helpline on 0800 328 5644 instead. Your call will be free. You can also get one-to-one support at your Jobcentre.

Keep your details up to date

It's important for us to have up-to-date contact details for all our residents.



Please let us know if you change your mobile phone number or email address.

With these details on our system, we can send you important texts – especially about repairs.

Customer services – a year on

It's been nearly a year since we set up our new Customer Services Team, to act as the first point of contact for your enquiries. We're pleased with your positive feedback.



I have used the new service and it was beautifully done. I had two problems to report and both were dealt with swiftly. I got all my repairs' texts and thought the service was excellent.

R. is lovely and was very helpful.

Keniston is number 1. Your help was really efficient.

Thank you for your time and informative help this afternoon.

That's nice, we get a name. It's nice to know who we are talking to.

If you'd like to comment on the service, get in touch, we'd love to hear from you.

Abortive calls & recharges

In 2018-19, we recharged residents £12,796 for misusing our service.

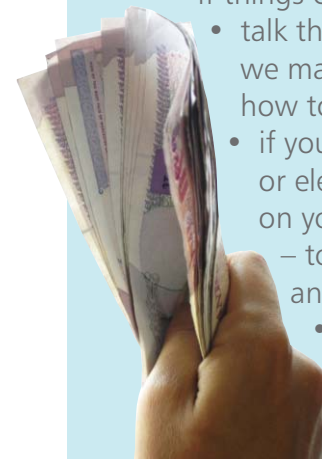
We make a recharge, for example, when:

- we pay for a repair that is your responsibility, or
- we pass on the cost of a missed appointment.

A missed appointment costs us up to £50 plus VAT. It's particularly expensive if you misuse the out-of-hours service. Last year, the abortive calls and recharges cost could have bought two new kitchens, four new boilers or 14 new garden fences.

There are many other reasons why you may incur a charge, so to avoid being recharged, you should:

- only make appointments you can keep – call us if things change, so we can cancel a visit
 - talk through your repair with us first – we may be able to offer advice on how to sort it out yourself
 - if you have problems with your gas or electricity, check you have credit on your meter and call your provider – to rule out problems we can't fix, and
 - never dump rubbish or large items at your estate – we will charge for getting it collected.



Our service standards

- We will return or acknowledge calls, texts and emails as soon as possible but always within two working days.
- We will reply to or acknowledge letters within 10 working days.
- We set target times for responding to repairs. (But they may slip – for example, if a contractor needs to order parts.) We aim to respond to:
 - **Emergencies** within 24 hours – such as an immediate risk to health and safety, or where a defect may damage the property
 - **Urgent** within three days – such as a leak that can be contained, a WC that won't flush properly, or partial loss of heating
 - **Non-urgent** within 14 days – such as faulty locks where security is not compromised
 - **Routine** within 28 days – such as a faulty kitchen drawer, damaged fencing, or easing and adjusting a front entrance door.

Tips from the Customer Services Team

- Tell the council if your bin isn't collected.
- Call the police, if there's an incident.
- Help cut our costs by not requiring a receipt when you pay your rent by card at the office (or accepting an email instead). The payment will show on your bank statement as 'Allpay'. We will always give you a receipt for cash.

Award for staff who go the extra mile

Barry Spragg (Head Gardener at Darrick Wood) and Jane Westpfel (Resident Liaison Officer) won our most recent staff awards – after being put forward by their Keniston colleagues.

What staff said: “Barry is always helpful and goes out of his way to assist when asked. He takes a lot of pride in his work and is consistently helpful and friendly and nice.”



What staff said: “Jane consistently delivers a high level of performance. She is a good team worker, e.g. I see her answer the overspill of calls on many occasions. I’ve heard many compliments from residents about Jane and I would second a resident’s comment in that she is ‘the face of Keniston’.”



Staff leavers and starters

We recently said farewell to **Brendan Brilley**, who was formerly Caretaker at Nethewode Court. Brendan gave Keniston 10 years of excellent service.

We also said goodbye to **Maria Stockwell**, who was our cleaner at the Darrick Wood community centre.

We wish them both all the best for the future.

We offer a warm welcome to **Paul Alderson**, **Tara Couldridge** and **Romy Kirk**. They have all taken up temporary positions with Keniston over recent months. Paul is a Rent Income Officer for our new Bickley Scheme, Tara is a Property Services Administrator and Romy is the Sheltered Scheme Manager for our schemes in Crawley.

A new board chair for Keniston

In November 2019, we warmly welcomed Emma Keegan to the role of Chair of the Board, after saying goodbye to Julian Miles, who gave us nine years of excellent service.

Emma has more than 20 years’ experience of working in the housing sector, most recently as Managing Director – Rochford, for Sanctuary Housing.

She holds postgraduate diplomas in housing, management studies, and systems thinking and practice. Emma is also a member of the Chartered Institute of Housing.

Emma says “I am delighted to have been appointed as Chair and am looking forward to working with residents, staff



and board colleagues to further Keniston’s vision of delivering better homes, better services and better neighbourhoods.”



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