

Winter 2018

Edition 6

doorstep

customer magazine



Paragon Asra



PA Housing

Welcome

Happy New Year, and welcome to your winter edition of Doorstep. We hope you had a wonderful festive period.

2019 is set to be a big year for us. We've got lots of exciting changes on the horizon, and you can read all about them on page 4. They'll streamline the way we offer services to you, and we hope you agree that it's a really exciting time to be part of PA Housing.

If you've ever considered a Mutual Exchange, our dedicated site makes it easier than ever. Head to page 11 to read all about it, or go straight to www.pahousing.co.uk/apply-for-a-mutual-exchange to see it for yourself.

A lot of readers may have been impacted by

Universal Credit already, and it will continue to affect more of our customers this year. We want you to be as prepared as possible; you can read our top tips on page 9.

In this edition, you can also read about:

- The landmark legal case we won last year on page 15
- Our brand new digital platform on page 13
- Our award-winning development programme in Woolwich on page 7
- The results of our annual PA in Bloom competition on page 19
- How to combat nuisance condensation around your home on page 21

We hope you enjoy this edition of Doorstep. If you have any suggestions for future editions – or on how

we can improve our services in general – don't hesitate to contact us at enquiries@pahousing.co.uk.

Ian Watts
Executive Director
of Assets

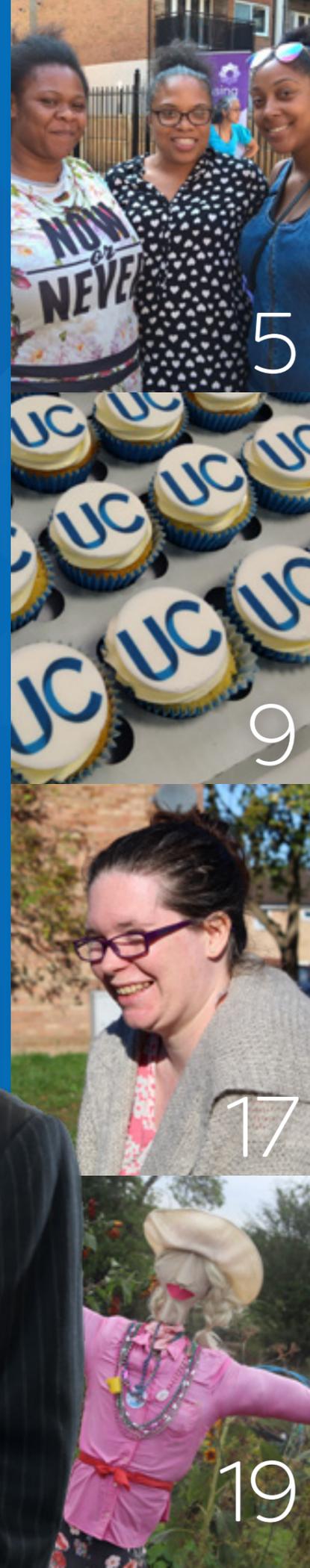


Editorial Group: Patrick Taylor, Ian Watts, Marion Hall, Nick Cullen, Joseph Ragnoli, Aidan Creed, Anne Jeffery and Rosie Wilson

3 Bede Island Road, Leicester LE2 7EA

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The cost to print this magazine is 22p per household

Introducing Hattie

Hattie Llewelyn-Davies OBE is the new Chair of PA Housing. She has devoted her working life to the housing and health sectors and, for 25 years has been a self-employed consultant with a focus on resident involvement, customer care and governance issues.

Hattie has a long association with PA Housing. She worked with Elmbridge tenants in the run-up to the transfer to Elmbridge Housing Trust, one of PA Housing's founding bodies, and was an interim Chief Executive of asra some years ago. She also trained involved residents at our Walton-on-Thames office when they first set up a scrutiny panel.

Hattie has worked with a number of housing associations, and chaired an NHS Trust. She chaired Viridian Housing, which became part of Optivo 15 months ago at the same time as Hattie's tenure as chair expired.

At that point, Hattie decided she wanted to be more involved with housing associations that were rooted in their local communities and she became Chair at Colne Housing which

is based in Colchester, Essex. Colne is a small organisation with around 3,000 units and is focused on local community involvement.

Hattie said:

"After about a year I realised I wanted something more stretching. I was delighted that there was an opportunity to join PA Housing because, in spite of being a large association, it still concentrates very much on the community and local involvement."

Although Hattie was already familiar with much of PA Housing's stock, she has made a point of visiting the areas that are new to her.

"One of the things I like about PA is its absolute commitment to investing in its stock," she said.

Hattie's priorities in housing are to:

- offer the best service possible to customers
- keep properties in beautiful condition
- provide more homes for those that need them.

"The most important thing is to get those things right. Many housing associations

concentrate on only one aspect, such as development, but PA Housing already shares my values. It's clear from the five year Corporate Plan that all these factors are important."

Hattie also thinks it is important to maintain direct links with customers and feels there should be more opportunities for customers to see and talk to staff.

Moving ahead, Hattie wants PA Housing to play a significant role in the housing sector. "I think PA Housing is in an incredibly strong position to be a voice in the sector, because of the range of homes it has across the country, and because of the different communities it serves."

