



Residents' News Update

Summer 2021



Garden renovation project at our sheltered accommodation scheme see page 5 for more info

In this issue:

- Stay safe as we ease out of lockdown
- Update on services: post-lockdown
- Paying your rent
- New garden for Cazenove Road
- Esra joins the team
- Making residents our top priority
- A better deal for tenants
- Review: how we handle complaints
- Beware Japanese Knotweed
- David gets a career Kickstart

Our Vision:

To make a positive difference to our residents' lives through the provision of quality and affordable homes to those who are in need.



Our Mission:

To provide quality homes and services, strengthen and build communities, and improve the lives of our residents.

No personal items in shared areas

We regularly inspect your communal areas to make sure that we are meeting fire rules.

We cannot allow you to leave personal belongings in corridors, stairwells or meter cupboards. We will remove any items we find.



Vehicle gate vandalism

We are getting many reports from residents that vehicle gates are being vandalised.

If you see anyone tampering with the gates at your scheme, call us immediately, as this is a risk to your estate's safety and security.



Checks on sub-letting

We are carrying out random checks on our properties, to find out who is living there.

You are breaking the law if you move away from your NLMHA home and let someone else move in.

If we find the wrong people living in your home, we will immediately send you a Notice to Quit.

Under the Social Housing Fraud Act 2013, a court can also fine you or send you to prison for sub-letting your home. In the most serious cases, this could mean a two-year prison sentence and/or a fine of up to £50,000.

Landlords across the country now share the information they hold. We also work with the police and local councils to help detect fraud.

If you think one of our properties might be sub-let, please let us know. We will understand if you prefer not to give your name.

Call us on 020 8815 4200 or email us at customer.services@nlmha.com

Let contractors in

When you have a gas check or repairs appointment booked, make sure you give access to our contractors

Every year, Robert Heath Heating, our gas contractor, needs access to your home to carry out your annual gas safety check and service. If you cannot keep the appointment, please call them immediately to change to a more convenient time.

When you book an appointment with any of our contractors, please make sure you are there on the day. To change an appointment, you can call them direct, or phone our maintenance team.

Stay safe as we ease out of lockdown

- Businesses including cafés, restaurants and pubs are now serving people indoors.
- People can meet in groups of up to 30 outside.
- Six people or two households can meet indoors, and stay overnight.
- Up to 30 people can attend weddings and wakes.

Take care

Infection rates are currently low in most of the country. More than four million Londoners have had their first jab. Around half of them have also had their second jab.

However, **Covid-19 has not gone away**, so please take care. Remember to give your neighbours space when you are



in communal areas. Keep washing your hands. Above all, keep rooms well aired when meeting others indoors.

We also recommend getting vaccinated when it's your turn.



Update on services: post-lockdown

At NLMHA, we are continuing to follow Government guidelines as we decide how best to provide services safely.

For the time being, our offices are open to staff only. We only allow visitors with an appointment.

Our repairs and estate services are running as normal.

Through the pandemic, we have been making good use of Zoom to stay in touch with residents. We have run virtual residents' meetings, including Scrutiny Panel meetings, and offered online training.

Our regular welfare checks on vulnerable people showed us that many residents were lonely. So we took the lead in arranging weekly Zoom sessions, where groups of residents with common interests could meet up to discuss a suggested topic. This has been a great success.



Paying your rent



Pay by **direct debit** direct from your bank to ours – the easiest way to pay.



We will automatically update your payment when we change your rent each year, but we will contact you first.

To set up direct debit payments call us on 020 8815 4200.

Set up a **standing order** from your bank account. Our bank details are: HSBC, Finsbury Park, 312 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2AW.

Account Number: 91073095.
Sort Code: 40-06-25

Include your tenancy number, so we know which account to credit. Remember, you will need to update your payment each year yourself.

Use your **rent payment card**, at your local store displaying the PayPoint sign, or at any Post Office.



For a new card, email customer.services@nlmha.com, or call our office on 020 8815 4200.



To make a **debit or credit card payment**, phone us on 020 8815 4200. You can use any debit or credit card that has a MasterCard, Maestro or Visa logo.



When to pay

Depending on your tenancy agreement, your rent is due:

- every Monday, a week in advance, or
- monthly in advance.

