

# Neighbourhood Life

Winter 2018

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# Hello!

## Giving Something More

### It's hard to believe that Christmas is upon us again!

Last year, we got into the festive spirit through our Giving Something Back project, giving time and donations back to the communities we work in. This year, we decided to Give Something More – going over and above the efforts we put in last year.

We had a variety of teams working together to do loads of great work for our communities: cleaning up local waterways, volunteering for foodbanks, making lunches for homeless shelters, collecting feminine hygiene products, gardening, visiting older people in the community, and raising money through sponsored walks, fun runs, golf days and even chest waxes! In all we raised an incredible £17,000 for local causes, which I'm sure will go a great way to helping people through large and small charities. Last year, 20 staff took part in our charity challenge; this year we had 40 staff complete the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge, raising £21,000 for St Mungo's. Combined with our fundraising from last year, this brings our total raised for St Mungo's to nearly £90,000!

### Doing more for you

We've also been looking at what we can do for you – more clarity on our service offer, more opportunities to get involved, more new affordable homes and more transparency in the way we do things.

We want to make it clearer what our responsibilities are and what yours are under your tenancy agreement. And making that clear means we can focus our time and energy on other areas, such as offering an even better service to you. Housing is also moving up the political agenda and the government is proposing making housing associations more transparent, so we are more open and honest about the work we do.

We really support this and we're working hard to get more of you involved in our panels and helping to scrutinise our services, making them more accessible.

And of course, we're always looking at ways we can open up possibilities for more people by providing more affordable homes across a wide range of tenures – whether its Social Rent, Affordable Rent, SmartRent, Shared Ownership or Private Sale. The work we're doing to build 5,000 homes over the next five years will help even more people to have a safe, secure home they can feel comfortable in with their loved ones.

However you plan on celebrating the festive season, I hope you have a wonderful time with your family and friends, and have a great start to 2019!

**Helen Evans**  
Chief Executive

### Audio, Braille, large print and translation services

We can provide any section of this document to you on audio CD, in Braille or in large print. Sometimes, we can also help with translations into other languages. If you require these services please contact Customer Services on **0300 373 3000**.

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## Office opening hours and service over the Christmas period

As always, we aim to provide you with a good service at all times including over the festive period. Our office opening hours during this time will be:

On Monday 24 December and 31 December, our contact centre will be open from 8am-4pm.

### Office opening hours

Monday 24 December	9am to 5pm
Tuesday 25 and Wednesday 26 December	Closed
Thursday 27 to Friday 28 December	9am to 5pm
Monday 31 December	9am to 5pm
Tuesday 1 January	Closed

Our offices will be open as usual from Wednesday 2 January 2019. Usual office opening hours are Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Remember, you can use the self service portal to report a repair, view your rent account and pay your rent, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, online via our website at **www.networkhomes.org.uk**. If you have an emergency repair while our offices are closed, please contact us on **0300 373 3000** and you'll be directed to our out of hours repairs service.

# Hitting new fundraising heights for St Mungo's



## Forty members of our staff completed the 24 mile Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge in September, raising £20,000 for homelessness charity St Mungo's!

Throughout the hilly journey, the hikers tackled 5,200ft of ascents, while also battling the Yorkshire wind and rain.

St Mungo's is a charity which aims to end homelessness and rebuild lives with their three pillars – recovery, emergency services and accommodation.

## Our Social Responsibility

As a social housing provider, we shares St Mungo's goals of ending homelessness and we're working to help stop homelessness in London not only by raising money for St Mungo's, but also by:

- ▶ Providing rooms for New Horizon Youth Centre, a charity which supports homeless young people across London into stable employment.
- ▶ Providing rooms for several organisations that need accommodation to support homeless people.

Fiona Deal, Executive Director of People and Technology at Network Homes said:

**“This is our third year supporting St Mungo's as our Charity of the Year and it's wonderful to see our staff really get behind their cause of ending homelessness and rebuilding lives. We believe good homes make everything possible and our support of St Mungo's ties into the work we're doing to provide more affordable homes for people in London and the South East.”**

# Celebrating Black History Month

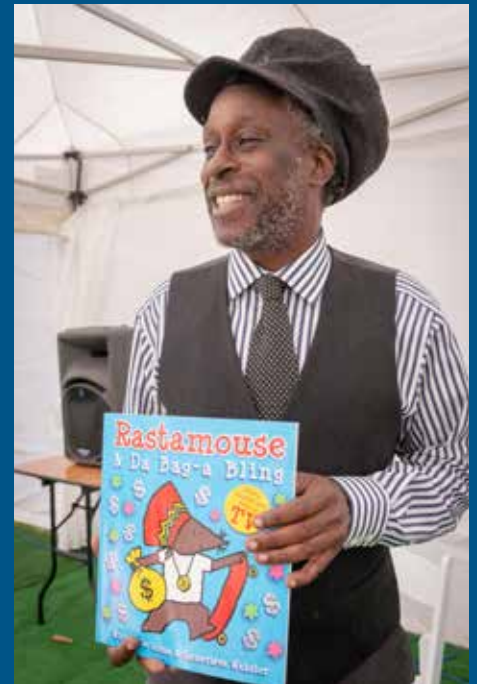
To celebrate Black History Month, throughout October we held a variety of fun events for residents and staff to celebrate and acknowledge the contributions of black people to our society.

Author and creator of the Rastamouse book and CBeebies show, Michael De Souza, brought his popular characters to life with an interactive reading for residents at Rectory Park and Kilburn Quarter.

And an African drumming teacher taught kids and parents drumming skills during a workshop.

We also held lots of internal events. We welcomed Michael De Souza to our Wembley office where he shared his experience being part of the Windrush generation, staff cooked and shared their native dishes, and we fundraised for the African Caribbean Leukaemia Trust. We hosted two panel discussions covering BME career progression and access to housing with speakers including Ben Laryea, CEO of Ekaya Housing Association; Cllr Robert Johnson for Northwick Park and Atara Frindler, Director of Skylight (Crisis UK).

All in all, a diverse set of events for our diverse staff and residents!



# Holy Trinity receives homelessness shelter donation



**Network Homes has donated £2,500 to Bishop's Stortford Night Shelter at the Holy Trinity Church in South Street to support plans to make it a facility for local homeless people in the winter months.**

The project has been running for over three years with around 100 volunteers helping Reverend Mandy Brown run the shelter from

November to March, the coldest months of the year. Volunteers provide support for homeless locals and fundraise to meet costs such as heating and lighting.

