

The magazine for Brent Council's tenants and leaseholders

Getting ready for Universal Credit

Major works across Brent

Give us your views on community hub for Kilburn

Chelsea Flower Show garden 🖟 finds new home in Kilburn

Brent's first dementia garden

Investment in communities

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Welcome from the Your Voice Team

We have an exciting winter edition for you with the latest news, information and safety advice.

Our cover story is about the first ever dementia garden in Brent at Watling September. This amazing garden will be a haven for dementia sufferers, offering them peace and tranquillity and reducing isolation. It will also be a place that they can nurture and develop. Read more on page 3.

As we head into November, Universal Credit will be rolled out in Brent. If you are a new claimant or have had a change of circumstances, you will have to apply for the new Universal Credit monthly payment directly from the Department for Work and Pensions. There are some exceptions, and we have put together more information and advice if you are affected on page 4.

We are very excited about the festive season approaching, and we hope you all enjoy the celebrations. We would, however, like to remind you about keeping safe and have put together some top safety tips on page 10. You can also read about what's been happening across the borough and with our active Residents' Associations on page 12.

We hope you enjoy this edition, and if you would like to make suggestions or contact us.

Your Voice Team

housingcommunications@brent.gov.uk



The Mayor of Brent, Councillor Arshad Mahmood was joined by local residents and councillors as he officially opened the first dementia garden in the borough.

The 'Life without Walls' garden was designed by Naomi Ferret Cohen as a landmark project for and about the lives, challenges and stigma experienced by people living with HIV. It was first launched at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show where it won a silver-gilt award.

Plants from the garden were generously donated to Brent and are now brightening up an old plot in the community garden at Watling Gardens, Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) in Kilburn.

It is hoped that at its new home in Kilburn, the garden will become a haven for people living with dementia and help to reduce social isolation. The garden will be tended to by people living with dementia, enabling them to get involved in an activity and support their community.



Getting the garden up and running has been a real community affair. Cllr Lia Colacicco (Mapesbury Ward) has been the driving force behind moving the garden from Chelsea to Kilburn. Local branches of Selco and B&Q provided the materials needed while organisations Veolia and Wates landscaped the gardens. Support also flooded in from Mapesbury Residents' Association, Friends of Gladstone Park and Garden Friends.



Sign up to **MyAccount** to enjoy a brilliant online experience

MyAccount is a free online service, available 24/7 on your computer, tablet or mobile:

- Report a repair
- Pay your rent
- Report anti-social behaviour
- Update your personal
- Make a complaint/ compliment

More than 8,000 Brent Housing Management residents are already signed up and benefiting from this service.

More information about this service can be found on our website: www.brent.gov. uk/your-council/myaccount/

Creating an account requires three things:

Your own secure email account, your first and last (family) name and a password. It's very simple, all you need to do is sign up and join in.





Are you ready for Universal Credit?

Your benefits are changing from November

After a number of delays, the government's long-awaited welfare reforms are being rolled out in Brent.

The full roll out of Universal Credit will come to Brent from November 2018 on the following dates:

- 21 November 2018 for Harlesden Job Centre
- 5 December 2018 for Wembley Job Centre

This means that, existing residents with a change in circumstances, or those moving into Brent making a claim for the first time will have to apply for Universal Credit instead of the benefits listed below:

- Housing Benefit
- Employment and Support Allowance (income based)
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit

The six benefits above will be merged into one single payment – Universal Credit. Unlike many of the existing benefits, Universal Credit will be paid once a month, rather than weekly, fortnightly or four weekly as housing benefit is traditionally paid, and will be paid directly into your bank account in arrears. This is a change for many residents who currently have their housing benefit paid direct to their landlord.



The government wants all Universal Credit claims to be both made and updated online. If residents do not have access to the internet, they will be able to visit Harlesden or Wembley Job Centre for assistance. Each Job Centre will have a front of house team specifically set up to help and assist residents to make and maintain their Universal Credit claims online.

