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## Domestic Abuse Services

For over 40 years, Housing for Women has been supporting women and children in London escaping domestic violence and abuse.

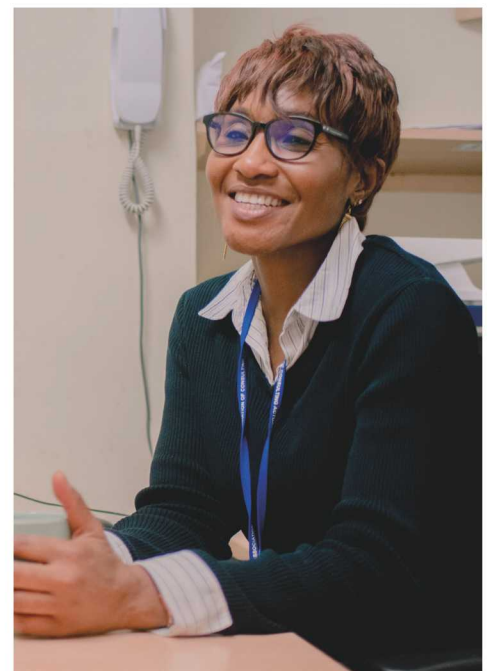
# Looking back and moving forward

## Welcome to the Summer Edition of Connect, your Resident Newsletter

With half a year behind us, we're taking the chance to look back, and ahead, here at Housing for Women. We know that the past six, and indeed, 18 months have been challenging and we have been operating very differently both at work and at home. We want to make sure we're learning from the challenges, changes and adaptations we have been working through together.

In the coming weeks our Executive Team will be hosting a series of virtual Roadshows to connect with you, our residents and service users, to gain your feedback and hear your concerns, to help shape our service delivery.

We will contact you shortly to let you know when your virtual Roadshow will be.



## More ways to support you

At Housing for Women, we're more than just a landlord, and we're committed to supporting you as much or as little as you need. As well as our dedicated team of staff, we also have a number of volunteers who can help.

We've updated our privacy policy so that our volunteers can get in touch with you and help with any problems or concerns you might have, or simply be someone to have a chat with. Our Telephone Befrienders or Client Liaison Volunteers might get in touch using your contact details, and will always identify themselves as Housing for Women volunteers before speaking to you.



### Volunteers lend a hand

Francine is a Client Liaison Volunteer who works to help residents get the best from their home. She shares a bit more about her role, and how she protects residents' data.

"I applied for the role of Client Liaison Volunteer at Housing for Women back in December 2020 but, due to the pandemic, started in March this year.

My role involves engaging with clients over the phone or by email, obtaining and providing information relevant to appointments for work, inspections, repairs etc. I also schedule and carry out client surveys to find out information about their homes, for instance the model of the boiler/heating system or if there is a smoke alarm present, and liaise with contractors to ensure that all our properties comply with regulations. I am learning a lot about the social housing sector and developing my communications and customer service skills.

My role is to obtain information from clients and pass it to contractors within frameworks, so that all works are done on time. So that I can do my work properly and ensure clients' personal information is safe, Housing for Women offered me an online training called

e-learning with subjects like data protection, safeguarding, health and safety, etc. I also had an induction session covering relevant policies and procedures at Housing for Women. I was assigned a computer connected to the organisation's network, protected with Mimecast, a programme that ensures that the information I share with colleagues or contractors cannot be hacked or illegally obtained by third parties.

I only share relevant information with the necessary contractors, with the permission of the clients, to keep their data protected. I update the database Castleton, with all my communications so we keep records of the work we do. I always introduce myself to clients and explain the reason for my call – that has worked very well so far.

Volunteering at Housing for Women has been a very good learning experience, I have learnt different ways to work, and everybody is very friendly and welcoming. I feel very supported and can ask for help whenever I need to."

### Could you spare a little time?

Over the last year-and-a-half we have seen an inspirational uplift in community spirit. During the first national lockdown last year there was an outpouring of people wanting to help, to do what they could for the good of the country. We saw people following the rules to help protect the NHS, weekly applause for our frontline workers, and neighbours helping neighbours by donating to local causes or offering practical help of collecting shopping or prescriptions for those who were unable to leave their homes.

