

Winter 2024

Edition 14

doorstep

customer magazine



PA Housing

Welcome

My name is Kathleen and I'm both an involved resident and a Board member at PA Housing. I was also formerly the Chair of the Customer Committee. During my time in these roles, it has always been my priority to champion your voices and do my best to ensure that PA Housing provides a service that does right by you.

As we move into a new year, 2024 brings with it the chance to look at our priorities. That means sticking to what works and those good habits that we're proud of, but also seeing what we can do better. That could mean bettering ourselves as individuals, striving towards our personal targets, or doing more for the people around us and supporting our communities. In my personal experience, getting involved with PA Housing has been a rewarding way of helping my fellow residents and it's something that I'd very much recommend to any of you considering it.

From our Board discussions, PA's priority this year – as it always should be – is to focus on us, the residents. Of course, our organisation owns properties, but PA's purpose is to serve the people living in them.

Throughout this magazine, you'll find money saving tips, support, inspiring news stories from across the country, and a fantastic competition opportunity.

Happy reading!

Kathleen Harris-Leighton,
Involved Resident
and Board Member



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Do you follow us on social media?

Our social media channels are a great source of information and a way of understanding some of the services we offer to you.

Take a look and follow us today.



f @PAHousingUK X @pa_housing @ pahousing



Your service charges in 2024/2025

We'll be writing to you at the end of February to let you know your new service charge for the year ahead. As in previous years your charge is based on our best estimate of costs that we will incur, and your paperwork will include a breakdown of your charge by each service we provide.

Our aim is to be consistent in how we charge you for the services we provide. There may be times however where things look a little different to what and how we charged you last year, and the price we pay for our services continues to go up in most areas. There is some good news on energy pricing though as the wholesale prices have fallen since last year.

Ahead of you receiving your new charge we thought it would be useful to look at some of the changes that will affect your charge in 2024/25. It's important to remember that each of these areas will have a different impact dependant on where you live and what services you receive.

You can find out more online at:
www.pahousing.co.uk/servicecharges

A Fresh new look

We've been working alongside developers Prodo to give our website an upgrade, so it's more user-friendly and easier to navigate than ever before.

Once it goes live, don't worry, our address won't change. You can still find us at www.pahousing.co.uk

We'd love to know what you think of the updated design once it's ready, so if you have any feedback on how we can make the experience of our site the best it can be, pop an email to us at doorstep@pahousing.co.uk

Getting financial support to you in a flash

We know that times are tough right now. That's why we've teamed up with Lightning Reach, who work with a broad range of charities and organisations to bring you financial support, quickly and securely. Through just one website and one easy to complete form, Lightning Reach can find out if you're eligible for grants, local schemes, and

discounted tariffs from any of its partner organisations.

What's more, none of the payments that you receive from Lightning Reach have to be paid back. Once the money is paid to you, it's yours to spend or save.

Set up during the pandemic, Lightning Reach has already

helped over 25,000 people to find support and assisted in delivering over £2 million in grants for its users.



Why not give it a try?

It was great to speak with so many of you!

Now, we have lessons to learn

Over a 2-week period last September, 240 PA Housing colleagues knocked on 20,160 of your doors to ask some questions and get a sense of what you thought about our services. We received 5,605 responses (5,261 from rented accommodation and 344 from home ownership), which means that we were able to speak to over a quarter of you.

Based on all your responses to our questions, our overall satisfaction score from our renters was 62% and 38% for our shared owners. Of course, this is far lower than we'd like it to be, but it has provided us with a lot of helpful information on where we should be focusing our efforts. Whilst there is still room for improvement in all areas, we received more favourable results when we asked how safe you feel in your homes and whether you agreed that you were treated with respect by colleagues, which is encouraging to hear. Another positive side of this is that some PA colleagues who don't often get the opportunity to speak with residents face-to-face were able to have these productive and enlightening conversations with you.

However, many of you told us that you were not satisfied with how antisocial behaviour and complaints were dealt with at PA. Furthermore, you told us that your biggest cause of dissatisfaction was having issues with repairs. This is simply not good enough, and we need to do much better. On the whole, residents in rented accommodation were more satisfied than those of you who own your homes – although the sample size was a lot smaller. Now, our mission is to get to the heart of all these issues by understanding the trends in the results.

We're already focusing on taking ownership of issues, how we communicate with you, and giving timelines in our responses. Our next steps will be to target the areas that you were most dissatisfied with so that when we knock on your doors again for our big survey later this year, we're hoping to see some improvements.

