



Streets Ahead

Summer 2024



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- Our fire safety programme
- The 53 Week Year - what it means for you
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- How we're helping people affected by domestic abuse
- Our new care partnership with the Orders of St John Care Trust
- News from your Scrutiny & Improvement Team
- Keeping your community tidy - our large refuse item collection scheme

A message from Orla Gallagher, Chief Executive

Welcome to the summer edition of your Streets Ahead newsletter.

We know you're worried about the cost of living– that's why we've included a section on the help our team can offer to find out if you're entitled to extra benefits.

We're also focusing on fire safety, as well as showing how you can find out the contact details for your housing officer, arrange large refuse items to be collected, and other important info.

An especially significant issue we've included details of is the 53-week year. We explain what this means for your rent and how to ensure you keep up to date with payments.

I'm also very pleased to bring you news of a new partnership with The Orders of St John's Care Trust, safeguarding care provision across Buckinghamshire. This means more investment to refurbish and improve these care homes, and reopening Carey Lodge in Wing to provide 75 more care places.

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, we hear from your Scrutiny and Improvement Team on the work they've been doing to represent you. I meet with SIT regularly to talk about how we're performing and where we can improve. At our recent meeting, the feedback was that we need to improve the condition of estates, including maintenance and cleaning of communal areas so tenants can be proud of where they live. In response, I agreed to prioritise estate services with specific value for money targets, and hold more estate inspections.

Other initiatives that have been led by SIT feedback are a review of estate services costs and actioning agreed service standards. We also made a commitment for Housing Solutions to engage with residents outside working hours.

With very best wishes,



Our Faster Repairs Service

We provide a 24-hour, 365 day emergency repairs service, but you told us you wanted faster repairs and we've listened. That's why we've expanded our team to speed-up your repairs service - and hopefully you're seeing the results.

Recently we introduced a new option of three-day urgent response repairs, in addition to our four-hour emergency response time. What's the difference between 'emergency' and 'urgent'?

Emergency:

Any issue affecting the health, safety or security of you and your family or that may cause significant damage to your home or that of your neighbours. This can include gas leaks, no electricity or a loss of drinking water, broken glass that is a danger or security risk or fire escapes being damaged or blocked.

We also respond on an emergency basis, for any reason, if health and safety is at immediate risk.

Urgent:

These are issues such as a tap that won't stop running, a blocked toilet where there's another one available still, partial electrical power loss, or defective flooring. These repairs may not be an emergency, but the impact of delaying the repair could be disruptive or lead to further damage.

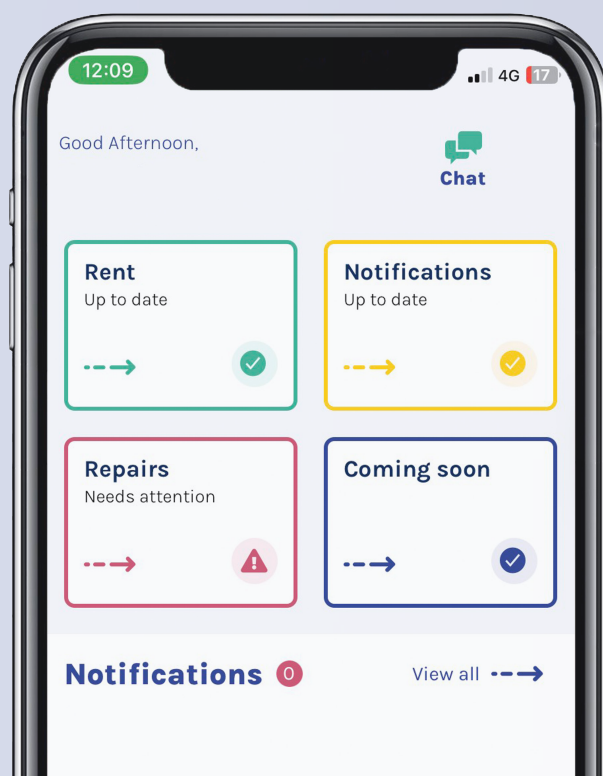
Need a Repair?

The quickest and best way to book a repair is using the Housing Solutions App or the Customer Portal which is available through our website, as these are available any time of the day.

