

Summer 2019

Edition 7

doorstep

customer magazine



Paragon Asra

PA Housing



Welcome

One of the promises we made when PA Housing was set up was to listen to what you want and to change our ways of working so that you would be happier with our services. We have already taken on many of your suggestions and in this edition of doorstep you will find details of some of the projects you requested that we now provide.

You said you wanted to see more of our people out in your areas so they would be easier to reach and could react more quickly when you need them. Following 18 months of research and a £1 million investment we have launched our new housing services model. We've taken on more than 30 new staff and by now you should have met some of the team as they have been out gathering details on what our neighbourhoods need. If you haven't seen them yet, watch out for their purple shirts!

But even before we started the new model we had other projects underway that you asked for.

- We've provided activities for young people in areas where there is little for them to do.
- We have invested in new stock to help tackle the housing shortage in London and the South East.
- We've carried out improvements to existing stock, such as new heating systems.
- At your request we've made it easier to reach us with a simplified, single telephone number.
- We've also introduced the My PA digital portal to make managing your home more convenient.

You can find information about all this and more in this edition of your magazine.

We are continuing to seek your opinions on our services, and we're

planning future surveys about how we are doing and what you want from us in the future. So stay in touch. We want to hear from you.

Best wishes

Patrick Taylor
Executive Director of
Customer Services



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Paragon Asra Housing Limited is a charitable Community Benefit Society registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014.

Registered Office: Third Floor, Pentagon House, 52-54 Southwark Street, London SE1 1UN. Community Benefit Societies No. 7536. Homes England No. 4849



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Would you like to receive this magazine electronically?

If yes, please email us at doorstep@pahousing.co.uk and we will add you to the mailing list.



The cost to print this magazine is 22p per household

Fun activities for kids

Good neighbours make good friends



We are always keen to offer services that you want and one of the things we're often asked about is providing more for children and young people.

As a result of requests from residents at Beaumont Leys in Leicester, we set up free fun activities during the half term holidays for everyone aged 4 to 12. Thanks to funding

from EEM Ltd all the activities were provided and run by an experienced events company, Rising Stars Multi-Sports, who aim to use everyday activities to help children learn about the world while developing their physical coordination and independence.

Kids were provided with safety gear, where necessary, and advised

to wear suitable clothing. The event was designed to appeal to sporty types as well as to encourage those who weren't so keen on games. It included:

- Dart Tag (Nerf) - an action based activity that relies on team work, solving game situations and coordination.
- Trampolining - a great way for children

- to improve their coordination and core strength.
- Adventure - a huge inflatable bull that was a challenge to ride.
- An obstacle course, sumo suits, gladiators, space hoppers and archery.

Staff from Housing Services and Finance helped out and were delighted to meet the families involved.

Residents of Hedingham House in Kingston asked for our help because a lack of activities in their area meant young people gathered in the courtyard making noise until late at night. The problem came to light during

our Neighbourhoods on Tour visits. So our Resident Involvement, Tenancy Solutions and Neighbourhood teams got together to come up with a novel way to help. In discussion with residents, they drew

up a Good Neighbour Agreement and everyone accepted a few simple rules to make life better for all. Among the changes were a ban on ball games in the courtyard; older children not to use the play area;

parental supervision; and consideration for others in all activities. Our teams also drew up a list of clubs and associations close to the scheme that welcome young people, including sports, Sea Cadets, creative workshops, and holiday activity clubs.

You're a winner every time with My PA

The great new My PA service is now up and running and many of you have already signed up. It's the easiest and most convenient way to manage your home online. If you haven't tried it yet - what's stopping you?



Katie from New Parks in Leicester signed up and had a double bonus because she won our promotional competition. She was presented with £250 worth of shopping vouchers by Digital Customer Engagement Officer Bic Athwal and Digital Project Manager Dan Moraga.

She said: "I was really surprised to win the competition. I decided to sign up after I spoke to someone on the phone when I paid my rent. She said it would be much easier for me to use the app, so I thought I would give it a try."