To make an application for Universal Credit, residents will need to apply directly to the Department for Work and Pensions via their website www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit There is also a free helpline available for those that need extra support: **0800 328 5644.**

Councillor Eleanor Southwood, Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform said: "Our priority is to get all of our residents through these changes without skipping a beat. Obviously that's easier said than done, but the sooner we can talk to people the sooner we can be sure that they are all sorted."

Please note:

Residents who don't have a change in circumstances in general will remain in receipt of housing benefit. There are some exceptions to this, for more details please visit: www.brent.gov.uk/universalcredit

Don't fall into rent arrears

If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit, this is currently paid to your landlord directly. However, under Universal Credit, you will instead receive your Housing Benefit as part of your monthly Universal Credit payment. You will therefore need to ensure that you pay your rent directly to your landlord and do not fall into rent arrears, as this can have serious consequences.



Creating a better customer experience

help us provide a great, simple and reliable platform for residents to get improve how we provide our services. action and have launched our new Housing Promise (see page 9), customer service training for the introduced our new resident

new service structure and make use of advanced technology.

You Said

You wanted a set of service standards so that you can hold us to account.

We Did

We worked with a group of residents and frontline staff to introduce a set of housing standards.

You Said

You wanted us to reinstate the joint estate inspection programme so you can help us monitor estate services.

We Did

We've developed a programme of inspection for estates. Please check out the website or communal noticeboards for your block services.

You Said

You want us to work with our contractor to review the way we handle items left in the communal area.

We Did

We've developed a joint procedure with our cleaning contractor Wettons which will provide clarity on how we deal with any items left in communal areas.

We need your updated details to keep you safe

The tragic Grenfell fire in June 2017 highlighted the importance of having current and correct information about our residents.

We need to know exactly who lives in all of our properties, be they leaseholders, tenants or members of the household in case of an emergency. We also need to make sure we provide a service that is fair and accessible to everyone, and to make interacting with us easy and hassle free for you.

We will soon be launching a new state-of-the-art system, including a digital app, which aims to provide better and efficient services for our residents. The new system will keep all your information in one place and make it easier for you to



Get your details right 🛭

Help us to keep you safe and give you a (hassle-free service) by providing your up-to-date details!

contact us about repairs, cleaning and other housing services that matter to you.

To make the new system as effective as possible, we need to make sure that the information we hold about you is accurate and up-to-date.

Please help us by completing our online form www.brent.gov.uk/yourdetails Alternatively we can send you a form by post.

For further information, please contact housingtransformation@brent.gov.uk



Green light for community hubs

Brent Council's Cabinet have agreed proposals to extend the community hub model based on the successful Harlesden hub pilot. The decision was taken at the Cabinet meeting on 12 September.

Communities across Brent will benefit from the opening of dedicated hubs which will assist vulnerable residents to access services, seek help and receive support in using online services.

Over the next two years, the community hubs will be rolled out in a phased approach to additional areas including Kilburn, Willesden, Wembley and Kingsbury and Kenton; with Kilburn scheduled to open first, in Spring 2019.

The Harlesden Hub will continue to operate with extended opening hours.

The aim of the hub model is to work with residents who find it difficult to access the support they need through mainstream services. The hub model is focused on supporting people to help themselves and each other, working with them to solve their problems and build knowledge, understanding and resilience.

The hub offers a physical space enabling a range of local organisations and voluntary and community sector services to work together under one roof and provide a more localised approach. The hubs will also be a valuable tool in helping residents to get online and access the council's online services.

Kilburn

the Neighbourhood Housing Managers

Brent Housing appointed three new Neighbourhood Housing Managers, Magda Goncalves, Geoffrey Mann and Nicola Waugh (pictured left to right). They are responsible for the housing management frontline service, and between them manage a team of 15 Housing Officers. We spoke to them to find out about what their role involves.



What does your role involve?

In March we launched a new structure, and changed the way we deliver frontline housing services.

A new Neighbourhood Services Team was created.

Neighbourhood Services provides all frontline housing management services including anti-social behaviour, tenancy management and estate management. We also provide initial contact for residents on leasehold issues and community engagement.

