



June 2023

# Newsletter

Waltham Forest Housing Association

# 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

To celebrate, we are hosting a summer party on  
**WEDNESDAY 16 AUGUST 2023**

Between 12 Noon and 3pm at

**THE GARDEN ROOM,  
THE VESTRY HOUSE MUSEUM,**

Vestry Road, Walthamstow E17 9NH

For more information contact  
[info@wfha.org.uk](mailto:info@wfha.org.uk) or  
020 8524 6987, option 4



WFHA would like to thank our stakeholders who have kindly donated towards our event



## In this issue

Coming soon: our new-style tenant survey • Got views to share? Give Shahron a Call!  
Help us inspect your estate • Benefits advice

# Our new-style tenant survey

We will be carrying out our latest tenant satisfaction surveys this summer – and we are really keen to hear your views.

## We're committed to high standards

### We recently sent you a copy of WFHA's service standards and commitments.

The booklet explains what you can expect from us, when we provide you with services. It also sets out the timeframes we work to.

Our service standards were designed with the help of our Tenant Scrutiny Panel and they reflect tenant feedback.

The booklet is designed to work alongside (not replace) your tenancy agreement.

If you have any questions, you are welcome to call or email us.

Major surveys give us valuable feedback about how satisfied you are and how well we are doing.

### Introducing the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

This year's survey will be a little different, because the Regulator of Social Housing has drawn up a new set of tenant satisfaction measures for us to use. The idea is that every social landlord will ask the same questions, so that we can more easily compare our performance with other similar landlords.

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

- keeping your homes in good repair
- maintaining building safety
- engaging with you respectfully and helpfully
- handling your complaints efficiently, and
- managing your neighbourhoods responsibly.



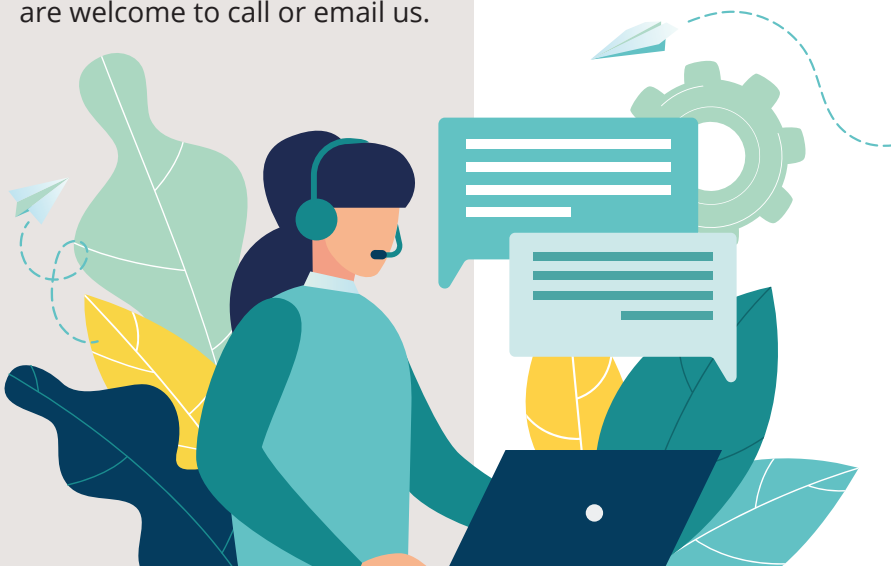
### What happens next?

We have commissioned Acuity – a specialist independent company – to run our survey for us. They will contact all our tenants to ask for your views. You will receive a survey through the post and you may get a phone call.

To make this possible (and to make sure we get feedback from a range of tenants), we will pass on to Acuity your name, address, phone number, age and ethnicity. Acuity will strongly protect this information, in line with data protection regulations.

The answers you give will be confidential. Acuity will ask if you want your responses to be completely anonymous. But you can opt to give them permission to follow up later on some of what you tell them. They will never include anything in their findings that could identify you – unless you want them to.

When you speak to someone from Acuity, they will never ask you for sensitive personal information, such as your bank account details or passwords.



## Community alarm upgrades

If you are one of our sheltered tenants, your community alarm equipment is going to be upgraded next year, in line with UK-wide digitalisation.

Our Head of Operations, Nicky Anderson (below), and our Head of Asset Services, Sally Rowe (top), will lead consultation meetings in the autumn, to show you the new equipment and answer any questions. Upgrade works will start from January 2024.

If you are unable to come to a meeting, you can phone us instead on 020 8524 6987, option 2.



## OKEachDay service ends

The OKEachDay service will be coming to an end on 1 July 2023. You can still use the service until this date.

Between now and 1 July, OKEachDay will contact you to see if you would like to keep the service as a private customer.

If you do not wish to continue with the service, they will arrange to remove the equipment from your home.

You can contact OKEachday directly on 0808 208 1234 to find out about their private packages.



## Going digital Tenant portal goes live

Our first-ever online tenant portal went live in March 2023 – giving you access to our services 24/7.

