



What's inside?

- 2 Coronavirus update
How the latest lockdown affects you
- 4 Staying warm this winter
- 6 Get involved with Housing for Women
- 8 Complaints performance
- 9 Have your say on housing policy
Complaints and compliments
- 10 Ways to pay your rent?
- 11 Grants to help you work from home
- 12 Take Note!
Looking after your mental wellbeing

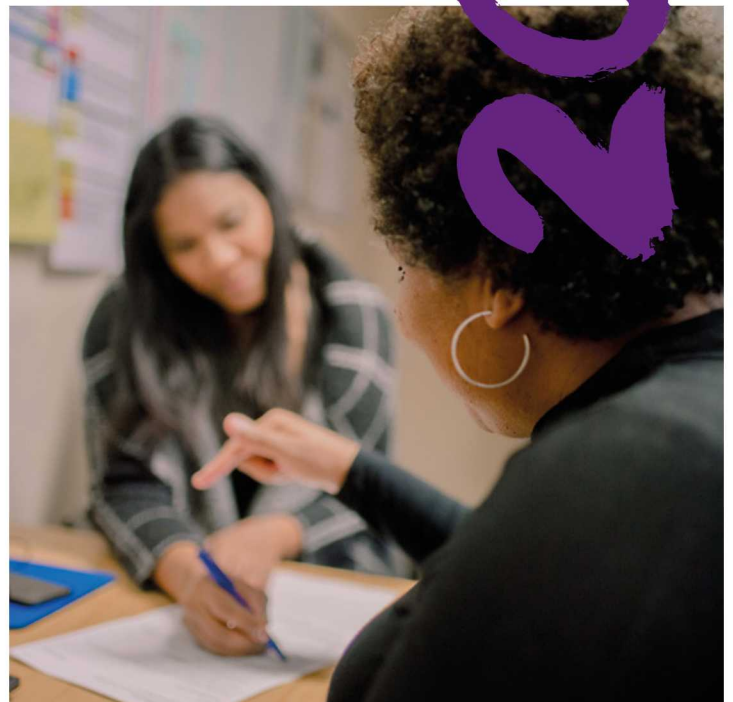
Housing for Women is a housing association and charity providing housing and support services for women and their families in London.

Looking ahead to a brand new year

Welcome to 2021's first edition of your Resident newsletter, Connect.

We've got lots of projects and planned works coming up this year, and we're working hard to get things done in line with current Government guidelines and restrictions. Stay tuned for regular updates.

In this quarter's newsletter we'll be sharing some of the ways that you can get involved with Housing for Women and have your say to help shape the way we do things. Plus we've got tips on staying warm and looking after your health at home, and info on how we can help with homeschooling.



Coronavirus

We know it has been a difficult winter. We are all missing loved ones and the feeling of our 'normal lives', but it is important that we continue to work hard to stop the spread of COVID-19.

How will this lockdown affect me and my home?

Neighbourhood Officers

Due to the current restrictions, your Neighbourhood Officers won't be able to visit you at home but will continue to be available remotely by phone and email. You can contact them as normal for information, advice and support.

If you have any concerns regarding your health and wellbeing, your neighbours, or your neighbourhood, please contact your Neighbourhood Officer.

Estate inspections

Estate inspections will continue, but may be reduced due to the restrictions and availability of staff.

Anyone visiting your estate will continue to follow Government guidelines and use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Repairs

At the time of writing, the UK remains in a national lockdown, considerably limiting the work we are able to carry out in your homes.

Due to restrictions, we are currently limiting our repairs service to emergency repairs only. Any non-emergency repairs can still be logged with our team but will not be booked in with contractors until we can safely return to our usual full repairs service.

Housing for Women puts repairs into three categories:

- 1. Emergency Repairs:** These could affect your immediate health and safety, or will severely damage your home if they are not dealt with promptly.
- 2. Urgent Repairs:** Repairs that need to be carried out quickly, but aren't an immediate threat to your safety or the structure of the building.
- 3. Routine Repairs:** Are of a minor nature with little inconvenience to your or damage to your home.

Please continue to follow the Government's guidelines to thoroughly and regularly wash your hands, wear a face covering in enclosed spaces, including transport, and stay at least two metres apart from others.

HM Government

NHS



**WASH
HANDS**



**COVER
FACE**



**MAKE
SPACE**

If you have any coronavirus symptoms:

- A high temperature
- A new, continuous cough
- A loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste

Stay at home and get a test at:
www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test



IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS REGARDING YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING, YOUR NEIGHBOURS, OR YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICER.



