

Season's greetings

Our staff, Board and Tenant Scrutiny Panel send festive greetings to all our tenants.

We wish you a very happy Christmas and all the best for the New Year.



Holiday closure dates

Our offices will be closed for the holidays from 12.30pm on Friday 23 December 2022. They will reopen on Tuesday 3 January 2023.

If you need an emergency repair while our offices are shut, you will find our out-of-hours arrangements set out on the back page.

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Tenant services go online

You will soon be able to access our frontline services 24/7 – thanks to a major digital upgrade here at WFHA.



In January 2023, we are going live with new housing management software, which will make us more efficient and include our first-ever 'tenant portal'.

We will write to invite you to sign up online, so that you can access the system securely.

Once registered, you will be able to go online, at any time that suits you, to:

- report a non-emergency repair
- check your rent account
- print a rent statement
- give us a compliment or make a complaint
- check and update some of the information we hold about you and your household, and
- engage with us in other ways.

Our new housing management system replaces software that was over 20 years old and that was not web based. So, the overall change is designed to make our services more cost-effective, secure and digitally-inclusive.

If you have any questions please feel free to email us at info@wfha.org.uk, or phone Linda Wright, Head of Governance, on 020 8524 6987.

New tenant satisfaction measures

The Regulator of Social Housing has created a new system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services.

The changes mean introducing new tenant-facing standards and introducing a new set of tenant satisfaction measures that social housing landlords must report on.

Because landlords will be using the same measures and the same wording in their major surveys, you will be able more easily to look at how well we are performing compared to other similar landlords.

The new measures will give us valuable information about where we can improve and help us to meet our regulator's standards.

From 1 April, we have to collect a range of views from you on areas such as repairs, safety checks and complaints. Nearer the time, we will write with more details, before contacting you to find out how you think we are doing.

The changes are being introduced in line with the Government's Social Housing White Paper, which was published two years ago.



Cost-of-living update

As we head into winter, we know that many of our tenants will be worrying about their energy bills and rising food costs. You will find some useful information on this page, but you are also welcome to call us if you need further support.

Help with your energy bills

The Government has been providing funding in various forms to help people pay higher heating bills.

As well as extra money for people on benefits and those who are over state pension age, most people are getting £66 taken off their monthly electricity bills until March 2023.

If you have a (non-smart) pre-payment meter, you should be getting vouchers by post or email instead. Use them when you top up your card at a PayPoint site. Contact us if you need help to use this scheme.

During the year from April 2023, people on means-tested benefits will get another £900. People on disability benefits will get £150 and pensioners will get a £300 top up to next year's Winter Fuel Allowance.



Rent payments

It is vital that you keep up with your rent payments. You are at risk of losing your home if you do not. If you are in financial difficulty and you are worried about paying your rent, please phone us on 020 8524 6987, option 2, or email info@wfha.org.uk, so that our Housing Management team can help you.



Still struggling to pay?

Contact your energy provider to agree a plan you can afford and to find out about any grants.

Go online to www.turn2us.org.uk to search for grants from charities. You can also check the benefits you could claim on this website.



Crisis support from the Council

If you are in crisis, you can make a claim for Local Welfare Assistance from Waltham Forest Council. You can ask for help to pay for:

- food
- gas and electricity
- household and other essential items, and
- to pay for immediate needs.

Go to: www.walthamforest.gov.uk/benefits-and-money-advice/help-and-advice/local-welfare-assistance-household-support-fund-lwa to apply. Or contact us, if you need help to do this.

The Council's Household Support Fund is currently waiting for the Government to confirm further

funding. If this is agreed, people who are vulnerable or in crisis will also be able to claim up to £250 towards energy or water bills, pre-paid prescription charges or housing costs.

The Council has put together a page of information and links to help you access local support. Go to www.walthamforest.gov.uk/benefits-and-money-advice/your-crisis-our-action

This web page covers:

- benefits and debt advice
- food support, and
- jobsearch support.

It also signposts the HEET project, which offers energy advice home visits (www.theheetproject.org.uk)

Food banks in Waltham Forest

Eat or Heat have four foodbanks in Waltham Forest:

- in E17 (open Monday, Wednesday, Friday)
- in E4 (open Tuesday am), and
- in E11 branch (open Thursday am).