You can also contact us via webchat on our website www.housingsolutions.co.uk or call our Customer Contact Centre on 01628 543101.

Cancelling or changing appointments

If you need to cancel or change your appointment then the best way to do this is to call our Contact Centre, but you can also use the app or portal.



Our Fire Safety Programme

Important info for residents living in blocks with communal areas e.g. shared stairs and hallways



We have an ongoing fire safety programme in place, with specialists Savills UK helping to ensure we comply with fire regulations and keep you safe.

There is new fire safety information and a QR code that links to your block's Fire Risk Assessment (FRA), on posters in your block's communal areas. It identifies potential fire-related hazards and aims to reduce the chance of fire.

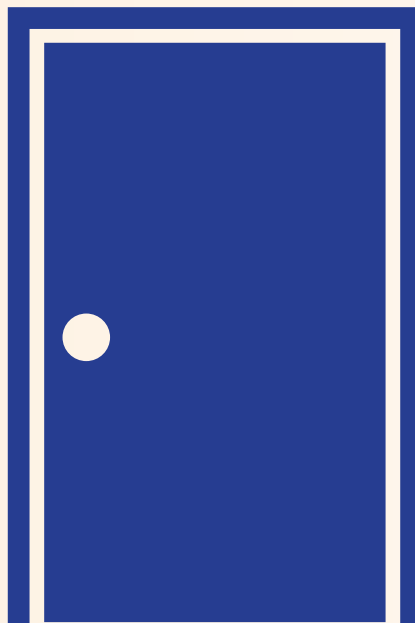
If you or any other household member have mobility issues that mean you need assistance evacuating the building in an emergency, we'll help you put a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) in place.

If you think you need this help but don't already have a PEEP please let your housing officer know now.

If you need any other info, or can't scan the QR code please call our Contact Centre on 01628 543101.

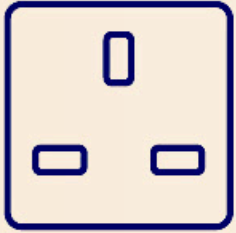
Fire Doors - Important Info

- Fire doors and their frames are designed to withstand heat. They help slow down the spread of fire and give you extra time to get out.
- Keep fire doors closed - don't prop or wedge them open.
- Do not damage, alter or tamper with fire doors. This is a breach of your tenancy.
- Fire doors have a label that contains important information so we can track and inspect it. Don't remove this.
- You must report any fire door that's not working or looks damaged to us straight away by:
 - Logging a repair via our online portal
 - Emailing contact@housingsolutions.co.uk
 - Getting in touch via webchat on www.housingsolutions.co.uk
 - Calling our Contact Centre on **01628 543101**



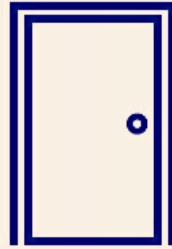
Fire Safety in your Home

To minimise the chances of a fire occurring, please follow the guidance below – you can help yourself and others stay safe from fire risk.



Electrical

Do not overload electrical sockets and switch them off when not in use



Doors

Do not leave a fire door open and never disconnect an automatic closer



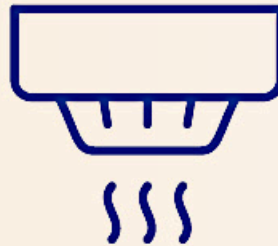
Flammable

Do not store anything flammable such as petrol in your home



Smoking

Do not smoke in bed and always put out cigarettes fully



Smoke alarms

Test your smoke alarm weekly and do not cover or remove



BBQ

If you have a balcony, do not have a BBQ on it



Cooking

Do not leave cooking unattended



Belongings

A tidy home with fewer belongings can reduce the risk of a fire spreading



Candles

Do not leave candles unattended and always put out fully

April

2024

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

The '53 Week Year'

Did you know there are 53 weeks in the next financial year?

Unfortunately, because of the way the calendar falls this financial year, which started on 1 April, if you pay your rent weekly, there will be an extra week of rent to pay.

Why is this?

No year is exactly 52 weeks long. Non-leap years are approximately 52 weeks plus **one** day. Leap years are roughly 52 weeks plus **two** days. The exact figures are 52.143 weeks in a normal year and 52.286 weeks in a leap year.