When she is not working she spends much of her time sailing on the

Norfolk Broads. She is also Chair of a small charity based on the Norfolk Coast which is dedicated to the welfare of the county's grey seal population.

Aman Dalvi OBE preceded Hattie as Chair and PA Housing achieved the top rating of G1: V1 from the Regulator of Social Housing during his tenure. Aman said: "Having completed my full six year term of office and achieved the top regulatory ratings, it is time for me to step down. I wish Hattie and the Board all the best."



£1 million investment in how we provide services

Got that January feeling? Us too. We're making big changes to the way we do things, and we're delighted to share the results with you.

New Year, new us!

We know we've not always got it right delivering our services to you, especially in some neighbourhoods where we've had fewer people on the ground. So we are delighted to say our Board has agreed to spend £1 million to recruit new staff to help make a real difference to you and where you live.

The additional roles will be based on the needs of customers and will be directly linked to improvements in our services to make sure you see benefits from these changes.

We'll have more staff on the 'doorstep', meeting you regularly (if you want to) and being there to answer queries. They will keep an eye on

things like communal cleaning and gardening to ensure they're up to standard, and they will tackle issues such as anti-social behaviour and tenancy fraud.

As these plans develop we'll be keeping you posted on what this means for you and the improved services.

New customer relationship System

We launched a new IT system – Discover – to support our communications with you. Essentially we've streamlined everything we do. It's a huge upgrade on the previous system, and it means that all your data is kept securely and efficiently.

The new system will cut call waiting times and ensure an improved level of service. With less administration to do, we can focus on solving any problems you may have and making sure that we get it just right.

New contact details

From 1 February 2019 the way you contact us will be simpler. We have joined up our contact services to ensure we have one designated phone number and one email address.

A single phone number and email address help us communicate with you more effectively and let you get in touch more easily. Win win!

Tel: 0300 123 2221
Email: enquiries@pahousing.co.uk

New website

Log on to www.pahousing.co.uk from 1 February 2019 to discover the brand new look and feel to our website.

In an increasingly digital world, we want to make sure we're keeping up. Our slick new website

will provide information, quick fixes and solutions, as well as offering great tools like our mutual exchange site (see page 11) and our ASB toolkit.

New app

You might be used to the Paragon Portal or My asra, but our brand new 'My PA' is the best of both worlds.

With a new and improved repairs service and a speedy way to pay your rent, check your balance and update your details, My PA is your gateway to a stress-free living experience. Simply go to www.pahousing.co.uk and search 'My PA' or download My PA from the Apple or Android app stores.

Neighbourhoods on Tour



In a bid to meet as many of you as possible we held a Neighbourhoods on Tour event. Staff and involved residents hopped in a van and visited several sites a day to promote our services, deal with inquiries or just have a chat.

We visited sites in Richmond, Kingston and Elmbridge and places where we don't often

meet many of you! We called at Rolandson Court in St Margarets, Franklands Drive in Runnymede, Longmead Road in Hersham and many other places. We also had people from external agencies and some of our contractors along, which gave us the opportunity to give plenty of information about who you should contact when you need advice or support. We

were able to explain what all our different departments do, as well as answer questions on a host of topics.

The involved residents were able to tell everyone about the benefits of taking an active role in helping to improve services at PA Housing.

As soon as we set up our table and chairs at any

of the blocks residents and their children came out to speak to us. Issues included everything from repairs, antisocial behaviour, recycling, how to get a transfer and grounds maintenance. Our staff were able to look at repairs, provide advice on how to deal with fly-tipping and they encouraged residents to think of community solutions for common problems.

On one estate 35 residents visited our stand. Not everyone had questions, many just wanted to say hello. We handed out some PA Housing goodies such as pens, keyrings, mugs and other useful items. We also offered sweets, cakes and soft drinks, which were popular with the children!

The visits were publicised in advance through noticeboards, on our website, Twitter and by text so residents knew when we'd be around and where to find us.

Among the teams taking part was the Inclusion team who could offer advice on welfare and

benefit issues. Many residents were helped on how they will be affected by the introduction of Universal Credit. The Tenancy Solutions team also answered questions on the best way to deal with anti-social behaviour.

Feedback from residents was overwhelmingly positive and many asked us to do the tour regularly - so we are already planning another series of visits next year. A number of residents are now attending their local Forums to help follow through on the issues raised.

Housing Services Manager Sinead Mooney said: "Neighbourhoods

on Tour has been a great success. Questionnaires and telephone surveys are a great way to gauge how customers feel, but there is no better way to check on customer confidence and monitor if we are focusing on their true needs, than to meet them face to face.

"We wanted Neighbourhoods on Tour to improve communications and meet customers across a wide variety of neighbourhoods. It gave PA Housing an opportunity to be seen as a positive presence in the local community."

The Neighbourhood Coordinators have already begun to notice some

changes as a result of the visits, including increased reporting of repairs and grounds maintenance issues which has improved many areas.

We have also seen improved levels of resident involvement and community engagement through the use of communal facilities.

Sinead added: "Residents were pleased to see PA Housing on site and discuss their issues and concerns face to face with officers. Another series of visits is scheduled for next year and we look to expand the services available during the tour, by working with external partners."



Spotlight on Woolwich

PA Housing is about much more than bricks and mortar – it's about people. We put our residents at the centre of everything we do. We want to give back to communities and our award-winning regeneration programme, Trinity Woolwich, does just that.