Our donation will go towards improving the services provided by the shelter during the winter months, which is simply a church hall with 12 camp beds for those in need and an adjoining annexe for two volunteers to sleep over.

David Gooch, Executive Director of Development at Network Homes who visited the church hall said: "It was certainly a humbling experience. We were shown the set up of the hall and learned how an army of 100 volunteers have been running the shelter throughout the winter. I was very impressed by the work the night shelter does. As a housing association we are committed to tackling homelessness so this is a cause very close to our hearts."

Reverend Mandy Brown, said: "Network Homes offered more than I ever expected. The donation will help us to provide an improved service to our users. Donations such as these are important to help keep the shelter growing successfully."



## Network does Pride!

**In July, Network Homes joined hundreds of organisations across the country in celebrating Pride. We wanted to recognise the enormous contribution that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people – as well as people of all other sexual and gender minorities – make to our work and our communities.**

At an event in our Wembley office, LGBT staff shared their stories and helped to raise awareness about the ongoing struggle for LGBT rights. We also hosted a speaker from Stonewall Housing, the UK’s leading housing charity for LGBT people, who told staff that LGBT discrimination has a direct impact on housing access, with a quarter of young homeless people identifying as LGBT.

But Pride is not just a celebration for us – it’s also a challenge to improve inclusion of LGBT people in everything we do. We’re working with other housing associations to develop a Pledge Card which will set out our commitment to support LGBT residents, so look out for information on how to get involved!

# We’re committed to diversity – not through words but actions

**Fiona Deal, our Executive Director of People and Technology, talks about how we’re supporting BME people at work**

If we don’t represent the diversity of our customers at the highest levels of our businesses, how can



we be sure our decisions are providing the best solutions for our communities? When you think of the diverse range of people housing associations serve, you would expect their leadership teams to reflect that diversity.

Not the case. Only 4% of senior leadership roles in housing associations are held by individuals from BME backgrounds, compared to 14% in the UK population.

This is why Network Homes has signed up to Leadership 2025 - a nine-month intensive senior leadership development programme which aims to support BME talent and create a housing sector with more BME leaders. It seeks to positively challenge the sector to acknowledge diversity is good for business, not just a tick-box exercise.

Leadership 2025 encourages housing organisations to become leadership diversity champions by signing up to a five point plan based on the recommendations of the Altair Review:

- 1 Report annually on key diversity statistics
- 2 Set aspirational targets for their board and committee recruitment from under-represented groups
- 3 Interview more diverse pools of candidates
- 4 Develop the leadership pipeline of junior and middle-management BME individuals in their organisation
- 5 Chief executives and boards should lead by example, taking a proactive and visible role in promoting, monitoring and endorsing the recommendations from the research.

It’s important to us at Network Homes to get involved with this initiative at the earliest opportunity because we want to demonstrate our commitment to diversity - not just by talking about it, but by doing something that has the potential to create a more ethnically diverse leadership across the housing sector.

**We see this as a win-win:**

opportunities for executive-ready future BME leaders to secure a place at the top table; and for our organisation and the whole sector to benefit from a broader range of skills, perspectives and solutions that truly reflect our communities and the people we house.

# De-bunking sheltered housing myths



**We held an Open Day at our Beldanes Lodge scheme in Willesden with over 50 guests from the community visiting.**

Our Open Day was to bust some of the myths about sheltered housing – what it actually is and what it's like to live there.

## Myth busting

Many people have a misconception of sheltered housing....thinking it restricts rather than enhances independence. We've even been asked 'what time do I have to be in by?'

People living in our schemes have their own self contained flats with the extra benefit of additional communal facilities to socialise in. We have parties, exercise classes, fish and chip lunches, movie evenings and more! And with staff on-hand to offer information, advice and wellbeing checks, we can also



support our residents if they need it.

The team organised transport to take people to visit a number of sheltered schemes in the area accompanied by our dedicated Activity Coordinator. This gave everyone the opportunity to speak to the residents and see the reality of this kind of housing.

Partners from Elders Voice attended to promote their Brent support service and offer advice and guidance to attendees. We also had music from our Young at Heart choir, made up of residents from various schemes that enjoy singing and all the benefits it brings.

If you're interested in getting involved, or finding out more about our sheltered housing, in both London and Hertford please call the Customer Contact Centre on **0300 373 3000**.

## Older and even bolder!

**Find out how our Older Persons Service (OPS) has been doing for the past year!**

OPS in London by numbers:

- ▶ 28 housing schemes
- ▶ 28 dedicated scheme managers
- ▶ Five boroughs in London region – Brent, Barnet, Haringey, Harrow and Westminster
- ▶ 1,000 homes
- ▶ Four programmes of activities throughout the year
- ▶ £538,129 of social value created through activities.

**A Tremendous Year for London Older Persons Service**

- ▶ 91% of tenants said living in a sheltered housing community had improved their sense of wellbeing!
- ▶ Customer satisfaction up 7% to 92%!

What a tremendous year we've had in the London Region Older Persons service. Along with these great statistics we've had a huge variety of events and activities. All have taken place in our sheltered and extra care schemes, inviting older people in general needs accommodation from

the community, to bring people together to prevent loneliness and to improve people's sense of wellbeing.

We work closely with the communities we serve; many tenants were invited by local schools to Christmas shows and lunches, and left with a gift. A local church visits a scheme monthly for a fellowship; they bring refreshments and a cake for anyone with a birthday. They also host an annual free BBQ, and invite local tenants to a lovely Christmas lunch for seniors and people receive a Christmas hamper full of goodies.



## Highlights for our older people in 2017/18

### Royal Albert Hall visit

Our residents love to attend the Royal Albert Hall as part of their Community Outreach programme. This year, they've been to the Tea Dance, Dementia Friendly screening of Top Hat, a Jazz singer, historic talk about the Suffragettes and the Friendship Matinee Symphonic Rock. And we'll be heading to the Friendship Matinee - Carols at the Hall in December too!

### Royal Wedding parties

Celebrating the Royal Wedding this year gave us all a sense of excitement. Scheme Managers were busy planning events at their schemes. The parties brought people together, sharing and making new friends, dressing up for the occasion.



