

Season's greetings from WFHA

Our staff team and Board send festive greetings and best wishes for the New Year to all our tenants.



Our holiday closure dates

Our offices will be closed for the holidays from Tuesday 24 December 2023 at 12.30pm. They will reopen on Thursday 2 January 2025. For our emergency repairs service during the festive break, see the back page.

Events in Waltham Forest

Visit LBWF's website for a list of up-and-coming events. Go to: www.walthamforest.gov.uk/events/things-to-do-autumn-and-winter

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Christmas fire safety

Tips from the London Fire Brigade:

- Keep candles away from curtains, Christmas trees, or anything that could catch fire.
- Don't leave candles burning unattended. Consider using LED tea lights instead.
- Check your Christmas lights conform to safety standards and switch them off when you go out or go to bed.
- Don't attach decorations to lights or heaters – they might catch fire.
- Don't leave cooking pans unattended.
- Don't cook if you've been drinking.
- Put cigarettes out carefully if you smoke.
- Test your smoke alarms. Consider fitting a heat alarm in the kitchen that will detect the rising temperature of a fire, but not get set off by cooking fumes.
- Don't overload sockets.
- Make sure any new electrical appliances have a British or European safety mark when you buy them.
- Make sure you have a fire escape plan and share it with everyone in your household over the Christmas period.
- Check on elderly or vulnerable relatives and neighbours and make sure they are safe.

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



Paying rent at Christmas

Christmas can be the busiest and most expensive time of year, with the cost of buying presents and extra food.

Instead of just relaxing and enjoying family time, you may be worried about how much Christmas will affect your finances – and whether you will struggle to pay your rent.

Do remember that it's important not to let Christmas costs take over. Missing your December rent payment would mean starting the New Year in arrears. You could then struggle to catch up.

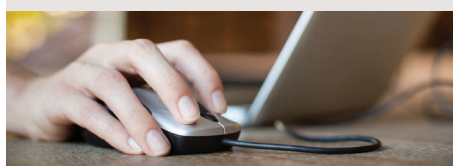


If you start the year with your rent fully paid and up to date, you could then pay a little extra throughout the year – or just in the run-up to Christmas. Covering your rent first could give you extra money to enjoy the holidays, without the worry.

Change of circumstances

If your circumstances change, remember to tell us, update your Universal Credit account, or contact the Housing Benefit office on 020 8496 3000.

Your benefits will change if your income has gone up or down, or if there are other changes in your household. It is very important to make sure that you keep your details up to date.



We are here to help

If you're in financial difficulty, or struggling to pay your rent, do contact us. We are here to help.

We will support you to avoid getting into rent arrears and to keep to any arrangements you make to repay amounts that you owe.

We may also be able to help you access support from other sources, as well as giving assistance to complete funding application forms.

Call us on 020 8524 6987, option 2, or email us at info@wfha.org.uk

Christmas rubbish

Dispose of your Christmas rubbish safely and responsibly.

- Bag non-recyclable rubbish and food waste securely, to avoid attracting vermin.
- Put recycling and rubbish bags out on collection day and inside the right bins.
- Check that what you put in the recycling is actually recyclable, or the bins may not be emptied.
- Check if your wrapping paper

is recyclable by trying the 'scrunch test'. If it stays in a ball and has no glitter or foil decoration, it can go in the recycling! Remove any sticky tape, bows and tags.

During the festive season, collection days may change. For collection days call the council on 020 8496 3000, or go online to: www.walthamforest.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/household-bin-collections/check-your-collection-days

Satisfaction survey update

We are continuing to make changes in line with the feedback you gave us in our last satisfaction survey.

Our 2023 survey included the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures introduced by the Regulator for Social Housing. These allow for direct comparison with other social housing providers.

As we reported last issue, you gave us an overall satisfaction rate of 77%. Since we got the results, we have been busy responding to the changes you asked for.

To be more visible around your estates and schemes, we moved from our Church Hill office and

located our staff at several scheme offices around the borough.

You wanted more ways to speak to us – and to see more of us in person. So, if you are a sheltered housing tenant, you now have:

- a weekly welfare visit
- weekly surgeries at your scheme
- suggestion boxes at your scheme, and
- (coming soon – dates to be announced) monthly coffee mornings at your scheme.

