

Talkback

Newsletter of Keniston Housing Association

Winter 2023

Competition: win an air fryer

Your chance to start your healthier New Year with a new air fryer.

We're offering an air fryer to the lucky winner of our Christmas competition.

What's an air fryer?

An air fryer cooks by circulating hot air around the food. The food is heated by convection, which creates a crunchy, crispy exterior, while using very little fat. It is an easy and healthier way to cook foods like chips and fried chicken.

- You can cook and bake almost anything, while cutting your cooking time by around half.
- Air fryers use less than half of the energy used by conventional ovens – so you can reduce your energy bill, as well as your carbon footprint.
- They use less oil for fewer calories and a safer way to cook.
- Convection heat may preserve some nutrients when cooking.

Our competition

We want to see your best festive creations – just send us a photo. Your entry could include:

- homemade cards or crafts
- your Christmas decorations – trees or lights
- you in your best Christmas jumper or fancy dress, or
- homemade baked goods.

It must be Christmassy and something you created this season. We will check the images have not come from the internet!

Enter your photo:

- by email to lynnruss@kenistonha.co.uk
- via WhatsApp to 07713 388010
- or by post to our office.

Closing date is Friday 12 January. We will select a winner and deliver the air fryer by the end of January.



Photo for illustration purposes. Actual prize may vary.

Feature in the spring edition of Talkback

If you already have an air fryer, we would love to hear your favourite tips and recipes. Send them to us by Friday 15 March for a chance to feature in the next issue of Talkback. One resident will win a £20 shopping voucher.



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all from Keniston!



Christmas and New Year

Our phone lines will close at 5pm on Friday 22 December 2023 and re-open at 9am on Tuesday 2 January 2024. Staff will not be available during this period and we will not check texts or messages via the website until we return.

Our contractors will be on hand for emergency repairs only. To report one, phone 01689 889700 for a recorded message directing you to the out-of-hours service.

Keniston learns BSL

Our Customer Services team have started an online introductory course in British Sign Language (BSL).

BSL was recognised by the UK Government as an official minority language in 2003. This has brought with it more funding to meet the communication needs of people who are deaf.

Keniston's Rebecca completed the course first and says: "I loved how flexible the course was. You could study when it suited you, so there was no pressure. Even though it was a beginner's course, it covered a wide range of topics."

Anyone can take this course. You pay what you can afford as an enrolment fee (minimum £3). You then have free access to the course material for two years.

For further details, go to: www.british-sign.co.uk



Resident meetings – what do you think?

In the New Year, we will be sending out a short survey asking for your thoughts on times and locations for resident meetings. We want to find out how best to carry out our resident meetings each year. We appreciate your feedback.

Keep people safe from cuckooing

'Cuckooing' is on the rise. Let's all keep a look out for victims of this extreme form of bullying.

'Cuckooing' is when people take over someone else's home in order to exploit them – like the bird, which takes over other birds' nests.

Human cuckoos prey on vulnerable adults. They offer them romance, friendship or gifts – in exchange for the use of a room to store things or meet 'friends'. Once the victim agrees, they are at risk of abuse.

Cuckooing is most often about storing and dealing drugs. But it can also involve sex work, or storing weapons. Or the perpetrator may want somewhere to live and someone to exploit financially.

The victims are usually already vulnerable, which means they will find it difficult to change their situation. This is where their neighbours and social landlords can make all the difference.

If you know someone is isolated or vulnerable, take note of any warning signs. These may include:

- more coming and going from the property
- more cars and bikes outside
- more anti-social behaviour
- damage to the front door or a door being propped open
- not having seen the tenant

recently – or having concerns about their appearance or mood when you do see them.

If you have concerns, contact us so that we can check on the situation. We will always put the welfare of our tenant first and protect your confidentiality.

Let's make sure that Keniston homes are safe and secure for all our residents and look out for one another. Getting to know your neighbours may actively make them less vulnerable to exploitation.



Disrepair solicitors? Not all they seem

More and more 'no win, no fee' solicitors are trying to make money out of disrepair cases – with social landlords getting regular phone calls in recent months.

These companies can often be pushy about getting you to sign up. And they may not always give you all the facts, so that you can make an informed decision.

If you take up their services, please be aware of the following.

- Your repair won't get fixed any more quickly – you need to talk directly to us about it.
- If we did get things wrong, you are unlikely to get more compensation.
- Paying your solicitor's expenses can take thousands of pounds out of our repairs budget, which

affects the money we have to spend on everyone's repairs.

- You may be liable to pay fees if you decide to abandon the claim, or if your claim proves to be false, fraudulent, or you refuse to cooperate fully in your claim.
- If your claim is unsuccessful, we have the right to claim our court and solicitor's fees from you.
- Always check your written agreement with the company thoroughly. Each provider will have their own specific terms. It is not always as simple as "No win, No fee".

We genuinely want to help fix any repair problems in your home.

So, help us to help you.