### Ruislip Lido

We went to enjoy the wonderful weather and company of each other at Ruislip Lido. A sister of one of our Tuls House tenants said: "Going to Ruislip Lido is a real treat! It means so much to see my sister getting out and having a good time which she wouldn't be able to do on her own."

### The Young at Heart Choir

We have a choir of our tenants and older people from the community which we started in 2015. All these people with various medical conditions and abilities love to come together and sing; it lifts their spirits and makes attending choir practice so worth while.

### Tenants Representatives

We like to encourage our tenants to get involved with us. The role of a representative is exactly that - to act on behalf of and in the best interest of his/her fellow neighbours from their scheme. These meetings take place once every two months and bring together residents, senior staff and guest speakers. They work as an information sharing forum, and a place to bring issues for resolution.

### Music Nights

Our wonderful monthly Music Nights have become one of the most popular activities we do.

We have an in-house DJ on the decks, getting people up and dancing; for the more mellow resident, there's always a game of dominoes to be had too!

### In-House Events 2017/18

Across our schemes we put on a variety of in-house events. Every scheme is different and has its own favourites. This year our schemes have had:

- ▶ Valentine's Day, International Day, Pancake Day, St Patrick's Day, Harvest, Carnival, Diwali and Easter parties, plus a Christmas party!
- ▶ Summer Tea Dance, Garden Party, BBQs and Cream Tea events
- ▶ Sing-a-long, Breakfast Club, Story Telling, Keep-Fit, Bingo, Film Night and Music Night.

Get in touch with our Activities Coordinator Anne Marie Weir at [anne-marie.weir@networkhomes.org.uk](mailto:anne-marie.weir@networkhomes.org.uk) for the latest on our activities.

# Hotting up at the Kiln

**We're always looking for ways to support our local communities and help our residents reach their goals.**

Over the last 10 years, one of the ways we have done this is to contribute to an establishment formerly known as the Tricycle Theatre, in North West London. The theatre supported young residents from our homes on Press Road into the arts, with a fantastic theatre company brimming with talent from those as young as five years old.

By taking part in the drama group our young residents had the opportunity to perform for their local area and even be in a short film, hone their drama skills, grow in confidence and be empowered to speak their truth.

The theatre has continued to invest in young people from all around the borough of Brent while undergoing two years of refurbishment.



Excitingly, they have now transformed and reopened their doors to the community as the Kiln Theatre in Kilburn.

The Artistic Director, Indu Rubasingham, said: "Kiln Theatre is a theatre for today, for everyone and for our local community; celebrating our history and embracing the future."

We are proud to have contributed to the renovations and excited to see the enhancements to the accessibility and theatrical experience for new and returning audiences. It's great to share in the legacy of this establishment that continues to develop its community outreach programme and extend its artistic reach – all of which contribute to its mission of 'making theatre, for all'.

# Spirit of the sea

**Young people from Fennel Close in East London got the opportunity to visit Southend-on-Sea for the day over the summer.**

It all started when one of our residents got in touch to see if we would be able to support her in organising a day trip for people from her area.

We were able to help people from Fennel Close to have fun in the sun and enjoy all the sites Southend has to offer including the world famous pier!

Our resident said: "They all had a great time, and for some it was the first and only time they got off the estate for the entire summer."

"They would like me to pass on their thanks for a great day, and distraction from the GCSE results."

We'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who attended!



Photo by Jim Linwood



# Making a stand to tackle domestic abuse

**Network Homes has signed a pledge to tackle domestic abuse. The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), the professional body for people working in housing, launched the 'Make a Stand' pledge.**

Different genders, ages and backgrounds can experience physical or mental domestic abuse. We need to ensure our colleagues and residents feel safe and confident enough to speak up and ask for help.

## Why are we supporting this?

- ▶ On average the police receive over 100 calls relating to domestic abuse every hour.
- ▶ On average two women are killed by their partner or ex-partner every week in England and Wales.

- ▶ Domestic abuse related crime is 10% of total crime.
- ▶ We want to support all our staff and residents to live comfortably in their homes.

## What have we committed to?

We've signed the pledge agreeing to complete four commitments by 2019 – and we already do some of them!

- 1 Appoint Champions to support activities for people experiencing domestic violence and offer advice.
- 2 Put in place and embed a policy to support residents who are experiencing domestic violence
- 3 Put in place a HR policy and procedure on domestic abuse to support members of staff who are experiencing domestic abuse



- 4 Make information about national and local domestic abuse support services available on our website and in other places which are easily accessible to residents and staff.

## Do you need support?

The following organisations offer support and advice on their website:

- ▶ National Domestic Violence helpline [www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk/](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk/)
- ▶ Women's Aid [www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/helpline/](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/helpline/)
- ▶ Men's Advice Line [www.mensadvice.org.uk/](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk/)

# Your NHS prescriptions - check before you tick!

**Many of us assume that we are entitled to free prescriptions on the NHS, but getting it wrong could cost you.**

A new service from NHS England and NHS Business Service Authority can help you see if you're entitled to free prescriptions and how to avoid penalty charges of up to £100!

## How to check

All you need to do is visit [nhs.uk/checkbeforeyoutick](http://nhs.uk/checkbeforeyoutick) to use the eligibility checker. By answering a few simple questions, you will see if you can tick the box for a free prescription, and what proof you need to show your pharmacists when you're collecting your

prescription, or when it's being delivered to you.

If you're not entitled to free prescriptions, there's other financial help available such as the NHS Low Income Scheme and NHS Prepayment Certificates. To find out more, visit [nhs.uk/healthcosts](http://nhs.uk/healthcosts).

## Are you on benefits?

Make sure you check, as not all benefits entitle you to a free prescription. If you accidentally tick the wrong box on the form when collecting your prescription you could be fined £100!

## Pregnant or got a child under one?

All pregnant women and mums of children up to one year old are

entitled to free prescriptions. To tick the box and claim your free prescription, all you need to do is make sure that you have a valid Maternity Exemption Certificate. Your GP or midwife will be able to help you get one. Just ask them for more information.

You can find out more about Maternity Exemption Certificates by visiting [nhsbsa.nhs.uk/matex](http://nhsbsa.nhs.uk/matex).



# Fiona gets inspired by estate regeneration



## Stockwell Park resident Fiona Rodrigues believes a two week placement with Network Homes has boosted her career prospects.