Our first set of priorities based on your feedback are:

- Ensure each neighbourhood has a dedicated neighbourhood coordinator (NC) so you

know who to speak to where you live. We will aim to have this in place by 1 April 2024. When an NC leaves, we will re-recruit as quickly as possible but there may be short periods when a neighbourhood doesn't have cover.

- Improve the wait times for residents telephoning us by ensuring 95% of calls are answered within 15 minutes. In the following year, we will look to bring this down to under 10 minutes. We will report quarterly on performance in this area.
- Develop a hybrid repairs model which uses national, local, and in house workforces to improve the quality of our repairs service and improve satisfaction levels. The first strands of the new model will be in place by 1 June 2024.
- Communicate with you more during repairs or maintenance by giving you regular updates, so you always know what is happening without the need to chase us. This will take us time to achieve but we know is a major cause of frustration for you so we're trying to address this as quickly as we can.

- Spend £10 million more than in the current financial year to further improve residents' homes and communities.
- Publish and promote clear service standards by June 2024 so you understand the services we provide where you live.
- Accurately manage your service charges so you're confident you're paying for the service you receive to reduce queries by 50%
- Complete a root and branch review with residents of both our complaints and antisocial behaviour processes to improve how we handle them by May 2024.
- Refresh our approach to resident engagement with a new Resident Assembly being in place by April 2024 and a Youth Resident Assembly by July 2024.

See you again soon!



Top 20 money saving tips

2.

There are a range of apps out there that can help you to have some more spending money. This may mean selling unwanted goods on eBay or Vinted; getting discounted, unsold food from your favourite outlets on Too Good to Go; or automatically saving on Plum or Monzo.

3.

On the 'Cost of Living Support' section of our website, you can find the Better Off Benefits Calculator, which allows you to check if you're eligible for a broad range of benefits in 10 minutes.

4.

Do you have money coming out of your bank account for subscriptions and services that you use very little or not at all? It may be worth checking and cancelling some of those direct debits.

5.

Have you considered home contents insurance? Although this involves paying for insurance, in the event of theft or damage, you can get money back to replace the items you have lost. We have partnered with Thistle Tenant Risks, who you can call on **0345 450 7289**.



6.

This may not be the case every time, but when you get a receipt from a shop, give it a read, because sometimes they will offer discounts on your next purchase.

7.

If you're finding it difficult to pay your rent, call us on **0300 123 2221** and the dedicated Coordinators in our Income Team can help you to set up an affordable payment plan.

8.

If you regularly use a certain shop, signing up to their rewards or points systems can save you a lot of money in the long run.

9.

Before you go shopping, planning out exactly what you need for your meals that week and writing a list will help you to avoid buying things that you don't need.

10.

Making sure you only use trusted sites on the internet, especially when making purchases, can help to minimise the risk of (very costly) fraud. See page 18 for more information.



1.

Are you as energy efficient as you could be? See pages 17-18 for more information on how you can keep your home warm for less.

11.

We can often rely on familiar names when we're doing our shopping, but sometimes, own brand products can be just as good. They're also far easier on the bank account.

15.

Consider opening an ISA or savings account so that the money in your bank gains more interest and increases. This also gives you more of an incentive not to withdraw it and spend it for a while.

16.

Occasions that involve buying gifts can be expensive. To avoid debt, why not set a limit to your spending, pay in affordable instalments, or put aside a savings pot far in advance?

19.

If you regularly travel from city to city or town to town, consider getting a railcard to make big savings on your train travel.

12.

There's a wide variety of price comparison websites out there, including big names for insurance like Go.Compare, Money Supermarket, and Confused. They will tell you some of the cheapest deals and help you to decide what's best for you.

13.

Before you make a purchase online, it's worth checking voucher sites like Groupon and VoucherCodes to see if you can get any money off your order.

14.

'Loyalty penalties' for insurance where new customers are charged less than existing ones are now banned. However, it's still worth shopping around with your energy, internet, and insurance to ensure you're getting the best deal.

17.

Our Tenancy Sustainment Team can help you to access benefits, grants, and other financial services. Please contact them at: TenancySustainmentTeam@pahousing.co.uk or call on **0300 123 2221**.

18.

You can make your money go further by having fun with free days out like walks, museum visits, and sightseeing or by checking sites like moneysavingexpert.com/deals to see if you can find paid days out for less.

20.

Comparing supermarket prices to check if you're getting the best deal is always worth doing. The website Which? shares research online that shows what the cheapest supermarket is each month.