We want that community spirit to continue. And what better place to start than by volunteering in your own community? Volunteering with Housing for Women will give you the chance to give back, support your neighbours, meet new people, and learn new skills.

If you are interested in volunteering with us, or would like to find out more about it and how it works, contact Maria, our Volunteer Co-Ordinator by emailing [volunteer4us@h4w.co.uk](mailto:volunteer4us@h4w.co.uk) or giving her a call on **0203 794 4798**.



**VOLUNTEERING AT HOUSING FOR WOMEN HAS BEEN A VERY GOOD LEARNING EXPERIENCE, I HAVE LEARNT DIFFERENT WAYS TO WORK, AND EVERYBODY IS VERY FRIENDLY AND WELCOMING. I FEEL VERY SUPPORTED AND CAN ASK FOR HELP WHENEVER I NEED TO.**

## Keeping your information safe

We regularly update our privacy policies to make sure that your data is kept safe, and only the people who need it have access to your personal information.

### What personal information we collect

When you first apply and are assessed for your tenancy with us, we capture certain information about you and your circumstances as part of processing your application. This includes:

- + Your full name and contact details
- + Physical and mental health details
- + Benefits information
- + Financial details
- + National insurance numbers
- + Home Office information and immigration status.

### Why we collect this information

We need to collect and process any personal data relating to you and any dependents in order to effectively manage your tenancy. This is supported by a tenancy agreement. As providers of this housing application / landlord service we owe a duty of care to all who occupy our properties and it is therefore a legal duty for us to collect and process information which may affect all occupants and any visitors.

### How we keep your information safe

We have a Data Protection Policy and procedures in place to make sure that your personal data is processed safely and securely. This information can be provided on request.

For more information on your privacy and to read the policy in full visit [www.hfw.org.uk/privacy-notice](http://www.hfw.org.uk/privacy-notice)



## Fire Safety

As your landlord, we want to make sure you and your homes are safe. We want to make sure we are taking all the right steps to reduce any risks associated with fire in your homes.

### Fire safety is everyone's responsibility.

#### Our responsibilities

- + Regular inspections of your homes and estates to identify and address any fire risks
- + Regular gas and electrical safety checks in your homes
- + Servicing, repairs and maintenance on your homes and all fire safety equipment

#### Your responsibilities

- + Keeping all communal areas clear of belongings or rubbish.
- + Make sure you know the fire action plan for your home and building.
- + Regularly checks of your smoke or heat alarm to make sure it is working



**Smoking is not permitted in any communal areas.**

If you do smoke, make sure your cigarettes are fully extinguished in water before putting them in an ashtray. Do not put cigarettes on balconies or throw cigarette stubs from the balcony as this is a fire risk.



#### Please keep all communal areas clear

In the event of an emergency all occupants must be able to escape quickly and safely. Housing for Women has a legal duty to ensure that escape routes are safe. As a resident, you share this responsibility.

To help keep you safe, we take a zero-tolerance approach to items left in communal areas and if discovered they will be removed.



**Barbecues** are not permitted on balconies. Sparks and embers can fall onto the balcony or homes below and cause fires.

## Raising funds to help more women

Every single day our life-changing services support women across London. From access to safe, affordable homes, to tailored support for women and children escaping domestic abuse. But we couldn't do it without our generous supporters – who bake cakes, host film nights, and run marathons – helping to raise vital funds so we can continue to help even more women.

### Get Together, Give Together

This July we're getting together, to give back. And we want you to get involved.

To make the most of the summer, keep the kids busy during the school holidays, and celebrate the fact that we can meet up with friends and family again - in small groups or safely outside, we'll be having fun, fundraising together.

We've come up with some ideas to get together and raise some money:

- + Host a BBQ for friends and family in your garden and ask your guests for donations
- + Invite 5 friends to a pamper party and charge them for manicures and facemasks
- + Challenge your friend to a race – and sponsor each other to see who can run the farthest
- + Host a games or quiz nights with some drinks and snacks for a small donation
- + Start a virtual book club or host a book swap and ask people to donate the price of a ticket
- + Have a picnic in the park with friends where people can donate
- + Do a sponsored bike ride with your bestie.