This means that every five years or six years, these extra days cycle around to add an extra Monday to the year, so from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 there are 53 Mondays.

What does it mean for me?

If you receive Universal Credit, the Department for Work and Pensions have confirmed that they will **NOT** cover the extra week of rent – you'll need to pay it. There is nothing we can do to change this. If you don't pay, you'll end up in arrears.

However, if you're still on Housing Benefits you will not be affected.

What you should do

We recommend you pay a little bit extra each week over the year.

For example, if you pay £200 a week for your rent, you could divide this by 53 weeks and pay an additional £3.78 a week.

If you're unsure about the amounts to pay, we can help - call us 01628 543101 or email contact@housingsolutions.co.uk for advice.

Important Information for Residents on Housing Benefit

During 2024-2025 the DWP will be migrating working age households receiving Housing Benefit onto Universal Credit. Universal Credit pays all your benefits including your rent in one monthly payment.

Look out for a letter called a 'Universal Credit Migration Notice'.

This notice letter is important as it will tell you that your existing benefits are stopping, and you need to make a claim for Universal Credit.

It will also tell you what you need to do and by when.

If you don't claim Universal Credit by the deadline, all your benefits will end on the day before your deadline and you could be left with no financial support for 5-6 weeks (this is the usual wait time for first Universal Credit payment).

Tips to prepare you for the move to Universal Credit:

- Try to set aside a bit of money every week to get ready for the gap in payments when you move over.
- If your rent is usually paid direct to Housing Solutions and you'd like this to continue, you can ask for Universal Credit to pay us directly. However, this will not happen automatically and you must request it.
- You will be required to provide documents to support your claim. These include identification, bank statements, proof of rent and proof of income.

Once you receive your notification, if you need assistance with migrating to Universal Credit our specialist Welfare and Benefit Team can support you through this process.

Ask Our Experts

Did you know that we offer help getting the benefits you're entitled to?

Our Welfare and Benefits team offers free advice about benefits and how to manage money. If you need extra support or you're not sure you're claiming all that you can, contact us for confidential advice.

For now, here are some answers to frequently asked questions:

Q. Should I be claiming Housing Benefit or Universal Credit?

A. You can claim Housing Benefit if you get a state pension or are living in temporary or supported accommodation. Otherwise you'll need to make a claim for Universal Credit.

Q. I'm on benefits and my utility bills are too high - what can I do?

A. Contact your utility companies - you may be eligible for their support fund or discounted rates.

Q. I work full time but I'm finding it hard to manage and I owe money on my rent, and have debts with council tax, water rates and credit cards. What can I do?

A. Please contact us - we can check to see if you're entitled to any financial assistance and put a plan in place to repay rent arrears. You should also contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau or a charity like Stepchange on 0800 138 1111. They'll be able to negotiate with your creditors and help set up an affordable repayment plan.

Q. I cannot afford to buy white goods - can I get any help?

A. Contact your local council housing team to make an application for help with white goods. We can also refer you to other charities who could help.



Talk to Tania

"Hi, I'm Tania. I've worked in the housing sector for over 8 years offering benefit advice and supporting residents in sustaining their tenancies."

Tania Bibi - Welfare & Benefits Team

Q. How do I know what benefits I'm entitled to?

A. We can carry out a benefits check for you, or you can use the benefit calculator on our website. This will work out what benefits you're eligible to claim.

Q. I have a shortfall in my benefits - can I get any help with this towards my rent?

A. If you have a shortfall due to the bedroom tax or benefit cap you can apply for a discretionary housing payment from your local authority. We can help you with this.

Q. I receive benefits towards my rent – how do I report the new rent increase?

A. If you receive Housing Benefit please report your rent changes to the Housing Benefit department at your local council. If you receive Universal Credit, you'll need to update your journal online. Your rent increase starts from 1 April.

Q. I'm a shared owner and struggling to pay my mortgage and rent what can I do?

A. You'll need to speak to your mortgage lender to discuss the options they can offer. Depending on your income, you may be entitled to Universal Credit payments. Contact us for advice on this.

Just Ask Jack

"Hi I'm Jack. I've worked for Housing Solutions for 5 years and within the benefits team for the last year. I love being able to provide support and help residents maximise their income."