- Report your problem directly to us first – we cannot take calls

**NO WIN
NO FEE**

from a solicitor about repairs you have never told us about.

- If you aren't happy with our response, use our complaints system to tell us why.
- If you wish, you can also discuss your complaint with the Housing Ombudsman, who can award compensation if they judge we have failed to provide a good service (see their contact details in the complaints article below).

By taking these steps, you will allow us to continue to invest as much of our budget as possible into good quality repairs for all our homes. You will also protect yourself from the risk of being charged fees or court costs.

Learning from your complaints

We continue to receive a low volume of complaints.

Between April and October 2023, we received four complaints, against eight for the whole of 2022.

Board member Peter Voisey is now our Complaints Champion. He reviews our complaints as a critical friend. Before each quarterly Board meeting, Peter meets with our Operations Director to discuss:

- the complaints we received
- how we responded
- any concerns that arose, and
- any learning for the future.

How to complain

You can complain by email, phone, or letter, meet us face to face, use

our social media or the contact form on our website. Or you can call the office to ask for a form – on paper or by email.

If, at any stage, you aren't happy with our responses, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service in the following ways:

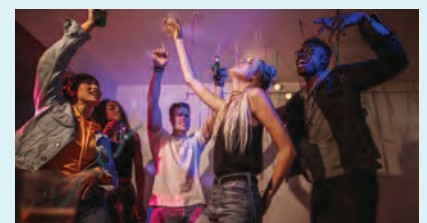
- Online: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/make-a-complaint
- Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- Phone: 0300 111 3000
- Write to: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ (there may be delays)

Check our website, or contact us, for more details about Keniston's complaints process.

Complaint or nuisance?

Sometimes residents send us 'complaints' that are really about neighbour nuisance.

We will deal with them under our anti-social behaviour and nuisance policy, if they meet our definition of "any behaviour which is unreasonable and causes a substantial interference to the use and enjoyment of a person's property or home".



Board member profile: Ian Pinches

We warmly welcome Ian Pinches, who joined the Keniston Board earlier in the year.

Born in North London, Ian is a semi-retired qualified accountant, now focusing his attentions on a small portfolio of non-executive roles in the wider public sector. He has held senior roles in social housing, as well as the NHS and emergency services.

Ian recalls: "I studied quite late, without attending university. It wasn't easy, so I was proud when I passed my accounts exams with the support of my family. My finance career really took off and I reached a Deputy Chief Exec role."

Around 15 years ago, a friend put their café/bar at the local railway station up for sale. "I fancied a career change (my wife called it my mid-life crisis!), so we set up a business running micro-pubs from the station."

By the time Ian and Lesley-Ann retired, they had been on TV several times, including on Michael Portillo's 'Great Rail Journeys'. They had also won a string of awards, including CAMRA's National Cider Pub of the Year (2013). They featured in the *Good Beer Guide* for six consecutive years.



Ian says: "Now that I have stepped away from full-time work, I can focus my time on non-exec roles – which I particularly enjoy – and it is great to be able to choose who I work with."

The couple now live in West Norfolk, but Ian has experience of working in social housing across London and frequently visits the capital to see family.

Why Ian chose Keniston

"I joined Keniston around January and have attended a few meetings now. It has been very interesting. I have visited several different schemes and enjoyed meeting residents – which I firmly believe is key to a Board role in housing.

"I have a passion for working with smaller associations. The value they bring both to the built environment and to residents' lives is frequently more than most larger organisations. I witness much more contact with residents, alongside a deeper knowledge of their needs."

More facts about Ian

"In the recent past, my wife and I helped at a distillery local to where I live. They are a small business and we enjoyed supporting them to grow and develop over a period of about two years. We did some sales and marketing as well as a few odd jobs for them.

"I also know how to make gin and can mix a decent cocktail or two!"

Asked if he had any claims to fame, Ian replied: "Not really... but, Betty Boothroyd lived nearby to our last house near Cambridge and it wasn't unusual to bump into her around the village at weekends. A lovely lady – with a loud voice when she wanted it to be!

"I also consider myself very fortunate to have met the late Queen Elizabeth II a couple of times when I was a Board member at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Kings Lynn."

New homes for Darrick Wood

Back in May this year, our planning application for new homes at Darrick Wood was refused by Bromley Council – despite us meeting all the planners' requirements. We have since appealed against this refusal and expect a decision during 2024.

We have been working on these

plans for several years, aiming to provide good quality homes for 26 households.

We know our plans are not welcomed by some who live near the site. However, we believe that, on balance, the need for new homes outweighs the disruption from the new building.

We believe that everyone needs a home they can afford that meets their needs. There is a huge shortage of new social housing and too many people are having to wait for a home. In the meantime, many are having to live in temporary homes, often many miles away from their families, friends and local schools.

We will keep everyone informed about the progress of our appeal.

New windows at Tarling Close

We recently installed new windows at Tarling Close in Sidcup.