The uplifting story of a family in Leicester

When we learnt about the struggles our residents were having, we were determined to help.

In 2022, Roger (Major Works Surveyor) received queries from a family of residents in Leicester regarding the threshold strip on the front door of their house. The issue was that residents, Paresh and Leena, couldn't fit their daughter Alisha's wheelchair over it and they were struggling to transfer her in and out of the house in the wheelchair.

When Roger visited their home alongside Ash (Programme Delivery Coordinator) it was clear that the residents needed a different door, but some of the other adaptations required to make things easier for them weren't feasible in that house. For example, Paresh was carrying his daughter Alisha – who will soon be in her teens – up the stairs to bed every night, which could not have been good for his back! However, there was not enough space in their home to install a lift, so the option of relocating had to be considered.

At the time, some residents from an independent living scheme run by PA Housing – directly opposite their home – were moving elsewhere. This meant that half the larger building, which was originally two houses converted into connected independent living flats, was now vacant. This provided an opportunity to make it into two separate houses again, one of which could be adapted to the family's needs.

The offer was accepted by the family of four (Leena, Paresh, their teenage daughter Kheya, and Alisha), but there was a lot of work required.

After some involvement from the council and an occupational therapist to draw up plans and make sure that all the support would be helpful, the long task of adapting and converting the house could begin.

The team installed a lift that can take Alisha from the living room up to the bedroom she shares with her parents. The hospital bed that she sleeps in has been placed in that bedroom too, as her parents have to be vigilant in case she has a seizure in the night. A wall

From left: Roger, Leena, Paresh and Alisha



was put in front of the landing to create the lift shaft upstairs.

Also, their bedroom is fitted with sliding doors into a bathroom with a level access shower and wet chair. This is to make it easier for her carers to shower her. The local authority will be installing hoisting too, which will help to carry Alisha where she needs to go within the house.

Leena said:

“We lived in our previous PA house directly across the road for 14-15 years, so it feels strange to have moved. In some ways, we'll miss living in our old home, but it was smaller, and we struggled with the door and the stairs.

“When this option of moving across the road was presented to us, Paresh was originally in two minds. Getting this lift after years of Paresh carrying Alisha upstairs made my mind up though. I said we should take what we were offered because making sure Alisha's needs were met was the main thing and we both agreed.

“Since moving in, we've been decorating and making it feel more like our home, working around Alisha and her carers. Our new house gives us more of our own space. We used to go out for food or take it upstairs while the carers were in to get out of their way, but now we can go into another room, stay in, and save money.

From left: Kheya and Alisha



Also, there are opportunities to do arts and crafts activities with Alisha in the dining room. The care given will be bigger and better than before.

“The wet room upstairs has made a difference too. We were able to give Alisha a bath ourselves the other day and the last time was a long while ago. She loved it! The adaptations would have cost us a lot of money to do ourselves. We paid a bit towards it to speed up the process, but the equipment was mostly funded by disability grants.

“When we had issues in the old home, I sometimes cried down the phone to PA, asking if there was

anything they could do to help. What you see today is because of Roger’s work and determination. Once the process started a year ago, Roger made use of his many contacts, and things got done really quickly. And now, the future’s bright.”

Paresh said:

“When Roger and Ash first visited to have a look, it was like Batman and Superman showing up at once. It was wicked! Communication is key and we were never kept in the dark. When we moved in, there were no issues, just certain things to do ourselves.

“I’m settled. I no longer have to carry Alisha up the stairs,

which will be good for my back – although I have carried her up once for old time’s sake. It’s great to have that easier option though, it helps you mentally to know that the adaptations are there. This also means that I can go out earlier with my friends when I meet them once a week. I previously had to wait until around half 9 to join them as I needed to be at home to carry Alisha to bed.

“Our quality of life will definitely improve. We will take each day as it comes, and the main thing is that Alisha got the help she needed. Aftercare has been good too. Roger has popped by to see how we’re settling in. Overall, it has been a

good experience. There was nothing to fault about the process. Happy days!”

All the best from PA Housing to Leena, Paresh, Kheya, and Alisha!

Do you need help with aids and adaptations to make it easier to live in your home?

For more information, visit: www.pahousing.co.uk/aidsandadaptions



Freeze the day!

It’s competition time. Be in with a chance of winning **£250** in supermarket vouchers!

The Frosts are a cool family of snowmen, snowwomen, and snowchildren who all live together in an ice, pleasant igloo. They were enjoying a chilled Brrr-sday night, drinking slushies and watching The Greatest Snowman on telly, when suddenly, disaster struck, and they were caught up in a snowstorm.