Jack Sheppard - Welfare & Benefits Team



The Welfare & Benefit team are based in our Maidenhead office. They provide advice and support to all our residents who might need help maintaining their tenancies. They can help over the phone, in person at our office or we can arrange a home visit if you can't get to us.

Call 01628 543101 or email welfare@housingsolutions.co.uk

Get to Know your Housing Officer

As a Housing Solutions resident your Housing Officer is the person who's there to help you out with any questions you've got about your home or community. Our Housing Officers are regularly out and about talking to residents and making sure blocks and estates are safe and in good shape.

If you want to find out directly who your Housing Officer is then there's a section on our website called:

'Find My Housing Officer'

You can select where you live on a map and see your Housing Officer's name and contact info.

Housing Solutions Jobs Homes Repairs & Maintenance Rent Thames Home Choice About Customer Portal

Find my Housing Officer

Home > Homes > Find my Housing Officer

Our Housing Officers are on hand to assist you with any questions you may have about living in a Housing Solutions neighbourhood.

Click on a house below or 'search here' to find out who your Housing Officer is along with their details to easily contact them. For postcode search expand to a larger map (top right button).

Property Search

Shared Ownership information

Your Tenancy Agreement and Types of Tenancy Agreements

Support in your Neighbourhood

Grounds Maintenance and Caretaking

Find my Housing Officer

Sheltered and Supported Housing

SEARCH HERE

This map was made with Google My Maps. Credit your own.

Henley-on-Thames, Shepherds Close, Taplow, Burnham, Farnham Royal, Queensway SL6 7SA, Seer Green House, Bhamra Gardens, Bray, St. Adrian's Close, Hayes Close, Forest View Cottages, Wargrave, Century Chase, Millie Cottages, Pool Lane, Pavilion Cottages, Dunsden Green, Sonning, Cleveland, Charvil, Hurst, Beech Court, Earley, Baslow Road, Spooner Place, Binfield, Warfield, Bracknell, Hurley Drive, Ascot, Windsor.

← Pool Lane

Street name
Pool Lane

Post Code
RG10 0JA

Housing Officer
Philip Muzuva

ate your own.

Henley-on-Thames, Shepherds Close, Taplow, Burnham, Farnham Royal, Queensway SL6 7SA, Seer Green House, Bhamra Gardens, Bray, St. Adrian's Close, Hayes Close, Forest View Cottages, Wargrave, Century Chase, Millie Cottages, Pool Lane, Pavilion Cottages, Dunsden Green, Sonning, Cleveland, Charvil, Hurst, Beech Court, Earley, Baslow Road, Spooner Place, Binfield, Warfield, Bracknell, Hurley Drive, Ascot, Windsor.



NO MORE WEEK

Our focus on domestic abuse

**Sarah Andrews,
Housing Solutions'
Assistant Director of
Housing and
Resident
Engagement talks
about 'No More
Week'**

Did you know we're asked to help with two or more reports of domestic abuse every week?

However, we know this issue is under-reported, so we're working hard to make it easier to report abuse while keeping those affected safe.

'No More Week' is a global initiative to raise awareness about the effects of domestic abuse, and how everyone can tackle it. It inspired team members at Housing Solutions to form a working group to raise awareness about domestic abuse and find more ways to support people in our communities who may be at risk.

That's also a big part of why we have a new community safety team, who are there to offer support by listening, helping with access to other specialist services, and most importantly, making sure that people who are affected can keep up their tenancies.

Domestic abuse can affect people of all ages, genders and backgrounds and part of the task we've set ourselves is to make sure that the same support is available to everyone.

If domestic abuse affects you or someone you know, or if you would like to get involved with our working group, then please get in touch with us for a confidential chat:

Call: 01628 543101

Email: communitysafety@housingsolutions.co.uk



Providing Places for Quality Care Across Bucks



The Orders of
St John
Care Trust



Did you know that, as well as offering affordable homes for people and their families, Housing Solutions also owns eight care homes across Buckinghamshire?

To safeguard the care that's provided, we've entered into a new partnership to ensure 75 more care home places will soon be available in Bucks.

Housing Solutions has recently agreed arrangements with The Orders of St John Care Trust (OSJCT) as a new partner to take on leases of the care homes from the existing care provider the Fremantle Trust.

This has helped to ensure ongoing quality care at the homes and investment to improve them.

