

Winter tips and competition

Winter, the cost-of-living crisis and rising energy costs are significantly changing the way we use our homes.

Condensation and mould

At this time of the year, with this year's cost pressures, you may:

- be less likely to keep your home consistently heated
- be more likely to dry clothes indoors, instead of outside or in a tumble dryer
- be keeping windows closed to keep in the heat, and
- be taking showers instead of baths.

Unfortunately, all of these changes can raise the moisture and condensation in your home, and lead to mould growth.

Tip 1: Sort out mould straight away

If you start to find mould, it's important to clean it off quickly with an anti-mould cleaning product. In serious cases, if you leave black mould growing, it can be bad for your health.

If you're finding it difficult to manage the mould in your home, don't hesitate. Call us for further advice.

Tip 2: Cut down on condensation

Kitchens create a lot of moisture. So, when cooking, cover pans to keep moisture in and save fuel. Use your extractor hood or fan, if you have one. Keep the door closed and a window open.

Bathrooms create moisture too. Open windows and use your extractor fan. Keep the door closed when bathing or showering. If you can't dry your washing outdoors, hang things up in the bathroom and open a window.

Bathroom and kitchen extractor fans don't cost much to run. At the current average of 34p per kWh, using a standard fan for two hours a day would cost you around 41p a week.

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Win a hooded blanket

We have two, cosy, hooded blankets* to award as prizes for the best winter tips.

Send us tips on any of the following.

- Saving money
- Saving energy
- Keeping warm
- Keeping condensation away

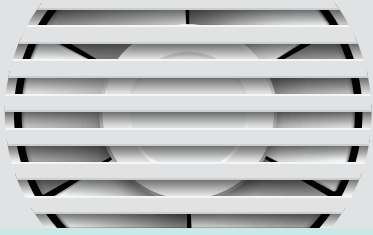
We will publish your tips on our social media and website.

The closing date for entries is 4 January 2023. Please phone, text or WhatsApp your tips to 01689 889700 / 07713 388010, or email lynnruss@kenistonha.co.uk

**Image is for illustration purposes only.*

Condensation and mould

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Tip 3: Keep rooms well aired

Move furniture away from external walls. Leave a 5cm gap, so that air can really circulate – otherwise, mould can get started.

Wardrobes and cupboards should not be over-full. Warm, full cupboards can breed mould.

Ventilate rooms by opening windows regularly – especially in rooms you use often. Breathing, fish tanks, pets and house plants all create moisture in the air. A dehumidifier can help pull moisture from the air.

Tip 4: Keep your home reasonably warm

Homes that get too cold and have high humidity are more likely to develop mould. During cold months, aim for constant warmth in your home, using your thermostat and boiler timer, to reduce humidity levels. Report any boiler problems to Property Services and make sure you give us access for your annual gas safety checks.

If you are struggling with condensation, please do speak to us.



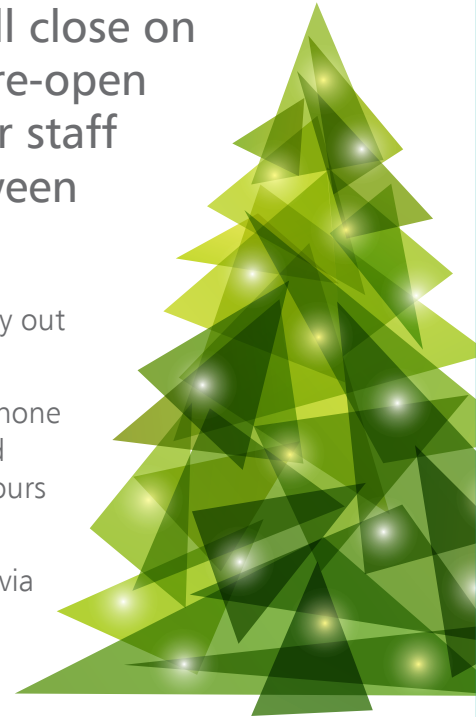
Christmas opening hours

Our office phone lines will close on Friday 23 December and re-open on Tuesday 3 January. Our staff will not be available between these dates.

Our contractors will only be able to carry out emergency repairs at this time.

To report an emergency repair, please phone 01689 889700 as normal. Our recorded message will direct you to our out-of-hours service for emergencies.

Please do not report emergency repairs via text or our website over the Christmas period, as we will not be checking for messages until after the holidays.



Staff awards for excellence

Thank you to everyone who nominated staff members for an award.

In the end, we decided they all deserved to benefit from a voucher and certificate.

Here's what you told us

Jonathan Mavunga – Caretaker

"We would both like to nominate Jonathan, our caretaker, for a staff award, which is well deserved. He always has a pleasant smile and is a true gentleman, and we are truly blessed to have him around. Many thanks."