The University College London student, who is in her third year studying Planning Design and Management, spent two weeks with our Regeneration Team.

While volunteering with a youth project run by SW9 Community Housing, a subsidiary of Network which manages Stockwell Park Estate, Fiona attended a CV workshop where she mentioned her interest in regeneration. She was urged to contact Regeneration Manager Tim Goodwin, who arranged work experience with his team. The team is working on three large regeneration projects across London and Hertfordshire.

Fiona said: "On my placement Tim gave me an insight on what he and his team do and the projects

he carries out. He explained what you need to take into consideration when you plan a regeneration scheme, the way it develops and the important people involved in the process. Over the two weeks we visited Network's regeneration sites at Rectory Park, Ealing, Ridgeway, Hertford, and Stockwell Park. We went to various meetings, met councillors, spoke to contractors. It was good to see how everyone came together, to discuss what's been done already and what's being planned.

"Tim also gave me lots of information and documents to read through. In one of my university modules next year I'll be asked to create a regeneration masterplan so he explained to me how you do this. One of the most important things is building contacts as having good contacts can get you far in life. I can't express how helpful Tim Goodwin was."

"The work placement has definitely boosted my opportunities for when I graduate."

Fiona Rodrigues

Since her placement, Fiona has been offered a temporary paid receptionist role at SW9 which is something else to add to her CV.

After graduating Fiona is keeping her career options going. Her long term goal is to go back to Angola where her parents are from to help transform homes and infrastructure there.

"I'd like to build up my experience in regeneration or planning in the UK first then perhaps move to Dubai to work on projects there. I'd eventually love to go back to Angola where my parents come from. I feel I could be more use to people there, transferring the knowledge I've learnt here to make it a better place."

Tim Goodwin said: "Fiona was an absolute delight throughout her placement. Always on time or early, very quick picking up things, interested in the projects we looked at, and immediately building up a rapport with everybody she met."



# Annual report for tenants 2017/18



Because good homes  
make everything possible

**Welcome to the annual report for tenants 2017/18, where you can find information about how we're doing against our targets, our performance and achievements over the last financial year. Our reporting runs from April 2017 to March 2018 with the financial year.**

It's been a good year for us where we've seen our overall customer satisfaction increase to 87%.

**Our new targets to achieve by 2023 are:**

- ▶ **5,000** new homes over five years,
- ▶ Become a Sunday Times **Top 100 Company** to Work For
- ▶ Achieve **90%** customer satisfaction
- ▶ Reach **35%** operating margin on core social housing business.

**We are an award-winning housing association and build award-winning homes. These are a few of the awards we won during 2017/18:**

- ▶ Landlord of the Year at the RESI Awards 2017
- ▶ 5\* health and safety rating from the British Safety Council
- ▶ Best Starter Home Scheme for The Crescent, Hertford at the WhatHouse? Awards 2017
- ▶ First prize for Project Vista at the London Homelessness Awards 2017
- ▶ Employee Engagement Strategy of the Year and Improvement Strategy of the Year at the UKCCF Contact Centre Awards 2017
- ▶ Silver Award for Bircherley Court in Best National Housing with Care Scheme 59 units and Avonhurst House in Best National Retirement Housing Scheme, 37-43 units at the National Housing for Older People Awards.

**87%**

overall customer satisfaction

**773**

new homes started

**£66,000**

raised for St Mungo's.

# Your rent

We set the rent for our social rented homes in line with the Government’s policy on target rents and based on the size and value of the property. The chart below shows the average rent for our properties per week.



## Average social rent per week 2017/18

Studio	£87.37
1 bed home	£104.46
2 bed home	£120.17
3 bed home	£133.54
4 bed home	£142.31
5 bed home	£151.71
6 bed home	£162.88
<b>Average</b>	<b>£121.46</b>

We also offer homes for Affordable Rent, brought in by the Government in 2011. Our Affordable rents are set in line with the Government’s guidance and are capped at 80% of the market rent level.



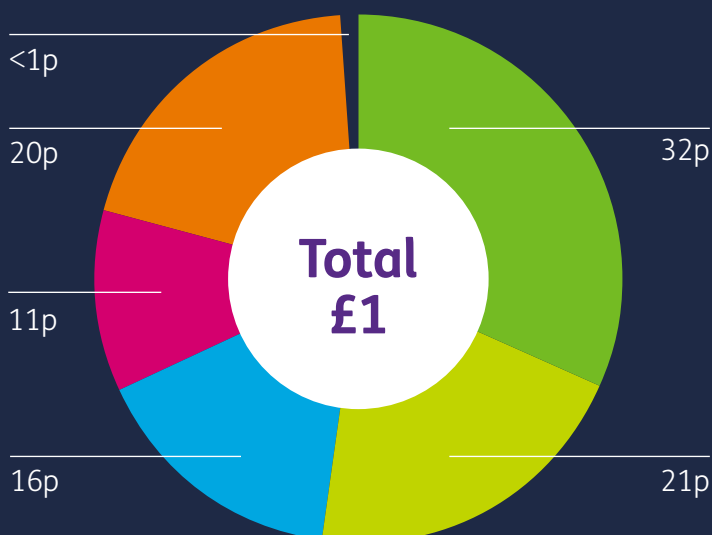
## Average affordable rent per week 2017/18

1 bed home	£177.90
2 bed home	£208.79
3 bed home	£199.08
4 bed home	£225.76
5 bed home	£370.66
<b>Average</b>	<b>£196.92</b>

We have a target of 4.25% rent arrears; in 2017/18 we beat the target and were at 3.96% rent arrears.

**Please note:** the average rent of a two bed home is higher because we have more two bed homes in London, where rents are typically higher, than we have in areas outside London.

## How we spend each £1 of your rent



- ▶ Housing management and administration
- ▶ Repairs and maintenance
- ▶ Payment for leasing properties
- ▶ Service charge
- ▶ Depreciation – how our housing properties and other fixed assets’ price reduces over their ‘estimated useful life’
- ▶ Loan interest payments

# Customer services

We're dedicated to providing you with a high level of service and we're working towards achieving 90% customer satisfaction. In 2017/18 87% of our customers were satisfied overall with our services.

# Complaints

We recognise the importance of customer complaints and welcome them as a valuable form of feedback about our services. We aim to resolve all complaints at first point of contact, which is stage one of the complaints process.

