

# Talkback

Newsletter of Keniston Housing Association

Summer 2023

## Tenants get together

In recent weeks, we've been enjoying holding our first summer social events since the pandemic, while sheltered housing residents have hosted some events of their own.

We normally host two socials – picking different schemes each year. This year, we laid on a joint event for Perryfield House and Sunningdale Court, with a singer, bouncy castles and lots of games. We were lucky with the sunshine and raised £55 from the raffle and tombola to use towards future sheltered activities.

We also picked Southwood Close and Whites Meadow, where we held a very rainy family fun day, huddled under the gazebos. Sadly, the rain meant no bouncy slide, but we managed a spot of karaoke and some games. We raised £39 from the raffle and tombola to use towards future activities.

Our sheltered scheme residents organise activities all year round. Tarling Close and Darrick Wood sheltered residents held parties in May to celebrate the King's Coronation.

Residents at any of our schemes are welcome to raise funds for activities and trips. For example, you might like to host a cake sale, raffle, or a bring-and-buy sale.



Above: Celebrating the Coronation at Tarling Close.

To discuss fundraising, please speak to Lynn Russ, our Engagement and Communications Officer. We can also help you to start your own residents' group, so you can plan your own events and activities.

If you would like your event featured in Talkback, please let us know.

*Pictured below: (Left) Darrick Wood sheltered held a Coronation party. (Centre) Duck fishing at the Sunningdale Court event. (Right) Our lucky raffle winner in Bickley.*



# Money saving tips

## Plan your spending

Make a monthly or weekly budget to help you plan your spending. There are free budgeting tools online. Try:

- the Citizens Advice Bureau's online budgeting tool at: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/budgeting/budgeting/work-out-your-budget](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/budgeting/budgeting/work-out-your-budget), or
- download a budget planner at: [www.stepchange.org/portals/0/assets/pdf/budget-planner.pdf](http://www.stepchange.org/portals/0/assets/pdf/budget-planner.pdf)

Pre-planning your supermarket shop is a great way to stop you adding things you don't really need. Planning menus in advance can also reduce food wastage.

## Find savings

Sign up for the free weekly email from Money Saving Expert, which is full of savings news. Go to: [www.moneysavingexpert.com](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com)

Consider switching bank accounts for the rewards – for advice go to: [www.moneysavingexpert.com/banking/multiple-bank-switching](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/banking/multiple-bank-switching)

Switch credit cards to cut the interest you pay: see [www.moneysavingexpert.com/credit-cards/balance-transfer-credit-cards](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/credit-cards/balance-transfer-credit-cards)

For cheaper broadband and/or phone bills go to: [www.moneysavingexpert.com/compare-broadband-deals](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/compare-broadband-deals) (but see the social tariffs below too).

For cheaper mobile details, check out: [www.moneysavingexpert.com/cheap-mobile-finder](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/cheap-mobile-finder) (but see the social tariffs below too).



Use market comparison sites to get the best deals on car and contents insurance, and (when prices settle) to choose your energy provider.

Use food saving apps like Too good to go ([www.toogoodtogo.com/en-gb](http://www.toogoodtogo.com/en-gb)) to pick up cheap bags of goodies from local businesses at the end of the day.

Make the most of discounts, coupons and sales – but don't be tempted to buy extra items. See: [www.moneysavingexpert.com/deals/supermarket-coupons](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/deals/supermarket-coupons) for advice on tracking these down.

## Apply for grants and social tariffs

People on Universal Credit and others on benefits and low incomes can benefit from grants and social tariffs from service providers.

### Energy bills

If you are struggling to pay, ask your energy provider about any grants they provide.

### Water bills

If you are on benefits and live in London, check whether you can

get a significant discount on your Thames Water bill. Go to [www.thameswater.co.uk/help/account-and-billing/financial-support/waterhelp](http://www.thameswater.co.uk/help/account-and-billing/financial-support/waterhelp)

If you live in Kent, South East Water also provides a social tariff. Check this out at: [www.southeastwater.co.uk/help/priority-services/help-paying-your-bill](http://www.southeastwater.co.uk/help/priority-services/help-paying-your-bill)

### Broadband/phone bills

Several companies offer social tariffs for people on low incomes. For example, check out:

- BT Home Essentials
- G Network Essential Fibre Optic
- Virgin Media Essential Broadband (existing customers only)
- Hyperoptic Fair Fibre

Community Fibre offer a low-cost deal on 20Mb full fibre broadband that is open to everyone.