Or think of your own way to have fun and raise some money at the same time. Don't forget to post your efforts on our JustGiving Page: [www.justgiving.com/campaign/Gettogethergivetgether](http://www.justgiving.com/campaign/Gettogethergivetgether), and on Social Media using the hashtag **#GetTogetherGiveTogether** and tag us **@Housing4Women** so we can share the best ideas.

Look after a neighbours pet

Do some yoga together

GET TOGETHER GIVE TOGETHER

Have some friends over for a party

Host a coffee morning

SCAN ME

# amazon smile

If you shop on Amazon, you can support our work at the same time by using Amazon Smile. You'll enjoy the same shopping experience and there is no cost to you.

Turn on AmazonSmile in the Amazon app to generate donations.

[smile.amazon.co.uk](http://smile.amazon.co.uk)



### How does it work?

Every time you purchase a product on Amazon Smile, you can choose Kinship to receive a donation of 0.5% of the net purchase price (excluding VAT, returns, and shipping fees).

Sign up through Amazon Smile today so that your purchases support us to be there for women who need us.

How to use Amazon Smile

1. Go to [smile.amazon.co.uk](http://smile.amazon.co.uk) to log in using your Amazon details or create an account.
2. You will be prompted to select a charitable organisation to start shopping.
3. Search for and select "Housing for Women" in the "Pick your own charitable organisation" and pick Housing for Women from the results.
4. Confirm that you will need to start shopping from [smile.amazon.co.uk](http://smile.amazon.co.uk) to ensure that your purchases are eligible. Tick the box next to the statement by clicking it. Then click "Start Shopping".

After this you will be redirected to main Amazon homepage with confirmation that your eligible purchases will now support Housing for Women.

And just remember to visit [smile.amazon.co.uk](http://smile.amazon.co.uk) when shopping on Amazon and all your eligible items will raise donations for Housing for Women.

## Managing condensation, damp and mould in our homes

No-one wants to live in a damp home, and condensation, damp and mould can cause disrepair to homes, as well as ill-health. Housing association homes are, overall, better quality than other types of homes. For example, government data shows that around 5% have some kind of damp or mould problem, which is lower than in other types of social homes or in private rented properties.

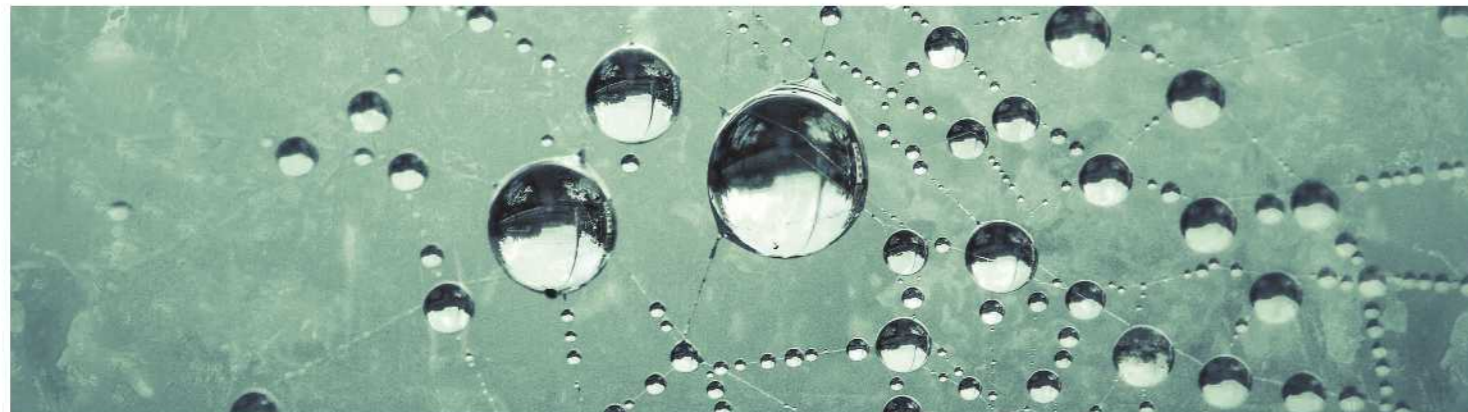
Housing for Women is currently reviewing our approach to managing condensation, damp and mould (CD&M) in our homes, as part of a wider home condition survey being undertaken on all of our properties.