The Trinity Woolwich development (formerly One Woolwich) is providing a massive transformation from outdated, run-down neighbourhoods to pleasant, convenient communities. The 7 year project is a joint enterprise with developer Lovell Homes and the Royal Borough of Greenwich. The demand for new homes is growing, especially in London and the South East, where housing prices are beyond the reach of many. We are keen to build new houses in Woolwich, which has – and will continue to – made dramatic improvements to the area. In total we are building 525 brand new homes.

We're committed to working closely with

Lovell Homes and the Royal Borough of Greenwich to create a joined up and innovative approach to the project. Trinity Woolwich has unique 'short life' accommodation in the existing properties so that they do not stay empty while we redevelop them. Instead, we work with the council to temporarily house families in need.

The previous tenants of the properties have either been rehoused by the council elsewhere in the borough, or they will return to their neighbourhood once the new properties are completed.

The scheme is helping the council manage its housing demand, including meeting some commitments such as providing homes for refugees. By ensuring that all the accommodation is used while the clearance is underway, the scheme opens up housing opportunities that did not exist previously.

The first stage of the new development, Trinity Walk, has been open almost a year now. Back in March 2018, more than 50 households were given

the keys to their new homes. PA Housing's Chief Operating Officer, Matt Cooney, said: "We are very proud of what has been achieved through our partnership with Lovell Homes and the Royal Borough of Greenwich. These fantastic new homes provide another opportunity for people living or working locally to live in new homes at an accessible price, made possible through the availability of affordable rent and the shared ownership scheme."

As part of our long term commitment to the area and the community, we have opened an office in Woolwich, which will provide a useful hub for residents and help to address local needs. We'll also be offering a training programme for local residents, and starting a repairs service which will introduce our own labour force to the area and provide employment opportunities for our residents.

We have worked with Lovell and the Royal Borough of Greenwich to employ an Estate Management Agent and an Estate Management Board specifically for the

Trinity Walk development. The Board is made up of residents and PA Housing staff, and will ensure that all residents have the same level of service and a say in how the area is run.

The new homes have taken account of the area's rich history, in particular its military heritage. The development is in line with local building materials and design, and reflects the London brick barracks that previously dominated the area. Trinity Woolwich is extremely convenient for commuters; since the opening of Crossrail they are just a 20 minute journey from central London.

When John and Erica first viewed their new apartment they were delighted with the location near their former home, and the affordability. John said: "We never thought we would be able to find something we could afford in an area we love so much. This is a real benefit for the borough."

We were honoured that Trinity Walk was Highly Commended at the Housebuilder Awards 2018 for the Best Regeneration Initiative.

"We never thought we would be able to find something we could afford in an area we love so much."

The Trinity Woolwich development

UC full service has arrived

Five top tips for managing your Universal Credit

As of December 2018, Universal Credit has been made available throughout the country. Eventually, anyone that previously claimed any other benefit will be transitioned onto UC. The programme isn't without its controversies, and recipients will have to adjust to the new way of working. Your money will be paid in a lump sum and has to be self-managed – which may take some time to adjust to if this isn't what you're used to. Our staff are on hand to assist with your Universal Credit queries and concerns in any way we can.

1. Open a bank account

First thing's first – you won't have the option to pick up your Universal Credit payment like you may have done with some benefits. All claimants of Universal Credit will need a UK bank account. If you don't already have one, you can do this online or in your preferred branch.

2. Get online

You'll need an online account with the government to access your Universal Credit statements. Online banking also makes setting up direct debits for rent and bill payments much easier – which is especially valuable because all your money is self-managed under

Universal Credit. If you're anxious about getting online, why not come along to one of our Digital days? Contact inclusion@pahousing.co.uk for more information.

3. Work out a budget

With one monthly lump sum being paid into your account, it's important that you set yourself a budget to help you manage your money. This should include consideration for all monthly outgoings, including food, commuting, childcare, hobbies and spending money as well as bills and rent.