"I was a bit worried at first because I wasn't sure the money had gone through, but now I know it works I'll use it all the time. I used to have to call at weekends to make payments because I couldn't phone during the week

while I was at work. This is so much easier.

"I've no idea what I'm going to spend the money on. I've just done some redecorating so I might think about what I need after that, then go shopping."

If you still haven't signed up, do it now. All you need is an internet connected device and your PA payment reference number. (You'll find it on your rent statement.) Visit pahousing.co.uk and click on My PA Login. Register using your payment reference and your email address and we'll email you back.

Click the link in that email to verify your account and then

log in using your email address and a password you have created; then start enjoying the convenience of My PA straight away!

It's available 24/7 so you don't have to wait until our offices are open, and you won't have to contact us by phone. You can diagnose, report and monitor repairs; book appointments; check your rent balance; make payments; set up a Direct Debit; and lots more. The system is very secure so you don't need to worry about your data going astray.

Around 7,500 of you are now registered to use My

PA. Within a month of its launch 1,209 people had signed up - 115 of them in a single day! Lots of our customers are choosing to pay their rent through it, either individual payments or by setting up a Direct Debit. Like Katie, they're finding it easier and more convenient than phoning our call centre. Don't miss out. Sign up today and start taking advantage of what My PA offers.

You can download My PA by visiting pahousing.co.uk/mypa

Repairs

An average of 85% of My PA users tell us it is easy to report a repair using My PA with 100% in April and May.

Checking your account

Since the start of 2019, 6,157 customers have logged in on My PA to check their account.

How is My PA used?

The vast majority of our customers like to use My PA to make payments and book their repairs.

How is MyPA doing?

To make sure we're offering you great services, we regularly monitor performance and measure our success. Here's some of the latest figures.

When can you use the portal?

You can log in any time, any day, but most regular My PA users tend to use the portal between 7am and 10pm.

Time saving

Reporting a repair can take as little as 90 seconds.

Webchat

Using webchat is becoming more and more popular. There's been a 300% increase since the start of the year. In January we had a total of 599 webchats, equating to 27 per day. In May, we had a total 1,590. That's 76 web chats a day.

New UC Hub supports claimants

We hope our customers thrive in their homes but recent changes to the benefits system, such as the introduction of Universal Credit (UC), have created challenges for many.

Often claimants find it difficult to navigate through complex rules and regulations, and as a result millions of pounds of welfare benefits go unpaid every year in the UK.

When UC first launched in 2013, we realised many of our residents might need help, and began training our staff to cope with the changes. Once the full service arrived in some of our areas it was clear we needed to go even further, and in September last year we brought together a specialist advice team.

Named the UC Hub, the team has specialist benefit advisers who carry out telephone interviews, visit people at home to offer advice, or go with claimants to support them at JobCentre interviews. They also answer email inquiries and manage

the process with the Department of Work and Pensions.

It is all overseen by team leader Hayley Ivers who said: "The team will always go the extra mile for people. We cannot secure extra money for everybody, but we try to prevent anyone from getting into debt."

Before the Hub was introduced new UC claimants were clocking up arrears of around £250 because of the change to monthly benefits and the delay before the first one is paid. Since its introduction in October 2018 the Hub has helped 691 customers. The average arrears increase is now just £18.71.

We helped one woman who was facing eviction because she accumulated more than £3,000 in arrears after her housing benefit was stopped and she moved onto UC. We supported her applications for Council Tax Reduction, Discretionary Housing Payment, and Universal Credit Mandatory Reconsideration, which resulted in a back

payment of £2,493, meaning she could pay off a considerable amount of her arrears and set up a payment plan to clear the rest.

If you think you might be moving onto UC soon, get in touch because we can help you prepare for this. We have produced an advice leaflet that explains what will be different and the process you will need to go through to make your claim.