We took away the traditional patch model for Housing Officers. Residents do not have a named Housing Officer with a patch; a member of staff is allocated as needed. They will cover all frontline issues in the locality areas of Harlesden, Kilburn,

Kingsbury and Kenton, Wembley and Willesden and are tasked with providing a responsive, tailored service.

The Housing Officers are now much more visible, they are not office based and can attend areas where they are needed.

We have also invested in mobile technology so that our staff don't have to be seated at a desk in the office to work. They use tablets and smartphones which receive live information and enable officers to carry out their duties while out and about, such as during estate inspections, tenancy visits and investigations of low level anti-social behaviour.

What are your priorities for Brent?

Our priorities for Brent are to ensure we provide a tailored service to every single resident.

We want residents to be able to access services provided by the council and to ensure that they can approach the relevant person who can provide that service to them.

Will you be working closely with residents?

Residents are the heart of what we do. We want to be working closely with residents and meet them regularly in their homes and communities. We do not want to be seen as unapproachable, we want to listen to concerns, admit when we get it wrong, and work with residents to put it right.

Review of housing allocation scheme

The council has an existing Allocation Scheme for determining priorities and the procedure to be followed in allocating social housing.

The scheme details how housing is allocated, and prioritised specifying the households who fall within the statutory categories as set out in legislation, for example homeless

households or people living in overcrowded or unsatisfactory housing.

Whilst the Allocation Scheme itself does not affect the supply of social housing that is available, it does determine which households are given a reasonable preference for housing.

The last review of our Allocation Scheme took place in 2014. The Housing Needs

Service is about to commence public consultation on proposed amendments to the scheme, to help us to identify the issues that should be included in the review.

For further information on the consultation process, please check out our website www.brent.gov.uk or email: laurence.coaker@brent.gov.uk



Investment in your homes

We are committed to Detailed surveys have been carried out across all our managed homes over the last the external and internal fabric of the

collected will help us to

out for further



Major works - listening to your feedback

There have been a number of changes to our major works' procedures in response to residents' feedback.

YOU SAID: You wanted to have more information about how long scaffolds will be in place.

We have introduced scaffold signs, which show why the scaffold is in place, what works are being carried out, and the proposed duration of the time scaffold will be on site. A scaffold register, which lists all scaffolds on Brent managed estates is maintained and checked regularly. As a result of this, complaints about scaffolding have reduced considerably.

YOU SAID: You wanted to have more detailed Section 20 notices.

When major works commence, our independent consultants take photographs which are available as a record for the future if required. We will also shortly be inviting residents to accompany the Property Services Team to inspect works at handover meetings and to approve the standard of completed works.

YOU SAID: You wanted us to concentrate on street properties and fire safety works.

This year's programme has concentrated on street properties and fire safety works in response to residents' feedback. We are addressing the refurbishment of the external fabric of the buildings and landlord's common parts including electrical and fire safety issues. A series of well-attended residents' consultations have already been held and work is underway in a number of 'pilot' properties.

YOU SAID: You wanted us to carry out thorough post inspections.

We are commencing inspections of works completed in the last 18 months. Residents will have a chance to feedback on any defects to works they have found since the works were handed over.

We have carried out cavity wall insulation to 279 properties since the housing service was taken in-house by Brent Council. Installing the cavity fill increases the 'U-value' of the properties which means they lose less heat, and makes the homes warmer, reduces the risk of condensation and reduces fuel bills for residents, helping to reduce fuel poverty and contributing to reduction of CO2 emissions in the borough. The insulation was provided with part funding from energy saving grants.



Housing Promise launched

We recently launched a new set of service standards which we have called the 'Housing Promise'.

Our 'Housing Promise' aims to provide you with the best customer service every time you contact us.

The Housing Management service also has specific quality standards to measure performance, so you can expect an increasingly high quality and consistent service from all of our teams.

When you have to contact our staff, they will be customer focused and create a positive experience for you. You can expect the following:

- We will ensure our staff are given the tools to deliver excellent customer service
- We will treat you with courtesy and respect at all times

- We will always look for solutions and focus on what we 'can do'
- We will explain what's your responsibility, and what's ours
- We will apologise and put things right when we get it wrong.