The blizzard carried them away and they found themselves walking in the air. But that’s just the tip of the iceberg, it seems they’ve landed where snowman has ever gone before... they’ve

been scattered throughout the pages of doorstep Magazine! However, that’s cold comfort when they’re not together.

That’s where you come in. It’s up to you to find and reunite the Frost family and get them back home before they overheat on Thursday 29 February 2024 and melt into puddles. So, it’s time to put your snow goggles on and get searching through this magazine – back to front and pole to pole – until you can tell us the total number of snowpeople you’ve found. I’m sure that’s snow problem for someone as sharp as you!

Don’t give them the cold shoulder and flake out on them in their time of need. We know that’s not how you roll. They’ll be so grateful that they’re already offering a reward for finding them all. Whilst it isn’t cold, hard cash, the Frosts do want to help one lucky household – drawn at random – with a £250 voucher for a major supermarket of their choice.

Send an email with your answer to doorstep@pahousing.co.uk before noon on 29 February to be in with a chance. On your marks, get set, snow!

You must be a PA resident over the age of 18 to submit a response. Children will have to ask a parent or guardian for permission to participate. One entry per household. A winner will be selected at random on Friday 1 March from all the correct responses. Once the winner has been selected, we will be in contact to ask their preferred supermarket. The deadline for submissions is 12 noon on 29 February 2023. Any entries after this time will not be accepted.

My PA - the fastest and easiest way to manage your home online.

Secure and simple, you can access it 24 hours a day without having to wait in a phone queue.

- Check when your annual gas and electricity safety inspections are due.
- Quickly diagnose and report your own repairs.
- View the status of current repairs.
- Choose a convenient time for a contractor to visit.
- Pay your rent or set up a Direct Debit.
- Send any other enquiry through My PA to avoid the queue.
- View your account balance or any personal details.
- Receive important notifications.
- Request a new fob or keys.
- Request a refund.

Register now on our website at:

mypa.pahousing.co.uk

You only need an email address and your payment reference number from your rent statement.



Support when you need it

What can our Tenancy Sustainment Team do for you?

If you're struggling with your benefits, finances, or looking for ways to save money on your bills, our Tenancy Sustainment Team (TST) can support you. Knowing where to start when looking for support can be daunting, but when you speak to one of our experts, we'll be able to run a check to see what benefits and funds you could be entitled to. In a quick, 10-minute chat, we'll be able to perform a benefits check, and we will do everything we can to help in one conversation.

Recently, Tenancy Sustainment Officer, Teresa heard about a resident with learning difficulties whose sister is his full-time carer. The sister was also financially supporting him as he was only living on a very small pension from Portugal. Teresa worked with them to apply for both the State Retirement Pension and Pension Credit. He was awarded a State Pension of £31.24 a week and a back-dated payment of £15,413.85.

Following this, Pension Credit was also awarded at a rate of £70.10 a week with a back-dated payment of £1,249.28.

As well as Teresa's work, our new Disability Benefits Officer, Dani, worked with the resident to get him on the right rate of Disability Living Allowance. This gave him an additional weekly income of £101.75.

The resident's sister was overwhelmed with the support they received and the increase in income. She said that this was life changing as the money could be used to employ people to sit with him while she received essential medical treatment.

If there is anything we can't help you with directly, like debt advice, TST can use their specialist knowledge to point you in the right direction and refer you to a range of charities who can help.

Send us an email containing your full name, address, and a brief description of the help you need to tenancysustainmentteam@pahousing.co.uk and we'll attempt to get in contact with you the following day. Alternatively, you can get a self-referral form on our My PA app.

Walnut Tree Close has come a long way

Back in the summer of 2022, Andrea, a Neighbourhood Coordinator at PA Housing, met with Fiona Sacks, Deputy Mayor and the Liberal Democrat Councillor for Barnes Ward in Richmond-upon-Thames, London. Alongside one of our residents at Walnut Tree Close in Barnes, Andrea showed Fiona an outside space next to Diana House which had become overgrown and, as a consequence, had also become the site of recurring antisocial behaviour (ASB).

Many of the residents were eager to see this cleared, with some going as far as to say that they might want to see it paved over altogether. In the interests of doing something a bit more environmentally friendly, sustainable, and appealing to the eye, Fiona wondered if more could be

made of it as a garden space with planters and flowers.