You can help smooth the transition by getting ahead with your rent. You'll have to wait at least a month for your first UC payment so paying your rent in advance means you won't accrue debts during those first few weeks. We can help you to set up a Direct Debit that will make payments for you automatically so you don't have to remember. We can also help you to get online, set up a bank account if you don't have one, and

create an email address, all of which you'll need to collect your money. We'll also help you to check you are receiving all of your entitlements. Call **0300 123 2221** or email **universalcredit@pahousing.co.uk**.

UC Universal Credit

Is it time for you to get involved?

At PA Housing, customers are at the heart of what we do and we want you to have your say.



Our team of PA Housing residents play a vital role in guiding what services we offer and how we manage them. This is your chance to join that team.

We believe that as a customer you should have a meaningful say in how services are delivered, as well as how your homes and communities are managed. There are many ways to get involved to influence and improve the services we provide and the communities you live in.

Some things can be done from the comfort of your home and in any way you're able to. Or you could attend an event,

meet other residents and hear what they have to say. We'll be sending more information to you soon about joining one of our service improvement groups. It's your opportunity to work with us to put things right and influence the services you pay for to make the changes you want to see for all PA residents.

It doesn't have to take a lot of time. You just need enthusiasm and a keen interest in your community. But don't take our word for it. Here's what some of our Involved Residents say:

• Michael: "There's a real sense of satisfaction from being more involved. A lot of tenants

say they'll stand up for themselves, but they don't, or they don't know how. I can help them have a voice."

• Mitchell: "If you're left in the dark you get angry and frustrated, but if you're informed you're more relaxed and can handle things better. People don't always know how to get what they want but I can help by guiding them through the systems."

• Sadhana: "It's very rewarding. Some people maybe don't go out because of a language barrier but we can help them to reach everything that PA Housing provides. The skills we learn are also very useful for other things you want to do."

• Anthony: "People need motivation to take part in things, so we make sure there are regular events. They feel good when they are involved and we feel good because we've helped them."

If you think this is for you, call the Resident Involvement team on **0300 123 2221** or email **getinvolved@pahousing.co.uk** and we'll be pleased to talk to you.

Still not sure? Why not watch our new video and hear from people who are already having a positive influence on our services and within their communities. You'll find it on our website **pahousing.co.uk/customers/get-involved**

We'll be there before you need us!

We have invested **£1million** in our housing services. That includes **32 new PA Housing colleagues** who will be out in your neighbourhoods.

The (on the ground) teams are supported

by new specialist teams based across the country.

Look out for our special publication hitting your doorstep this autumn that introduces our new services and teams and explains what this means for you.



#Teampurple



Samantha Pamment
Neighbourhood 1
Teddington, Hampton,
Kingston Upon Thames,
Twickenham



Wayne McEwan
Neighbourhood 2
Surbiton, New Malden, Long
Ditton, Epsom, Kingston
Upon Thames



Peter Emordi
Neighbourhood 3
Chessington, Thames Ditton,
Surbiton, Long Ditton,
Claygate, Esher, Tolworth



Catherine Goodchild
Neighbourhood 4
East and West Molesey



Chris Keen
Neighbourhood 16
Croydon, Lambeth, Barnes,
Wandsworth



VACANT
Neighbourhood 17
Richmond, Mortlake, Sheen,
Barnes, St Margaret's,
Twickenham, Kew



Amar Afzal
Neighbourhood 18
Mansfield, Sutton-in-
Ashfield, Meden Vale,
Hucknall, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,
Huthwaite, Forest Town,
Warsop Vale, Mansfield
Woodhouse, Warsop



Liam Hopps
Neighbourhood 19
Nottingham, Gedling,
Broxtowe, Giltbrook,
Mapperley, Calverton,
Daybrook, Carlton, Forest
Fields, Bulwell Basford, St
Anns, Radford, Basford



Paul Pearce
Neighbourhood 5
Sunbury on Thames,
Walton-on-Thames (North)



