

LSHANews

THE LSHA TENANTS' NEWSLETTER **SUMMER 2023**



welcome
to this Summer edition
of LSHA's Newsletter

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We are pleased to send you the latest issue of our newsletter. Please let us know what you think!

Don't forget we are always on the look-out for news. If you have a suggestion for our next newsletter, please tell us about it.

CONTACT LSHA



call: 020 7735 3935
email: info@lsha.org.uk
web: www.lsha.org.uk



**OUT OF HOURS
EMERGENCY
REPAIRS**

If you have an **EMERGENCY** Electrical, Plumbing or Heating repair out of office hours, which cannot wait until the office is open, contact: **One Stop Contractors on 07946 314 749**

The out of hours service is for genuine emergencies only, please check your Tenants' Handbook to see what constitutes an emergency.

Staff Changes

As we are sure you've been aware, we've had lots of staff changes over the past few months and we're sorry that during this time, we haven't always kept you as well informed about those changes as we should have done.

Our website has now been updated with details of our current staffing team but here is a brief summary of our leavers, joiners and recruitment campaigns.

Diane Thompson, Housing Officer, left us in September 2022 and **Elaine Brown** (elaine.brown@lsha.org.uk) moved across to take over the Lambeth and Lewisham patch. **Lara Haastrup**, who was providing cover on the Southwark patch on a temporary basis, left us at the end of June and we will be appointing a permanent new Housing Officer in August.

Kevin Donaldson, Surveyor, left in April 2023 and we are advertising to fill this position. In the meantime, please direct repairs and maintenance queries via your Housing Officer.

Beverley Laws started on 10 July 2023 as our new Customer Services Officer, replacing Ayomide Olajobi who had been with us on a temporary basis since January 2023.

Lastly, **Ruby Judt** has joined us as the Interim Head of Finance and **Lawrence Onikosi** joined us on 1 June as our Finance Officer.



welcome to all our new staff members

DEVELOPMENT UPDATE:

Antony and Roderick House

LSHA are looking forward to letting the new 30 flats which have been added to the existing building of Antony & Roderick House this Summer.

All the new homes have been offered to existing tenants either downsizing or moving to larger homes or to people in housing need referred by Southwark Council.

MyTenancy a reminder

MyTenancy is a secure web based system that provides tenants with internet access to their rent account. Information such as account transactions, outstanding repairs and personal information is readily available online, controlled with multi-level password access.

Tenants can also view and print their rent statement, place a maintenance request or inform us of any changes in your circumstances.

You will need to have access to a computer, tablet or mobile telephone. All tenants have their own individual login and password which you should not pass to anyone else as this gives you access to your rent account which is confidential to you.

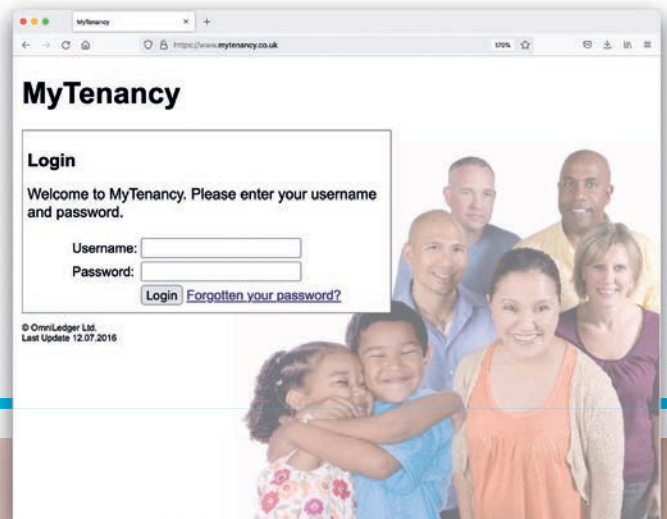
First time tenant login details will be issued by the Association. It is then the tenant's responsibility to change these details to suit their own preferences.

To log into My Tenancy you will need to log on to our website which is www.lsha.org.uk/tenant-services and click on **My Tenancy**

My Tenancy

Remember:

- Username and passwords are now case sensitive
- There is a "Forgotten your password?" hyperlink that will allow you to recover your account



Don't Forget LSHA's Texting Service...

