

# Talkback

Newsletter of Keniston Housing Association

Spring 2022

## Resident survey

# What you told us

Nearly nine out of 10 residents (88%) are satisfied with our overall services.

Almost 350 residents – 40% of you – completed the survey. You scored us a bit lower than last time, so we are following this up.

However, we are pleased that 90% of residents are satisfied with how we managed through the pandemic – with most people giving us '10 out of 10' top marks.

*Overall, I do believe Keniston is one of the top housing providers we have in this area. I would never move.*

*Keniston has been great since moving here. I feel it's a safe place to live, which allows me peace of mind to raise my daughter. I know I can always call Keniston, and a friendly, non-judgemental person will be on the other end of the phone. Keniston, you've been great. Thank you for having me.*

*Everyone I have met and spoken to has been extremely helpful and friendly. It makes a huge difference.*

*Very secure and well-maintained housing, with excellent staff and great customer service.*

### How you rated us



You said you wanted changes in your neighbourhood, including better handling of anti-social behaviour. You also suggested:

- more events and meetings – (these will restart shortly)
- better communication
- improving grounds maintenance and cleaning, and
- improving rubbish disposal.



### "I'm over the moon!"

Mr Dickson from Perryfield House was one of three lucky residents who won shopping vouchers in our survey prize draw.

## Estate services satisfaction surveys

Every two years, we also send out surveys to find out how satisfied you are with estate services such as cleaning, gardening and lighting. Your feedback is very important to us.

From 2022, we will enter all participants into a prize draw for each survey – you could win a £10 shopping voucher.

If you have an email address registered with us, we will use it to contact you. Otherwise, we will send you a paper copy. Please keep your details with us up to date.

# Cost of living crisis

The Bank of England has warned everyone to prepare for a cost-of-living crisis.

This will be a worrying time. But please be assured that we will be here to help when you need us.

Here's what's happening:

- following a 54% rise in the energy price cap, your energy bills have risen by more than half from April (unless you are still on a fixed-rate deal)
- energy bills will rise again, by at least another 20%, from October
- your Council Tax may rise
- if you are working, your National Insurance contributions will rise by 1.25%
- fuel costs at the pumps have been increasing, and
- food and grocery prices are also rising.

## Should I switch?

High energy prices are similar across the whole energy sector. This means you are unlikely to get a better price by switching supplier.

Be aware that most of the new fixed-price deals being offered by energy providers are now **much higher** than variable rates. This is because variable rates are capped by the Government.



## Government help

The Government has stepped in with two measures to help reduce the effect of high energy bills.

### 1. Energy bills rebate

In October, you will get £200 off (or a credit note) against your household electricity bill. If you're on prepay, you will get this through your smart meter, or be given a voucher or cheque.

However, from April 2023, every electricity bill will include a new £40 annual charge. This will be added for five years.

### 2. Council tax rebate

If your council tax is in bands A to D, you will get a £150 rebate off your council tax in April 2022. This is designed to help you pay for higher energy.

You won't get the discount if your household doesn't have to pay council tax. But, if that applies to

you and your income is low, you may be able to make a claim from your council instead.

## Help from suppliers

If you're in debt to your energy supplier, you might be eligible for a grant to help pay it off. Ask your supplier for more details.

If you can't get help from your own supplier, check if you can get a grant from the British Gas Energy Trust. Find out more at: [britishgasenergytrust.org.uk/grants-available](https://britishgasenergytrust.org.uk/grants-available)



## Rent increase

From August (later for Bickley residents), your rent will rise by 4.1%. Our Board has taken this difficult decision after carefully considering the options and the impact on residents.

We took the following into account.

- Keniston needs sufficient income to maintain services to a good standard, at a time when the cost of repairs and maintenance is rapidly rising. We always work hard to get the best value for money, but we don't want to cut costs by using poorer-quality materials or cheaper contractors.
- This is a significant increase, but it is less than the current rate of inflation of 6.2%.
- Our finances are recovering from a four-year period between 2016 and 2020 when rents were reduced. After the increase, the rent you pay will be just over 4% higher than seven years ago.
- We aim to support all those who are finding it difficult to make their rent payments.

We will write to you nearer the time with more details about your rent and service charges. If you are struggling and need to speak with us, please contact your Rent Income Officer.



## New awards for staff



We're introducing new staff awards for excellent customer service – to be voted for by residents.