Sarah Webster
Neighbourhood 6
St Johns and
Walton-on-Thames (South)

Your Neighbourhood Team



Rahul Shah
Neighbourhood 20
Charnwood, Beeston,
Chilwell, Melton, North West
Leicestershire, Rushcliffe,
Loughborough, Syston



Jay Patel
Neighbourhood 21
Corby, East Northants,
Kettering, Rushden, Oundle,
Burton Latimer



Beth Stephens
Neighbourhood 7
Weybridge, Hersham,
Walton-on-Thames (Central)



Jumai Gukas
Neighbourhood 8
Ashted, Brooklands Road
Weybridge, Cobham,
Oxshott, Leatherhead,
Bognor Regis



Ros Wilkinson
Neighbourhood 9
Weybridge, Addlestone,
Chertsey, Staines, Egham,
Woking, Tongham, Reading,
Slough



Yaw Nkansah
Neighbourhood 11
Hammersmith and Fulham,
Hillingdon, Hounslow,
Feltham, Isleworth, Whitton,
Woodlands



Simon Knight
Neighbourhood 22
Aylesbury Vale, Daventry,
Northampton, South
Northamptonshire, St
Albans, Wellingborough



Chloe Noyce
Neighbourhood 23
Beaumont Leys, Abbey



Rachael Weston
Neighbourhood 24
Rushy Mead, Belgrave,
Humberstone & Hamilton,
Evington



Mumtaz Hashim
Neighbourhood 25
Castle, North Evington,
Wycliffe, Westcotes,
Braunstone Park, Rowley
Fields, Fosse



Frankie Barrett
Neighbourhood 12
Barnet, Brent, Ealing



Kayode Ogundele
Neighbourhood 13
Camden, Haringey,
Islington, Redbridge, Tower
Hamlets, Waltham Forest



Jerome Walker
Neighbourhood 14
Newham, East Greenwich,
Thamesmead, Abbeywood,
Plumstead



Nadine Charlemagne
Neighbourhood 15
Bexley, Shooters Hill,
Woolwich, Charlton,
Lewisham



Joanne Taylor
Neighbourhood 26
Saffron, Stoneygate,
Knighton



Amy Heathcote
Neighbourhood 27
Harborough, Oadby,
Wigston, Rutland, Kettering,
Leicester



Desrii Edwards
Neighbourhood 28
Braunstone, Countersthorpe,
Narborough, Blaby,
Coventry, Hinckley, Kirby
Frith, Bosworth, North
Warwickshire, Nuneaton,
Bedworth, Rugby

What will the Neighbourhood Team do?



We've listened to feedback from customers and colleagues and have launched a new and improved Housing Services. Our Neighbourhood Coordinators are able to give you a local 'on your doorstep' service. The team will work across all of our properties apart from our Independent Living schemes.

The team is mobile and will spend at least 70% of their day in your neighbourhood.

Members will be very visible as they'll be

wearing purple uniforms that tell you they are the Neighbourhood Team.

The team carry out estate inspections, report communal repairs, work with customers to keep communal areas clean and clear, monitor our cleaning and grounds maintenance contractors, carry out new customer sign ups and perform first year visits. They will also be working with you on projects in your neighbourhood and to help set up local residents' groups.

Each Neighbourhood Coordinator will be

holding regular local surgeries. Look out for Neighbourhoods on Tour coming to you this year!

The purpose of the Neighbourhood Coordinator service is to be local and accessible on your doorstep. This means that you cannot contact Neighbourhood Coordinators by phone or email.

If you want to report anything, like some dumped rubbish, you can do this using the My PA app, online or by phoning our Customer Contact Centre.

What they don't do

The Neighbourhood Coordinators don't deal with individual repairs, antisocial behaviour, housing moves or home budgets, but they are supported by teams who do, so they can signpost you to where to get help and advice on any issue.

If you report an issue the Neighbourhood Coordinator will let you know that they have picked this up either in person or by putting a card through your door.