Our text number is 07826 826823 Let us know what you think of our service & please ensure that we have your most up-to-date mobile number by using our text service.

ABOUT US...

The LSHA Tenants Group was formed in 2020 and we have been meeting regularly ever since.

We work together with LSHA to make sure that tenants voices are heard and that we can shape and influence LSHA's services and policies for the benefit of all tenants.

WHAT WE DO, AND WHY THAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU...

We want LSHA to know how we feel about our homes, and about the services they provide to help us live safely and happily in them. The Tenants' Group is a way to let LSHA know when services are good so that LSHA can keep getting it right, and when they're sometimes not so good, so that tenants and LSHA can work together to make them better.

And we want LSHA to have policies that are transparent and written in language that's easy to understand so that we can all be confident, comfortable, and secure in our homes. We believe that's important; we hope you do too.

LSHA Tenants' Group

WHAT WE'VE DONE SO FAR...

We reviewed LSHA's Service Standards so that LSHA know what standard of service tenants want and expect from the Association. And we have set out how these services should be measured to make sure that LSHA are keeping to their word.

We've also updated the Contractor's Code of Conduct. We said we want contractors to behave respectfully when carrying out repairs in our homes and the code sets out how contractors should conduct themselves. Our input was welcomed by LSHA and it's an important part of the updated standards.

You can find both documents by visiting www.lsha.org.uk/publications/ and clicking on the 'Service Standards' or 'Contractor's Code of Conduct' button.

We also helped to develop the Community Investment Fund Grant Process. This included drafting the application form and guidance notes. Tenants can apply for up to £500 for projects to benefit themselves, their neighbours and their communities. There have been a number of successful applications to the fund, and we hope to tell you about others in future newsletters.

Information on how to apply to the Community Investment Fund is on LSHA's homepage www.lsha.org.uk/ Scroll down the page to 'LSHA Community Investment Fund'.

WHAT WE'RE PLANNING TO DO NEXT...

We have some priorities for the year ahead. We will be looking at the repairs service and working with LSHA to improve it. We want to look at all aspects of the process - from reporting a repair through to getting feedback from tenants once the repair has been completed.

We will also be reviewing and updating the Tenant's Handbook as the last update was approximately 7 years ago. We want to produce an updated handbook that provides essential information for tenants in one place that is easy to read and find your way around. We want to promote the Community Investment Fund and encourage more tenants to take advantage of the grant to benefit theirs and their neighbours lives. And we will continue to provide regular feedback on service delivery to help LSHA monitor and improve their performance.

GET INVOLVED!

We meet for one hour once a month. Some tenants attend regularly and others drop in when they can, and tenants can provide input and feedback in other ways - we have a new email address below for you to send us suggestions for example. Our meetings are online through Zoom video conferencing so no need to travel anywhere. We also plan to meet in person twice a year now that we are once again able to.

LSHA can provide training and help to get you involved and it's a great way to develop new skills and boost your confidence. Taking part in a community group is also a great addition to your CV, especially if you're looking for a change of direction!

Call us on: 020 7735 3935, text your contact details to: 07826 826823, or email: getinvolved@lsha.org.uk

We'd love to hear from you!

LSHA Annual Rent Changes

We have to abide with the 2023 Rent Standard set by the Government which applies to rent periods that begin in the 12 months from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 in relation to low cost rental accommodation.

From 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 the weekly rent of any existing tenant may not be increased by more than:

CPI+ 1% in any year

Subject to a cap on weekly rents not increasing by more than 7% in any year

Rent increases will happen right across the social housing sector as landlords raise rents in line with the government standard.

We will write to you in August 2023 to confirm exactly what your rent will be from 2nd October 2023, along with any increase to your Service Charge if you pay it.

If you're concerned about the rent increase and would like some advice on claiming benefits or managing your money, call us on 0207 735 3935.

To find out more about the government's rent standard, go to: www.gov.uk/government/publications/rent-standard

Universal Credit



To make sure you get the right amount of benefits, you need to report any changes to your circumstances to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Your claim might be reduced or stopped if you don't report a change straight away or you give incorrect information. To inform the DWP about changes to your rent sign in to your Universal Credit online account or by telephoning the Universal Credit Service Centre.