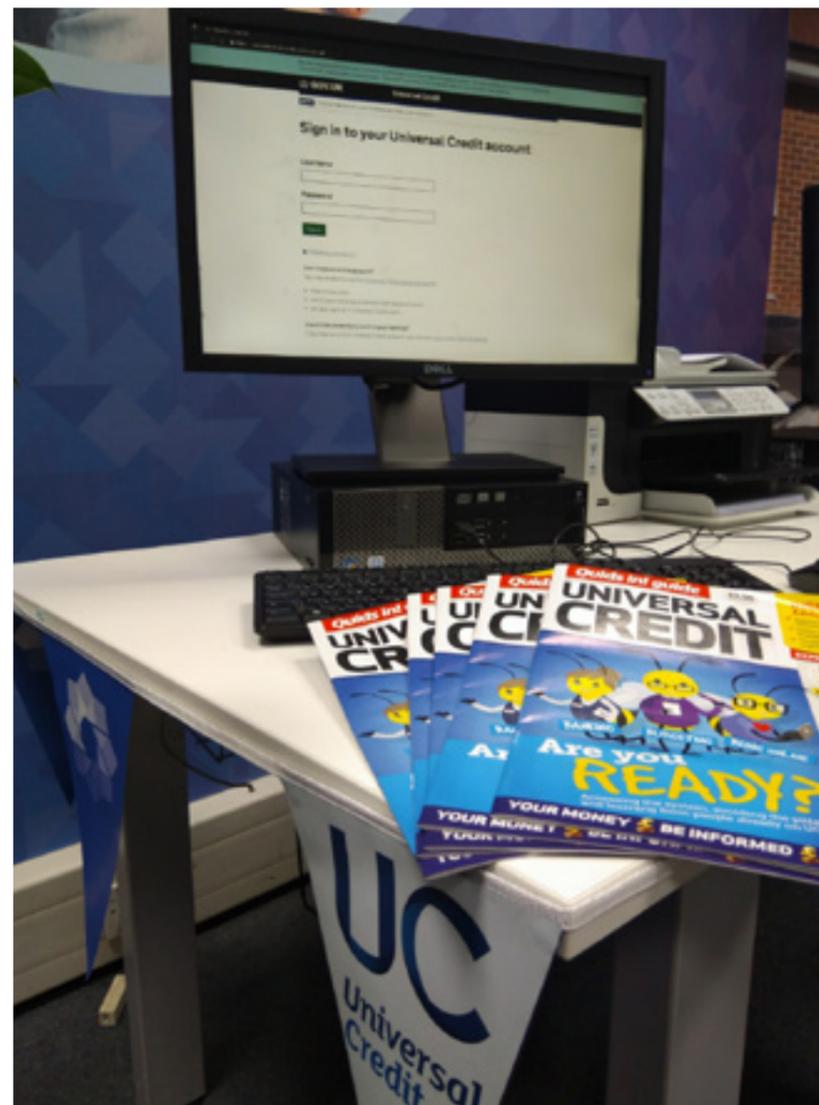
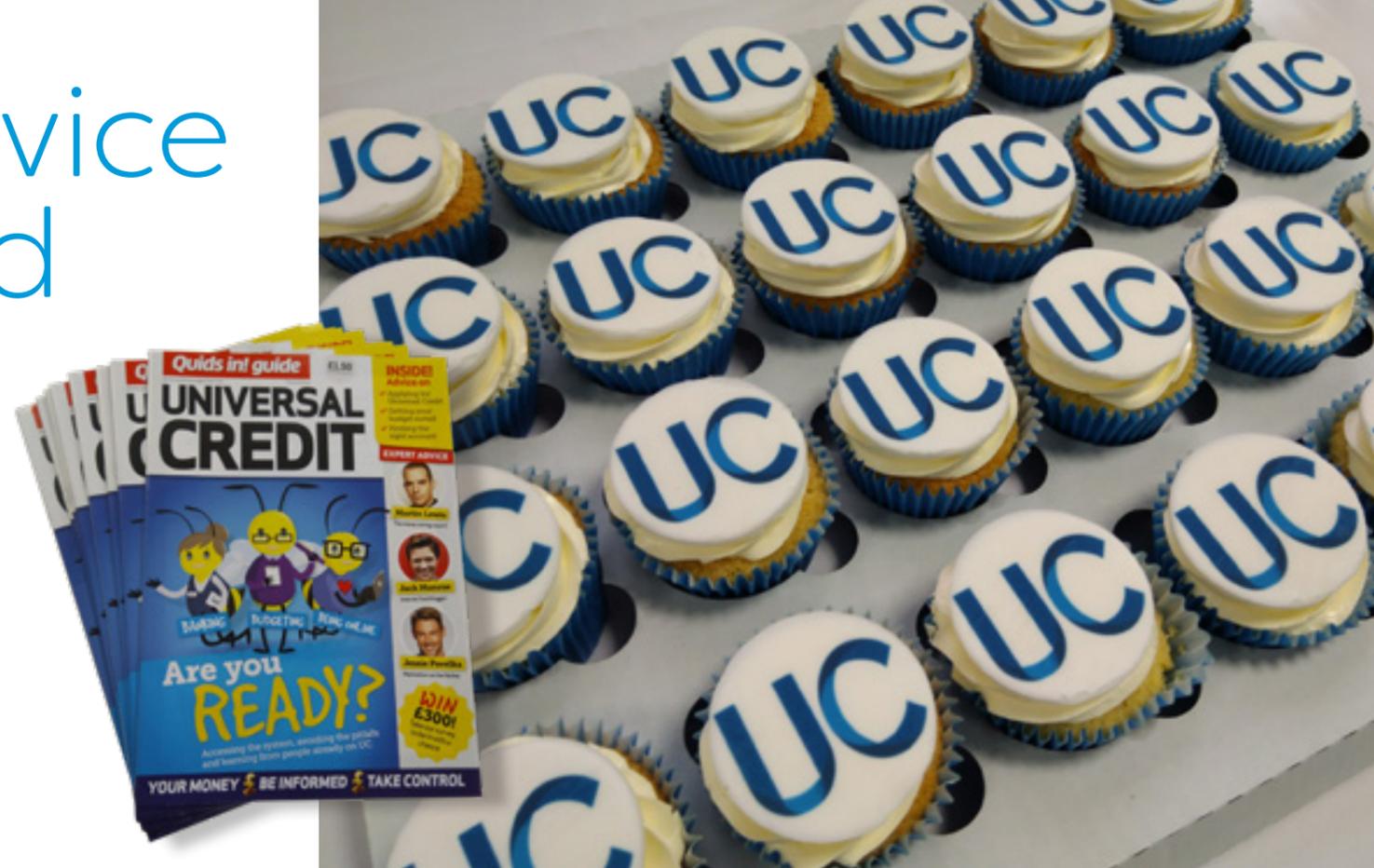
4. Keep a spending diary

One way to help you set a budget and stick to it is

to get an understanding of where your money is going. Try making a note of everything you spend money on – it doesn't have to be big things, even those £3 coffees soon add up! Once you have a better grasp on your outgoings, you should be able to identify where you can cut back if needs be, and where you can afford to be a little more generous with yourself.