When you need to contact us, we have tried to make this as simple as possible. You can use the following channels:

• Our self-service customer portal is available to tenants 24 hours a day to manage your account online (e.g. check your balance and make payments), whenever it's convenient (see page 3)



 You can easily contact us by phone, email or online, face-to-face, either in your home or at our offices.

Please see the website for more details of our 'Housing Promise' to you.

www.brent.gov.uk/ housingmanagement

£65 million affordable home building bonanza for Brent

817 new homes for social rent will be built locally after the Mayor of London recently agreed a £65 million part funding package for Brent.

Brent is receiving the fifth highest amount of money out of 26 boroughs in London, as part of the Mayor's £1 billion programme dedicated to 'a new generation of council homes'. The council will be adding the remainder of the capital to the part funding to cover the actual building cost of more than £200 million.

Cllr Eleanor Southwood, Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform said "This is fantastic news from the Mayor.

Brent is committed to tackling homelessness and providing suitable and affordable homes to those who are most in need, so any opportunity to help us with this is greatly welcomed.

"The nationwide housing crisis has been decades in the making and it won't be easy to solve but this is definitely a very welcome announcement from the Mayor. We now need the Government to match the ambition of local councils such as ours and help us to get housebuilding again."

Council home building fell to nearly zero in the 1990s, and many councils' ambition has been held back by Government restrictions and rigid limits on their powers and borrowing.

Sign up to our Your Voice e-newsletter

Do you know that we have a dedicated news and alert service for council tenants and leaseholders

Be the first to hear about latest news and developments. We also send out important information regarding your safety, news alerts for your block or estate, opportunities such as apprenticeships, events you may be interested in, competitions you can enter and prizes you can win!

The newsletter will be your main source of information about Brent Housing, as the residents' magazine will be phased out from Spring 2019.

So keep in touch and don't miss out!

Sign up via our website:

www.brent.gov.uk/ housingmanagement

housingcommunications@ brent.gov.uk



HEALTH & SAFETY



Take care with decorations and make sure that you stay fire safe.

- Decorations can be highly flammable so it's vital that they're hung with care. Never attach them to lights or heaters, make sure they are kept well away from candles and not hung around the fire place.
- It is also important to be electrical fire safe. Turn off decorations when you go to bed or go out and don't overload your plug sockets.
- Don't leave candles burning unattended, the best advice is not to use real candles at all. Candle effect LED lights are widely available and they create the same effect as a candle with none of the risk of a naked flame.
- Make sure your family and visitors staying for the festive period know what to do in an emergency. Practice a fire escape plan.
- Switch off electrical appliances when not in use. Always switch off and unplug decorative lights before you go to bed.

- Celebrate safely. The risk of accidents, especially in the kitchen, is greater after alcohol is consumed.
- Most fires start in the kitchen never leave cooking unattended.
- Make sure cigarettes are completely extinguished.
- Check the battery in your smoke alarm every week and use the New Year as a reminder to clean it and remove dust.
- Keep candles, lighters and matches out of reach of children.
- Take the time to check on older relatives and neighbours at holiday times and make sure they are fire safe.





LEASEHOLDER NEWS

Major works on your estate

Under the terms of the lease, we are responsible for carrying out repairs and maintenance to your block and estate. When repairs are more than £250 per unit, they are called 'major works'.

Examples of major works include:

- Replacing or repairing the roof on your building
- Replacing or repairing the lift in the building
- Installing new windows in your block
- Repairing roads, paths and walkways on the estate (other roads are maintained through council tax payments)
- Improving fire safety
- Internal/external decorations to your building's communal area.

We must consult you on any work we carry out in line with the Section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (as amended). We consult all leaseholders about major works that will cost them more than £250 each.

The consultation process

We will issue a section 20 notice. which will contain:

- Reason(s) for carrying out the work
- A description of the work
- An invitation to comments on our proposal
- A breakdown of costs
- An invitation to inspect the contract documents.