Once you are registered, our secure online service gives you an easy and convenient way to manage your tenancy, at times that suit you.

The self-service portal allows you to:

- report a non-emergency repair
- check your rent account
- print a rent statement
- pay us a compliment or make a complaint, and
- check and update some of the details we record about you and your household.

### Signing up

Before the launch, we wrote to all our tenants with email addresses, to explain how you can sign up to the new service.

If you need a little help to set up your online account, we are planning to hold a drop-in day at head office. Details to follow.

If you have questions, please feel free to email us at [info@whfa.org.uk](mailto:info@whfa.org.uk), or phone Linda Wright, Head of Governance, on 020 8524 6987.



# Got views to share?

## Give Shahron a call!

Our Chief Executive, Shahron Shah, is setting aside two mornings to speak to tenants on the phone.

Shahron will be available from 10am to 12 noon on:

- **Thursday 15 June**, and
- **Wednesday 19 July**.

You will not need an appointment – just call 020 8524 6987 and press any option. We will put you straight through, or arrange a call back if Shahron is currently speaking to someone else.

Shahron is taking these calls because we really value your views and ideas. We will announce further dates in future.

*Don't forget, you are also welcome to phone the office with your views and queries at any time.*



## Help us inspect your estate

Come and discuss your estate with us at our monthly inspection. We will be pleased to see you.

We inspect your estates to look for any problems in the shared areas at your scheme.

Inspections allow us to:

- check that gardening, grounds maintenance and cleaning are being carried out to a good enough standard
- order and check on repairs to communal areas
- check we are meeting health and safety standards, and
- plan improvements.

By taking part, you will be helping to make sure your scheme is safe, clean and secure – and a place to be proud of.

### Estate inspections

**Wednesday 5 July:** Acorn House, Electric House, Kevan Court

**Tuesday 11 July:** The Ridgeway, Woodland Avenue

**Thursday 20 July:** Garenne Court and Heathcote Grove

To find out more – including when and where to meet – phone 020 8524 6987, option 2 for Housing Operations, or email us at: [info@wfha.org.uk](mailto:info@wfha.org.uk)

*We will announce more inspection dates later.*



# Cost-of-living update

There is still support available, if you are on a low income.

## Help with energy costs

This April, the Government stopped paying £67 each month towards everyone's electricity bills. However, there is still some support available to help pay for energy.

**The energy price cap** has been extended for three months. (It rises again from the summer.)

**Pre-payment meters** If you have unused energy discount vouchers for your pre-payment meter, you must use them by 30 June 2023. If you have lost vouchers, ask your energy provider to reissue them.

From 1 July, energy providers will no longer be allowed to charge more for your energy if you have a pre-payment meter.

**Pensioners** Older people will again get an extra £300 on top of their normal Winter Fuel Payment. This will be paid in November or December 2023.

## Cost-of-living payments

People on low incomes, who get means-tested benefits, will get three cost-of-living payments, adding up to £900, over the next year.

The payments will be made in the spring and autumn of 2023, and the spring of 2024.

If you get **disability benefits**, you will also be given an additional £150 in the summer of 2023.

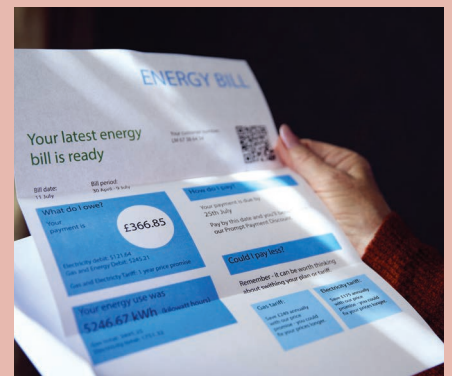
## Crisis support from the Council

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

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

The Council's additional Household Support Fund for 2023-24 is currently being finalised.

For details about these funds and for information about other support available locally, go to:



[www.walthamforest.gov.uk/benefits-and-money-advice/help-and-advice/local-welfare-assistance-household-support-fund-lwa](http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/benefits-and-money-advice/help-and-advice/local-welfare-assistance-household-support-fund-lwa)



## Support from WFHA

If you are experiencing financial difficulties and are worried about paying your rent, please call 020 8524 6987, option 2, or email us at [info@wfha.org.uk](mailto:info@wfha.org.uk)

You can also get in touch to ask for help completing any funding application forms.

## 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 (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.



## Shahron is our Woman of the Future

We're proud to announce that our Chief Executive, Shahron Shah, has been shortlisted for an award by our sector's main magazine – *Inside Housing*.



Shahron is one of just eight women to be recognised in the Woman of the Future category of the Women in Housing Awards this year.

The winners in all categories will be revealed at a special awards ceremony, which will be held in Manchester in June.

Shahron has been shortlisted for her vision over the past six years in turning WFHA into an outstanding organisation.