Following her visit, Fiona raised these issues to the Barnes Community Gardeners (BCG), a not-for-profit organisation coordinated by volunteers Crispin O'Brien and Susie Pugh. The two of them – alongside dedicated volunteers – were happy to look at this space to see how they could breathe new life into the green areas.

PA Housing were more than happy to contribute funds to this project, and – through a big collaborative effort with BCG, local residents, and several PA staff – the team were able to completely transform both pieces of land on Walnut Tree Close

Also, in October 2022, spring bulbs for crocuses, tulips,

daffodils, and camassia were planted, and by May of the following year, they were all beautifully in bloom. Many residents commented about how welcoming it was to see the flowers along their street. One nice anecdotal story was that a young girl (a resident of Walnut Tree Close) who planted some bulbs said, 'My flowers!' every time she walked past them once they had grown – which is a very heartwarming thought.

Once the community had come together to complete their gardening masterpieces, Councillor Fiona Sacks sent the following glowing review to our friends at BCG:

"I just wanted to let you know what a great job you have done and how much it is appreciated by residents who were quick to point

out that the regeneration of that formerly unloved area plagued by weeds and ASB, was one of the most positive things to have happened there over the last year. Everyone we spoke to loves the colour scheme and the herb planters and I am so pleased that the matched funding from both the Local Area Fund and PA Housing enabled you and your team to effect such a wonderful transformation which will clearly enhance the wellbeing of residents now and hopefully for years to come.

"Thank you for the fantastic work you do in the community. It is hugely appreciated by one and all."

This goes to show what a difference we can make in brightening up our

communities when we work in partnership with local authorities, organisations, and – of course – our residents. Such opportunities also give us the chance to build connections and a sense of community spirit within our neighbourhoods. Since the green areas were regenerated, we've heard comments from residents about the positive impact it's had on their mental health which goes to show how important projects like this can be. Although the seasons have changed now, and the winter can be harsh on plants, PA Housing has pledged more funds to maintain these garden spaces for this year too. This means that the residents of Walnut Tree Close can continue to enjoy these neater, friendlier, and more appealing green spaces as 2024 blossoms!

DIANA
HOUSE



Advice about how to stay safe online

It's important to be vigilant online. A few simple steps can potentially save you from losing money through online fraud and scams. Here are some helpful tips about how you can increase your online security:

Two-factor authentication

Most online services like email and banking now offer the option of adding two-factor authentication to the login process. This usually involves texting a code to your mobile phone, or perhaps downloading an app to verify your identity when logging in. This means that even if someone guesses your password, you still have control over allowing the login.

Password strength

Short passwords made up of just numbers or letters can easily be found out by hackers. When creating a password, perhaps try picking three random words which will allow you to create a strong password that is easier to remember.

Also, ensure that you don't use the same password for everything because you don't want someone breaking into

your bank account because they guessed the password to a social media account.

Password managers (for example, on your phone) can be a very helpful. This is a piece of software that securely stores all your different passwords so that you can always find them.

Don't ever share your passwords with anyone. For example, bank employees will never ask you for your password. This is a common trick in telephone scams.

Face and fingerprint

As an alternative to traditional passwords, consider using your fingerprint or face scan on your smart phone or tablet as it is completely unique to you and much harder for a hacker to fake. Many new devices now support fingerprint scanning, and a lot of banks now offer face recognition to log in or authenticate payments online.

Think before you click

When browsing and shopping online, it's easy to fall into the trap of assuming a site is safe. Scammers will often create very realistic looking websites but, in

reality, they are trying to steal your password or perhaps your credit card details. This kind of activity is very common at busy times like Christmas, Black Friday, or January sales, but it can happen at any time.

Links to these sites will often come in an email or text message. If you're unsure about the link you are clicking, go to a trusted search engine and type in the full address of the site you want. Also, check if your antivirus software is up to date.

Remember: if an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is!

Revitalising your neighbourhood

What our Estate Services Team can do for you

If you receive communal cleaning and / or grounds maintenance services, we have set out all the information you need on our website. This includes who your contractors are for these services based on where you live and our commitments to you.

Making sure the indoor and outdoor communal areas where you live are clean

and tidy is an important part of making you feel at home. Depending on the contract for your home, this could include keeping communal stairwells clean, removing graffiti, window cleaning, keeping bin areas tidy, and helping to tackle fly-tipping.

Looking after the communal green spaces around your home can be just as important in making you feel

proud of where you live. This could include cutting the grass, keeping bushes and hedges trimmed, and – if necessary – litter picking.