If you are one of our general needs tenants, you can meet us remotely at meetings by logging in using 'Teams'. You can also meet us using Teams if you can't get to our office for an appointment, or if you need an evening appointment.

We have also introduced a new way to store data about our tenants called 'Stay Connected'.

With your consent, we can find out



more about our tenants and their households. We will then be able to see where we can improve, or help to provide tenants with services that are directly applicable to them.

This will also help to ensure that all tenant groups are represented.

Our next survey using the Tenant Satisfaction Measures will take place in the summer of 2025.

Doing it yourself on our tenant portal



Our tenant portal gives you 24-hour access to many of our services – every day of the year. It's secure, easy to use and a convenient way to manage your tenancy.

You can use the portal to:

- report a non-emergency repair online
- check your rent account
- print out a rent statement
- check and update the details we hold about you, and
- pay us a compliment or make a complaint.

To get your online account started, you will need an email address.

If you have any questions, we will be pleased to assist. Please email us at info@whfa.org.uk or phone our Head of Corporate Services, Linda Wright, on 020 8524 6987, option 4.

Getting involved in our work

To continue improving services, we would really welcome your ideas and feedback.

If you would like to attend an estate inspection, or to get involved in other ways, please contact us.

To check when inspections are taking place, or to find out more, phone us on 020 8524 6987, option 2. Or email us at info@whfa.org.uk



Making ends meet

Support and advice from LBWF

The Council has put together a list of the resources available locally at www.walthamforest.gov.uk/benefits-and-money-advice/your-crisis-our-action

There is information about where you can get help with money, food, energy bills, health and wellbeing, skills and employment, and getting digitally connected. There are also links to help families.

The money section includes grants available from the Council. They include how to apply for:

- Local Welfare Assistance – to help pay for essentials, and
- Discretionary Housing Payments – if you are behind with your rent.



Help with energy costs

If you are struggling to pay, contact your energy provider to agree a plan you can afford and to find out about grants.

Charitable grants

To help pay basic household bills, search for charitable grants at www.turn2us.org.uk

Food banks in Waltham Forest

Eat or Heat operate the following foodbanks in Waltham Forest:

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

We can 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 E4. Open Tuesday and Thursday from 11am to 1pm at All Saints Church, Church Avenue, E4 9QZ. On Wednesdays, 11am to 2pm, they run a free 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.

They also provide hot meals and support to the most vulnerable.

Winter Fuel Payments and Pension Credits

Not everyone over state pension age now qualifies for Winter Fuel Payments.

You will still get a Winter Fuel Payment if you get Pension Credit or certain other benefits. Now is a good time to check your eligibility for these benefits.

Pension Credit

If you are over state pension age and you live alone, or with a partner who is also over state pension age, you can claim Pension Credit to top up your weekly income to the guaranteed level of £218.15 if you are single and £332.95 if you are a couple.

If you get Pension Credit, you will also qualify for winter fuel payments.

Pension Credit premium

If you are severely disabled, you could get an additional £81.50 each week. You would need to be claiming:

- Attendance Allowance
- the middle/highest care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- the daily living component of PIP (Personal Independence Payment)
- Armed Forces Independence Payment, or
- the daily living component of Adult Disability Payment, at the standard or enhanced rate.



Call the Pension Credit claim line for advice on: 0800 99 1234.

Mixed-age couples

If you are in a mixed-age couple, where one of you has not yet reached state pension age, you cannot get Pension Credit, but you may, as a couple, get Universal Credit instead.

If the younger partner is not working, they may get other means-tested benefits including Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance.

In all of these cases, as the older partner, you will also qualify for Winter Fuel Payments.

For more advice about claiming benefits, call or email us.



Winter Fuel Payments

If you qualify for a winter fuel payment:

- Your household will get £200 or £300 – depending on when you were born.
- Your confirmation letter will have arrived in October or November.
- Your payment will usually arrive in your bank account in November or December.

To check in detail if you are eligible, go to www.gov.uk/pension-credit/eligibility

For help and advice, call the Winter Fuel Payment Centre on: 0800 731 0160 or use the online form at: <https://secure.dwp.gov.uk/contact-winter-fuel-payments-centre/date-filter>

Mould, damp and condensation

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

We aim to help you solve these problems by:

- fixing any 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
- arranging a home visit if needed.