The Housing Ombudsman received 24 enquiries from residents, resulting in four investigations, with the Ombudsman deciding that Network Homes had dealt with the complaint appropriately in all four cases. On average the Ombudsman finds fault with the landlord in 37% of cases.

We responded to 69% of our complaints on time, against a target of 90%. We're bringing in a new database to help us improve this figure for 2018/19.

Stage of complaint	Number of complaints
Stage 1 (Resolved by the Management Team)	1,449
Stage 2 (Resolved by the Director or Executive Director)	98
Stage 3 (Resolved by the Board)	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,572</b>

**82.4%**

of enquiries resolved at first contact, so your query is resolved quicker. We beat our target of 80%.

# Empty homes

Before new families can move into an empty home, we need to check the property is safe, clean and in a good state of repair.

Our target time to get this done is 28 days from moving out one resident and moving in another. For 2017/18 we were just outside our target at 28.8 days.

We lost 1.08% of potential rent money due to homes being empty – some of this is unavoidable as the homes have to be made safe and in a decent condition for our residents to live in. But the figure could be lower if we were more efficient in our internal processes.

# Repairs

We are committed to making sure that your home is well maintained and in a good state of repair.

**81.7%** resident satisfaction with overall repairs, against a target of 85%

**99.96%** of homes had a valid gas safety certificate, against a target of 100%

**93.1%** of reactive repairs were completed on time (this figure doesn't have a target set).



# Thriving communities

Our social purpose is at the heart of everything we do – we invest money in resident events, training, employment support and community projects to support the communities we work in.

We encourage resident involvement at every level of the organisation and offer a variety of ways to get involved and help us to improve our services.

Supporting our communities during 2017/18:

**851**

hours of information and guidance given

**12**

apprenticeships secured  
10 with our contractors and  
2 with Network Homes

**98**

residents registered on our job ready programme Worksmart

**49**

residents helped into employment

**99**

residents supported in developing their CVs

**28**

unemployed people gained work experience or accredited training

Financial inclusion

**£1.4m**

recovered in unclaimed benefits by our welfare team

Support for homeless people

**41**

homeless young people supported through Project Vista, our work with New Horizon Youth Centre

**£12,065**

worth of grants, furniture and food bank vouchers given to residents

**£66,000**

raised for St Mungo's through a staff challenge from London to Paris

# Value for money

We're always monitoring to make sure we're delivering value for money services. We benchmark our services using HouseMark, a membership-based organisation which seeks to help the social housing sector improve performance and achieve value for money.

## This year, we've:

- ▶ Completed **284** new homes, with 79% for social or affordable rent or shared ownership, against a target of 465. This is because several projects were delayed while we reviewed fire safety across our homes
- ▶ Started **773** new homes, against a target of 344
- ▶ Invested **£73 million** in new homes
- ▶ Invested **£14.8 million** in maintaining our existing homes.

# Financial results

## Network Homes income

▶ Social housing income (rent, service charge and grants)	£144,788,000
▶ Surplus on sales of properties	£10,804,000
▶ Interest on bank deposits	£283,000
▶ Other social income*	£9,960,000
▶ Non-social income**	£55,345,000
▶ Revaluation of investment properties	£1,005,000
▶ Restructuring of loans	£87,000
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£222,272,000</b>

## Network Homes expenditure

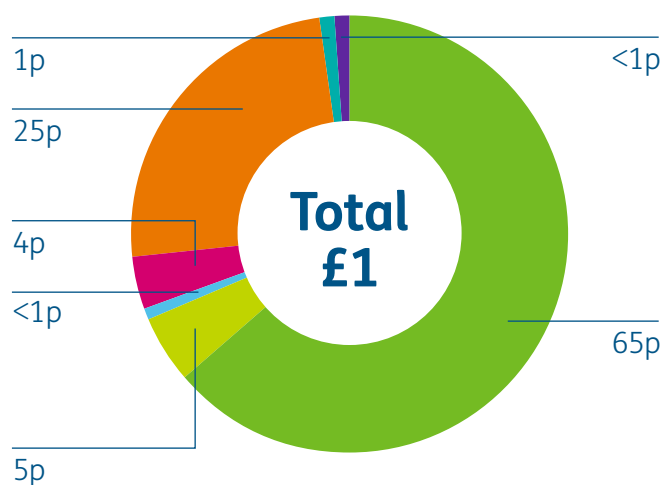
▶ Social housing	£107,800,000
▶ Properties sold	£37,361,000
▶ Loan interest payments	£26,333,000
▶ Other social costs*	£3,380,000
▶ Non-social costs**	£3,482,000
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£178,356,000</b>

## Cost

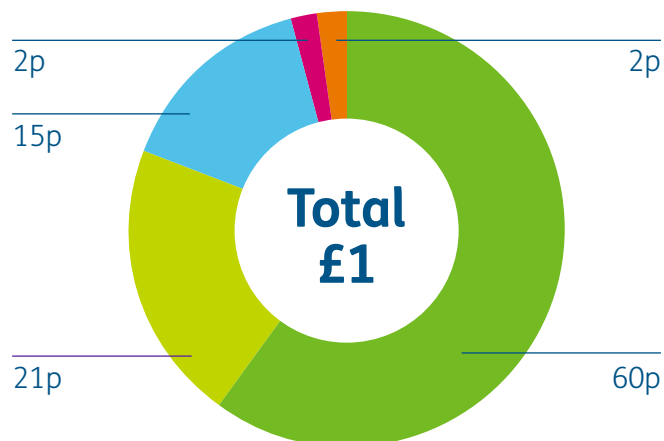
## Cost

We made a net surplus of **£44.3 million** after tax- all of this money gets reinvested back into the business to help provide more affordable homes, maintain our existing homes and improve your services.

## Where does each pound come from?



## Where each pound goes?



\*Other social income includes fees from agency contracts, supporting people contracts and sale of shared ownership properties.

\*\* Non-social income includes rent from commercial properties, rent from student accommodation properties, and market sale properties.



# Is Universal Credit coming soon near you?



**Universal Credit combines six benefits into one monthly payment. If you receive any of the following benefits, then you may be affected when it comes to your area:**

- ▶ Income Support (IS)
- ▶ Income Based Jobseekers Allowance (IBJSA)
- ▶ Income Related Employment & Support Allowance (IRESA)
- ▶ Housing Benefit (HB)
- ▶ Working Tax Credit (WTC)
- ▶ Child Tax Credit (CTC).