5. Reach out

We're here to help. If you need assistance with any of the above – or anything else relating to your Universal Credit claim – we're only ever a phone call away.



benefit will have to get to grips with it. The main sticking point is budgeting – Universal Credit is paid in arrears, which means that residents are often left without a payment for up to six weeks. While PA Housing endeavours to do everything it can to help residents struggling to manage their finances, the ultimate responsibility falls on the individual; which is why it pays to be prepared.

By learning about Universal Credit and understanding the implications before being moved onto it, residents can give themselves the best possible chance of a seamless transition and effectively managing their money.

It's a lot to think about and at times it can be overwhelming. Throughout the day in Woolwich, our team held one-on-one practical advice sessions so that people could chat through their personal finances and how Universal Credit would affect them specifically.

We'd like to thank everyone who attended the event and we hope you found it beneficial. We hope to hold more of these events throughout our localities so that we can help even more residents. Keep an eye on our website and

social media channels for updates.

Although the day is over, it certainly doesn't mean there's no support available for those who are struggling with Universal Credit, or those who are yet to move over to it. Contact our Tenancy Sustainment and Financial Inclusion Team on 0300 123 2221 or at inclusion@pahousing.co.uk. Last year, they helped our residents claim £2,247,794 back in benefits – and they might be able to help you, too. Don't keep financial anxiety to yourself – we're here to help.

For their fantastic work helping our customers all over the country, our Tenancy Sustainment and Financial Inclusion Team was shortlisted for a Welfare Wise Award at the 24 Housing Awards 2018. Our extended thanks and congratulations to everyone that contributed towards this phenomenal achievement – we couldn't be more proud!

One case study where we've assisted with the Universal Credit full roll out is Woolwich. Universal Credit rolled out throughout Greenwich – including Woolwich – over the summer, and so our London Tenancy Sustainment team headed to central Woolwich in order to answer our residents' questions.

The team, along with manager Ian Clutton, set up camp for a day in Woolwich Central Baptist Church in order to offer free, expert advice on Universal Credit.

Universal Credit can be a daunting prospect, and over the coming months and years, anyone claiming housing

Mutual Exchange is now even easier

Many of our residents have found their current homes through the Mutual Exchange (MEX) scheme, where two tenants can move to more suitable accommodation by simply swapping homes with each other.

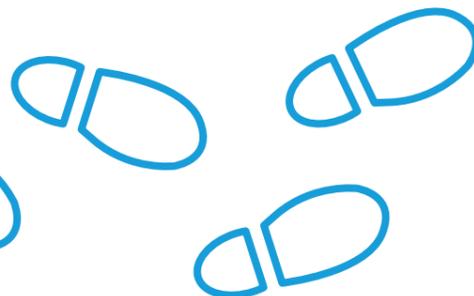
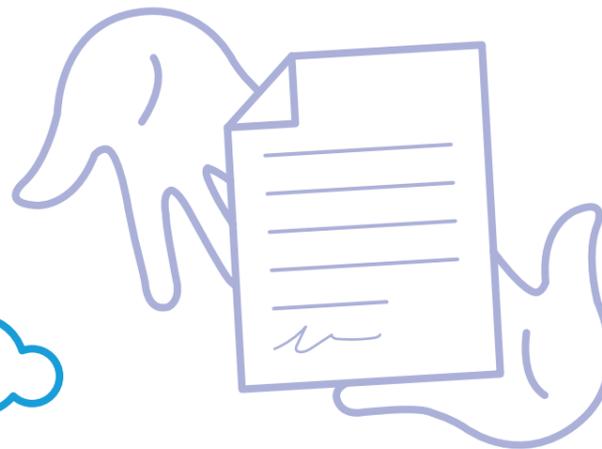
The reasons to move are many: if your family need a bigger place to live or your kids have left home and you need somewhere smaller; or you might need to be closer to work. You might just fancy a change of location. If your home is

ideal for someone else and their home is perfect for you, MEX could be the answer.

Whatever the reasons behind the move, a growing number of tenants are choosing the option, so we have streamlined the process to make it easier than ever. Anyone currently renting a home from PA Housing might be eligible to swap.

Simplified process

We've set up a special section on our website



with all the links you'll need to begin the process. You'll have to set up a HomeSwapper account and advertise your own property on it. There are more than 200,000 properties advertised in all parts of the country for you to choose where you'd like to move to, and other home swappers can see your details. The change can even involve more than two homes if necessary and we'll help you to set it up if you need us to.

Once you've found a match you can apply online using a simple form that asks for your details and those of the person you want to swap with. Your application will be allocated to a dedicated officer who will arrange an inspection of your property and gas and electricity safety tests.