Keep warm and stay well

Winter is well and truly here; the days are shorter and the temperature has dropped. With the continued challenges of COVID-19, it's more important than ever that we do all we can to stay well this winter. Here are some tips that will help you look after your health this winter.



Keep your home warm, safe and efficient

- + Heat your home to at least 18°C. This is particularly important if you have reduced mobility, are 65 and over, or have a health condition.
- + Wear appropriate clothing such as socks, long sleeved tops and jumpers.
- + If you can't heat all your rooms, heat your living room during the day and your bedroom just before you go to sleep.
- + If you have an electric blanket, use it as instructed and get it tested every three years. Never use a hot water bottle with an electric blanket.
- + Cover any gaps around windows and doors to prevent draughts.
- + Draw your curtains at dusk and tuck them behind radiators to help keep heat inside.
- + Make sure your radiators are not covered by furniture or curtains.

Look after yourself

- + Keeping well will allow you to do more and feel better. Being cold isn't just uncomfortable it can be bad for your health.
- + Sitting or sleeping in a cold room is not good for you and increases the risk of heart attacks, stroke and breathing problems.
- + Keep your bedroom windows closed during the night; breathing cold air can increase the risk of chest infections.
- + Exercise is good for you all year round and can keep you warm in winter.
- + Keep moving if you can, this will help keep you warm. Try not to sit for one than an hour – get up and walk around, make a hot drink and spread housework throughout the day.
- + Wear a few layers of thin clothing rather than one thick layer; this will trap the heat better to keep you warm. Thin layers of clothes made from cotton, wool or fleecy fibres are particularly good for maintaining body heat.
- + Food is a vital source of energy and helps to keep your body warm so have plenty of hot food and drinks.

Look after others

- + Check on frail or older neighbours or relatives, especially those living alone or who have serious illnesses, to make sure they are safe, warm and well.
- + Support vulnerable individuals to access existing resources to keep warm.



Get financial help

- + There are grants, benefits, and advice to help make your home more efficient, improve your heating or help with bills. It's worthwhile claiming all the benefits you are entitled to to help you through winter.
- + For advice on energy bills and energy efficiency, contact: [Simple Energy Advice](https://www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk) 0800 444 202 www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk



How COVID-19 can amplify cold weather-related health risks

The potential interactions between cold weather and COVID-19 include:



shared risk factors amongst population sub-groups affected by both cold temperatures and COVID-19



clinical impacts arising due to concurrence of cold weather and COVID-19



social isolation and reduced access to support networks and resources



increased exposure to cold temperatures due to changes in patterns of energy use at home, fuel poverty and reduced access to warm public spaces

system level risks related to concurrency of impacts, change in patterns of health and social care use, access and delivery and health seeking behaviour



DON'T LET THE COLD CATCH YOU OUT – CHECK THE WEATHER FORECAST AND BE READY FOR COLD WEATHER.

Get involved and make a difference

At Housing for Women there are lots of ways that you can get involved and make a real difference in your community. We work better and deliver better services with different voices in the room. We are always looking for tenants to share their ideas and help shape our services.

We are recruiting for the following roles:



Estate Champion

Our homes and where we live feel more important than ever before. Now that we're spending so much time at home, it makes such a huge difference when the spaces we live in look good and feel calm and welcoming.

At Housing for Women this is a communal effort and we're always looking for people who care about their homes and environment to help make a difference. If you're interested in helping to keep your home and communal spaces looking good, we need you.

Estate Champions help monitor their estates and give us feedback so we can ensure your homes are looking their best, and you're proud of where you live. Contact your Neighbourhood Officer to get involved.

Volunteer Roles

We regularly recruit for volunteer roles to support our key services, including Office and Administration Support, Fundraising & Communications, Telephone Befrienders, and Customer Engagement.

Volunteering at Housing for Women gives you hands on experiences in a supportive and professional environment where you can grow your skills and make a real difference to the lives of women.

Find out more about our current roles by visiting www.hfw.org.uk/support-us/volunteer-with-us/volunteer-vacancies, or emailing volunteer4us@h4w.co.uk



Our Values



Committed to Excellence

We are always striving to do better and are enthusiastic about learning from our experiences.



Acting with Integrity

We are fair, open and honest, and keep our promises.



Positive

Our people have a 'can do' attitude. We are positive about change and see it as an opportunity to develop.