Look out for **#Teampurple** in your neighbourhood – the team are excited to meet you! Find details on our website pahousing.co.uk/yourneighbourhood

Help at the end of the phone

Service 24 are the people at the other end of the line when our customers have out-of-hours emergencies. They never know what they will face throughout the day. It could be an urgent repair, fire panel warning, someone locked out of their home, or a serious medical emergency like a heart attack or stroke.

It can be tough on the 27 staff who provide cover, working in groups of up to 7 at a time, but for their client base of more than 67,000 customers, from PA Housing as well as other housing associations, they can literally be a lifeline.

Callers can reach them through emergency pull cords, or some wear pendants with a signal button. Raising the alarm puts them in touch with the team at our Bede Island office, who then contact whichever service is needed.

Last year the team dealt with 102,709 calls and that's expected to rise

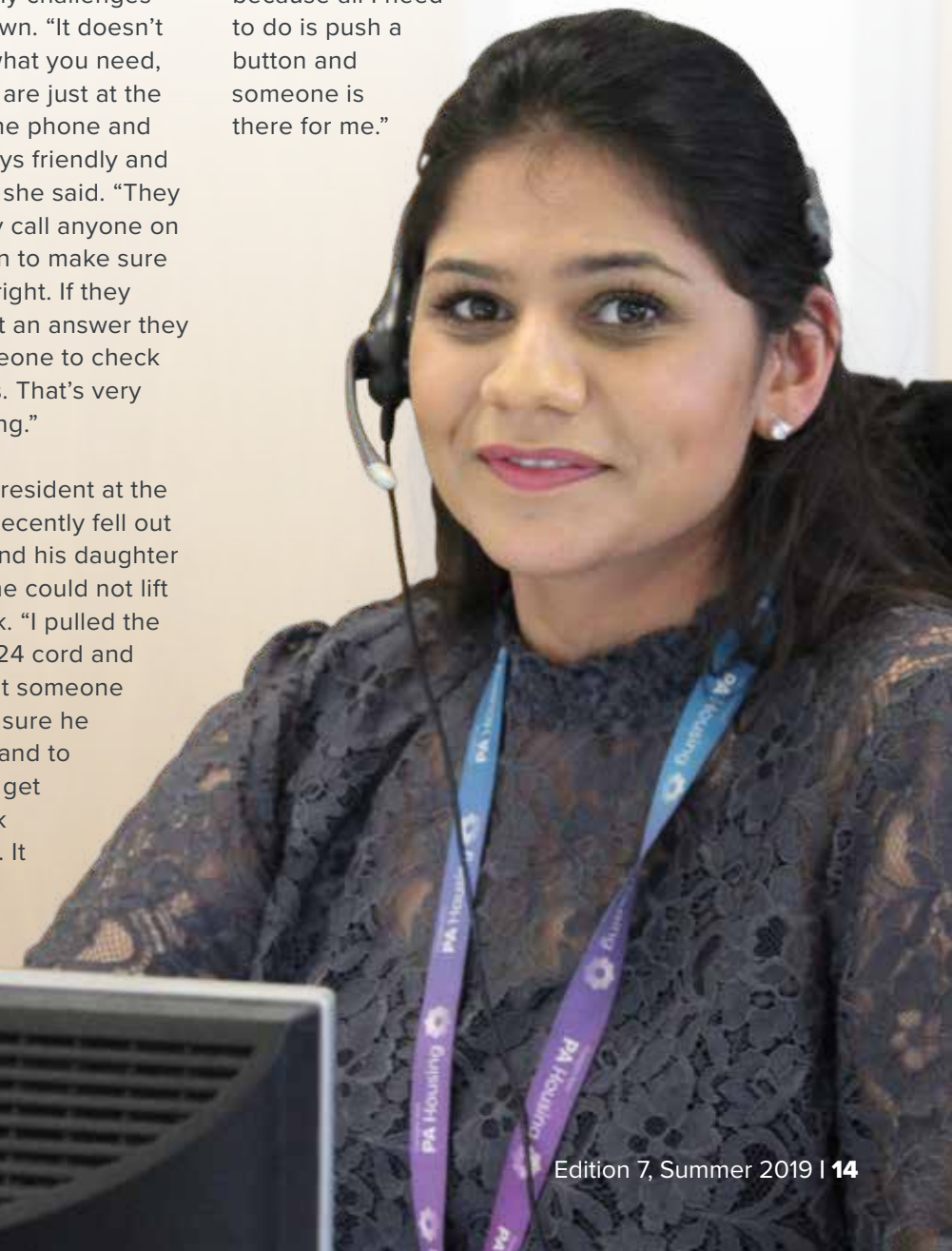
because they are now responsible for even more properties. But their customers are grateful to know they are there when needed.