Annual Rent Increase

Your questions answered

Here is information about the 2023 annual rent increase for Lambeth & Southwark Housing Association with effect for most tenants on the 2nd October 2023.

We explain

Why rent is going up

How and when the increase will take effect

How you can access financial advice and support if needed

Why is LSHA increasing my rent?

From 1 April 2020 and amended in 2023 the government's Regulator for Social Housing is letting housing associations increase rents in line with its 2020 & 2023 rent standard. This standard allows for a Consumer Price Index (cost of living) increase which has been capped at 7% for the financial year of 2023/2024.

Some of the rent you pay goes towards investing in our properties, providing more homes and running our office. We, like you, have seen our costs increase, particularly around repairs. LSHA is a not-for-profit housing association; all surpluses are re-invested in homes and services.

When does the new rent payment come into effect?

The new charges apply from 2nd October 2023 for weekly tenancies, and for monthly tenants at Vaughan Road from the 1st October 2023. (Butler House tenants 6th November 2023) so you will need to adjust your usual payment unless you pay by direct debit in which case no action is required as we will make this adjustment for you.

We will send you a letter and notice of rent increase at least one month before your rent is changed. If you are claiming housing benefit or universal credit please take a copy of the rent letter to housing benefit or to the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP), if you are claiming universal credit. This is your responsibility to advise housing benefit or DWP of any changes to your rent or service charges immediately so the correct rent is paid.

If you're concerned about your rent increase and would like some advice on claiming benefits or managing your money, call us on: 020 7735 3935





How to Pay your Rent

Direct Debit The easy way of paying your rent, please contact your Housing Officer to set up a convenient date to pay your rent, it is flexible and hassle free.



Other Payment Methods

When making other payments, i.e. through Allpay, standing order or directly through our bank account, please ensure that you use your **tenant reference number and property reference** to ensure that we are able to allocate your payment to your rent account promptly.

How do you work out how much to put my rent up by?

Like all social landlords, we have to follow the government's guidelines relating to social housing rent. We are mindful of the cost pressures facing both us as a business and our customers and that the increase will not be more than 7%, in line with government guidelines.

Make sure you're getting the help you need

You might find this free benefits advice website helpful in making sure you're receiving all that you are entitled to. Here is a useful link: www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/entitlement

Paying Your Rent

Making payments for your rent and service charges is important and should always be your first priority.

The consequences of not paying your rent are serious and in the worst case could result in you losing your home.

There are things you can do to avoid going into arrears and we are here to help you.

What should I do if I have problems making a payment?

Don't ignore the problem

Talk to us as we can arrange for your housing officer to talk to you to advise on benefits you might be able to claim

We can talk through your budget with you and make a fair repayment agreement that you can afford

Don't promise payments you are unable to make

Make every effort to pay on time. If you have problems keeping to the payment agreement, please let us know straight away and tell us if your circumstances change

Help with Money

Search 'Energy Advice' online for free services to help you reduce your energy bills

CITIZENS ADVICE

Help if you are struggling with your bills.

Search 'Citizens Advice' online or call 0800 144 8848

HELP FOR HOUSEHOLDS

Find out what cost of living support you could be eligible for. Visit the Cost of Living Campaign website at: www.costoflivingsupport.campaign.gov.uk

MONEY AND BENEFITS ADVICE

visit: www.gov.uk/browse/benefits

STEPCHANGE DEBT CHARITY

Offering free expert debt advice.

Visit: www.stepchange.org



Home Safety Inspections

FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY, LET OUR CONTRACTOR IN...

Some of our contractors have had tenants refuse to let them in to carry out vital health and safety checks. These appointments can be and often are life-savers. Every gas-fired appliance we've fitted in your home must be checked yearly. We also carry out safety checks on electric wiring and other potential risks in your home to protect you and your neighbours.

We do our best to find a convenient time for you when booking routine repairs. If you cannot be home for a safety inspection we have booked for you please let us know.

Testing alarms fitted to detect smoke, heat and carbon monoxide

For your own safety and that of others please check all alarms and detectors in your home every four weeks. To do this press and hold down the test button. The alarm should sound loudly. A green light should show continually on the device and a red light should flash every 40 seconds. If there is a fault with any device ring us on 020 7735 3935 and we will send someone out to repair it. You will not be charged for this service. It is free. If your smoke detector starts beeping do not take the head off! Call us and we will replace it.