Empowering

We aim to empower our customers to make choices and have greater control of their lives.



Complaints performance

July – September 2020

12 Total complaints

18% Closed on time

4 Received for General needs Housing

8 Received for supported housing

Report a repair

Email: repairs@h4w.co.uk

Phone: 020 7510 6120 (press 3 for repairs)

Customer Portal: my.hfw.org.uk

We are open Monday to Friday 9am–5.00pm.

For emergency repairs outside of these hours please call **020 7510 6120**, press 3 for repairs, and your call will be diverted to our out of hours service that will be able to assist you.

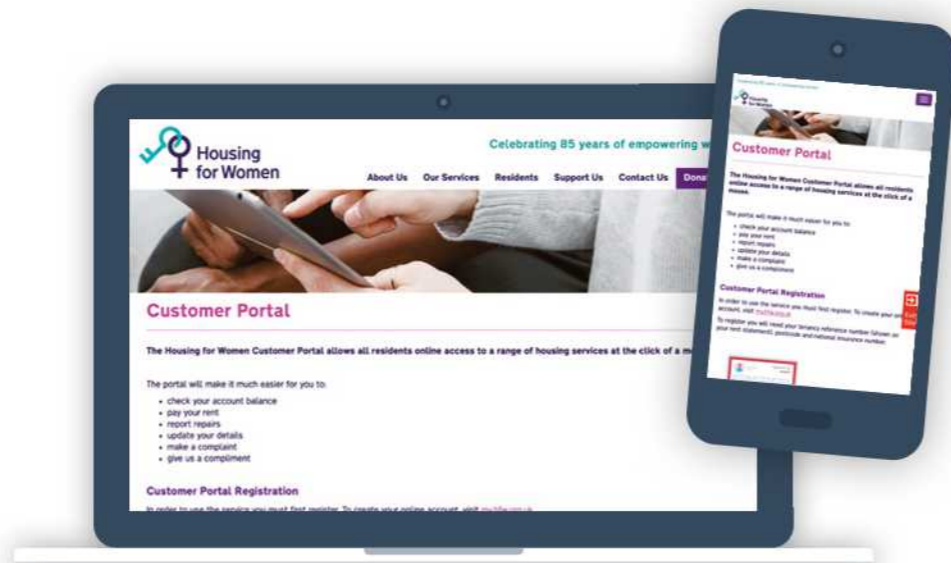
IT'S TIME TO GET ONLINE!

Struggling to find time to call us to book in your repair?

Want to check your account or make a payment online?

The Customer Portal allows you to do all of this and much more 24 hours a day.

To register and access your online account visit my.hfw.org.uk



Time to Connect

We need your help. If you're interested in helping to shape the way you hear from us, and want to be part of our brand new Communications Panel, get in touch by emailing us at: communications@h4w.co.uk



Have your say on housing policy

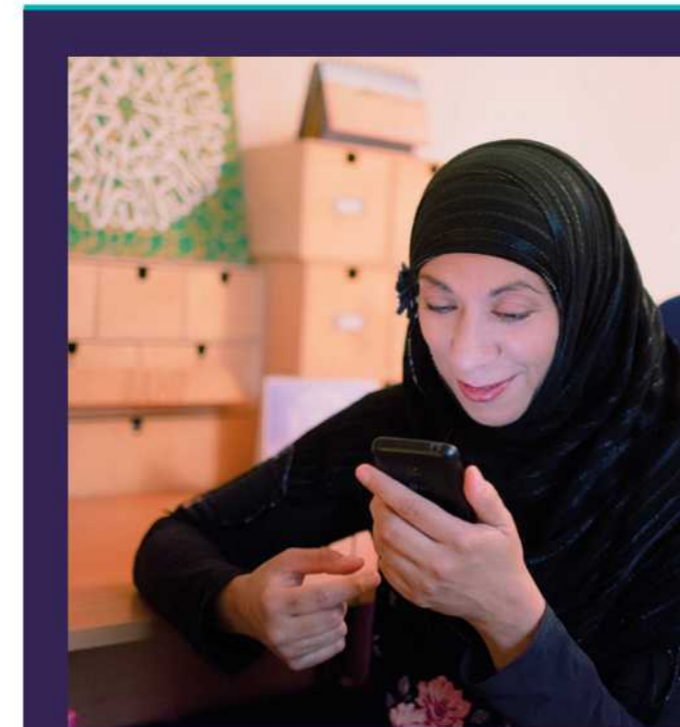
The London Borough of Lewisham is currently reviewing its Housing Allocation Scheme Policy, and they want to hear from you.