If you are unhappy with the work

You should contact the Leasehold Team on 020 8937 2601 or email

housingmanagement@brent.gov.

uk if you are unhappy with the works carried out. The Leasehold Team will then pass your enquiry to the Property Services Team to investigate and respond.

Once you receive the response to your enquiry, if you are still unhappy, you can apply to the First Tier Tribunal, who will decide if the works are of a reasonable standard.

Major works payment options

You can arrange to pay for the works interest free over 12 or 24 monthly instalments (the 24 month option is available on amounts in excess of £1000). Please speak to the Leasehold Team for more information and to request an application.



Around the borough

Tablet prize winner

Congratulations to Joselte Peniakoff-Warner from the Kilburn area who was the lucky winner of an Amazon Fire tablet, as part of our data gathering competition which ended on 30 September.

Ms Warner was presented her prize by Councillor Eleanor Southwood, Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform.

Councillor Southwood said: "I was really pleased to present Ms Peniakoff-Warner with her prize. It's very understandable to feel nervous about sharing your personal information. This piece of work is so important for improving our services and keeping residents safe so please do update your information as soon as you can."

To update your details, please complete the online form: www.brent.gov.uk/ yourdetails Alternatively you can request a form by post by contacting us on: housingtransformation@brent.gov.uk



John Perrin Place laundry room makeover

The laundry room in John Perrin Place, Kenton was given a makeover by Brent repairs contractor, Wates Living Space.

Brent Customer Services Officer, Vina Bhudia put forward a suggestion to transform the laundry room as part of Brent Housing's social value



commitment to tenants and leaseholders.

Wates happily supported this community project, and gave the laundry room a much needed facelift. It was decorated throughout with new seating, worktops, windows and a new ramp.

Resident John Feeley from John Perrin Place said: "We are very happy with this work by Wates and impressed with how quickly they completed everything. They have done an excellent job."

Paul Brennan, from Wates said: "It's been a real pleasure to have done this work for the residents of John Perrin Place, I'd also like to thank Greyline Builders who carried out the concrete work and the decorations."

Bike hangars

Bike hangars have been installed across Brent Council estates in a bid to encourage residents to live a healthy lifestyle and take up cycling.

The bike hangars have been funded by our contractor partner, Wates as part of our £400K environmental improvement fund for 2018/19.

The estates that have benefitted so far from the installations include, Frontenac (Willesden), Landau House (Cricklewood), Peascroft House (Kilburn), Rosedene (Brondesbury), Kings Drive (Wembley) and Gauntlett Court (Wembley). Mead Court (Kingsbury) will be receiving their bike hangars shortly.

The bike hangars will reduce the amount of bikes left in communal areas, and reduce fire risks.



In memory of Jim Foord

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of a passionate and dedicated resident, Jim Foord. Jim was the secretary of Fiveways Residents' Association in South Kilburn. He passed away on 6 July 2018.

Jim was a great character and his contribution to the community was immense. He always went above and beyond in the role of Secretary at Fiveways, and brought his unique and bubbly personality into our community events. At our monthly film night he would take on the role of a cinema usher in full uniform with a bow tie. He would serve ice cream and choc ices during the interval from a makeshift tea tray, much to the delight of the residents who attended.

Every Christmas Jim magically

transformed into Santa Claus and he delighted all the children at the Christmas parties. The last time Jim dressed up as Santa, a little girl on hearing Jim's unmistakable voice was prompted to ask: "Santa, is your name Jim?"

Jim had a passion for history, particularly local history, and would often regale the committee with memories of growing up in Kilburn where he spent his whole life. And being a London Taxi driver his memory was legendary.

lim's generosity of spirit and enthusiasm was boundless. He was a kind, caring and compassionate man with a great sense of community. Jim will be sorely missed by his friends and neighbours who are planning a get together in his honour when the new Fiveways' Community Hall is complete.

Heartfelt condolences go out to Jim's wife Chris, his four children and their partners and eight grandchildren.

By Maureen Coughlin, Fiveways Residents' Association



HOW ARE WE PERFORMING?