The following areas have been affected recently or will be affected soon.

October – Hackney, Hayes, Hertford, Hoxton, Stevenage, Tottenham, Uxbridge, Wood Green

November – Biggleswade, Harlesden

December – Borehamwood, Kentish Town, Milton Keynes, North Kensington, Wembley.

### We're here to help!

If you need support paying your rent or information about your benefits, get in touch with our income or welfare team by filling out the Contact us form on our website!

## Making our website easier for you to use

**READ  ALOUD**

### Is English not your first language? Or maybe you have trouble reading online?

We have a new tool on our website to make your online experience even easier. ReciteMe is an accessibility tool that can support you to have a better experience online.

By clicking on the button (above) at the top of any of our web pages, you will have access to a variety of helpful tools:

- ▶ Read aloud text-to-speech
- ▶ Interactive dictionary
- ▶ Sophisticated translations of over 100 languages
- ▶ Colour contrast changer
- ▶ Font adjuster
- ▶ Plain text mode – just the text, no pictures or distracting website backgrounds
- ▶ Magnifying glass
- ▶ Reading ruler – just like you'd use with a book!

This feature is also coming to the SW9 Community Housing website and our Network Homes Sales site, so all three of our websites will give you an even better customer service.

You can see ReciteMe at [www.networkhomes.org.uk](http://www.networkhomes.org.uk), where there's also a handy user guide to show you how the tool works.

# Paying your rent over the festive period

**We understand you may have a lot of expenses over the festive period but it's important you don't forget to pay your rent. If you have any concerns about paying your rent, please contact us on 0300 373 3000 and speak to our Income or Welfare teams who will be able to assist you.**

There are a number of ways you can pay your rent:

- ▶ **Online self service portal** – pay online, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at [www.networkhomes.org.uk](http://www.networkhomes.org.uk).
- ▶ **Direct Debit** – contact our Income Management Team on **0300 373 3000** to set up a Direct Debit.
- ▶ **Over the phone** - via AllPay, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on **0844 557 8321** or call us on **0300 373 3000** between 8am

and 6pm. You'll need to quote your unique 20 digit rent payment card number.

- ▶ **Standing order** – make payments to Network Homes Limited, sort code: 20-05-03, account number: 53408728. Please remember to quote your payment reference number found on your rent account statement.
- ▶ **AllPay payment app** –download the app for free from your app store. For more details visit [www.allpay.net](http://www.allpay.net).
- ▶ **PayPoint outlet** – pay at the post office or any PayPoint outlet using your rent payment card.

Remember, we're here to help. If you're struggling to pay your rent, please let us know as we can offer advice and support. The earlier you contact us the sooner we can speak to you about your options.

# Fire Doors - The 5 Step Check

**We were pleased to support this year's Fire Door Safety Week in September. This campaign raises the awareness about the critical role of fire doors.**

As part of our fire risk assessments and estate inspections, we inspect all the fire doors in our properties to ensure they are safe and compliant.

You can help too by reporting any faults you spot with fire doors. Here's a 5 Step Check to what to look out for:

## 1. Check for certification:

Is there a label or plug on top (or occasionally on the side) of the door to show it is a certificated fire door? You can use your mobile phone camera or a mirror to check. If there is, that's good news, otherwise report it to us.

## 2. Check the gaps:

Check the gaps around the top and sides of the door are consistently less than 4mm when closed. You can

use a £1 coin to give a feel for scale; this is about 3mm thick. The gap under the door can be slightly larger (up to 8mm is not uncommon), but it does depend on the door – as a rule of thumb, if you can see light under the door, the gap is likely to be too big. It's good news if the door fits the frame and it's not damaged. If not, report it. If the gaps are too big smoke and fire could travel through the cracks.

## 3. Check the seals:

Are there any intumescent seals around the door or frame, and are they intact with no sign of damage? These seals are usually vital to the fire door's performance, expanding if in contact with heat to ensure fire cannot move through the cracks. Most fire doors also have a smoke seal around the perimeter as well as the intumescent seal. This brush or fin seal should fill the gap when the door is closed.

If not, report it - the door may not be properly maintained and in the intensity of a fire may not protect you long enough.

## 4. Check the hinges:

Are the hinges firmly fixed (three or more of them), with no missing or broken screws? If you see problems, report it - the door needs to be properly maintained.

## 5. Check the door closes properly:

Is the door easy to operate and does it close fully? Open the door about halfway, let go and allow it to close by itself. Does it close firmly onto the latch without sticking on the floor or the frame? If not, report it. A fire door only works when it's closed. A fire door is completely useless if it's wedged open or can't close fully.

Please make sure you report any fire door faults to us on **0300 373 3000** or emailing **customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk**.

# Top fire safety tips over the festive season

**As the festive period approaches, we want to remind you of things you can do to keep your household and home safe.**

1. Lit candles should always be placed on a non-flammable base away from other objects and shouldn't be left alone.
2. Always check candles are completely out before you go to sleep.
3. Ensure candles are placed in a safe place away from young children or pets.

4. You should only use festive lights that are 'CE' approved (there should be a CE marking on the packaging) and always ensure these are turned off and unplugged before you go to sleep.
5. Make sure you don't overload sockets or attach decorations to lights or heaters.
6. It's really important that you test your smoke alarm weekly, cleaning it and removing dust.
7. Know your escape plan.
8. Don't use fireworks, sparklers or any other device indoors, including in communal areas

such as corridors or communal gardens. You also shouldn't set them off from your balcony or terrace!

## 9. And finally, enjoy this festive period.

If you require any help relating to fire safety, please contact the Fire Safety team on **0300 373 3000** or **firesafety@networkhomes.org.uk**. You can also watch our video or download our Fire Safety in Your Homes booklet from our website at **www.networkhomes.org.uk/firesafety**.

# Don't get dumped this winter!



**Did you know that over a third of illegally dumped waste comes from households? Illegal waste crime costs the UK economy more than £600million every year and there were over 850 illegal sites discovered last year in the UK!**

## What is an illegal waste operator?

An unlicensed waste operator who doesn't take the proper measures to protect the environment or dispose of waste safely.