Jan Lewis – Rent Income Officer

"I am nominating Jan Lewis, for all the help she has given me. If not for Jan, I would be homeless, and she helps me with my mental health. So, thanks to Jan, I am much happier."



Lorraine Bull – Cleaner

"Lorraine is so lovely. She does extra things that she doesn't need to. Heard other people say she is a gem, she's so good and very sweet."

Andrea Spittle – Housing Officer

"Hi, I would like to nominate for the staff awards, Andrea Spittle, my Housing Officer. In the last nearly two years, she's gone above and beyond, helping with an awful situation, and still trying for us now."

Pictured: Jonathan Mavunga and Andrea Spittle receiving their award from Jonathan Card CEO.

Making a complaint

We aim to provide an excellent service to tenants, leaseholders and other people who come into contact with us. We take pride that we receive few complaints. However we aren't complacent. We encourage residents to tell us when they aren't satisfied with the services we provide.

We recognise that when things go wrong, we need to respond quickly and then take action to put things right. We aim to learn from our mistakes by reviewing the complaints we receive, so that we can do things better in future.

Our complaints process is simple

You can make a complaint in an email, phone call, letter, face to face, through our website or social media.

We will let you know how we plan to handle your complaint and keep you informed of progress.

We will make reasonable changes to our complaints process where necessary, to make sure we don't treat people with specific needs unfairly.

The Housing Ombudsman Service

can help you too. Go to www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint; email info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk; phone: 0300 111 3000, or write to: Housing Ombudsman, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ.



Darrick Wood development

We are still committed to building 26 much-needed new homes at Darrick Wood.

However, our application for planning consent is still being considered by Bromley Council, so the process has been delayed.

At this point we have no date for when we can expect to hear the outcome.

We will keep our residents informed of progress when we know more.



Thinking of downsizing?

One of our residents recently moved from a four bedroom property to a home with three bedrooms.

Our resident needed to move because their eldest child had moved on. This meant they had a 'spare room' and would lose some of their Universal Credit through the bedroom tax.

Our resident also felt that another family could make better use of a four bedroom house – just as they had, when they were first in need of it.

"I know how hard it is to find a property for a large family, so it felt right to free up my home for another family. I didn't feel it was

right for me to keep hold of the larger property when someone else needed it.

"I am really pleased with the move and the new house is beautiful. The process has been straightforward and I was kept up to date all throughout. Now that I will be in a better financial position, I would like to come off Universal Credit and do more hours at work.

"I am working towards becoming more independent and being able to manage better. I can finally plan for the future."

If you would like to discuss moving to a smaller property, please contact your Housing Officer to find out more.



Profile: Board member Samantha Herelle



Samantha Herelle has more than 20 years' experience in the housing sector and has previously been a Board member for Optivo Housing Association. We caught up with Samantha recently to find out more about her.

What brought you to Keniston?

"Having served my maximum term for the board at Optivo, I took a short break from the commitment involved in being a board member. I was then approached by a recruiter about the Keniston Board vacancy. Keniston is local to me and it felt like a really good fit. I joined in May this year and have already attended several meetings and an away day.

"It has been a good experience. I have been impressed with the quality of Keniston's housing stock, the low level of complaints and the high level of resident satisfaction. I have witnessed a lot of effort by the directors to ensure good governance is demonstrated. Finances are robust and there is scope for new development, all while supporting residents during these difficult times."

How did you end up in housing?

"It was a happy accident. I studied history at university, focusing on black and colonial history. When I graduated, I didn't really know in which direction I was going and I needed a job. I saw an advert for Customer Service Advisors at Circle 33 Housing and started there as a temp. After being made permanent, I eventually fell into promotional opportunities along the way and the rest is history."

Despite being successful, Samantha sometimes doubted her abilities and worked hard over the years to improve on that. "You must tell yourself you can do it. Having good mentors and people around you that you trust all helps. Support from others is always important. I have also supported others along their journey. When you deliver results, get nominated for an award and are given recognition for your work, it's a great morale boost. You take on a new perspective about your own abilities."

Samantha was nominated for a Women in Housing Professional of the Year award by her Chief Executive, when she worked for Mount Green Housing Association.

"When I first arrived at Mount Green, I was involved in



an important transition for the company. I was the point of contact with the regulator during a regulatory inspection. It was really important to ensure residents could access services easily and I was involved in a restructuring process to enable this to happen effectively – improving overall performance and resident satisfaction. I was nominated for my work, and it was a big surprise when I won the award."

Samantha was also one of the first to take part in the 'Leadership 2025' programme for BME housing professionals. Leadership 2025 is a charity working across the sector, together with key stakeholders, to make the housing sector leadership more diverse.

What are your interests outside of work?

"I like going to art galleries and my favourite artist is Lubaina Himid CBE. She was one of the first artists involved in the UK's Black Art movement in the 1980s and continues to create activist art which is shown in galleries in Britain, as well as worldwide. I also enjoy travelling when I have the time and would love to go back to St Lucia in the Caribbean. Other than that, I spend time with my daughter and potter about in the garden. I like to think I am a little green-fingered."