If you have a problem paying

You must prioritise paying your rent or risk losing your home. If you are having problems, let us know as soon as possible. Email customer.services@nlmha.com, or phone 020 8815 4200.

If you need more support, go to www.gov.uk/browse/benefits to use the benefit checker. You may be able to claim additional benefits.

You might also be eligible for a Discretionary Housing Payment from your local authority. This is a top up towards your housing costs. You are most likely to get this if your benefits are capped or you lose benefit because you have too many bedrooms for your household size.

What happens if you do not pay

If you get into difficulty and can't pay your rent, we will contact you and do our best to support you. However, if you keep missing payments or you fail to keep to a plan we have agreed, we will have to take action to take back your home.

The pandemic eviction ban ended at the end of May. This means that we are issuing notices of seeking possession once more. Be aware that it now takes four months, not six to complete this process.

If you're having problems paying your rent, always contact us immediately, so that we can help.

New garden for Cazenove Road

Residents at our Cazenove Road sheltered scheme have started a gardening project, after a brainstorming session with NLMHA.

We came up with the idea of revamping the scheme's communal garden, as a way to get residents involved, working together and feeling positive about where they live.

After the session, we visited the space with our gardening contractor and made a digital plan that reflected residents' ideas.

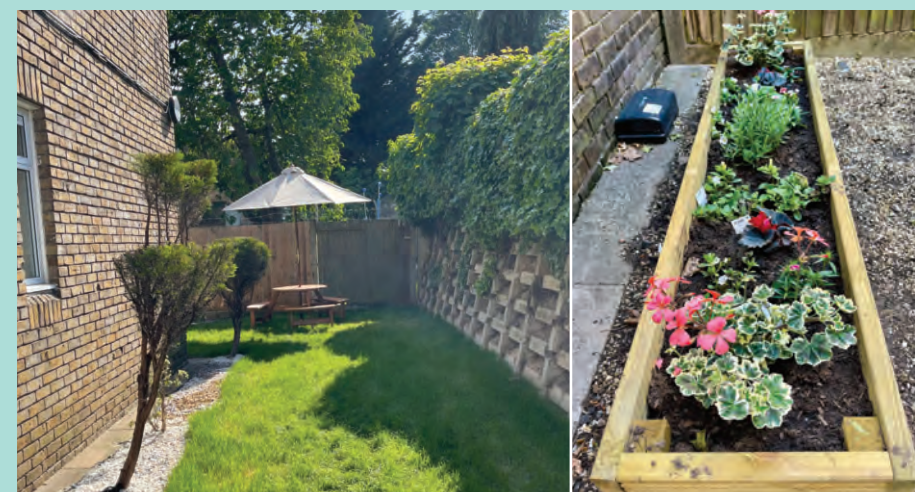
The works began by flattening raised beds and returfing the

garden area. Multi-coloured stones were placed along the side of the garden and the rose bushes were prepared for re-growth. We also supplied two garden tables with benches and two planters with topsoil.

Overall, we have created a garden where our residents can relax in open green space, have picnics, get involved in potting plants and socialise with each other.

Our Cazenove Road scheme has 11 one bedroom flats and is home to vulnerable adults and older people over the age of 55.

The garden at Cazenove Road.



Esra joins the team

My name is Esra, I am the new Tenancy Sustainment Officer at NLMHA. I aim to support you to maintain your tenancies by providing an efficient customer-focused service.

Support

I am able to offer support in the following areas.

- Reducing rent arrears, maximising benefit income and helping to fill in forms – for example, for Discretionary Housing Payments.
- Accessing grants to help with basic living needs, including food, furniture and gas and electricity prepayment meters.
- Signposting tenants with mental health needs to access relevant services and develop appropriate support plans.
- Following up concerns about adult/child safeguarding.
- Accessing training and employment opportunities.



I am committed to making good relationships with residents, so that I can make sure you get the right information to help meet your needs.

Residents first: Making residents our top priority



We are currently looking to recruit a co-opted tenant Board member

As a Board member you would take part in regular meetings to discuss our strategic direction and policies.

We want to be acknowledged by our residents as a first-class service provider. You would bring an important tenant viewpoint to the heart of our decision making.

Applications will be considered by the Board and, those it considers meet the criteria for selection may be invited for an interview.