They can often lure you in with flyers through the door or on social media with really cheap rates offering to get rid of your unwanted furniture, building rubble or garden waste.

## What can you do to make sure you choose a reputable company?

- ▶ Check the company you're using is registered – they should be able to show you their registration documents on request

- ▶ You can also check their permits on <https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register>
- ▶ Always get a written receipt with contact details and information about what the waste was and where it was taken
- ▶ Note down the vehicle information that comes to collect your waste
- ▶ Protect yourself! You could be prosecuted or made to pay a Landfill Tax if you knowingly use an illegal waste operator.

You can also report suspected waste crime to the Environment Agency incident hotline on **0800 807 060** or anonymously to Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**.

# Your yearly Gas Safety Check



**Every year, we are required by our regulator to carry out a Gas Safety Check on the properties we own. That's thousands of properties a year that we need to be able to access to keep you and your neighbours safe.**

## What do you need to do?

- ▶ Look out for a letter or other communication from us telling you the time and date we'd like to come and visit the property. These happen every year, so don't be surprised how quickly they come around!
- ▶ If you won't be able to be there, call us as soon as possible to arrange a better time.
- ▶ Be there at the arranged time to let us in to do our safety check. It only takes five minutes!

## If you don't let us do a safety check

If you won't let us into your property to do a safety check, then we will keep trying to get in touch with you. Eventually, we may even have to take you to court to get access, as the Gas Safety Check is a legal requirement.

If we have to go to court, the cost of doing so will be billed to you.

# Changes to your Locata options!

The way you can bid for homes on Locata is changing! If you live in East Herts, Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon or Hounslow, you will be able to bid for homes more regularly.

## East Herts

Bidding is now open from Fridays at 9am until Wednesday at 1pm, every week! You will now be able to bid on properties weekly rather than fortnightly. The way you can bid remains the same - to see a personalised list of properties that are suitable for you, just login to your Locata account.

Properties will be advertised for five days, so as long as you log in at least once a week in the hours above, you will not miss any suitable homes.

Bid now at [www.homeoption.org](http://www.homeoption.org).

## Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon and Hounslow

Bidding will be open all the time and as soon as a new property becomes available, it will be advertised. You can see new ones everyday and you can place bids on any day of the week.

To see your personalised list of properties that are suitable for you, just login to your Locata account. Properties will be advertised for seven days, so as long as you log in at least once a week, you will not miss any suitable adverts.

Bid now at [www.locata.org.uk/onlineform/](http://www.locata.org.uk/onlineform/).

# What to do for your moving day!

## There are some important things to remember to do before you move out of one of our General Needs or Older Persons homes.

Everything you need to know is in the Moving Out section of your Tenancy Agreement. The main things to remember are:

- ▶ To return all sets of keys and door entry fobs to Network Homes
- ▶ To leave window keys in the property
- ▶ To clear the property including the loft, of all furniture, floor coverings, rubbish and personal belongings
- ▶ To clean the property
- ▶ Where applicable, to cut back and clear all items including

sheds and outbuildings from the garden

- ▶ To leave any gas and electric payment meter cards or keys in the property
- ▶ To fix any damage you or your visitors have caused to the property.

If you don't leave the property in a good condition, and carry out the above tasks, we will have to charge you for the related costs we incur.



# They're new! And they're green!



## We've appointed a new cleaning and grounds maintenance contractor in Hertford – New Green!

New Green is a specialist cleaning and grounds maintenance provider which works exclusively for housing associations.

In communal areas, they will be providing:

- ▶ Cleaning, in general and also deep cleaning floors, removing bulk waste and removing graffiti
- ▶ Grounds maintenance
- ▶ Window cleaning
- ▶ Anything else required to make your area look neat and tidy.

## How will you know who they are?

New Green staff will attend Network Homes' sites in work wear and vehicles which have the New Green logo on. They will always carry an ID badge.

If you would like to find out more about New Green you can visit their website at [www.newgreen.co.uk](http://www.newgreen.co.uk) or check their Facebook at **New Green Services Limited**.

If you need to contact them directly, they would love to hear from you and answer your query. You can call them on **01707 871 516** or email them on [admin@newgreen.co.uk](mailto:admin@newgreen.co.uk).



## Working together with Oakray



**In September, we started a new long term contract with Oakray, our gas repairs contractor. They have previously been servicing our London region as an interim contractor, taking over from a previous provider to help improve the service. The contract will run until 2027.**

The team will continue to provide domestic and commercial:

- ▶ Gas servicing
- ▶ Gas boiler installation
- ▶ Gas boiler, hot water and heating system repairs.

Patrick Flynn, Repairs and Estate Services Contract Manager, said: "We're really pleased to be working with Oakray on a longer term. Since we've started working together, we've really seen an improvement in our customers' experience of our repairs service, with our latest figures in 2018 showing 88% satisfaction.

We will continue to work together to achieve future improvements and hope our London residents really notice an improved gas repairs service."

## Make sure you're getting the Warm Home Discount

**Have you heard about the Warm Home Discount Scheme, which helps people on low incomes to pay their electricity bill over the winter?**

This government initiative gives a one-off £140 discount, which comes as a reduction in energy bills if the supplier is a member of the scheme.

**Should you receive it?**

**Pensions** - If you receive Pension Credit, you should get a letter from the Department of Work and Pensions by the end of the year which will outline if you are eligible. You shouldn't normally have to apply for the scheme as it is usually automatically deducted from your bill.

**Other benefits** - The discount may also be available to you if you are at risk of or living in fuel poverty. So if you're claiming Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit, you might be able to get the discount.

**Low income** - If your income is less than £16,190, you may be eligible if you meet one or more other conditions set out by your energy supplier.

**Who to contact**

The so-called 'Big Six' energy suppliers - British Gas, EDF Energy, E.ON, npower, Scottish Power and SSE - are all part of the scheme, as well as many smaller providers. Visit [www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme) to find out more information and see if your supplier offers the discount.

Sometimes the energy supplier may be able to offer a discount at their discretion, so it's worth getting in touch with them.

You can also get in touch with our welfare team if you're having trouble with your bills and they may be able to help you - email our welfare advice team on [welfareadvisors@networkhomes.org.uk](mailto:welfareadvisors@networkhomes.org.uk).