With this review, we aim to solve any problems in our properties created by condensation, damp and mould, as well as discovering the causes of CD&M. In turn we hope to improve the living condition and lives of our residents, and reduce costs associated with CD&M for both Landlords and Tenants.

We are currently developing a strategy to combat the occurrence of CD&M in our properties, which will include measures to ensure condensation, damp and mould do not re-occur.

Beginning in October 2021 our technical surveyors will visit every home to assess the overall condition of our properties and any investments needed. We will also develop and immediate review of current issues and works needed to improve residents' living conditions where we have cases of condensation, damp and mould.

If you have any concerns about condensation, damp and mould in your home, please contact us via our repairs email address: [repairs@h4w.co.uk](mailto:repairs@h4w.co.uk) If you don't have access to email then please do contact us on our switchboard number which is **020 7501 6120**.



## Meet the Team Customer Experience Manager

Yasmeen has recently joined Housing for Women as our Customer Experience Manager. Her job is to make sure you get the best service and experience possible. We sat down with her to find out a bit more about her experience and why she's so excited about her new role.



**YASMEEN**

I joined Housing for Women with one sole intention- to make the customer experience EPIC.

Energized- Positive- Innovative- Caring. I want every customer interaction to be based on our values and be representative of our ethos and vision.

My career within customer services spans over 20 years with 15 years being within the

housing sector predominantly responsive repairs. To me, it doesn't matter whether you are part of a G7 resident provider, with over 50,000 properties, or a smaller provider with less than 1000 units, customer experience matters, and we must put our residents at the heart of what we do.

The 3 areas I will be focussing on will be: improving the complaints process, increasing resident engagement and enhancing the customer experience across the housing and repairs teams. I'll work with all the teams within Housing for Women to deliver positive customer experiences and ensure that our processes are seamless in delivering our customer promises.

My personal mantra is "devoted to the customer experience." I am a strong believer that the best people to assist with shaping a service are the users themselves. Therefore, I would like to personally invite you to join the Resident Scrutiny Panel at Housing for Women.

**"DEVOTED TO THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE."**

**Complaints performance**

April-June 2021

**1** Compliments received

**50%** Handled in time

**26** Total complaints

**3** Received for neighbourhood

# Ways to pay your rent?

Your rent is due each month in advance. It is due on the first day of each month. You can use any of the following methods to pay your rent or other charges:



## Direct Debit or Standing Order



## Online via the Customer Portal

Visit [my.hfw.org.uk](http://my.hfw.org.uk)



## Online using Allpay

Pay online at [www.allpayments.net](http://www.allpayments.net)



**Telephone** If you have an Allpay card you can call their 24-hour payment line on **0330 041 6497**



**Cheques** Please make cheques payable to Housing for Women. Please put your tenant number and address on the reverse.



**Shops** You can pay at any shop displaying the PayPoint, Post Office or allpay.net signs



**Internet banking** If you bank online, you can set up either a standing order or a one-off payment. Please ensure you quote your tenant reference number as the reference. Please quote Sort Code: **30-00-09** Quote bank Account: **00025164**

## Top tips for Universal Credit Claimants

Universal Credit is a new type of benefit which replaces Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Working Tax Credit.

These are our top tips for being organised and making sure that your claim for Universal Credit goes as smoothly as possible.

## Accept Your Claimant Commitment

When you make your claim for Universal Credit you must accept your claimant commitment online within 7 days otherwise your claim

will be closed and you will need to start your claim again.

## Changes in Your Circumstances

Once you are claiming Universal Credit you are required to maintain your claimant commitment to find work, increase your hours and/or engage in work related activities with your Work Coach. This is called conditionality and if you do not complete it you may face a reduction of your payments.

If you are unable to carry out your claimant commitment due to a change in circumstances, please let your Work Coach know as soon as possible so they can temporarily amend your agreed duties.

## Thought about paying your rent by Direct Debit?

Set up today to be automatically enrolled into a £50 gift card prize draw. A new winner will be selected each quarter! To set up visit [www.hfw.org.uk/resident-area/rent-charges](http://www.hfw.org.uk/resident-area/rent-charges) to download the direct debit form and return it to us.