One of the residents living in our Wolsey extra care scheme in Leicester is a widow with no family in the UK, and finds she has to deal with many challenges on her own. "It doesn't matter what you need, the staff are just at the end of the phone and are always friendly and helpful," she said. "They regularly call anyone on their own to make sure we're alright. If they don't get an answer they get someone to check up on us. That's very reassuring."

Another resident at the Wolsey recently fell out of bed and his daughter found she could not lift him back. "I pulled the Service 24 cord and they sent someone to make sure he was OK and to help me get him back into bed. It means

a lot to me to know that help is there. I feel more at ease knowing I can get help from them."

At Abbey Mill, a different extra care scheme, another resident said the system lets him be independent but he knows that he can get help if he needs to. "I feel safer at home because all I need to do is push a button and someone is there for me."



Contacting us

You've been asking us to simplify how you contact us and we're pleased to say we've introduced one telephone number and one email address for everything you need. Thanks to a huge investment in training and equipment you can now expect a consistent system, wherever you live.

And there'll be no more transfers between departments for different tasks. You can call to report a repair, ask for a replacement key or

pay your rent, and the same advisor will handle everything, except in a very few, specialist circumstances. We can deal with your calls quickly and efficiently, and ensure we provide the best service to all customers. Our Customer Services Advisors are being trained by the Chartered Institute of Housing so they can offer expert advice.

We now offer a call back service if our lines are busy, so that you can keep your place

in the queue without hanging on.

For less urgent calls you can use our online contact form by visiting our website at pahousing.co.uk/contact-us. We'll get back to you within 1 working day. There's also a live chat button on the website with an average response rate of under half a minute.

Or you could register with My PA, which has lots of useful information to help you manage your home, and where you can report a repair in

under 2 minutes and pick your own appointment.

Our offices are staffed from 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday, but we're available 24 hours a day and every weekend in case of emergencies.

Call **0300 123 2221** or use the online email form.

Collecting your comments

We constantly monitor our services to make sure that we are offering what you want to the standard you expect. One of the ways we check is by carrying out surveys so you can give us your feedback.

Your replies help us to plan and improve our services. Sometimes we use the information to see how we're doing compared with other housing associations.

We might contact you by phone, text or email. Most surveys are short, just 2 or 3 questions, mainly with one word answers, although sometimes we send out longer

questionnaires. You might also be contacted by a research company acting on our behalf.

Your feedback allows us to measure how you feel we are doing so please keep your comments coming.

At the moment we are sending out surveys:

- after a repair is completed
- following gas servicing
- if you have spoken to our Tenancy Sustainment Team
- following help from our Universal Credit Hub or welfare benefits team
- if you are a new customer.

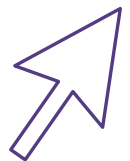
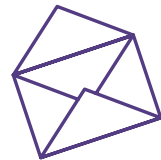
Your views are important because they help us to plan and update our services. For example:

- Feedback from a home ownership resident in London highlighted the need for scheme managers to review noticeboards regularly so that residents' notices are kept up to date.
- A customer in the Midlands said she was happy with the standard of her repairs but had had to cancel a shift at work while she waited in for the contractor. We are now looking at ways to let you know approximate arrival times so you don't need to stay in all day.