## Airbnb - know what you should and shouldn't do

**Thinking of letting out your property on Airbnb? If you are a leaseholder, this will be a breach of your lease.**

Here's why:

- ▶ Use of your property for temporary lettings like Airbnb is a breach of your lease as it amounts to subletting
- ▶ You do not have Network Homes' consent to sublet the property
- ▶ Use of such companies means you are using your flat for a commercial use instead of residential, which is a breach of lease
- ▶ You are in breach of the clause in the lease requiring planning permission for use of temporary lettings
- ▶ You would be in breach of the Health and Safety Regulations such as 'fire safety'
- ▶ Your property insurance could become invalidated
- ▶ You would be in breach of your mortgage conditions
- ▶ Causing noise nuisance by having loud parties and disturbing your neighbours is also a breach of your lease.

All of the above could result in Network Homes taking action against you which could result in you losing your property.

For more information please contact our Leasehold team on [leasehold.services@networkhomes.org.uk](mailto:leasehold.services@networkhomes.org.uk).

# Getting involved in your Network home



**Every year, Network Homes holds a Big Building Check, with staff from all across the business going round to inspect many of our homes and developments. They're looking for anything that might need changing or improving, which might be safety issues, graffiti or overgrown plants.**

**We caught up with London Panel member Teresa, who volunteered to support our Big Building Check.**

**Hi Teresa, You recently volunteered to accompany two of our staff members on this year's Big Building Check. Tell me...**

**What was it about this event that interested you?**

*I was interested in volunteering for the Big Building Check as this event is about staff and volunteers going to different estates, working together to identify any areas which might need improving.*

**What did the day involve?**

*I was picked up from my home in London and we travelled to the Hertford office to pick up details*

*of the buildings we would be checking. We were briefed on any local issues and were given our paperwork to identify what areas of work needed attention.*

*The staff from Network Homes were lovely and very professional, always involving me.*

**Was the Big Building Check what you expected it to be?**

*The Big Building Check is never what you expect it to be. I've been before, but it was a reality check for me. I had this image in my mind that because it was Hertford that it would be picture perfect. I was able to see that residents and Network Homes face the same types of challenges, no matter where your home is based.*

**Did you learn anything new about our staff or estates?**

*Being involved shows you just what challenges lay ahead and some of the difficulties that staff can be faced with. For example - it's especially challenging when the staff are trying to ensure that sensitive information,*

*given by residents, is dealt with appropriately.*

*The lesson I have personally learnt is not to take things for granted. It was only when speaking to other residents that it really highlighted the challenges a Neighbourhood Officer can face when they're out and about.*

**What did you enjoy most about the Big Building Check?**

*What I enjoyed most was seeing how things are done and the measures that are put in place for this event to happen. The work starts from the moment you collect your keys and paperwork and continues until every property has been inspected.*

*Fortunately the work finished for me at 3pm when we handed the keys back and I was dropped back home. That's when the real work began for staff as the areas of work identified will need to be completed.*

**Would you recommend other residents take part in opportunities like this?**

*This is a fantastic opportunity to get involved; it's about learning perspectives of staff and residents. Together, this is where changes are made. I honestly feel that if you do have an opportunity of being involved, please do, as it is such good experience to have.*

*Thank you very much for sharing your experience with us and being an involved resident for several years. Your commitment to representing our residents is really valued.*

# Improving our transparency

**We're working to improve our transparency, which means being honest and open about what we do.**

## Why this move to more transparency?

In August, the government published a Green Paper on social housing; Green Papers suggest new policies and ask the public for feedback. This Green Paper had a strong emphasis on empowering social housing residents, and suggested:

- ▶ Tackling the stigma felt by social housing tenants because they live in social housing
- ▶ Doing more to make homes safe and decent
- ▶ Speeding up and improving the complaints process
- ▶ Making housing associations publish their performance figures, and comparing them in league tables.

We've responded to the government on these options.

## Your thoughts

We wanted to hear what you thought about how we were doing. So we sent out a survey and held meetings with our resident panels.\*

We learnt that:

- ▶ 73% of survey respondents felt people are looked down on to some degree because they live in social housing
- ▶ 68% of respondents said league tables would make us more accountable to them – but only if the measures are meaningful and calculated transparently

- ▶ Respondents thought we could improve our transparency around opportunities to be involved in shaping services, and independent advice when you disagree with how we handle a complaint.

We'll be using your feedback to improve our services, the ways you can be involved, and how transparent we are. Currently, we're continuing staff training to embed first class customer service, and bringing in a new IT system to speed up our communication with you. We're also working to give you access to more information on how we work, how we spend our money, and how we're performing.

Look out for more updates in our Spring Newsletter – and don't forget, if you're interested in being involved in shaping our services,

you can register your interest on our website by filling out our Contact us form at [www.networkhomes.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.networkhomes.org.uk/contact-us).

\*If you didn't receive a message from us, please call us on **0300 373 3000** to update your email address and phone number.



## This issue's top tweet!

Check out our top tweet since the last issue.



## ▶ Getting ready for improved online services

### **Have you signed up to receive our email newsletter?**

As more and more of our work is done online, we want to make sure you are kept up to date with what we're doing and can get the best out of our services.

#### **Our portal**

In the new year, we will be launching a new look portal on our website. You'll be able to do everything you currently can on the portal, such as:

- ▶ Pay your rent
- ▶ Check your statements
- ▶ Raise a repair.

When we've got the new look system up and running, we'll also improve the features on it, so you'll be able to do even more, and keep track of your queries.

If you haven't already, you can sign up to the current system at **[www.networkhomes.org.uk/selfserviceportal](http://www.networkhomes.org.uk/selfserviceportal)**. You won't need to sign up again for the new look system!

#### **Our e-newsletter**

If we haven't got your email, we won't be able to keep you up to date with what's going on at Network Homes and in your local area, as well as information about fun days, advice and safety information.

You can sign up to our emails in less than a minute by visiting **[www.networkhomes.org.uk/newslettersignup](http://www.networkhomes.org.uk/newslettersignup)**.



#### **Keep in touch**

-  **0300 373 3000**
-  **customerservice@networkhomes.org.uk**
-  **[www.networkhomes.org.uk](http://www.networkhomes.org.uk)**
-  **@networkhomesuk @asknetworkhomes**
-  **NetworkHomesuk**
-  **@networkhomes**

Registered office: Network Homes, Olympic Office Centre, 8 Fulton Road, Wembley, HA9 0NU.

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