The Resident Panel told us:

- *I think this is a really good idea. We have the same thing where I work – awards recognising staff input and achievements. It's nice to receive an accolade, especially when we often think that our jobs are thankless!*
- *Sounds like a good idea, but I don't think I have found a baddie yet!*
- *I think it is a good idea, and a certificate and voucher would be nice.*

To nominate a staff member, take note of the following tips.

1. The staff member must have shown great customer service – on one occasion or consistently.

2. You can suggest only one staff member and you must give reasons (we can't consider your nomination otherwise). We will judge staff on merit, not the number of nominations received.

The deadline for nominations is Thursday 30 June 2022. The shortlist will be drawn up by the Management Team and the Resident Panel.

We will present a certificate and prize voucher to the winner and announce the results in the summer edition of *Talkback*.

Please send nominations to Lynn Russ by phone to 01689 889700, by email to [lynnruss@kenistonha.co.uk](mailto:lynnruss@kenistonha.co.uk), or by writing to the office.

## New service standards – coming soon

We have merged all our service standard promises into one easy-to-read document, which will be sent out to residents shortly.

Our staff have worked with Resident Panel members to develop our promise to you in line with Keniston's core values.

The new service standard document will be emailed to any of you who have given us an email address. We will send a paper copy to everyone else.

Please make sure your contact details are up to date and that you check your email junk folder so you don't miss our mailings.

## Development update

**Darrick Wood** On 1 March, the planning application for 26 new rented homes at Darrick Wood, together with changes to landscaping, went live on the Bromley Council website. Residents were invited to comment as part of the formal consultation. This has now closed, and we await the results.

**Bickley** We are working with architects BPTW on plans for the redevelopment of new housing on the site of Robert Whyte House. We are aiming to replace the existing building with 39 new homes in two blocks. These will be a mix of general needs and housing for older people, all to be let at social rent to local people.



# Successful transfer for Fred

## Fred

Resident Fred is settling in nicely, after moving to Darrick Wood.

Having spent over 38 years living in North London at Hornsey Road, Fred decided it was time for a change. He had been an inner-city dweller for most of his life and, as he got older, wanted somewhere quieter, without all the hustle and bustle that London has to offer. So, he enquired with his Housing Officer, Sharon, about the possibility of a transfer.

“Sharon was brilliant – from sending me the transfer form to helping with any questions I had. I went online and looked at Keniston’s other schemes, even checking Google Earth and Street View to see what there was in the local area of each one.”

After some research, Fred opted for Darrick Wood’s sheltered



scheme – taking a longer-term view of what his needs may be in the future. He liked the fact that there was no through traffic on the estate and that it was surrounded by the Darrick and Newstead Woods. Fred is a fan of the great outdoors, having been a gardener and landscaper during his working career.

“The whole process of applying for a transfer was simple and I knew I could get help from my Housing Officer if I needed it. I have been here six months and love the peace and quiet. I’m happy being here and like the people I have met so far. As a

keen walker, I’m also looking forward to exploring the local area and the woods. I may even volunteer for the local friends group.”

Although Fred has left some family behind in London, he does have a brother and some cousins not too far away from Darrick Wood, in the nearby area.

Fred looks forward to a fresh start with a new outlook on life. He has always wanted to fly a kite and he now has one at the ready to take over to the woods on his next walk.

## Plant a tree for the Jubilee

**We’re launching an invitation to residents to bid for a tree at their scheme, as part of the Queen’s Green Canopy project.**

The Queen’s Green Canopy is a unique, UK-wide tree-planting initiative created to mark Her Majesty’s Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

Individuals, community groups, schools, businesses and councils that take part

will be creating a network of trees to help support the environment and fight the climate crisis.

Any tree planted will be marked with a commemorative plaque.

To get a tree planted where you live, send your bid to [enquiries@keniston.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@keniston.co.uk) or call us on 01689 889700. We will announce the results in the summer *Talkback* newsletter.



## Rubbish and recycling

### Getting rid of large items

Please don't dump bulky rubbish at your scheme.