Call us on **0300 123 2221**

Email enquiries@pahousing.co.uk



Visit pahousing.co.uk



Download My PA at pahousing.co.uk/mypa



James

Holly the husky

Meet James Morris

James is a PA Housing customer living in Richmond. At just 23, he has raised money for the likes of Great Ormond Street and Help for Heroes and has been involved in Treat Me Right, a programme that trains professionals on how to work with autistic people. Most recently, he's been placed on the Learning Disability and Autism Leadership list. His London flat forms part of accommodation managed by Certitude, a provider to support people with learning disabilities, autism and mental health issues across London. We went to meet James and one of Certitude's managers, Mark, to chat about James' achievements and experiences.

You were originally labelled as challenging and aggressive but now you're using your journey to challenge stereotypes. Can you tell me about your journey and your experience?

In the past, services and people didn't understand the needs I had as a person with autism, like communication and sensory issues. They'd view me as

challenging or difficult. They didn't have any understanding of my autism, or any training that could help them understand it.

How did that make you feel?

It was hard for me to cope with how others viewed me. I had a lot of changes in my life which made me quite frustrated. When people didn't understand me, I felt really upset.

And how do you feel now?

I feel that my life has changed for the better; I feel like a much better person inside. People view me as an adult now, and they have better knowledge of my autism so they respect my choices and needs a lot more.

You're on the Learning Disability and Autism Leadership list. Congratulations! How do you feel about it?

Amazing; I'm being viewed positively for the first time in my life. People are trying to understand me; the list helps the public to understand autism.

It was your part in the Hops Not Hate campaign that put you on the list. What was that all about?

We created our own beer to target hate crimes. I went down to the brewery [Gipsy Hill brewery in London] to meet people. I loved it. I've also been involved with the Treat Me Right project, which trains doctors, nurses and other professionals to understand more about autism. When people have attended the Treat Me Right course, they understand more, and I get positive feedback in the sessions. I won a Certitude organisational annual award, too, for my involvement.

That's brilliant. Let's talk about where you live. Do you enjoy living in your accommodation – and what's your favourite thing about it?

I love my accommodation; I had some bad experiences growing up, and I'm glad that I've come to live here. I struggled in a residential set up because it was too communal. Now, I've got my own separate flat, which I prefer. Due to my autism, I like to have everything set up in a certain way. Living alongside other people triggered me, but past services didn't understand that. They thought I was being difficult or awkward, but I just like things in a certain way – as do most people on the autistic spectrum.

Services in the past have expected me to fit in around them, rather than them being accommodating to me. Where I live now fits around my autism. I am supported as an individual.

You like to dress up as mascots in your spare time. What sort of thing do you get dressed up for?

I've always liked mascots, so I linked that up with fundraising – I've worked with charities like with Help for Heroes and Great Ormond Street, and I've worked with rugby and football teams. In the future I would like to work with the Autistic Society, and I'd also like to design my own mascot one day.

Who's your favourite mascot to dress up as at the minute?

I like Brooklyn and Alaska. I named them myself. Brooklyn comes from New York because I love New York so much, and Alaska the husky comes from a very cold climate because I love huskies so much.

Do you have one tip for working more effectively with people with autism?

Ask people with autism what they want. It's about asking, not telling.



Brand new boilers for 225 homes

We want our residents to be happy and comfortable in their homes and one of the ways we support that is through regular modernisation. In one of our latest projects we have upgraded from inefficient electric heaters to A rated gas boiler systems in 225 properties across the Midlands.

Working with UK Gas and Fulcrum we have provided new Worcester Bosch boilers

that will heat homes more efficiently and save residents money. Depending on the size of the home the savings could be as much as £800 a year.