Useful skills

Please let us know if you have skills and/or qualifications in any of the following areas, which are required by NLMHA:

- finance or banking
- legal
- governance and compliance in organisation
- human resources management

- development, building and construction
- housing management
- information technology and cyber security
- health and safety, or
- leadership and management.

We would expect that you have an interest in the social housing sector and in working for the community.

We positively encourage applications from diverse backgrounds and, in particular, female applicants, since they are currently under-represented in the organisation.

To find out more about applying to join the Board as a co-opted tenant member, phone our Resident Engagement Officer on 020 8815 4200 or email customer.services@nlmha.com

We will be pleased to hear from you.

Join our Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Scrutinising our services is all about making sure we provide excellent services that meet the standards we've set out.

Our Tenant Scrutiny Panel brings together residents from across the boroughs we operate in, and from a mixture of property types and backgrounds.

How does the panel work?

Tenant Scrutiny Panel members look into service areas, policies and procedures. Members discuss issues with staff and review procedures, which is then fed back to improve services.

Members also receive training and support to be able to perform and enhance their skills.

Benefits of being part of the panel

- You get a real opportunity to influence services.
- You gain an in-depth insight into our work as a social housing provider.
- You get training and development opportunities on the way.
- You will learn new skills and meet new people.
- We pay out-of-pocket expenses, including travel, and can help with childcare and carer costs.

For further information, please phone our Resident Engagement Officer on 020 8815 4200 or email customer.services@nlmha.com



Tenants and residents associations

Set up a new tenants and residents association (TRA), or join an existing TRA where you live. TRAs work hard to represent their local area and find ways to develop their local communities.

By joining, or setting up a TRA you can:

- invite members of the senior management team to site visits and meetings
- meet with your local ward councillor
- access funding opportunities to improve your area
- develop a stronger sense of community and get to know your neighbours better
- use community facilities to hold meetings/events
- attend training/mentoring events with other TRAs
- hold local events in your area.

An annual grant is available to registered TRAs, to cover annual running costs and the purchase of equipment for your group.

Other ways to get involved with NLMHA

- Join us for estate inspections.
- Help us draw up a neighbourhood agreement to set local service standards.
- Organise or take part in fundays, activities and training events.
- Become a mystery shopper to test our services.
- Send comments by email or by letter.
- Complete our surveys.
- Come to a residents' meeting.



A better deal for tenants

Since the fire at Grenfell Tower four years ago, the Government and the National Housing Federation have been looking at how landlords work with their tenants.

As a result:

- the Government has drawn up the Social Housing White Paper, and
- the National Housing Federation has launched the Together with Tenants scheme.

Both will affect how we work with you in future.

In recent weeks, we have run virtual training on the Social Housing White Paper with some of our residents. They are now sharing what they learned with their neighbours and giving us feedback.

We also held virtual resident meetings on the Paper, inviting people to offer their ideas on how we can improve our services and policies.

About the Social Housing White Paper

The Government’s Social Housing White Paper aims to improve the landlord/tenant relationship.

Once it becomes law, councils and housing associations will need to make sure that:

- We are transparent about our performance and decision making

- We put things right when they go wrong
- We listen to tenants and do more to involve you.

The White Paper includes a Tenant Charter. In future, as a tenant, you should expect:

1. To be safe in your home
2. To know how your landlord is performing

3. To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
4. To be treated with respect
5. To have your voice heard by your landlord
6. To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
7. To be supported into home ownership if you want this

Together with tenants

The National Housing Federation has a four-point plan for change for housing association residents.

1. A new requirement in the Code of Governance, making boards accountable to their residents
2. A new Together with Tenants charter
3. Resident oversight and reporting of progress against the charter

4. Giving residents a stronger collective voice with the housing regulator

Together with Tenants Charter

- **Relationships** between housing associations and their residents will be more open and respectful
- **Communication** with residents will be clear, accessible, timely & provide important information
- **Voice and influence:** residents’ views will inform decisions, so that all feel listened to

- **Accountability:** residents will work with their housing association to hold them to account for the decisions they make
- **Quality:** residents can expect their homes to be good quality, well maintained, safe and well managed
- **When things go wrong,** there are simple ways to raise issues, make complaints and get problems resolved

Completed review: How we handle complaints

We are updating our complaints handling process to bring it into line with a new Code introduced by the Housing Ombudsman.