Which contractor looks after your communal cleaning and grounds maintenance will depend on which region – or lot – you live in. You can find out which Estates contractors work in your area below:

Region	Cleaning Contractors	Grounds Maintenance Contractor
Surrey	Wetton	Just Ask
West London	Wealdens	Wealdens
East London	Wealdens	Wealdens
South Leicester and Northamptonshire	Interclean	John O'Conner
Nottinghamshire	Clean Green	Tivoli Group
Leicester	Interclean	John O'Conner

The Estate Services Team also works closely with Treeworks Environmental Practice (TEP), who have been contracted to proactively inspect and help to manage all (approximately 20,000) trees in our communal areas. TEP carries out annual inspections on a proportion of the tree population so that we can prioritise work on high-risk or nuisance trees.

For more information on what our Estate Services Team can and can't do in your area, take a look at our Communal Services page at the address below.

www.pahousing.co.uk/communalservices

“A blanket around their homes”

How we’re making our coldest homes winter-ready

In the Highfields area of Leicester, we’re undertaking huge upgrades to some of our oldest – and least energy efficient – homes alongside our contractor, Equans. Some of our homes are over 100 years old, which means that their lofts have limited insulation and their walls have none at all. As there are many homes in this area that are energy Band D or below (which means that heat is lost very easily from these homes) we’re starting here, but we hope to expand this project across the country in the future to continue striving towards our target of Net Zero carbon emissions.

Once the work has been completed, the improvements installed will mean that residents in these homes will be more comfortable and warmer in the winter, have greater control of their heating, have a reduced risk of damp and mould, and have better air quality in their homes – all at no extra cost to them.

The process involves:

1. Installing wall insulation to the outside of the rear and side walls, finished in a render colour chosen by the resident.
2. Installing wall insulation to the inside of the front walls.

3. Replastering and redecorating the front rooms to a colour chosen by the resident.
4. Improving the loft insulation and fitting loft boarding.
5. Installing a new Switchee smart thermostat.
6. Improving ventilation throughout the home.
7. Carrying out any repairs necessary to the walls, roof, and guttering.

This is a lot of work and requires operatives to be working for a few hours in residents’ homes on as many as 45 days. We understand that this could be perceived as quite invasive, so we spoke to Raisa, one of the first residents in the area to have all the work completed to hear what she had to say about the project:

“At first, there were concerns that our rooms would look smaller because of the thickness of the internal wall insulation, but it doesn’t look much different. Overall, we have probably lost 2 to 3 inches from the size of the room, and we don’t notice it at all. The work is noticeable from our back garden because of the external wall insulation, but it’s looking very good and neat. We can feel that our home is warmer now that it’s done, and it takes a shorter time for it to heat up.

“The process took quite a while with operatives being present in our home for a few hours on most days for over a month. Ideally it could have been shorter, but everybody who worked in our home was extremely courteous. Equans were happy to give us our space and privacy when we needed it. For example, they halted work because it was my daughter’s birthday and even got her a card. They were so good that they felt like part of the family. We also got help from PA Housing with Resident Liaison Officer, Nameera also being there to keep us informed every step of the way. There was never a need to chase anything up, so would I recommend this? Of course!”

Equans and PA are happy to go the extra mile to ensure that residents are happy during this process. We’ll help by:

- recycling belongings and furniture that residents might not want by providing a limited waste disposal service,
- providing cardboard boxes for temporarily storing belongings whilst we complete the work,
- supporting to clear loft space whilst we improve the insulation and fit boarding,



Internal, during work



External, after work

- moving any furniture away from the affected walls,
- matching paint and wallpaper where possible so your home still feels like home,
- working with residents to have fitted furniture re-installed before we leave.

Nik Barnett, Site Manager at Equans, kindly provided the following statement to dispel some common misconceptions about the project:

“After months of planning, we’ve been completing work on our first homes. We’ve learned a lot from them, which will now allow us to work on more projects at once. Although it takes us a while to make these changes to each home, if we receive notice in advance, we can accommodate for any of the residents’ needs. If they need the house to themselves, we’re happy to come back

another day. Everyone has their own life to live.

“What we’re doing is like putting a blanket around their homes whilst still making sure there’s enough passive ventilation – like fans in kitchens and bathrooms – so it isn’t sweating or stifling. Whilst this may seem like it’s cooling the air down, it actually moves warm air around the house. This insulation and ventilation can dramatically reduce damp and mould appearing on the walls.

“One misconception is that the heating won’t need to be turned on still. This is not true. However, residents will find it much cheaper to heat their homes once this is done. The new thermostats that are being installed will automatically turn the boiler off once the room has reached the set temperature. They can also monitor how much energy is used to

measure the effectiveness of the insulation. The temperature can be controlled remotely via an app so it can be warm by the time residents arrive home.