NEW FIRE SAFETY (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2022 CAME INTO FORCE 23rd JANUARY 2023

The regulations state that we must provide relevant information about fire doors, particularly residents' flat entrance doors, as these play an important part in containing any fire within the flat in which it starts, including that:

- fire doors should be shut when not in use
- residents or their guests should not tamper with self-closing devices on fire doors
- residents should report any fault with, or damage to, fire doors immediately to us

Minimum requirements for inspections of communal fire doors in blocks of flats

The minimum requirement is for a responsible person, which will be our LSHA Surveyor or your Housing Officer, to undertake an inspection of communal fire doors to identify any obvious damage, for example:

- if there has been any alterations or damage to a door's glazing apertures or air transfer grille
- if there are any gaps around the door frame and that seals and hinges are fitted correctly
- that the door closer shuts the door
- that the door closes correctly around the whole frame
- that there is no visible damage (either deliberate or from wear and tear) to the door or door closer

If any issues are identified from these checks, it would be appropriate to undertake more detailed checks of doors (or the self-closing device) if any damage is identified from the initial inspection. This could include engaging a specialist.

Problems with access

This is a new requirement for all internal flat front entrance doors to be inspected annually and tenants should allow access.

If access is denied LSHA will gather evidence of the steps they have taken to inspect the flat entrance doors. This could include correspondence between the responsible person and tenant seeking permission to gain access. Your co-operation in giving access is appreciated for your safety and your neighbours too. In the event that we have difficulty in getting access for these inspections, it might be necessary for LSHA to commence injunction proceedings as a last resort.

SUSPECT A GAS LEAK?

This is an emergency. Do not call us.

Call the National Gas Emergency Service NOW on 0800 111 999.

You will be given safety advice and, if the call handler says it's needed, they will send out an engineer.



MAKE SURE YOUR HOME IS READY FOR INSPECTION!

If you are moving out of a property, we will need to carry out an inspection of your current home to make sure that it is in a suitable condition for you to hand back to us.

This includes checking for any repairs which are due, any damage to the property (such as missing doors or holes in the walls), checking the decorative condition of the property and noting any alterations which have been made to the property without permission. If the property is not in a suitable condition, you will be recharged.

Please remember to:

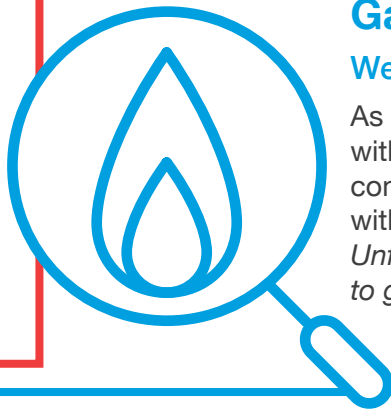
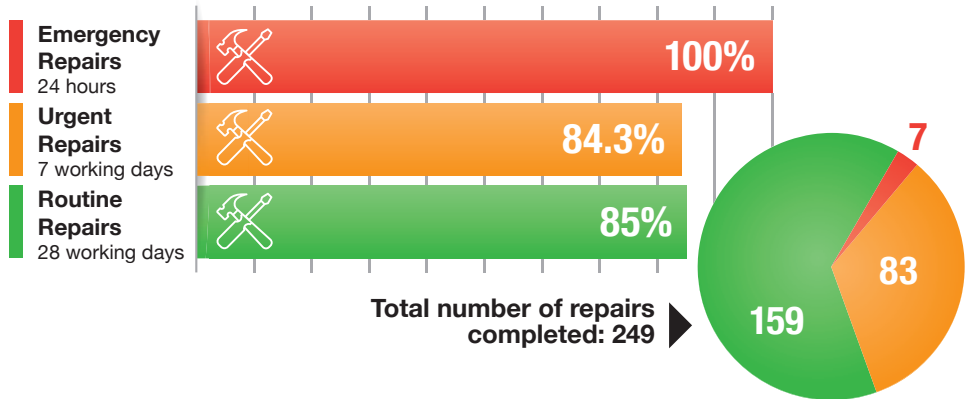
- Report any outstanding repairs to us
- Let us know if you have made any alterations without our permission
- Replace any fixtures or fittings that you previously removed
- Put right any damage which you have caused to the property