Our changes include adopting the Ombudsman’s definition of a complaint as:

an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

As part of our review, we held Scrutiny Panel meetings on Zoom, asking residents to look at our existing policy. They gave us suggestions for changes and later approved our revised policy.

For more information on the Complaints Handling Code go to: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code



Programmed works 2021

We carried over some of our fire protection work because of the pandemic lockdowns. This means we had to reschedule some jobs. We thank you for your patience.

We are now:

- completing electrical upgrades
- installing fire alarms, heat detectors, smoke and sensor alarms, and CO₂ alarms.

Changes to your home

You must get our written permission before carrying out structural work to your home. If you do not do this, you could make the property unsafe or unsightly. We might instruct you to pay to put things right.

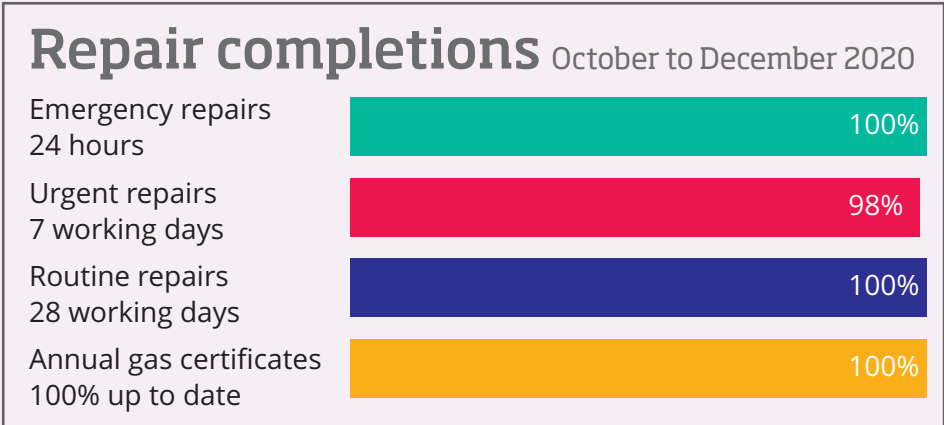
Lost keys

If you lose your keys, we don't have spare copies. You will need to pay a locksmith to replace the lock and keys. Please don't call our emergency contractors. You will be charged for the callout.

Electricity off?

If your electricity cuts out, check the consumer unit to see which switch has tripped off. You can then check which appliance might have caused the problem.

If your neighbours also have no electricity, call your supplier. If they don't have a problem, call us for a repairs appointment.



Damp, mould or condensation?
Let us know - we want to help!

The tips below, explain how you can tackle damp-related problems in your home. But you are also welcome to contact us for advice.

Tackling damp

True damp is caused by a leak, or rain getting in. It often leaves a stain on ceilings or walls and gets darker when it rains.

If you have damp patches like this in your home, contact us.

Solving condensation

Condensation is much more common than damp. It is caused by the way we use our homes.

You will find condensation on windows and cold surfaces around your home.

To prevent condensation:

- Leave your windows open every day for 20 minutes.



- Don't hang wet clothing on radiators to dry out. This can cause damp on your walls.
- Avoid too much clutter in your room. Let the walls breathe.

Let us know if:

- you notice a draught entering from windows, or
- you notice steam in between the two layers of glazing to your windows. This could be due to blown glazing.

Remove mould

Follow the safety instructions on an appropriate mould removal product. Use a mould resistant paint in your bathroom.



Beware of Japanese Knotweed

You are responsible for maintaining your garden. This includes checking for unusual plants that could be Japanese Knotweed.

We have a legal duty to remove this invasive plant. It's fast-growing and forms a strong clump, with tall, dense, annual stems that come up from beneath the soil.

It's tough to control Japanese Knotweed and if you don't tell us as soon as you notice it growing, it can cost several thousand pounds for a herbicide treatment.

You must tell us as soon as you notice this plant growing. If you don't, we may need to pass on the cost of removal to you.

David gets a career Kickstart

We are pleased to welcome David Layne, as our first new apprentice via the Government's Kickstart scheme.

David is delighted to join NLMHA and has shared his story below.

The Kickstart Scheme provides funding to employers to create new job placements for 16 to 24 year-olds on Universal Credit, who are at risk of long-term unemployment.

The six-month placements provide 25 hours per week at the

National Minimum Wage, or (age 23 or 24) the National Living Wage.