### Need help?

Go to the Turn2Us website for comprehensive advice on benefits and lists of bodies offering grants: [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)

# Tenant satisfaction survey

Our next tenant satisfaction survey will be held in the autumn – so, please do complete and return it, when it arrives.

The Regulator of Social Housing now requires us to survey all our residents every two years, instead of every three. We also have to make use of the Regulator's new Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

The idea is that from now on, every social landlord will ask the same questions, so that we can more easily compare our performance with that of other similar organisations.

The questions are designed to check whether you think we are doing a good job by:

- keeping your homes in good repair

- maintaining building safety
- engaging with you respectfully and helpfully
- handling your complaints efficiently, and
- managing your neighbourhoods responsibly.

We have appointed Acuity, an independent survey company, to manage the next survey on our behalf. Acuity will initially email the survey to you (along with a text notification). This will be followed by a mail out to those who have not responded.

You may also get a phone call from Acuity.

Your feedback is important to us, so thank you in advance for taking part. There will be a prize draw for all who respond.



## Learning from complaints

Although we try to deliver a good service at all times (we actually get few complaints) – occasionally things can go wrong. If this happens, we would like to hear from you.

### How to complain

You can complain by email, phone call, letter, face to face with staff, or by going through our website or social media accounts. You can use the contact form on our website, or phone for a form.



If you are unhappy with the outcome of a complaint, we pass the case to our small complaints panel, which is made up of Board members. You can choose to put your case in person if you prefer. If you do attend in person, you can bring someone with you.

### Taking things further

The Housing Ombudsman is now able to assist and advise tenants throughout the life of a complaint.

If your complaint has gone through both stages of our complaints

procedure and you are still not satisfied with our response, the Housing Ombudsman Service may take it up for you formally. You can:

- complete their online complaint form at: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint)
- email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
- phone: 0300 111 3000
- write to: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ (however, there may be delays with this option), or
- fax: 020 7831 1942.

If you want to know more about our complaints process, please get in contact, or you can find lots of information on the website.



# Board member profile: Liz Emmanuel

We warmly welcome our new resident Board member, Liz Emmanuel.

A Keniston resident and Chartered Management Consultant, Liz has been working with small businesses for over 15 years to optimise and transform their businesses digitally. She is also a UK registered nurse, working in the NHS for the past 20 years.

Liz is used to being a board member. During the Ukraine war, she has also worked on the board of the AWBS (American Women in Berkshire and Surrey) International Women's Club, as Head of philanthropy. She made contacts with many agencies to get the charity involved in helping children with cancer leaving the war zone. She put measures in place to help and support the refugees.

She also supports a young carers' charity. "We do a lot of fundraising events to help people in the community and are very active in making changes and improvements to people's lives. Making changes is my middle name."

Liz has been with the Keniston Board since March. "So far it has been really good and very interesting. I have always wanted to make a change in people's lives and make a difference."

Reflecting on the highlight of her career, Liz told us: "Being a digital transformation consultant, I bring solutions to any business problem. I got involved with a charity training project managers and coordinators to roll out a plan across all their branches. I set up successful partnerships, getting high street food retailers on board to feed the homeless. The impact



was huge and I was so proud of that work."

Sharing her 'claim to fame', she said: "I have been on TV for a women empowerment programme. I am passionate about supporting other women."

Liz also finds the time for hobbies and interests: "I volunteer a lot, especially for charities, as it gives me joy. I love travelling and my favourite place is Disneyland Florida. Still on the wish list is a visit to Barbados. I help with my grandchildren often and enjoy horse riding."



*Pictured on this page: Liz with her philanthropy team, her grandchildren and happy on horseback.*

## Board member changes

**Alongside Liz, Ian Pinches has also joined the Board.**

Ian is the new Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee. We will include a profile of Ian in our next issue.

