



Contact us

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

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Check out our new website

Our new-look website is now up and running with new features for residents.

You will find our latest news and publications, as well as useful information about your tenancy and our support service. You can also pay your rent online.

We have added information on welfare reform and a benefit calculator – for people affected by the bedroom tax.

We would welcome feedback. Call or email the office.

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

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

An easier way to contact your council

Islington and Harrow Councils have introduced a new way for you to contact them.

Instead of phoning or queuing at their offices, you can now do lots of things online. For example, you can pay your Council Tax, sort out your parking permit, report graffiti and look up council services – and check the council's progress on the things you reported earlier.

To get started, you need to register online for your own E-account.

Go to www.harrow.gov.uk/myharrow for Harrow.

Go to: <https://myaccount.islington.gov.uk/myaccount/Account/Login.aspx> for Islington.



Apna Ghar celebrates 20 years

Apna Ghar residents, friends and staff got together in July to celebrate our 20th anniversary.

We held the event at St Luke's Community Centre in EC1.

Our Chair Noreen Sumra (below) spoke of the beginnings of Apna

Ghar and we also heard from two guest speakers – Councillor James Murray who leads on housing at Islington Council and Lizzie Clifford who is London Lead Manager at the National Housing Federation.

We wanted the day to be fun, so we provided a lovely buffet, entertainment by the Muskaan Wheelchair Dance group (top right), a children's bouncy castle and face painting.



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Keeping busy

Support client **Caroline Page**'s life changed dramatically when her working life ended – but now she's as active as ever.

I believe the best way to cope with any kind of loss is to keep busy. So, after losing my job in 2008 due to redundancy, and realising that due to my age and disability I was unlikely to be offered another, I set out to find ways to keep myself occupied.

Volunteering

I approached the RNIB (Royal National Institute for the Blind) at the end of the year and eventually I was offered a volunteer role within the Talk and Support Team.

They provide tele-befriending groups for people with sight loss, who chat over the phone at the same time each week. My role as a dial-up volunteer involves me firstly dialling up the group facilitator, before bringing in each of the participants from anywhere in the country, and they chat about anything they like for about 55 minutes.

I also facilitate my own group and my role is acting as a host and making sure that everybody



has their say, as some people tend to dominate and other participants need drawing in. My group is made up of six ladies in their 90s. I always enjoy hearing their stories, which are often very funny as well as interesting. They tell me how much they look forward to their telephone groups and always thank me for having them.

Campaigning

That took care of one day a week, but I needed more. I became the tenants' rep at my supported housing scheme and got involved campaigning to save our scheme and its facilities – and won!

Things spiralled after that and I joined a couple of disability groups, one of which I now chair. My proudest success was getting the Council to install dropped kerbs around our local streets, and to put a double yellow line over a dropped kerb in our local high street, which cars often parked across. I was always attending one meeting or another, sometimes two a day. I also took advantage of the Resident Involvement Team's free training opportunities and I now have various certificates up on my walls. These are not real qualifications, but they look impressive anyway!

Sharing

The next thing I got involved with was Timebank. For those of you



who do not know, Timebank is all about swapping skills. For every hour you give, you get a time credit, which you can use to buy time from another member. I review potential venues for wheelchair access, help with stands at information days, and do a bit of weeding and watering the garden.

In return I have had flat packs assembled, a haircut, cupboards sorted, net curtains washed and rehung. I'm also learning to grow my own vegetables and herbs, which I have been able to take home and use, so I can prepare some healthy dishes. Every month we meet for lunch and everyone brings something to share. I have met lots of new people and it gives members an opportunity to swap ideas, offers and requests.

Being involved in so many things has really boosted my confidence. I never dreamt that I would be able to do public speaking, chair meetings and sit on panels. "Keeping busy" certainly does prevent boredom, isolation and, ultimately, depression.



Introducing new fixed-term tenancies

New residents who move in to homes owned by Apna Ghar will have a new type of tenancy in future.

Instead of a 'lifetime' tenancy, we will give these tenants a fixed-term tenancy – with a one-year probationary (trial) period, followed by a five-year term.

We are making this change so that every few years we can check that our homes are still occupied by people who really need them – especially our wheelchair properties. We will also check that people have managed their tenancies well.

This change will not affect our existing residents. To find out more, phone or email the office.

Low-cost computing

Microsoft is offering people on low incomes refurbished computers for £99 and laptops for £149.

Others can buy a computer for £149 and a laptop for £179, and the scheme also gives access to very cheap broadband deals.

Go to www.getonlineathome.org or phone **03719 100 100** on weekdays (8.30am to 5.30pm). To sign up to broadband at the same time, and get £50 off your computer, phone **0800 090 1297**.

Celebrating? Do it safely

Diwali, Guy Fawkes Night and Christmas are all on their way – but remember to celebrate safely. Here are some Fire Brigade tips.

Having a party?

- Show guests your escape route and overnight guests where you keep your keys.
- Look out for the young, old and people with disabilities.
- Put out ashtrays to keep lit cigarettes out of the bin.
- Take extra care when drinking alcohol.

Setting off fireworks?

- NEVER go back to a lit firework, throw fireworks or put them in a pocket.
- Don't drink alcohol while handling fireworks.
- Store fireworks in a closed box and take them out one at a time.
- Set aside a bucket of water.
- Follow the instructions on each firework. Use a torch to read them, not a naked flame.
- Light fireworks at arm's length, using the taper.

- Make sure everyone stands well back.
- Always supervise children and never give sparklers to a child under five.
- Light sparklers one at a time and wear gloves.
- Keep pets indoors.
- Take care near open flames.
- Only buy fireworks marked BS 7114 (British safety mark) or CE (European safety mark).

Using fairy lights/candles?

- Unplug fairy lights when going out or to bed.
- Keep candles away from things that might catch fire.
- Keep matches and lighters in a safe place.
- Put candles out when you leave the room or go to bed.
- Check fairy lights are in good working order and replace blown bulbs.
- Don't let bulbs touch things that can burn easily.
- Check the fuse in the plug is the right size.

Below: Apna Ghar's Rashmi meets the Fire Brigade at our fun day!