**WOMEN IN HOUSING AWARDS**



**HOUSING HEROES AWARDS**

For the full list of finalists go to: [www.womeninhousingawards.co.uk/shortlist](http://www.womeninhousingawards.co.uk/shortlist)

## Maximise your income Grants and benefits

**If you are struggling to make ends meet, you may be able to raise your income by applying for a grant or an additional benefit.**

*switching benefits, because some of the old benefits pay more than Universal Credit.)*

### Discretionary Housing Payments

You may be able to get a DHP (Discretionary Housing Payment) from the Council. DHPs are temporary rent top-ups. Claim online at: [www.walthamforest.gov.uk/benefits-and-money-advice/housing-benefit-support-and-guidance/discretionary-housing-payments](http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/benefits-and-money-advice/housing-benefit-support-and-guidance/discretionary-housing-payments)

### Grants

You may be able to claim a grant or switch to a social tariff to help you pay bills. Use the online search at: [grants-search.turn2us.org.uk](http://grants-search.turn2us.org.uk), or contact your supplier to find out if they run a scheme.

### Benefits

Are you getting all the benefits you could claim? Use the calculator at: [benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk](http://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk) to check if you are missing out. (But always get independent advice before



# Protecting your fire doors

You can help us keep your home safe from fire by taking care of your fire doors.

Fire doors act as a barrier to slow the spread of fire and toxic smoke around a building. They allow more time for people to leave, or stay put safely, during a fire – and make things safer for the emergency services too.

In a block of flats, there are fire



and smoke doors on the stairwells and in the corridors.

**If the door to your flat opens onto a communal space, this will also be a fire door.**

You should never repair or work on any fire door in your building – including the door to your home. You could cause damage.

You should **never**:

- drill or cut into a fire door or cut into it
- paint over a fire door's seals
- replace handles, hinges or any hardware on a fire door, or
- wedge a fire door open.



Fire doors should always come to a full closing position if opened. If you notice one that does not do this, or that has been damaged, call us on 020 8524 6987, option 1, as soon as possible.

## Stay safe in your homes

Here are some top tips for staying safe at home.

### Safe electrics

- Don't use faulty appliances or items with worn/damaged flexes.
- If an appliance plugs in, keep it out of the bathroom.
- Look for the CE mark when you buy new electrical items. Make sure second-hand items have been properly safety checked.

### Safe gas

- Don't block boiler air vents.
- Check CO2 alarms regularly – change batteries promptly.
- If the flame in a boiler or gas hob turns from blue to orange get it checked immediately.
- Check gas pilots are still lit.
- If you suspect a leak, open the windows, turn off the supply and call your gas supplier, or the National Grid Emergency

- line on 0800 111 999. Do not use electrical switches.
- Look for the British Standards safety mark or British Seal of Approval on new items. Make sure second-hand items been checked by a Gas Safe engineer.

### Safe kitchens

- Keep heavy items low down and items you use a lot in easy reach.
- Take extra care with hot liquids.
- Keep knives away from children.
- Turn panhandles inwards.
- Use a cordless or coiled lead so children can't pull on them.

### Safe medicines and chemicals

- Keep dangerous items in a locked or out-of-reach cupboard.
- Keep medicines in their original containers and never share other people's medicine.
- Take leftover medicines back to the pharmacist for destruction.

### Fire safety

- Take care when smoking and store matches/lighters safely.
- Never leave lit candles.
- Never overload sockets.
- Don't cook when you are too tired, or leave pans unattended
- Don't throw water onto a pan fire – turn the heat off if possible.
- Avoid charging phones overnight.
- Check smoke and heat alarms regularly.
- Know the escape plan if you live in sheltered housing. Or make your own plan if you live in general needs housing.
- Keep keys nearby at night.



## No drop-ins: please make an appointment

Our offices are not open to the public, so if you would like to see a member of the team, please contact us and we will make you an appointment.

Call us on 020 8524 6987 or email us at: [info@wfha.org.uk](mailto:info@wfha.org.uk)



Our normal weekday office hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Our office is closed at weekends and on bank holidays.

## Leave us a voice message

Sometimes when you phone us, your calls may 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 to call you back on.

# Emergency repairs when our office is closed

**Our out-of-hours repairs service is for genuine emergencies only.**

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

### What counts as an emergency?

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

### Gas emergencies

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



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

### Non-gas emergencies

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

Our contractors will visit to make the situation safe. They may need to return on another day to complete the repair.

Non-gas emergencies include:

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



## Waltham Forest Housing Association

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

Email us at:



- [info@wfha.org.uk](mailto:info@wfha.org.uk) (general queries)
- [repairs@wfha.org.uk](mailto:repairs@wfha.org.uk), or
- [complaints@wfha.org.uk](mailto: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 Tenant Engagement 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)  
 [@walthamforesthousingassociation](https://twitter.com/walthamforesthousingassociation)



### Sheltered housing tenants

As one of our sheltered housing tenants, use the numbers given on this page to report your repairs. You can also report an emergency repair by using your community alarm system.