When you have household items to get rid of, you can:

- take them to your nearest recycling centre
- arrange for a council collection – go to their website to see how much they charge
- use AO.Com's free Collect & Recycle Service. They collect items such as old cookers, fridges, freezers, TVs and washing machines, for recycling on a day that suits you (and you don't need to buy anything from them). For more details go to: [ao.com/product/sun-ao-recycling-service-white-60807-401.aspx](http://ao.com/product/sun-ao-recycling-service-white-60807-401.aspx)
- contact charities such as the British Heart Foundation or Elleanor, for a collection, if you have large items of furniture in good condition.

If you are arranging for a collection and will be leaving items outside your home, please tell your Housing Officer, so that we don't think items have been fly-tipped.

## Better use of recycling bins

When you are recycling everyday waste such as cardboard, please flatten or break up boxes to maximise space for all residents to be able to use the bins. Thank you.

## Feature in our new photos

We're arranging for a photographer to take photos of our estates and residents for use on our website and in our publications. Would you like to be included?



Over the next few months, we are planning photo shoots at Nethewode Court, Hornsey Road, Tollington Park and Merrow Street.

Our photographer will visit on a

weekday between 10am and 4pm. If you would be happy to have your photo taken, please contact Lynn Russ on 01689 889700, or email [lynnruss@kenistonha.co.uk](mailto:lynnruss@kenistonha.co.uk)

## Homes for Ukraine

The Government's 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme allows UK residents to host Ukrainian refugees – whether individuals or families. We know that some Keniston residents would like to take part, if they can, and we will assist to make this possible.



Anyone in the UK with spare space can offer to help. This applies whatever your nationality and immigration status – providing you have at least six months' leave to remain in the UK.

### Please note that:

- You have to be able to offer accommodation for at least six months, in a home that is fit for people to live in and suitable for the number of people to be housed.



- You will be given a thank-you payment of £350 a month. This will not affect any benefits you receive.
- You will not have to provide food or pay your guests' living expenses. They will be able to apply for some benefits and can look for work.
- You should let us know if you intend to host someone through the scheme, so we can give you permission, make sure the accommodation is suitable, and connect people up with the right support.

To ask if your home is suitable, email [enquiries@kenistonha.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@kenistonha.co.uk), or phone 01689 889700.

Find out more about the Homes for Ukraine scheme at: [homesforukraine.campaign.gov.uk](http://homesforukraine.campaign.gov.uk)



## Getting to know our staff

# Meet Danny – our caretaker in Islington

### How long have you been with Keniston?

Nearly six years now.

### What do you like about being a Caretaker?

I love being outdoors and could never work in an office. I get to manage my own schedule and every day is different.

### What's a typical day like?

I switch my time between Silver Court, Byers Court, Hornsey Road, Tollington Park and Burnhill House. I am very busy, but I like that as it never gets boring.

As well as the general cleaning and tidying of the estates, I check for any communal repairs or lights

that need fixing. I check all the bins and the chutes to make sure nothing is blocked and everything is clean. I check the emergency lighting and clean the communal windows. I polish the lifts so you can see your face in them! And whatever else that crops up that needs doing throughout the week.

There's always something to do. It is really satisfying seeing the end results of all the work done.

### Are there any downsides to your job?

Dumping of bulky rubbish is a regular issue. There are often cupboards, wardrobes and mattresses left by the bins. Dealing with this puts me behind with my other tasks and dumping in the bin area causes problems for the refuse workers. Sometimes they won't take the rubbish at all, due to access problems. It all has a knock-on effect.

### Anything interesting happen?

I came in one day and found several, large, items dumped in front of the entrance to Silver Court.

I checked the CCTV and discovered who the culprit was and was able to report it to the council. If anything happens



when I am not on site, it's good that I can always check the cameras.

### How do you get on with your residents?

All my residents are lovely, but Silver Court in particular is a really friendly place. Everyone is so sociable. Residents all talk to each other and there's great community spirit.

I have been a caretaker for the council previously and never saw the same friendliness and loyalty that residents show here to each other.

### What do you like doing in your spare time?

I love watching the footie. I'm a Gooner, which is an Arsenal supporter. Up the gunners!



## Starters and leavers

**We recently said farewell to Steve Swaden after 24 years as a Caretaker.**

Sharon Kirkpatrick also leaves us after 27 years as our office cleaner. They will both be missed and we wish them well for the future.



**Keniston Housing Association**

13 Artington Close • Farnborough • Kent • BR6 7UL

Phone 01689 889 700 • Fax 01689 889 701 • [www.kenistonha.co.uk](http://www.kenistonha.co.uk)

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