The Kickstart Scheme is part of the Government's Plan for Jobs, which aims to help a large number of people to retrain to get back to work.

To find out more about the Scheme, go to: www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme



David's story

My name is David. I'm 21 years of age. At Stoke Newington Secondary School, I only came out with two GCSEs, which were Drama and English Language & Literature, because I didn't take school seriously from years 7 to 9. From year 10, I discovered that I needed to take school seriously to have a good/decent future. By this time it was too late. But I really enjoyed Drama and English, so I managed to get 2 GCSEs. I also did work experience in football coaching.

I enrolled onto a functional skills maths course, as well as Sports and Science Level 3 Diploma, at Newham College East Ham Campus. I passed both. During this time, I also did work experience at two gyms, which helped me to develop a lot. It gave me a small taste of what the work of world was like. I did more voluntary football coaching.

I went on to do Personal Training Level 1 at Newham College East Ham Campus and Personal

Training Level 3 at Westminster College. After passing these courses, I wanted to get a job and looked into customer service/retail as a career. I signed up to the Job Centre to get help with getting a job, as well as funding for any courses I needed to boost my CV. The Job Centre also helped me create and alter my CV, not once but twice.

I applied for many jobs and apprenticeships and got turned down for years. At times I was depressed. Even more so when the pandemic arrived. Eventually, after staying barely positive, I got my first two job interviews ever, with McDonalds. Unfortunately, I didn't get the job. Two to three weeks later there was a job vacancy at North London Muslim Housing Association to be a Housing Assistant. I applied for this job and on the same day I got a call which scheduled an interview the same week. Within four days I had the interview. Bearing in mind this is my third interview ever, I was very nervous and excited at the same time.

Almost a week later, I got a call saying I got the job. I was relieved and happy. A lot of pressure came off of me. I told my family and friends and they were happy for me. My mother was delighted and over the moon about the news. I was grateful for the opportunity.

The workers at North London Housing Association are very welcoming, easy to get along with and helpful. The managers are amazing and not intimidating. I was given a tour around the lovely workplace on my first day here.

I take notes on how every team works. I learnt how to use the franking and printing machines. I do Customer Service training, which involves taking/making calls as well as emails. I do maintenance training, which involves inspections, learning about suitable furniture for properties and negotiating with contractors. So far, I'm having a great time and I want it to continue. I can't wait to learn so much more!



We're here to help you!

Email our Customer Service Team at:
customer.services@nlmha.com

Report your repair by email at:
maintenance@nlmha.com

If you don't have access to email, you can still phone in your query on **020 8815 4200**

1. Repairs

- If you have a problem with your heating and hot water and you have an individual boiler, please select **option 1**.
- If you have a problem with your heating and hot water, and your property is supplied by a communal boiler, please select **option 2**.
- For all other repairs, please select **option 3**.

2. Housing services

- For all other services including rent enquiries, neighbourhood issues and resident involvement, please select **option 2**.

3. Accounts payable

4. All other enquiries

Office hours

Our Customer Services Team take calls on weekdays from 9:30am to 5:30pm, but we are closed for lunch from 1-2pm. We are also closed during public holidays.

You can fax the Team on 020 8806 6854.



North London Muslim Housing Association
15b-15c Urban Hive, Theydon Road
Upper Clapton, London E5 9BQ

Website www.nlmha.com

Please recycle this newsletter when you've finished reading it.



NLMHA is not responsible for any of the external websites, or their contents, featured in this newsletter.

Out-of-hours emergencies

Gas leaks

National Grid 0800 111 999

Water leaks/burst pipes

Thames Water 0848 920 0800

Gas heating/hot water

Robert Heath Heating
0203 667 4584

St Andrews heating (E.ON)

0345 302 4312

Other out-of-hours repairs

North London Muslim HA
020 8815 4200

Useful information

National Debtline

0800 800 4000

www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

Childline 0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk

Samaritans 08457 90 90 90

www.samaritans.org

HomeSwapper

www.homeswapper.co.uk

National Domestic Violence

Helpline 24 hrs, 0808 2000 247

www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

Bulk waste collection Call:

Hackney on 020 8356 6688

Newham on 020 8430 2000

Tower Hamlets on 020 7364

5004 Waltham Forest on

020 8496 3000, or

Enfield on 020 8379 1000.