Download our advice leaflet at: wfha.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/WFHA-Damp-mould-WEB-EMAILv2.pdf



Save energy, lower your bills

Some simple ways to keep your energy bills in check.

Keep track of your bills

- Save money with paperless bills and by paying by direct debit.
- Send regular meter readings (unless your smart meter does this automatically).
- Question direct debit increases that seem too high.

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. Air fryers, slow cookers and microwaves 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.
- 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.)
- 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

Take shorter showers at lower temperatures.

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.

Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

We are opposed to discrimination in all its forms. We are dedicated to nurturing an environment that values and celebrates diversity. This commitment underpins everything that we do.

You can read or download our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy at: wfha.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/EDI-Policy-Sept-2023.pdf

We are committed to supporting all our tenants. We continually work towards creating a safe, inclusive community in which people of all cultures and sexual orientations feel safe, comfortable and accepted.

We have signed up to following commitments.



SHARP – the Social Housing Anti-Racism Pledge – provides a framework for housing

organisations that are committed to developing an inclusive culture. To achieve this involves taking

action, setting targets, and communicating and engaging with stakeholders. We also commit to working with others in the social housing sector to identify best practice to actively combat racism. At WFHA, our SHARP commitment means that we actively promote an inclusive culture for our tenants, staff, Board and stakeholders, where people are comfortable talking about race and racism. To find out more, you can visit the SHARP website at: www.sharpledge.org/sharp

HouseProud, the LGBTQ+ Housing Pledge, is a scheme that all social housing associations can sign up to, to demonstrate their commitment to giving LGBTQ+



tenants equality and support. The pledge was developed by HouseProud and the University of Surrey, in association with residents, staff members and sector leaders, to address the issues raised by the findings of No Place Like Home?, the largest study ever undertaken to understand LGBTQ+ experiences of social housing. The pledge is now delivered in partnership with Stonewall Housing. To find out more, you can visit the HouseProud website at: www.houseproud-lgbt.com

elop – support for the LGBTQ+ community

elop is an award-winning LGBTQ+ mental health and wellbeing charity.

It has been supporting people in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans+ (LGBT+) communities in Greater London, and on the borders of Essex, since 1995.

The charity offers specialist mental health support, advice, information, counselling, and wellbeing support

to adults, as well as support and social support groups for young LGBTQ+ people.

elop can also connect you to a wide range of community services delivered by and for LGBTQ+ people, including events, activities and social support groups. To find out more, go to:

www.walthamforest.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/support-

[and-community-services-your-area/elop](https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/support-area/elop)

You can also contact the WFHA team, who will be pleased to help you.



Our office

A quick reminder that we have moved to Libro Court Office, (address in the column opposite).

Please note:

Our registered office for any legal notices is still the same:
31 Church Hill, Walthamstow,
London E17 3RU.



Waltham Forest Housing Association

Write to us at:

WFHA Libro Court Office
2A Larkswood Road
Chingford
London E4 9DY

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), phone 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 (to ask 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.

Our registered address for legal notices is still: 31 Church Hill, Walthamstow, London E17 3RU.

Emergencies when our office is closed

Our out-of-hours emergency service will sort out problems that affect your immediate health and safety, or the structure of the building.

Please only use these numbers for genuine emergencies.

For all other repairs, please call on the next available working day.

Non-gas emergencies

For a non-gas emergency outside office hours, call 020 8524 2822. Our contractors will visit to make the situation safe. But they may need to return on another day to complete the repair.

Non-gas emergencies include problems such as:

- electrical fittings getting wet
- sewage overflowing indoors
- burst 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), and



No drop-ins: please make an appointment

Our offices are closed to the public – unless you have an appointment.

Our staff now work in multiple locations, including from home. We are by 'appointment only' to prevent you from making wasted journeys.

To make an appointment, phone 020 8524 6987, option 2, or email us at: info@wfha.org.uk

- failure of your electrical heating system in severe weather, where you have no alternative heating.

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.

If you are a sheltered tenant, you can also opt to report an emergency using your community alarm.

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.