If you have any questions regarding this please call us on: 020 7735 3935

Repairs & Maintenance Update

Repair Completion Statistics – January to March 2023

Percentage of repairs completed within target time



Gas Safety Inspections

We are 99.6% compliant as of May 2023

As of 31st May 2023, LSHA have 260 properties with a gas supply; the target for gas safety compliance is 100%. We are 99.6% compliant with one outstanding due to access issues. Unfortunately we are having to take legal action to gain access.

DAMP & MOULD It's always unsettling when you find mould growth in your home, and it's understandable to think there is something wrong. However, mould is an issue that can affect even the most cautious tenants.

What steps are we taking to tackle mould and dampness?

The cost-of-living crisis, which has seen an unprecedented rise in the cost of energy, has meant many people are unable to heat their homes to the level they would like. This has meant that reports of dampness and mould in tenants' homes have increased.

It is understandable that tenants may become alarmed at the appearance of mould in their homes. As such we treat each case individually to ensure nothing is overlooked.

When a tenant reports mould in their home we will arrange a visit to survey the problem, identify any actions that we can carry out and advise residents what actions to take to help prevent it reoccurring.

We have produced a leaflet which explains the causes of condensation and mould and tips on how to prevent them. All households will receive a copy of this and are urged to follow as many of the recommendations as possible.





Summer Energy Saving Tips

Summer is a great time to save energy in our homes. We tend to spend less time inside, and we're less reliant on household appliances. This means that there are more opportunities to save and build up credit for the Winter months. Using energy efficiently is important all year round, but here are some top tips to help you keep some extra coins in your pocket this Summer.

1 Keep windows closed during the day In the UK we're used to cold weather and our houses are built for this. As a result our homes can get very warm in Summer and it's often tempting to open a window. This could make matters worse as this allows more warm air to enter. Keep windows closed during the day when temperatures are high, with blinds and curtains shut to block direct sunlight. Open your windows at night when temperatures drop to allow cool air to enter and circulate. This strategy can help you save energy by making you less reliant on energy-consuming cooling measures such as air conditioning or fans.

2 Switch appliances off standby Never leave your TVs, computers or stereos on standby. By leaving that little red light on, you're wasting a surprising amount of electricity. It's much better for your wallet to turn them off at the wall. Furthermore, appliances emit heat when they are not completely switched off. Turn them off to help keep your home cool during warmer periods.

3 Use fans wisely The use of fans during the Summer can have an impact on your energy usage. However, you can counter this by ensuring that you are using your fans at floor level so that they circulate the cooler air instead of the risen warm air.

4 Forget about the dryer Using a clothes horse and letting your clothes dry naturally in the heat is much better than using a dryer. This is a great way of saving energy and helping to lower your bills. If you're lucky enough to have a garden, use an old fashion clothesline and let your garments dry in the sun whilst you soak up some rays!

5 Invest in LED light bulbs Light emitting diodes (LEDs) are ideal for energy saving as they use a low amount of energy and emit minimal heat. They can help save you around £40 a year on your electricity bill. Additionally, LEDs are made to be long-lasting, so you could also save on purchase costs.

6 Use water efficiently Heating water can amount to 20% of your annual heating bill, which is around £135 on average. To help you save, reduce your hot water usage by choosing lower water temperatures and opting for a short shower instead of a bath. You could also wash your clothes at a lower temperature.

Campaign Against Living Miserably

This is an organisation that will give support with anxiety, mental health issues, relationship breakdowns. Please go to their website www.thecalmzone.net for more information. **Do not suffer in silence!**



Lambeth & Southwark
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

21 Claylands Place, Oval, London SW8 1NL web: www.lsha.org.uk
tel: 020 7735 3935 text: 07826 826823 email: info@lsha.org.uk
Working for Better Housing

Our Office Opening Hours are 9.30am-5pm. We close between 1-2pm for lunch. If you would like to see someone in person, please telephone for an appointment on: 020 7735 3935 or email: info@lsha.org.uk

Please always allow 5 working days for a response to your email queries.