If everything is OK, we'll just need to check the new tenant's references and issue one for you.

How does it work?

We have 42 days to check your application

and decide if it can go ahead. We're able to approve applications in most cases, so if we don't give you a decision until the 42 days are up, it doesn't mean anything is wrong or the application isn't going ahead.

Who is eligible?

Both parties need to have been in their homes for more than 12 months, and rent accounts must be up to date, with no reports of anti-social behaviour. The property you're moving into must be the right size for you; it mustn't be adapted for a disabled resident unless you need it to be; and it can't have a private landlord.

Want to know more?

Visit our website at <https://pahousing.co.uk/apply-for-a-mutual-exchange> where you will meet the George family who made a successful mutual exchange, and learn about how you can too. Good luck with your move!

Be part of our digital community with our new app My PA



PA Housing is committed to digital inclusion, and maximising online engagement, because it is a better way to deliver services to you. Being connected to the digital world brings huge benefits. It broadens opportunities; boosts social inclusion; opens doors to education and communication and reduces isolation. From February it will give you 24 hour access to many of our services.

In response to customer feedback we are improving and extending what's on offer to you with a brand new digital portal called My PA. It will link you to a host of our services through any internet-connected device, with the extra convenience of being able to reach us

on mobile phones and tablets.

You can easily diagnose repairs using our room by room system, then report them with just a few clicks. You can also book appointments for contractor visits and monitor progress, and My PA will offer advice on things such as condensation that are your responsibility.

You'll also be able to:

- check rent balances
- set up a Direct Debit
- request a new fob or keys
- report pests
- raise grounds maintenance issues

If you get stuck on anything you can reach customer support directly, including live chat. We'll be updating the app regularly to bring you new services.

You'll need to register to use the service but it's quick and easy to do.

You'll just need a few details from your rent statement, then go on to www.pahousing.co.uk and follow the links.

A GDPR reminder

GDPR stands for General Data Protection Regulation and it's the latest rules that govern how we collect, store and use the data we have about you. It replaced the Data Protection Act, and introduced tighter controls on data handling, with tougher penalties for organisations that break the rules.

The new rules also apply to paper records. And they are not just about sensitive information such as health data or your political or religious beliefs. They include all personal data such as name, age and address.

We want your data to be safe so we are introducing stricter

processes to ensure that we comply with the rules. Any data we hold about you must be accurate, secure, and used only in the ways we have agreed with you. You have a right to know what data we hold; to have changes made to inaccurate information; and to ask for anything not relevant to our business to be deleted - the so-called "right to disappear".

Data Protection Officer Frank Renouf said: "This is all about people's right to know that the data we hold is being handled securely. We should respect other people's personal data as much as we expect others to respect ours."

"We have taken steps to make sure we are compliant with the regulation and that all the data we hold is properly handled."

PA Housing wins court case and sets legal precedent



This summer, PA Housing won a court case which will become part of case law. The Court of Appeal ruled that we had not evicted a tenant unfairly or acted disproportionately, and that we had followed the correct steps in dealing with the tenant, who claimed we had committed disability discrimination.

Initially, we instigated possession against the tenant on the grounds that he was causing nuisance and ASB. However, he argued that this behaviour was a consequence of his disability. As a result, we suspended the possession in order to protect the tenant's disability under the Equality Act, and agreed

that his home would not be re-possessed as long as he didn't breach his tenancy again. The court ruled that this was a proportionate response.

When the tenant breached the terms of his tenancy again, we were left with no choice but to obtain a warrant to re-possess the property. The tenant argued against this, which led to another court hearing.

There was no change in the tenant's circumstances regarding his disability, so we argued that there was nothing for the court to reconsider. The judge agreed and dismissed the tenant's application to stay in the property, ruling that PA Housing did not discriminate

against him because of his disability. In this case, the judge said that eviction would be a fair means of achieving a legitimate aim.

The judge ruled that the tenant had no right to ask the court to reconsider the case unless there was a change of circumstance; allowing the tenant to appeal the decision repeatedly could lead to continued and vexatious attempts.

PA Housing takes discrimination very seriously, and acknowledges that it is the landlord's sustained and continued duty not to discriminate against a tenant. There may be future cases where a change of circumstances would affect the case

differently – but this was not one of them. Sharon Butler, Tenancy Solutions Team Manager, said: "This is a very positive outcome for our residents in the locality, who have been experiencing serious anti-social behaviour for eight years. The PA Housing approach to tenancy solutions is to work with residents and support them to sustain their tenancies, but unfortunately in some cases this is not possible. The Court of Appeal judgement supports our approach and our robust internal justification process, which ensures that we are proportionate in our action and consider a resident's personal circumstances before we take enforcement action."

How are we doing?

To make sure we offer you great services we regularly monitor performance and measure our success. Here's some of the latest figures.

Emergency repairs completed within 24 hours: 99.76%

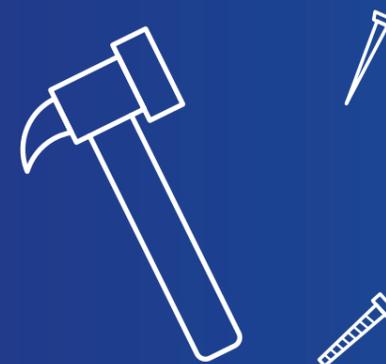
We're getting closer and closer to reaching 100% on this – and we're proud to say that we're nearer than ever.