Ask us to refer you for four weeks' support.

The **Rukhsana Khan Foundation** gives out three-day parcels on Saturdays from 11am to 12 noon at the William Morris Community Centre, 6-8 Greenleaf Road, E17 6QQ. You do not need a referral.

Highams Park Food Aid ("The Hub") provides food and household essentials for people in the E4 area. Open Tuesday and Thursday from 11am-1pm at All Saints, Highams Park. On Wednesdays from 11am to 2pm, they run a free community café.

The foodbank run by the **pl84u al-suffa** interfaith support group is open Monday and Wednesday, 12-2pm at the Epicenter, 41 West Street, Leytonstone E11 4LJ. This organisation also provides hot meals and other support to the most vulnerable.



Christmas fire safety

London Fire Brigade has important fire safety messages for the Christmas period.

- **Do** keep candles away from Christmas trees, curtains, or anything else that could catch fire and don't leave them burning unattended. Consider using LED tea lights instead.
- **Do** check your Christmas tree lights conform with safety standards and always switch them off before going to bed.
- **Don't** overload sockets.
- **Don't** attach decorations to lights or heaters – they can overheat and catch fire.
- **Do** make sure you have a fire escape plan and share this with everyone in your household, and any guests staying over Christmas.
- **Don't** leave cooking unattended and don't cook if you've been drinking alcohol.
- **Do** test your smoke alarms and make sure they are working. Fit a heat alarm in the kitchen that will detect an increase in temperature caused by a fire, but not be set off by cooking fumes.



The Fire Brigade has a simple tool for checking the fire safety of each room in your home. Go to: www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/home-fire-safety/home-fire-safety-checker-hfsc/

Mould, damp and condensation

We take mould, damp and condensation very seriously, because we know they can be bad for people's health.

As your landlord, we aim to help you solve these problems by:

- fixing problems with the building
- keeping your home well maintained
- providing you with efficient heating
- providing fans in kitchens and bathrooms
- giving you advice on how to prevent damp and mould caused by condensation, and
- by arranging a home visit if needed.

We will shortly be sending you a leaflet with advice that is simple to follow. We will also include this leaflet on our website.



Save energy and reduce your bills

Keep track of your bills

- Save money by opting for paperless bills and paying by direct debit.
- Send regular meter readings (unless your smart meter does this readings automatically).
- Be ready to question any direct debit increases that seem too high. Get your provider to explain the reasons.

Make the best use of your appliances.

Fridge/freezers Close doors quickly and keep shelves three-quarters full – less full or overfull makes appliances work harder. Defrost fridge/freezers regularly and vacuum the coils at the back.

Washing machines Wash full loads, at low temperatures, on eco settings. You can save 46% of the cost of running a load if you run washes at 30 degrees not 40.

Dryers Avoid tumble drying, if you can dry clothes naturally outside,

or in a room with the window open. Never dry clothes on radiators (it causes condensation).

Kettles and pans Boil only the water you need and keep lids on pans. Filling a thermos can give you cups of tea later in the day.

Cooking Defrost frozen food before cooking. Batch cook when you use the oven. Using an air fryer, slow cooker or microwave oven all cost less to run than a conventional oven.

Stay warm for less

- Turn the thermostat down by one degree and lower any thermostatic radiator valves to save energy.
- Turn off the heating an hour before you go out and set it to come on half an hour before you get home.
- Reflectors (or tin foil) on the wall behind a radiator can boost the heat back into the room.
- Draw curtains as it gets dark.

- Cling film across draughty windows and draught excluders can help you feel warmer. (But keep your home well aired, if you suffer from condensation, to prevent black mould starting.)
- Stay warm with an extra jumper, slippers or thick socks, a rug over your knees and a hot drink. But also stay active if you can.

Light your home for less

- Invest in LED light bulbs to cut energy usage by 90%.
- Turn lights off when leaving a room.

Shower for less

Shorter showers at lower temperatures can save money – especially compared to a bath.

Save wastage on standby

- Don't leave items on standby – this uses up to 85% of energy of running them switched on fully.
- Switch off sockets not in use.

