

## Fire safety at Apna Ghar

**At Apna Ghar, we were shocked and dismayed by the terrible fire at Grenfell Tower on 14 June.**

We would like to reassure you that we take your health and safety very seriously. We meet fire regulations and other health and safety law, and regularly review our arrangements.

Over the past two years, we have installed a new fire alarm system at Gard Street in Islington and upgraded the system at Pound Lane in Brent.

Since then, we have introduced weekly fire alarm testing at blocks. We get this testing done for us by our cleaners or other estate contractors.

In February, our two Tenancy Services Officers took part in training on fire risk assessments and general fire safety. This session was hosted by Apna Ghar and included staff from our partner landlords in the London BME group.

However, at the blocks we own, we choose to get assessments carried out by qualified specialists. If we don't own your block, assessments are organised by the owning landlord.

Following the fire at Grenfell Tower, we responded promptly to Government enquiries about the homes we own. We were able to report that we only own one block – Damask Court in Brent, which has six storeys. None of our properties have external cladding panels of the type used at Grenfell Tower.

As previously planned, we will shortly be commissioning updated assessments on all our blocks. We have to do this every two years – or sooner, if we have carried out certain major repairs. We will act on recommendations as soon as we can.



We recently updated our health and safety policies around fire safety and blocks of flats. Our Board is still on course to approve these at their July meeting.

If you have any concerns about fire safety in your Apna Ghar home, please contact us.



## Why communal areas must be kept clear

As part of our fire safety work, we remind you to keep communal areas clear of your personal belongings.

London Fire Brigade warns that leaving items in corridors, stairways and entrances is a big risk to the safety of everyone living in the building.

This is because they can:

- cause a fire
- make a fire more serious or spread more quickly
- get in the way of people trying to escape from a fire
- make it harder and more dangerous for the emergency services to fight a fire.

The Fire Brigade has been enforcing this health and safety requirement more strongly since 2013-14, when more than 500 fires started in the communal areas of blocks in just one year.

Following the Grenfell Tower disaster, we will make doubly sure that you remove any bikes, furniture, buggies, laundry, doormats, plant pots or other items immediately. If you don't, we may have to remove and dispose of them.

Please don't leave rubbish outside your door either – this is also serious fire hazard. You should always take your rubbish straight down to the communal bin store.

## Sophana: our latest volunteer

Meet Sophana Vijiakanthan, who is doing a three-month volunteer placement with Apna Ghar.

Twenty-one-year-old Sophana is French and is currently in her first year of a Masters in International Business. To complete the year, she had to do an internship abroad.

Sophana has worked alongside Vinod, our Finance Director, and particularly enjoyed learning about our performance indicators and working on our fixed asset register – which is a record of our properties.

She has also been working on our rent payment systems. She says: "To sum up, this experience is very helpful for me because I am learning so many things and it helps to improve my organisational, my IT and financial skills and now I am excited because I am going to work on the company website."

"I am really enjoying during this internship and I am appreciating to work with this friendly team."



In future, Sophana wants to specialise in marketing or the import-export sector.



## Keep an eye on your neighbours

**A very sad story in the press reminds all of us to look out for our neighbours.**

While we often hear about older people struggling alone, it was a shock to read about a disabled child dying of starvation when his mother died unexpectedly at home.

Let's all get to know our neighbours, so we can make sure people are alright. If you are concerned about an Apna Ghar neighbour, you can always call the office.

## Insure your contents

Don't forget – we insure the buildings you live in, but not your personal belongings.

In one week, recently, three tenants were affected by leaks. Sadly, none had insurance.

We strongly recommend taking out contents insurance, to cover your furniture, carpets and other personal items in case of fire, theft, vandalism, burst pipes, leaks, household emergencies or accidents.



Comparison websites like [www.confused.com](http://www.confused.com) or [www.gocompare.com](http://www.gocompare.com) are a good place to find a cheap deal. Search on 'renters' insurance'.

Alternatively, the My Home scheme provided by the National Housing Federation, together with Thistle Tenant Risks, is designed for people living in social and affordable rented housing.

Payments are flexible and there are lots of ways to pay. The policies also have no excess, which means they pay claims in full. You can insure as little as £9,000 (£6,000, if you are aged 60 or over).

Phone them on 0345 450 7288 or email [MyHome@thistleinsurance.co.uk](mailto:MyHome@thistleinsurance.co.uk)

# Out-of-hours emergency repairs

Emergency repairs when our offices are shut are handled by the landlord that owns your home. Our offices are shut on weekdays from 5pm to 9am, at weekends and on Bank holidays.



**Apna Ghar:** 0800 389 8699 or 020 7424 7370 and press option 5 (from 5pm to 9am and all weekend) – this service is provided for us by Places for People.

**Family Mosaic:** 0300 123 3456

**Genesis:** 033 3000 3000 (6pm to 8am)

**Guinness Partnership:** 0303 123 1890 (6pm to 8am)

**Islington & Shoreditch Housing Association:** 020 7704 7300

**London & Quadrant Housing Trust:** Use the emergency numbers for Apna Ghar properties.

**Metropolitan:** 020 3535 3535

**Network Homes:** 020 3701 3589

**Octavia Housing & Care:**

020 3589 3078 (Meers)

**One Housing Group:** 0300 123 9966

**PA Housing Group:** 0116 257 6716

**Peabody Trust:** 0800 022 4040

**Sanctuary Housing Association:**  
Out-of-hours gas team:  
0800 288 9289  
Repairs: 0800 916 1525



## Contact us

**Office hours:** Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

**General enquiries (including repairs)**

Phone: 020 8795 5405

Fax: 020 8795 5755

Email: agha@apnagar.org.uk

**Direct lines**

Andrian David: 020 3764 5081

Audrey Chambers:  
020 3764 5083

Amarjit Gujral: 020 3764 5082

**Website:** www.gha.org.uk

**Write to:** Apna Ghar HA  
21 Westmoreland Road  
London  
NW9 9BW



## No smoking in communal areas

Smoking in communal areas is a fire risk and against the law. So is removing a 'No Smoking' notice.

Please don't smoke in communal areas or throw cigarette butts out of your windows. Doing either is annoying to your neighbours, but it is also potentially dangerous.



## Bulky rubbish council collections

Large items left around the estate are also a fire hazard. Please arrange a collection and don't put them out until collection day.

For a collection call:

- Brent Council on 020 8937 5050 (five items, three times a year, free)
- Call Ealing Council on 020 8825 6000 (£40 for up to eight items and £25 for a fridge or freezer)
- Hackney Council on 020 8356 6688 (up to five items, four times a year, free)
- Veolia Haringey on 020 8885 7700 (most items free)
- Islington Council on 020 7527 2000 (£10 per item, minimum cost of £30 – but a 50% discount if you receive Housing Benefit or Council Tax support).
- Newham Council on 020 8430 2000 (£20 for up to six items).



## Bournemouth here we come!

Our day trip will take place on 31 August 2017. Call the office to book your place. Spaces are limited, so don't delay.

## Fire safety

After the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in west London, we are including a leaflet with advice about fire safety with this issue of Our Home.

In this newsletter, you will also find information about our fire safety arrangements and how you can play your part in keeping our properties safe from fire.



## Direct debit prize draw winner

Edna Anderson from Brent gained a shopping voucher worth £50 – after winning our latest direct debit prize draw.

If you pay by direct debit and your rent account is clear, we enter you into our prize draw automatically.

Paying by monthly direct debit is simple and secure. Your rent is never late and we update your payments every year.

To set up a direct debit, call the office on 020 8795 5405.

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