## Paying Your Rent

Paying your rent on time should be a financial responsibility each month. It forms part of the tenancy agreement you have with us. Whether you pay your rent yourself, or it is funded by someone else such as your local Housing Benefit office, it's your responsibility to make sure that your rent gets paid.

## Customer Portal

Don't forget you can pay your rent, and book repairs through the Customer Portal.

Sign up now at [www.hfw.org.uk/residents/customer-portal](http://www.hfw.org.uk/residents/customer-portal)



## Service Charges

Housing for Women as your landlord is reviewing your service charge, the process for setting it and the consultation with you before any service charge demand is made. You'll only be charged for the services you use. We'll also ask you if there are specific other services you want us to provide.

As soon as your service charge is set we will contact you to discuss any changes.

## Problems paying your rent?

If your rent is not paid the money owed is called 'rent arrears'. Rent arrears are a priority debt. Your rent arrears is a priority debt because there are more serious consequences if you don't pay them. The result of not dealing with it could mean losing your tenancy.

Our job in the housing management and income team isn't only to ensure that your rent is paid, but that you have access to all of the support available to enable you to be in a position to do so.

If you are having difficulty paying your rent, you should contact your Neighbourhood Officer on **020 7501 6120** Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, or on Facebook, and Instagram.

Our approach will be caring, empathetic and sensitive.

Your Neighbourhood Officer will inform you were to get:

- + debt advice
- + budgeting advice
- + benefit support, advice and appeals
- + employment support
- + advice on welfare reforms and access to support

## If you don't pay

As your landlord we may seek a court order to ensure you pay your rent as and when due. We are here to help you get back on track to clear your rent arrears.

**Get in touch today, don't delay!**



# TAKE NOTE!



## Customer Hub

Our new telephone system will make it easier for you to contact us, get through to the right department, and have your questions answered.

As part of the new system, our Housing Officers will no longer have individual mobile telephone numbers. Any previous contact numbers are no longer in use.

All calls need to go through our main number, **020 7501 6120**, so you can get all the help you need.

## Visiting your home

We are committed to keeping your home safe and in a good condition, as well as meeting the legal standards required of us as landlords. In order to do this, we will sometimes need to visit you in your home to carry out safety and compliance checks. We are also carrying out a home condition survey to assess the quality of our properties and plan any necessary improvements to your living conditions.

Please help us when we need to come to your home by:

- + Allowing our staff and contractors into your home at an agreed upon time and date
- + Letting us know if you are unable to give us access to your home for any reason
- + Keeping your contact details up-to-date on your records so we can arrange appointments with you.

## Complaints and compliments

We aim to provide you with good quality services, but we can only be sure we are succeeding if you let us know. 2020 gave us new challenges in supporting you and delivering our services, and we are always pleased to hear how we helped or how we can improve.

There are a number of ways you can get in touch to give us feedback or make a complaint:

1. Completing the online complaints form: [www.hfw.org.uk/contact-us/complaints-compliments/](http://www.hfw.org.uk/contact-us/complaints-compliments/)
2. Emailing us at: [complaints@h4w.co.uk](mailto:complaints@h4w.co.uk)
3. Via the **Customer Portal**
4. Contacting us on **social media** – We will reply via Direct Message to obtain your name and contact details so we can help. Please remember never to share your personal details publicly.



### Your voice

'Brighter Futures' is designed for you, and so if you have anything you would like us to cover in future issues or you have a comment to make, please do let us know by writing to: Brighter Futures Editor, Housing for Women, Sixth Floor, Blue Star House, 234 Stockwell Road, London SW9 9SP or emailing [Communications@h4w.co.uk](mailto:Communications@h4w.co.uk).

### Head Office and Registered Office

Housing for Women  
Sixth Floor, Blue Star House  
234-244 Stockwell Road, London, SW9 9SP

Tel. 020 7501 6120  
Fax. 020 7924 0224  
Email. [info@h4w.co.uk](mailto:info@h4w.co.uk)

[www.hfw.org.uk](http://www.hfw.org.uk)

Housing4Women



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