James Keirnan, our Commercial Manager, said: "The conversion from electrical heating to full gas central heating is a complex and expensive process, it is fantastic that we are in a position to provide the upgrades for so many residents. It offers

astounding savings and ensures that residents are always warm in their homes, for a much lower cost. It's great to be part of something helping to provide safe and pleasant homes in neighbourhoods where people have pride in their homes and surroundings."

Richard Rhodes-Heaton from Property Tectonics, the building surveyor leading on the project, said: "We've had a lot of feedback from customers – they're really happy.

It's much better than their old systems, which were really inefficient so residents are going to see a huge improvement."

One resident said: "The heating had stopped working in my bedroom. I'm really happy – I've been cold and my kids have been cold, wearing their dressing gowns and stuff. I've been using heaters, but they cost a lot of money. I'm so happy – once they're done, I can redecorate and make it a home."

Providing more homes

Last year the government published a Green Paper called 'A new deal for social housing' which identified a need for more and better affordable homes in England. Demand for social housing is growing every year, particularly in London and the South East.

We are playing our part with a pledge to build 500 homes a year for the next 5 years, with our main area of expansion in London and the towns around our Walton-on-Thames base.



Are you ready for summer?

Here are some hints to help make yours a success.

Stay hydrated

Make sure you drink plenty of fluids in the summer. Signs of dehydration include: feeling dizzy, rapid breathing, dry mouth, muscle cramps, headache, sleepiness or confusion and fainting. If you suspect you or anyone with you has these symptoms get into the shade or somewhere cool, and sip water or diluted fruit juice. Avoid tea, coffee or alcohol because they could make symptoms worse.



Stay active

Sitting around in the sun is great, but don't forget to exercise too. If the weather's really warm take walks in the early morning or evening when it will be cooler. Or if your garden has shady areas you can do some light weeding and pruning to keep up your step count. On very hot days, swimming is a great way to keep cool.



Create a bird table

If you share your garden make sure the neighbours are OK with this one. Set aside an area where you can put vegetable peelings, a whole apple, seeds and nuts, or buy dried mealworms from a garden centre. Avoid using bread - it isn't good for them. Also offer water - it's as important for birds as it is for you. Then you can have fun watching who visits and looking up what sort of bird they are.

Eat your greens

Summer is a great time to grow plants. Even if you live in a flat you can set up a window box, and salad crops like edible leaves or radishes take no time at all before they're ready for the plate. You might even try your hand at herbs and small tomato plants. It's great to be able to pick your own produce - fresh from your plot.

Catch some rays

Everyone knows that being out in the sun too long and without sun protection isn't good for you - but staying indoors all the time is bad too. You need sunlight to produce vitamin D, which is needed for healthy bones, teeth and muscles.



Take up a new hobby

Summer is the perfect time to try new things, and not all hobbies are expensive. You could have a go at sketching and probably have paper and pencils in your home already. Origami is the Japanese art of paper folding. Practise on old magazines and junk mail and you can still recycle them afterwards! Learn a language with one of the free apps available. Or take up photography using your mobile phone. Be more creative than a few selfies!

Attract butterflies

If you don't feel confident enough to grow food you can always plant flowers that will attract butterflies, such as phlox, coneflower, marigolds and lavender. The great news for gardeners is that you don't need to weed so often if you want butterflies to visit.

"I'm bored!"

The summer holidays can be a challenge for kids but there are plenty of things to do to keep them entertained. Have a go at making your own ice cream - recipes are easily found online. Watch out for free or inexpensive play days in your area. We will be offering fun activities at some of our schemes. Keep an eye on our website and social media for details.



Water babies

Kids love water and will really enjoy having a paddling pool to play in on sunny days. But even if it's raining you can all have fun splashing in puddles - and you don't even need a garden.

If all else fails...

There are card games, board games, reading, painting, skipping, kite flying, country walking, paper aeroplane races, making up and telling jokes, singing, charades, going to the movies, Lego. The list is endless!



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