Performance Figures (April-June 2018)

Rent Collection

We aim to collect 99.5% of all rent due

2017/18: 99.3%

Brent Housing Management Target 2018/19: 99.5%



Estate Inspections

We aim to carry out 100% of estate inspections bi-monthly

2017/18: 96%

Brent Housing Management Target 2018/19: 100%



Stage 1 **Complaints**

We aim to respond to 93% of stage 1 local resolution enquiries within 20 days

2017/18: 99.5%

Brent Housing Management Target 2018/19: 100%



Repairs -**Completion Time**

We aim to complete 92% of repairs on the first visit

2017/18: 93%

Brent Housing Management Target 2018/19:80%



Gas Compliant Homes

We aim to have 100% of homes with a valid gas safety certificate

2017/18: 100%

Brent Housing Management Target 2018/19: 100%



Stage 2 **Complaints**

.66%

Percentage of stage 1 complaints escalated to stage 2

2017/18: 13%

Brent Housing Management Target 2018/19: For information

Repairs -**Quality of Work**

We aim for 95% of customers to be satisfied with the quality of repairs work based on text message surveys

2017/18: 72%

Brent Housing Management Target 2018/19:82%



Customer Experience Team Calls Answered

Percentage of phone calls answered in the Customer **Experience Team**

2017/18: 86%

Brent Housing Management Target 2018/19:90%



Customer **Experience Team** - Call Times

Average answering time for calls to the Customer **Experience Team**

2017/18: 2.17

Brent Housing Management Target 2018/19: 3 minute



emiere

Over a hundred people packed into the Granville Centre in South Kilburn in September to celebrate the launch of Youth Stories of Brent, a dynamic new documentary film telling the stories of inspirational young people from the borough.

The film breaks down stereotypes and negative perceptions of young people and sets the mould for Brent as the London Borough of Culture 2020.

Youth Stories of Brent captures the journeys, hopes and ambitions of young people from Brent. It also showcases some of the organisations and community groups working locally with young people, inspiring them and supporting them to achieve their potential.

A group of young people, aged 13-19, were recruited last year to be trained in film production skills by media training company, 'You're Only Young Once' (YOYO). The young film-makers have played a central role in the making of Youth Stories of Brent. They have gained transferable skills and will receive an Arts Award qualification on completion of the project.

The young film-makers come from all across the borough, including from Brent Council-owned homes. They each have their own talents, inspirational stories and ambitions which have contributed to the essence of the whole project.



Kingsbury attended the launch and was also interviewed for the film. She said: "Youth Stories of Brent is a powerful and empowering documentary highlighting the incredible young people living in Brent. It defies stereotypes and makes me extremely proud to be a young person living in Brent."

Amar Mazigh-Aichoun, aged 20 from St. Raphael's Estate was interviewed for the film as he represented Team England at the Commonwealth Games in April. Amar has faced many obstacles as he

was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis at 13-years-old, and he continues to inspire other young people to overcome challenges and reach their goals. Amar said: "The film launch was a great experience especially knowing that I was in it, meeting the Brent public and meeting the other youth of Brent. It will definitely leave a mark in Brent history to motivate youths in Brent."

Sign up to email alerts and news

Get the latest news, events and service updates for council tenants and leaseholders - straight to your email inbox!

Sign up now, if you want to find out about:

- The latest news for you
- Events and activities
- Information about local services
- Local public consultations.

It's free and easy to sign up so please visit www.brent.gov.uk/housingmanagement



Housing Management Services

You can report non-urgent repairs, pay your rent and other queries online at **www.brent.gov.uk/ housingmanagement** and via the My Account portal.

You can also contact the Housing Management Customer Response Team between the following hours:

Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm

You can also email your repair details to housingrepairs@brent.gov.uk

For all other Housing Management enquiries please email housingmanagement@brent.gov.uk or call 020 8937 2400.

If you have an urgent problem outside our office times, please call the out-of-hours service on **020 8937 1234.**



Got feedback on Your Voice?

If you would like to contribute to the next edition of Your Voice, please contact:

Your Voice Magazine, Corporate Communications, Brent Council, Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, HA9 0F

Tel: 020 8937 2400

Email: housingmanagement@brent.gov.uk



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