Beware of phishing

Cyber security is about protecting your identity, your devices and your data from criminal attacks. Phishing is at the heart of many of today's attacks.

What is phishing?

Phishing is when a cyber criminal contacts you by email, phone or text message, pretending to be someone else.

They will claim to be from a legitimate organisation – for example, your bank, energy or mobile phone provider, the police, HMRC or some other branch of the Government.

Their aim is to get you to give them sensitive information such as your:

- banking details
- credit card details, and
- passwords.

They may ask for this information over the phone, or trick you into clicking on a link to a website where you are asked to supply details. The email or text message can often look very realistic, with the right logos and fonts – as will the website you are directed to.

Once the scammers have the information they want, they can try to access your bank account, steal your identity and your money.

Extortion phishing

Some cyber criminals use phishing to try to make you pay a ransom. They may make threats or demands in order to get your money.



The threats can be anything from saying that they will harm you or your family, to saying that they will release embarrassing details or photos unless they are paid.

Extortion scammers usually try to make their threats seem as real and credible as possible in order to scare you into paying them. But their approach often involves sending the same email to many people. They don't actually know you – but they hope enough people will think the threats could be real.

How to handle phishing

Never click on a link on a text or email. It is always safer to use your web browser to open websites.

Don't engage with the scammer.

- Hang up the phone.
- Forward any scam text message to 7726, so that your phone provider can investigate.
- Forward any scam email to report@phishing.gov.uk
- Don't pay a ransom. You will make yourself a target for more scams in future.
- Don't worry if the phish includes your password. They

probably got this from an old data breach. Check if your account has been hacked at: <https://haveibeenpwned.com>

- If you still use this password, change it immediately. Get advice on passwords at: <https://www.cyberaware.gov.uk/passwords>

What a victim should do

If you have handed over details, be ready to tell (as appropriate) your bank or service provider and your IT department (if you did this on a work computer). Change any passwords that are compromised – on all sites where you use them.

If you lose money, take these steps.

- Tell your bank immediately – you may be able to get your money back.
- Call 101 to report it to the police.
- Report it to Action Fraud (which tracks and tackles fraud, but not individual cases) – go online to: www.actionfraud.police.uk
- Get advice from Action Fraud's cybercrime specialists by phoning 0300 123 2040.

Starters and leavers



Ben Cleaver

The Property Services Team welcome Ben Cleaver as our new Maintenance Operative.

Ben is directly employed by Keniston to provide a repair and maintenance services to our homes and estates.

Before employing Ben, we took time to review the way we provide our repairs service. We decided to enhance the service by having some direct labour of our own.

We now want to expand this service further by introducing an apprenticeship role – so that we can train up a new fully qualified maintenance operative to work for us alongside Ben.

Because of our geographical locations and the huge number of jobs that need to be carried out, we will always need to combine contractors and our own direct labour. We think there are many advantages to using both, as we work to deliver excellent quality customer service.

When we caught up with Ben, he told us: "It's been a couple of months now and I love it. I enjoy meeting people. I used to do the same kind of work for one of Keniston's contractors before I was made redundant. It's great to feel appreciated for what you do and being thanked for it. Everyone is

so friendly. I am fortunate in being familiar with staff, residents and the scheme locations already, so it was easy to hit the ground running."

Talking of running, Ben loves to run in his spare time and has previously taken part in various marathons.

During a Brighton marathon, he slipped and injured his knee, but was determined to finish, so he hobbled all the way from around the 18th mile. He is certainly determined.

Ben also likes to go clay pigeon shooting with his Dad at least once a month. They are quite evenly matched so it's always interesting to see who does best on the day.



Natalie Marchant

Natalie joins us as the new Housing Officer, covering areas previously managed by Sharon Hobbs.

Natalie has extensive experience in the housing and charity sector, having worked for some large associations and homeless charities.

She said: "I wanted to work for a smaller organisation and make a real difference to people.

"I have been settling in well so far and had a thorough handover from Sharon. Everyone's been really helpful and supportive. I have been to all the schemes and met lots of residents, who have all been very welcoming and I am looking forward to getting to know everyone"

In her spare time, Natalie also enjoys running and loves animals. She is currently working on her Open University degree in Social Sciences. It has been a long-lived ambition to complete it as part of her personal development. We wish her luck with the degree.

Housing Officer contact information

We have changed the email addresses for our Housing Officers. They are now:

- Andrea Spittle and Susan Rimmer: housingofficer1@kenistonha.co.uk
- Kelsey Thorogood and Natalie Marchant: housingofficer2@kenistonha.co.uk

Farewell to Chris Little

Chris recently left us for pastures new.

We would like to thank her for her long and excellent service.

She worked here at Keniston for nearly 24 years.



Keniston Housing Association

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