“Another FAQ we’ve had is ‘Can we just have some of the work done?’ For the insulation to work effectively, the whole process has to be completed because cold air is like water, it will always find a way through, and warm air will find its way out. This is what we’re trying to reduce by keeping in as much of the warm air as we can. The home we walk out of will be much warmer and more energy efficient than the one we first entered.”

And that’s a wrap! Stay tuned for updates on this project as we’d like to continue improving homes and saving residents money on their energy bills.

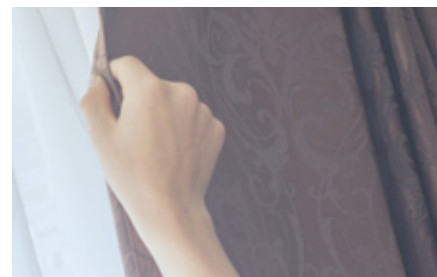


Staying cosy in your home

Now that we're in the colder months of the year, it's that time when we consider putting on the heating when our homes get too chilly. However, with prices being so high, it's important that we look at ways of reducing how hot it needs to be and managing how long we need to leave it on for.

That's why we've put together a series of tips to stay cosy for less.

Cold air can circulate around a house and heat can escape from the rooms you'd like to keep warm if your doors are left open inside. Consider keeping them shut to keep your home as toasty as possible. Closing blinds and curtains in the evening can also reduce heat loss. Just ensure that they don't block your radiators while they're on as they will absorb lots of the heat!



Putting draught excluders across the bottom of your doors can be important in keeping your rooms warm. They come in many different shapes and sizes (so you can choose a funky design) and they're not too expensive either.

Another tip for saving energy is to use pans that are the appropriate size when you're cooking. It takes less heat to warm up a smaller pan due to its smaller surface. The smaller the pan, the less heat and energy are wasted.



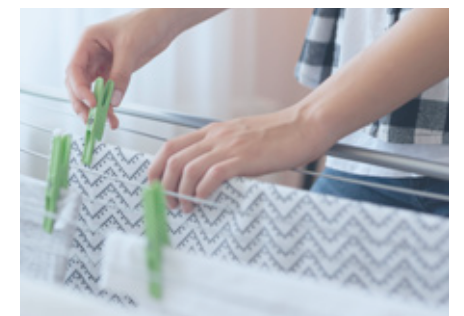
When drying your wet clothes in the winter, hanging them outside in the damp and cold weather isn't really an option. That's why many people resort to hanging them on radiators, so they dry more quickly. However, this can lead to damp or mould, and it can affect how quickly your home heats up. That's why it's sensible to invest in a clothes horse to use the natural heat of your home to dry your clothes and linen instead.



If your home has wooden floors, you're more likely to lose more heat than if you have carpets. In the case that you do have wooden floors, perhaps consider picking up a rug... to stay snug.



While in the house, before resorting to cranking the heating up to max, consider putting your warmest jumpers on and wrapping up in some blankets first. This will help you to judge whether you need the heating up or not.



Depending on how you use it, keeping your heating on a consistent low heat for a while can be more effective and less expensive than switching it on and off for short bursts of heat. To ensure your home heats up when you need it, getting to know the timer settings on your thermostat can be very helpful.

But that's not all you can do to reduce heating costs. You can also receive external help, such as:

Yearly winter fuel payments to help you with energy costs, which you can find at gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment

Cold weather payments for people in receipt of other benefits such as Pension Credit. See: gov.uk/cold-weather-payment

Warm home discounts, which entails a single payment for low-income and retirement-age people. Read more here: gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme





Knowing who's behind the door

We want to engage with you and your neighbourhood, which is why our Neighbourhood Coordinators can now support more of your needs in your local communities – because every engagement with you matters!

Listening to you

When you said you wanted people who could make decisions and give you answers when they knock on your door, we listened to your feedback – and we want to keep listening. Now, you'll be able to speak to your local Neighbourhood Coordinator (NC) about services such as cleaning, grounds maintenance, and fly tipping as our Neighbourhoods Team will be working more closely with our Estate Services Team so they can take more ownership and make sure this work is completed.

Your Neighbourhood Coordinator will have more control over the services delivered in your neighbourhood – whether you're a tenant, leaseholder, or you're living in shared ownership, sheltered, supported, or extra care accommodation etc. In short, if you're a PA Housing resident, your NC will be there to provide services to you!