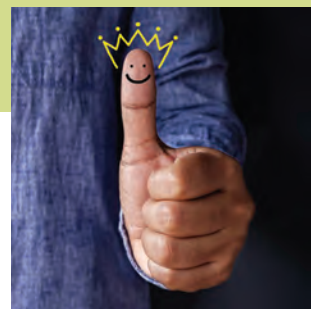
Residents gave us good feedback.

- "Excellent service by Keniston, who look after tenants and their properties with professional aptitude."
- "The new windows are marvelous."
- "Consultation and information leading up to installation was very clear and helpful."
- "The men who fitted the windows were very efficient and tidied up after themselves."
- "Professional, quick, tidy, polite and a very good job done."



Resident satisfaction survey

First results



Many thanks to the nearly 400 Keniston residents who responded to our recent satisfaction survey, which was run for us by Acuity.

The first results are just coming through, and it is clear that the huge majority of Keniston residents remain satisfied with our services.

In several areas, satisfaction has increased since the last survey in 2021 – while the current general trend amongst landlords is a drop in satisfaction levels.

- **88%** are satisfied that their home is safe
- **90%** say that Keniston is easy to deal with
- **89%** say that Keniston treats them fairly and with respect

Delivering quality services that meet your expectations is an important priority for Keniston. These are high scores that show that we are getting some of the important things right, and it's great to see.

We now need to look in detail at the results. There will, of course, be areas where we need to improve.

Headline results

- **Nine out of 10** residents are satisfied with the overall service, with nearly 60% 'very satisfied'
- **89%** say that their home is well maintained

Recent positive feedback

We love hearing your comments – thank you for taking the time. These are taken from estate services satisfaction surveys at Darrick Wood, Southwood

Close and Whites Meadow. Keep the comments coming! You could win a £10 shopping voucher in our prize draw.



Keniston staff award 2023



It's time to nominate the member of staff you would like to put forward for a Keniston staff award for excellent customer service.

To take part, think back over the past 12 months. Has the person you are thinking of given you great customer service, gone above and beyond, or been someone who consistently provides an excellent service?

They could be someone you meet in person or over the phone.

You can only put forward one staff member and you must provide your reasons. The award will be judged on merit and not on the number of nominations received. We won't consider a nomination without an explanation.

The deadline for nominations is 31 January 2024. The Resident Panel will make a shortlist with our management team.

The overall winner will receive a certificate and a prize voucher. We will announce this in an edition of

Talkback in the coming New Year.

Please give your nominations to Lynn Russ. You can do this by:

- phoning her on 01689 889700
- WhatsApping her on 07713 388010
- Emailing lynnruss@kenistonha.co.uk, or
- by writing in to our office (see address below).

Starters and leavers

Nethewode Court has two new staff members – Nigel Sutcliffe is our permanent caretaker and Les Back is our temporary caretaker.

Rachel Wood joined us as the new cleaner at Tarling Close in September.



She has really enjoyed seeing all the friendly faces and liaising with Deborah the Sheltered Scheme Manager. "I enjoy cleaning and work around Sidcup cleaning various communal areas."

Outside of work, Rachel likes the fun activities and community meals for all ages at her church. She particularly likes the carol services, with the yummy mince pies. Rachel also enjoys going to garden centres.

"I hope that Keniston staff and residents all have a wonderful Christmas. Thank you for being so welcoming."

Keniston and the XL Bully ban

We have updated our pet policy to reflect the new Government ban on XL Bully dogs and to include the compulsory microchipping of cats that comes into force on 10 June 2024.

The Government has added XL Bully dogs to the list of dogs banned under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, following a rise in attacks and fatalities.

From 31 December 2023 it will be against the law to:

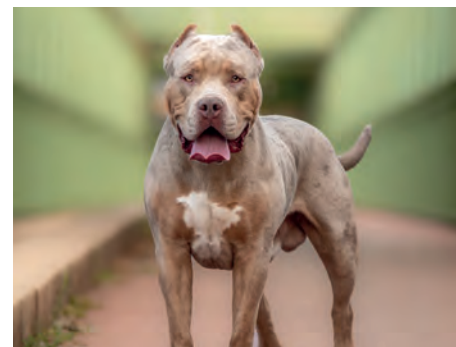
- sell, give away or abandon an XL Bully dog
- breed from an XL Bully dog, or
- take an XL Bully out in public without a lead and muzzle.

From 1 February 2024 it will be a criminal offence to own an XL Bully dog in England and Wales unless your dog has a certificate

of exemption. You must also register and check any dog that might be an XL Bully against the Government's criteria at: www.gov.uk/guidance/prepare-for-the-ban-on-xl-bully-dogs

Keniston's pet policy states that any resident wishing to have a dog or cat must first get our permission. You must also tell us if anything changes – for example, if your dog has a litter of puppies.

For more details about our policy, contact us.



Keniston Housing Association

13 Artington Close • Farnborough • Kent • BR6 7UL
Phone 01689 889 700 • Website www.kenistonha.co.uk

Follow us on     **YouTube**