

Why we're buying more **properties**

At a challenging time for small housing associations, we're aiming to make Apna Ghar stronger, so that we can carry on providing you with good quality, community based, homes and services.

As you'll see from our front page story, we have just bought our first newly built homes – thanks to securing our first £4 million loan facility, with Metro Bank plc.

We now plan to take a second loan, so that we can start to buy some of the flats we manage.

Securing our income

In the past, a large amount of our income came from Supporting People contracts with local authorities. Two years ago we had contracts with five boroughs, but by April 2014 we will only have two.

The change is because local authorities are cutting costs by opting to reduce the amount of support they provide and placing

their contracts with fewer and larger companies.

Buying newly built homes adds to the stock of homes we have to offer. But buying the homes we manage is also good for Apna Ghar, because when we own a property, we can be sure of our rental income – it can't be taken back by another landlord.

"We think we can also do a better job for tenants, if we're their landlord," says Jai Dosanjh, our Chief Executive.

"Firstly, we know the properties and their long-term repair and other problems. We will aim to sort these out more quickly than a larger landlord.

"We also provide a more personal



Chief Executive, Jai Dosanjh

service from our community based office, instead of tenants having to use a call centre that may not even be in London. Tenants will find it easier dealing with just one landlord."

We are currently writing to some of your owning landlords, asking for the option to buy homes. If your home is affected, we will let you know later in the year.

Harrow Supporting People contract ends

Harrow Council will not be renewing our Supporting People contract when it expires on 31 March.

Our support staff have been explaining the options available to our remaining clients.

Like the other boroughs that have taken this step, Harrow has always been happy with our service. The decision is based on cost.

Working with our Harrow clients has been rewarding and we wish you all the best for the future.



Direct debit prize draw winner

Ms Jama from Wembley, won £50 in our December direct debit prize draw.

We hold regular prize draws for everyone who pays their rent by monthly direct debit, direct from their bank or building society account.

To set up your direct debit, phone Andrian David on **020 8795 5405**.

Subletting? You could go to prison

It is now against the law to move away from your Apna Ghar home and let someone else move in.

Under the Social Housing Fraud Act 2013, a court can 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 a fine of up to £50,000.

Landlords across the country now share information. We work with the police and local councils to help detect fraud. We also carry out tenancy audit checks to make sure the right people are living in our homes.

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



Making a complaint about the **NHS**

If you need to complain about the NHS, you can get free and independent help from the VoiceAbility service.

VoiceAbility's trained advocates can give you information and provide additional support if you need help to put your case.

For example, they can:

- give you information about how the NHS complaints system works – they will send a free information pack)
- make sure you know what to expect
- help you write your complaint
- make sure you send it to the right people
- prepare you for meetings and go with you
- help you make decisions
- give you the chance to speak to someone outside the NHS, in confidence
- help you monitor the progress of your complaint, and
- put you in touch with other



people and organisations that may be able to help you.

They can arrange for help in your language, or for a British Sign Language interpreter. Or they can provide information in easy read, audio and large print versions.

VoiceAbility can assist if your complaint is about any service provided or commissioned by the NHS. That includes pharmacists and opticians, as well as hospital and community based services.

Call 0300 330 5454 (textphone 0786 002 2939) for details or email nhscomplaints@voiceability.org

10 tips to help you save energy

- Turn down your thermostat 1°C to cut your heating bills by up to 10% and save about £100 a year.
- Set your hot water thermostat to no higher than 60°C.
- Make good use of your central heating timer.
- Turn down radiators in rooms you only use occasionally.
- Switch off lights when you aren't using them.
- Turn appliances off at the wall – don't put them on standby.
- Replace normal light bulbs with energy efficient ones.
- Close curtains at night to insulate the room.
- Don't let furniture block radiators and heaters.



- Draughtproof windows and doors using DIY kits.



Contact us

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

Phone: 020 8795 5405

Fax: 020 8795 5755

Email:
agha@apnagar.org.uk

Website: www.gha.org.uk

Write to: 1 Olympic Way,
Wembley, Middlesex
HA9 0NP



Out-of-hours emergency repair numbers for the properties we manage

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.



A2 Dominion: 0800 432 0077

Apna Ghar: 033 3000 3000 (from 6pm to 8am and all weekend)

Asra Housing Group:
0116 257 6716

Circle 33: 0800 073 0417 or
020 7447 3100

Family Mosaic: 0300 123 3456

Genesis: 033 3000 3000

Guinness Partnership:
03000 111 321 (6pm to 8am)

Genesis: 033 3000 3000

Islington & Shoreditch Housing Association:
020 7704 7300

London & Quadrant Housing Trust: 0800 015 6536

Metropolitan Housing Trust:
020 3535 3535

Network Stadium Housing Association: 0300 373 3001

North London Muslim Housing Association: 020 8815 4200

Octavia Housing & Care:
0800 479 0011 (Homeserve)

One Housing Group:
0300 123 9966

Peabody Trust: 0800 022 4040

Sanctuary Housing Association:
0800 781 4823

If you live at **Damask Court**, your out-of-hours emergency number is 0300 456 3748 (from 5pm to 8am).

Are you registered to vote?

There are important elections on the way – so make sure you’re registered to vote.

In May 2014, there will be elections for:

- your local council, and
- the European Union.

On 7 May 2015, there will be:

- a general election – to vote in a new UK Government.

To vote, you must be:

- registered to vote
- 18 years or older
- a British citizen – able to vote in all elections

- an Irish, Cypriot, Maltese or qualifying Commonwealth citizen (you must have leave to enter or remain in the UK, or not require such leave) – to vote in all elections, or
- an EU citizen from another country – to vote just in local and European elections.

How to register

Everyone eligible to vote should be on the full electoral register by law. So should 16- and 17-year-

olds, so that they don’t miss out between updates of the register.

If your council hasn’t contacted you to update their register, ask them for a form.

Voting made easier for people with disabilities

You can opt to vote by post, making it easier if you have mobility problems.

If you have a strong reason, you can also opt to vote by proxy – so someone else casts your vote for you. Contact your council for more details.

Damask Court – our first new homes

It’s been an exciting time for Apna Ghar, as we took possession of our first newly built homes in mid-January.

The 23 flats at Damask Court in Wembley were originally due to be completed by the autumn. Unfortunately, handover day kept being put back, so our new residents had to wait till after Christmas before moving in.

The flats mean a welcome new start for local people in housing need. For Uzeyir Keser, it’s a huge relief to have a home of his own after 10 months of homelessness.

Uzeyir has been disabled since he suffered a serious accident at work. Shortly afterwards, his

landlord decided to sell the home he had rented privately for the past five years.

When the council was unable to help, Uzeyir spent seven months sleeping in his car and then three months in a homeless hostel. “I got a very, very bad time and I have depression,” he says.

Uzeyir says he likes the flat, “It’s fine for me – it’s nice”. But more importantly, it’s a roof over his head. “I need somewhere to sleep. Sleeping in cars, I am scared – maybe people will come and kill me or something,” he says.

Uzeyir’s support worker is now helping him to settle in and sort out the furniture he needs.

We wish Uzeyir, and all our other new residents, the very best in their new homes.



New homes at Damask Court in Wembley

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