Being seen

As well as feeling listened to, you also told us that you want to see us more in your communities. To make this possible, we've reduced the number of homes that our NCs are responsible for and increased the number of staff in this role. Not only that, but we will be continually reviewing our patches to ensure that they're more local and best suited to you. Our goal is to build a more personal connection with you and to provide informed, real-time information on the progress of your requests, so you don't need to chase us. We can tailor our services to your individual households because our NCs will get to know who's behind each door.

If your NCs can't answer your query in the moment, they can contact our dedicated, specialist teams, who can support them to provide resolutions for you.

Staying in touch with your communities

We want you to gain a greater sense of community spirit and pride in where you live. This also means being able to express what you'd like to see in your neighbourhood to make it a more vibrant, safe, and desirable place. That's why each of our NCs has been allocated their own neighbourhood improvement fund to make informed decisions on how to brighten up your community. Each NC will know the needs of your neighbourhood and will understand your service charges so they can ensure they meet with your requirements and demonstrate value for money too.

There's nothing like in-person chats and engagement. In face-to-face conversations with us, you can make suggestions, report issues, and stay informed in a way that is personal to you – all without having to call us. So, this is something we want to do more of. To achieve this, we've also enhanced our PA on Tour events by inviting along more colleagues from across our departments at PA Housing. This way, we can all get to know your community, highlight our services, and introduce you to other organisations and agencies in your area that can provide additional support.

But that's not all! Your NCs will be setting up a variety of different hubs where you can meet them for a chat about what matters to you. This could mean local coffee mornings, meet and greet desks, or private appointment sessions.

Having your say

We recognise that every interaction with you is an opportunity to capture how you're feeling and how we're performing. The aim is to provide a variety of ways for you to share your views and tell us how you want us to act on your feedback, so we'll be running a campaign about You and Your Neighbourhood. Part of this will involve occasionally knocking on your door to gather up-to-date information about you and to hear your thoughts about our services. We hope that this will allow us to provide a service that meets your needs and is tailored to you.

Let's get to know each other better and, together, we can all be proud of our neighbourhoods.



A home free of fear

1 in 5 adults experience Domestic Abuse during their lifetime. This equates to 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6-7 men. Domestic abuse occurs when the victim and perpetrator(s) of abuse are aged 16 or over and they are personally connected to each other. In 2022, around 2.4 million adults were victims of domestic abuse in the England and Wales (1.7 million women and 699,000 men). Any of following can be classed as abuse, and it doesn't matter whether this is a single incident or a consistent pattern of behaviour:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional, or other abuse.

If you're suffering from any of these, remember that you're not alone, and that support is available for you. You're not responsible for the abuse, nor are you to blame – it's your abuser who is responsible for their actions.

Domestic abuse, in any form, is a criminal offence, but it's estimated that less than 24%

of domestic abuse crime is reported to the police. No one has a right to abuse you or your children – physically, verbally, or sexually. Abusive relationships don't have to go on. You can get out, you can survive, and you can move on with your life. The first step is to ask for support, and there's no shame in getting the help you need.

What to do if you or someone you know is suffering from domestic abuse?

If it's an emergency and you believe that a crime is taking place, someone is injured, you're being threatened, or you're in immediate danger, you should always call 999.

In non-emergencies, a free National Domestic Abuse helpline is available 24/7, all year round on 0808 2000 247. For more information on this, you can visit the Refuge charity website on www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk. At PA, we're also here to listen, so please call us on **0300 123 2221** if you need advice.

What can PA Housing do?

We're members of the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA), which is an

organisation that provides a nationally recognised, best practice model for housing provider responses to domestic abuse. Currently, we're working towards an accreditation from DAHA, which means that we'll be equipped to deliver the safest, most effective responses we can.

You can speak to us and tell us your concerns as we take all reports of domestic abuse extremely seriously. We can ensure that this stays confidential, and we will only share the information given on a need-to-know basis so that you can feel comfortable speaking to us. Then, we can work with many different partner agencies to take a victim-centred approach to supporting you and your family.

How recently have you had your annual gas safety check?

If you haven't had yours in the last 12 months, give us a call on **0300 123 2221** or report it through My PA and we'll arrange for an operative to perform this for you. It should only take 45 minutes to complete.

By taking care of your gas appliances and preventing carbon monoxide leaks, fires, and explosions, you're also taking care of your home, your loved ones, and your local community. It may save you money on your utility bills too!

If you have a boiler problem, please report a repair to us and we'll get someone out to you when we can.