Barry Luhmann, Antonia Bance, Samantha Herelle and Seema Jassi have all stepped down from the Board over the past year and we have thanked them for their support.

# Summer photoshoots

We recently commissioned photoshoots at Sunningdale Court, Burnhill House and Perryfield House.



We now hold some lovely pictures of our stock and some feature residents. We will be using these photographs in our upcoming annual report, as well as in Talkback.

We thanked residents who took part in our photoshoots with a shopping voucher.



Above and left: pictures from our recent photoshoots.

## ULEZ car and motorcycle scrappage scheme

On 29 August, the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) is being extended to cover every London borough.

Motorists on lower incomes, who are disabled, or (added very recently) who claim Child Benefit, should be able to get a grant to help them scrap or replace their vehicle.

Under ULEZ, motorists with older and more polluting cars will have to pay £12.50 for each day they use their vehicle. In practice, this affects most diesel cars registered before September 2015 and most vans registered before September 2016. Most cars with petrol engines registered before 2001 are liable, together with some registered between 2001-2005.

For cars, motorcycles and wheelchair accessible cars or vans there are eight grant payment options, shown in the table above.

### How much you might get

Scrap a car	£2,000
	OR £1,600, plus one adult annual bus & tram pass
	OR £1,200, plus two adult annual bus & tram passes
Scrap a motorcycle	£1,000
	OR £600, plus one annual bus & tram pass
	OR £200, plus two adult annual bus & tram passes
Scrap a wheelchair accessible car/van	£5,000
Retrofit a wheelchair accessible van	£5,000

The grants for people giving up their vehicle in favour of public transport are higher.

There is a separate scheme for sole traders, micro business and



charities with small vans and minivans.

To find out more about applying for a personal grant, go to: <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/ultra-low-emission-zone/scrappage-schemes/car-and-motorcycle#on-this-page-7>

To find out more about the scheme for small and minivans, go to: <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/ultra-low-emission-zone/scrappage-schemes/van-minibus>



## Starters and leavers

We have said goodbye to Sean Delaney, who was our gardener at the Darrick Wood Estate. Josh O'Neill has now taken over his hours.

Lorraine Bull, our cleaner at Tarling Close, and Caretakers James Gavin (Nethewode Court) and Joshua Robinson-Bryan, (Merrow Street) have also left Keniston. We wish them all well.



## Smoke alarms save lives

Most fires at home start by accident. The effects can be devastating.

A fire detection system provides an early warning and gives you time to escape – which really does save lives.

Please make sure your smoke alarm is working. Test your device regularly and never paint over a smoke alarm. We have seen some painted-over devices and they no longer work.

If your alarm stops working, please let us know.



## OBITUARY

### Mark Currell

It is with great sadness that we announce the loss of Mark Currell, who sadly passed away in May of this year.

Mark, trading under the name of Mac and Co, had served Keniston for just over 25 years, with a carefree, can-do and let's-get-this-done approach – often in the most difficult of situations and in urgency, and always wearing a smile in doing so.



Residents will be more familiar with Mark for all those outside hard labour jobs such as paving, drainage, water mains, fencing and pretty much anything else that meant he could just be outdoors!

Mark will be deeply missed by staff here at Keniston and residents who were fortunate enough to have known him.

## Darrick Wood update

Many Darrick Wood residents will be aware that Keniston's planning application for new homes was refused by Bromley Council at the end of May.

We are considering our options and will provide more details when they are available.



If you have further questions, please:

- email [futureofdarrickwood@kenistonha.co.uk](mailto:futureofdarrickwood@kenistonha.co.uk), or
- leave a message on: 01689 664514 and we will get back to you.

## Contacting your housing officer

You can reach your Housing Officer by phoning our Customer Services line on **01689 889700**, or by emailing the Housing Officers directly at:

- [housingofficer1@kenistonha.co.uk](mailto:housingofficer1@kenistonha.co.uk) for Andrea Spittle or Susan Rimmer, or
- [housingofficer2@kenistonha.co.uk](mailto:housingofficer2@kenistonha.co.uk) for Kelsey Thorogood or Natalie Marchant

Please note that you will not always get an immediate response, because our officers are often out visiting your schemes.



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