Every local authority in England must have an Allocation Scheme to help determine who is prioritised for social housing, who is eligible, how the policy works, and how accommodation is allocated to people who need it.

In Lewisham alone there are nearly 10,000 people on the housing register, but only around 1,000 properties that become available each year. This is why the Allocation Scheme is so important, and why Lewisham wants to make sure their policy is working effectively and ensuring fair responses to housing need across the borough.

To share your experience and have your say on the proposed changes visit www.consultation.lewisham.gov.uk/strategic-housing-and-regulatory-services/https-lewisham-gov-uk-media-lewisham-housingal/

The consultation closes on 14 February 2021.



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/
2. Emailing us at: 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.



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



Online using Allpay

Pay online at 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 to download the direct debit form and return it to us.



Paying Your Rent

Please remember it is important to prioritise your rent so you don't fall behind. Your rent payments allow us to deliver our core services, including repairs, home improvements and support for your communities.

If you are struggling to pay your rent, or make ends meet, please contact us straight away. There are solutions we can offer, such as checking you're receiving the correct benefits, working out the best way of paying your rent and putting you in contact with our partners who are able to provide help.

Contact your Neighbourhood Officer for support.

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

Home-schooling and need more data?

With schools closed and many of us doing work and lessons from home. If the costs of internet or mobile data are becoming unmanageable, you might be able to claim free data. Several mobile internet providers are offering extra data to those in need. You can check if you're eligible and claim through your child's school.

Which mobile operators support the scheme?

At the moment the following UK networks are taking part:

Three (Pay Monthly and Pay-As-You-Go)

Smarty (Pay Monthly and Pay-As-You-Go)

Virgin Mobile (Pay Monthly only)

EE (Pay Monthly and Pay-As-You-Go)

Tesco Mobile (Pay Monthly only)

Sky Mobile (Pay Monthly only)

O2 (Pay Monthly and Pay-As-You-Go)

Vodafone (Pay Monthly and Pay-As-You-Go)

How to claim free data for home-schooling

You won't be able to contact your phone or internet provider directly. Extra data requests are being processed through your child's school. Get in touch with the school office, let them know which mobile network you (or your child) are on, whether it's pay-monthly or pay-as-you-go, and provide the relevant mobile phone number. It can take up to 14 days to register you into the scheme, so try to check sooner rather than later.

Who is eligible for support?

Extra data isn't available to everyone. At the moment the scheme is open to the families of children who:

- + do not have fixed broadband at home
- + cannot afford additional data for their devices
- + are experiencing disruption to their face-to-face education.

For full details on what each provider is offering, visit: www.get-help-with-tech.education.gov.uk/about-increasing-mobile-data

SCAN THE QUICK LINK



TAKE NOTE!

Looking after your mental wellbeing

Many of us are struggling to maintain our positive moods and mental wellbeing during the coronavirus pandemic. There are a number of things you can do to help support your mental wellbeing this winter.



Connect with others

Whether it's a phone call, message, facetime or catch-up over zoom, taking the time to chat to your friends and family can make a real difference to your day. We often have similar worries or concerns, so why not chat about them and share ways of coping – you might learn something new.



Get outside during the day

Getting as much natural light as possible is vital for your health and wellbeing. You could have your morning coffee in the garden or go for a walk during your lunchbreak to help boost your mood. Make sure you wrap up in warm clothing and have a hot drink afterwards to warm yourself up.



Look after your physical health

Taking small steps to look after your body can have a big effect on your mental health. Staying warm, getting enough sleep, eating a balanced diet and doing some light to moderate exercise each day will help you stay fit, healthy and positive.

If you are still struggling and need some support, there are people who can talk to:

- + **Anxiety UK:**
03444 775 744
- + **Samaritans:** 116 123
- + **Papyrus Suicide Prevention:**
0800 068 4141
- + **Mind:** 0300 233393
- + **Young Minds:**
0808 802 5544
- + **OCD UK:** 0333 212 7890
- + **Campaign Against Living Miserably:** 0800 58 58 58
- + **Text SHOUT:** 85258

Your voice

'Connect' 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: Connect Editor, Housing for Women, Sixth Floor, Blue Star House, 234 Stockwell Road, London SW9 9SP or emailing: Communications@h4w.co.uk.

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