Overall void loss: 1.55%

Universal Credit arrears – 4.92%

Universal Credit has created a big change for a lot of our customers [see page 9 for more], but with less than 5% UC arrears, our Tenancy Sustainment Teams have provided a smooth transition for many residents.



Routine repairs completed within 21 days: 94.48%

We're pleased to announce that this is an almost 2% improvement since the last issue of Doorstep. However, we're trying to improve our routine repairs service even further. From February, customers in London will benefit from a level of service that matches other localities, thanks to our change in repairs provider.



Average arrears per person: £164.99



Absolute relet time: 27.7 days

This is an improvement of two days in the space of six months!

Fun and chat at a Community Action Day

In response to requests from residents we are arranging more local events where we can get to know you better and you have the chance to talk to us directly and discuss topics you feel are important.

At our Community Action day we took along skips so that we could help people by removing any bulky rubbish they needed to dispose of. We had contractors on hand to carry out small repairs and improvements as well as litter picking and cleaning the area. And for anything bigger we arranged to carry out repairs later.

Children from the area were treated to a host of fun activities including giant lawn games, face painting and balloon animal modelling. There was also an ice cream van on hand all day. And we asked them to paint a picture of their perfect place so we can see what their dream home looks like.

Residents were asked to complete feedback forms to tell us what things we could do to

make the area better and they were rewarded for their help with free ice creams. From the responses we found that the key topics were security on site, fly tipping and the bin store, and intercom breakdowns. More activities for children would be welcomed.

Resident Involvement Officer Raj Sharma said: "The day threw a lot of light onto what residents really want from us and showed us what we have been missing. It gave us the opportunity to get into the community and offer a personal touch so we can start engaging with people and see what we can offer them. It was also a lot of fun!"

As well as providing feedback, residents were asked if they would like to be more involved with PA Housing and several said they would. One person who signed up on the day was Claire Van Kroonenburg.

She has lived on the estate since 2004, starting off in a flat at one end of the area and then moving a year later to her current home. She has wanted to be more

involved in residents' activities for some time but until recently there were too many hurdles to overcome.

Claire said: "They used to hold meetings when parents couldn't be involved because they were at work etc., but they've recently changed the times so now it's possible. I'm really looking forward to being part of it. I can be very determined when it's something I'm passionate about."

She also has more time because all her children are now at school: 14-year-old twins, an 11-year-old, a 9-year-old and the youngest is 5.

Claire particularly wants to see more on offer for children and young people on the estate. Some years ago there was a campaign to open a children's park nearby but it never happened. Now she plans to revive some ideas about young people's activities.

"We used to have a youth club but there isn't one any more. And I'd like to get the kids into doing more for the estate. We used to get them to

tidy up and there were races to collect rubbish and fill a bag. Parents would be out the front watching them, and we got to know everyone. It helped build the community."

Litter is a key topic. She also plans to campaign for more litter bins in a bid to avoid rubbish being dumped on the floor. The estate has only one public bin and she believes more would help.

"I have always pushed for things for the estate even before I became an involved resident and people have noticed. We have the potential to really turn this area round and make everyone proud to live here again".

"We have the potential to really turn this area round and make everyone proud to live here again."



Claire Van Kroonenburg
Involved Resident

PA In Bloom 2018

This year's PA in Bloom competition proved once again that we have some very talented gardeners among our residents. More than 30 gardens were up for awards with entrants from far apart as Nottingham and Surrey. They were judged over three days by our staff and members of our Resident Council.

Qualifying patches could be as small as a hanging basket or a window box, or as large as community gardens with lots of people working on them. The standard was incredibly high, however big or small the entry. Congratulations to everyone for their hard work, time and energy in taking part. You did us proud!

Top prize winner was Theofanis Andrews from Howorth House, East Sheen. He scooped 1st prize in the community garden and PA nomination categories for his exceptional gardening skills and was awarded overall winner for 2018.

The awards ceremony was a huge success,

even though it rained heavily on the day. It was held at Walton Community allotment, which is a joint venture run with our partner Walton Charity. The allotment is a community project where people from all walks of life get together to work on the gardens.

It's the kind of scheme that encourages social inclusion and is a way to involve people in social activities who would not normally take part. It particularly helps overcome barriers such as mental health difficulties, disability, isolation and poverty.

Because everyone is welcome, it means that the more able, and more skilled, can pass on their expertise to the rest, who learn basic gardening techniques, and so experience the thrill of producing their own food and flowers.

There was a tour of the site before the awards were announced and the rain didn't deter anyone from taking the tour.