Are you ready for power cuts?

National Grid say they may need to cut power to groups of homes between 4-7pm, or in the morning, on very cold weekdays in January and February. They would give 24 hours' notice.

Be prepared

The emergency services are asking people to use torches, not candles – because of the fire risk. Make sure you have a battery-powered torch (and spare batteries) in an easy-to-find place.

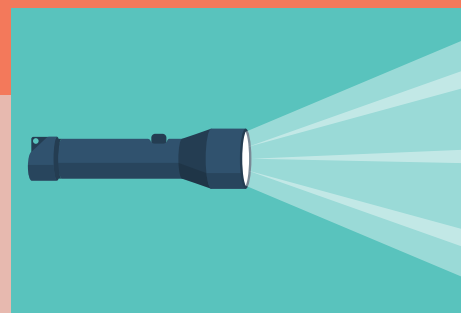
Keep your smartphone charged. WiFi will be cut, but you will still be able to use 4G to access the internet, send messages and make calls. Buy a battery pack charger, to boost the use of your phone.

Your landline will still work and a battery-powered radio would give you access to local radio. Keep a written note of emergency numbers, including 105 for the National Power Cut Helpline.

Help vulnerable people you know to get onto their energy provider's Priority Services Register – they will be prioritised as services are reconnected. Invite neighbours over if you are worried about them.

On the day

- If you work from home, remember to save your work in time – or turn on auto-save.
- Stay at home. It is safer than driving or being in an unlit public space.



- Store boiled water in a flask, so you can still make warm drinks
- Fill hot water bottles for warmth.
- Wear lots of layers and keep blankets to hand.
- Keep fridge and freezer doors shut to protect food so that you don't have to throw it away.
- Leave one light on, so that you know when the power has come back.
- Make sure you have switched off items like irons and electric fires. Coming back on suddenly could cause a fire.



Make an appointment

Our offices are closed to the public, so please make an appointment if you need to see us – and avoid a wasted journey.

We made this change because our staff now work partly from home and elsewhere, so they are not always in the office.

We are still limiting numbers in the office to keep people safe from Covid-19.

To make an appointment, either phone us on 020 8524 6987, or email us at info@wfha.org.uk



Waltham Forest Housing Association

The Energy Centre, 31 Church Hill
Walthamstow, London E17 3RU

Email us at:



- info@wfha.org.uk (general queries)
- repairs@wfha.org.uk, or
- complaints@wfha.org.uk

During office hours (weekdays, 9am to 5pm), call us on 020 8524 6987, then select:

- Option 1 for repairs
- Option 2 for housing management (to pay your rent, talk about benefits or other housing issues)
- Option 4 for governance (for enquiries about the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and tenant surveys).

For a non-gas emergency outside office hours, call our emergency contractors on 020 8524 2822.

Out of hours, if your gas heating system fails in severe weather and you have no alternative, call Swale Heating on 01795 503 365.

 [walthamforesthousingassociation](https://www.facebook.com/walthamforesthousingassociation)
 [@walthamforesta](https://twitter.com/walthamforesta)

Leave a message

Sometimes when you phone us, your calls go through to an answerphone.

If this happens, please leave us a message. Tell us your name, a bit about why you are calling and the phone number we should call you back on.



Emergency repairs when our office is closed

Our emergency repairs service is for genuine emergencies when our offices are closed. The numbers you need are listed in the box on the right.

Please do not phone these numbers out of hours if your repair is not an emergency. Call us on a normal working day instead.

Important note: If you smell gas or fumes, call Cadent immediately on 0800 111 999.



What counts as an emergency?

An emergency affects your immediate health and safety, or the structure of the building.

Some examples include:

- total failure of your gas central heating or electrical heating system in severe weather, if you have no other form of heating
- electrical fittings getting wet
- sewage overflowing indoors
- burst storage tanks, cylinders or pipes
- a leak you cannot contain, or
- failure of all lights or all power (but first check the fuse board for tripped circuits and that you have credit on your meter).

Our contractor will make things safe, but they may need to complete the repair on another day.



Sheltered housing tenants

As a sheltered housing tenant, you can report your repair by calling the numbers given on this page. You can report an emergency repair by using your community alarm system.