Part of this plan includes the refurbishment and reopening of Carey Lodge in Wing, which is planned to be operational again in early 2025.

We're looking forward to working with OSJCT to start delivering these improvements.

Meet your SIT Panel - Working for You



Do you know what the Scrutiny and Improvement Team(SIT) is and what they do? The panel's Chairman Brian Rayner explains:

We're a panel of nine residents who voluntarily scrutinise and review Housing Solutions' services , policies and performance. We also provide valuable feedback with the aim of continually improving the communities and neighbourhoods we live in. What we've done recently is:

- Identified areas for improvement in the repairs service. We've monitored the positive effects on repair times to your homes since the new 3-day urgent repair option was introduced.
- Participated in the assessment and selection of senior management positions.
- Reviewed with the Board of Directors work undertaken and proposed future activities.
- Set up working groups to contribute to improving the approach to Anti-Social Behaviour, Lettings and Rent Arrears.
- Reviewed proposed amendments to the organisation structure with management.
- As residents ourselves we'll make sure your perspectives are heard when it really matters.

Want your voice heard? Why not join one of our resident panels?

If you're a Housing Solutions resident over 18 who wants to make a difference to your community, you can join one of our resident panels such as the SIT Panel, or the Complaints Panel. Get in touch with Nivene Powell, Resident Empowerment Manager, for a chat. **Call Nivene on 07486 325073 or by email nivene.powell@housingsolutions.co.uk**

How we can help you keep your community tidy - Large Refuse Item Collection



It's important to keep our living conditions safe and free from clutter and rubbish, but we know it's not easy to take large items to the recycling centre.

We can help by removing large items that are no longer working or needed, so that they can be recycled.

Unfortunately we cannot take fridges or freezers due to licensing requirements for handling refrigerant gases. Please contact your local council to ask if they can collect these. Gas cylinders should also be returned to their original supplier.

We provide a low cost removal service: £15 for mattresses and £5 for every other item, including washing machines.

If you need smaller, loose items removed then these can be taken if securely bagged and will cost £5 per bag.

To arrange collection please call 01628 543101

Have you heard about your Jewson Discount?

The Jewson logo, featuring the word "JEWSON" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A thick yellow horizontal bar is positioned directly beneath the text.

We've teamed up with Builders Merchants & DIY supplier Jewson to offer Housing Solutions residents a 15% discount at the Maidenhead branch of Jewson, Reform Road, Maidenhead, SL6 8BY.

To receive your discount, just take along a proof of address and a rent or service charge letter and quote reference RESD035.

Emergency Repairs

Did you know that last year:

93% of emergency repairs were completed within four hours?

94% of urgent repairs were made within three days.

The satisfaction ratings from residents for their most recent repair is 90% - that's higher than almost every other housing association.



How do you want to hear from us?



At Housing Solutions we'll communicate with you in different ways depending on the reasons why we're getting in touch.

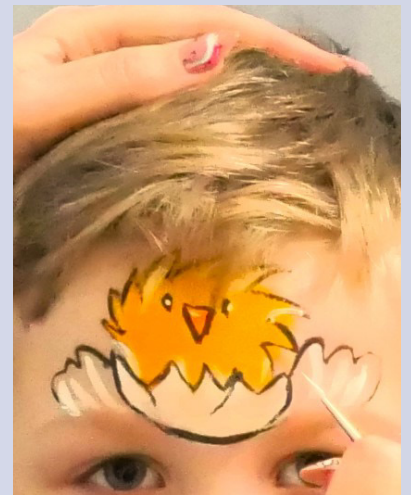
We're also happy to accommodate any preferences or requirements you have for communications. It's important to let us know what's best for you or if this changes.

To update us on your communications preferences go to:

www.housingsolutions.co.uk/commspref

Easter Egg-stravaganza at Woodlands Park

This Easter we held an Easter Egg Hunt for our younger residents, at Woodlands Park. Unfortunately the British weather meant we had to stay indoors, but everyone had a great time and over 200 people attended! Here are some pics from the day:





Housing Solutions

Crown House
Crown Square
Waldeck Road
Maidenhead
Berkshire
SL6 8BY



contact@housingsolutions.co.uk



01628 543101



www.housingsolutions.co.uk



iOS & Android



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