This year we had winners in all of our regions

Communal/ community garden category
 1st prize: Theofanis Andrews
 2nd prize: Allotment Group at Fulmer Close
 3rd prize: Ken Bowman

Highly commended
 Lisa Sharp, Margaret Beasley, Raymond Smith, Joan Swift, Carol Kavanagh, Elwony Hawley and Wainwright House

Best hanging baskets / balcony
 1st prize: Paul Kent
 2nd prize: Ken Bowman
 3rd prize: Diana Charman

Highly commended
 Raymond Smith, Janet Bennett and Roger Barnes

Best small garden or patio garden
 Shared 1st prize: Mark Evans, Paul Kent and Vonda Saunders
 2nd prize: Tim Wills
 Joint 3rd prize: Alan Pearson, Tracy Johnson and Ann Lowndes-Butcher

Highly commended
 Margaret Beasley, Jill Mansfield-Scaddan, Stephen Cunningham, Matthew Ruffell and Wainwright House

Best vegetables or fruits
 1st prize: Gardening Group at Albany House
 2nd prize: Wainwright House

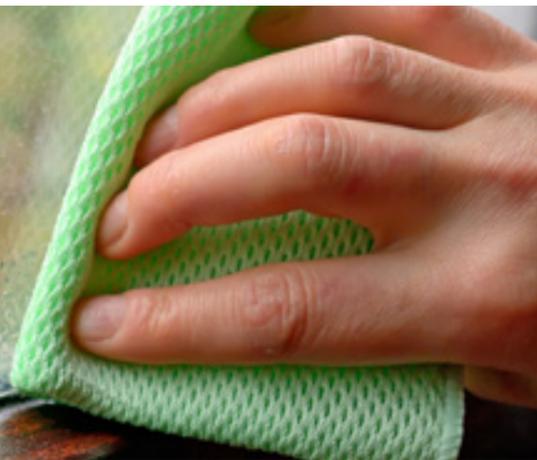
Most Inspiring or creative garden
 1st prize: Vonda Saunders
 2nd prize: Mark Evans
 3rd prize: Gardening Group at Albany House

Highly commended
 Margaret Beasley, Raymond Smith and Paul Kent

Best wellbeing garden
 1st prize: Gardening Group at Albany House
 2nd prize: Wainwright House
 3rd prize: Mark Evans

Nominate a PA Housing neighbour or resident
 1st prize: Theofanis Andrews
 2nd prize: Mark Evans
 3rd prize: Lisa Sharp

Dealing with condensation in your home



One of the frequent reasons for your calls to us at this time of year is condensation in the home. It's more likely when the weather turns cold because it's usually caused when warm and cold air meet. And if you don't deal with it quickly it can lead to more serious problems, like

mould. The good news is there's a lot you can do to minimise it, or even avoid it altogether.

Condensation is not damp

The first thing you need to know is the difference between condensation and damp. Damp in the

home is usually caused by leaking pipes, water pooling against a wall, rain seeping in through lost tiles or blocked gutters. It often leaves a tidemark. If you have damp you need to contact us.

Condensation is usually caused by everyday activities such as cooking,

washing and bathing. There is always some moisture in the air even if you can't see it. When the air gets colder, it can't hold all the moisture and tiny drops of water appear – this is condensation. If condensation is the problem you need to take some simple preventative actions.

These are some of the things you can do:

- Dry clothes outside or hang washing in the bathroom with the door closed and a window slightly open or an extractor fan on.
- Make sure your tumble dryer is vented to the outside or that it is the condensing type.
- Put a small amount of cold water in a bath before running the hot water, which will reduce steam.
- Do not run your shower for longer than required.
- Mop up condensation or water every day.
- It is normal to find bedroom windows misted up in the morning after a cold night but dry your windows and windowsills every morning.
- Wipe wet surfaces in the kitchen or bathroom but wring out the cloth. Don't dry it on a radiator.
- Catch condensation dripping from windows with condensation channels and sponge strips (available from DIY shops).
- Shut kitchen and bathroom doors when cooking and bathing.
- Use cooker hoods and extractor fans, or open windows when cooking.



A few more suggestions

- Avoid using bottled gas or paraffin heaters because they produce a lot of moisture.
- Use extractor fans if you have them.
- Ventilate your kitchen and bathroom for about 20 minutes after use by opening a small top window.
- Use a dehumidifier if you have one. These are cheap to run and the drier atmosphere they create will be easier and cheaper to heat.
- Do not put wardrobes against external walls to avoid mildew on your clothes.

Heating and ventilation

You can also cut down on condensation by heating your home more evenly and making sure you have adequate ventilation. Warm air holds more moisture than cooler air so it is less likely to deposit droplets of water round your home. Ventilation reduces condensation by removing moist air from your home and replacing it with drier air from outside.

Heating one room to a high level and leaving other rooms cold makes

condensation worse in the unheated rooms. It is better to have a medium to low level of heat throughout the house. It is cheaper to keep your central heating on at a low level than to use electric fires. It is also better to try to maintain a low heat than to heat the house twice a day from cold.

If you don't have heating in every room, open doors of unheated rooms slightly to allow some heat into them, and to improve air circulation. Don't push beds or sofas against radiators

because it stops circulation of warm air.

Keep a small window ajar or trickle vents open at all times. Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when in use by opening windows. Make sure you leave a window slightly open in your bedroom at night.

Dealing with mould

If you have mould forming in your property you can treat it by washing walls and window frames. Use a fungicidal wash that carries a Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

approval number, and make sure you follow the manufacturer's guidelines.

After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint and a fungicidal resistant wallpaper paste to help prevent mould growth recurring. Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo any carpets. Don't try to remove mould by using a brush or vacuum cleaner.

If you do this and follow the other advice given above, mould should not reappear.



Coming soon, the new PA Housing website.

Updated and improved in response
to your suggestions.

www.pahousing.co.uk