

Ekaya
Residents'
newsletter

Summer
in the city



ekaya
HOUSING
ASSOCIATION

Summer in the city

Welcome to the summer issue of Ekaya's newsletter.

Meet Taju, our Tenancy Sustainment Officer

As promised in our spring newsletter, we have successfully recruited a Tenancy Sustainment Officer, who will work for Ekaya and our partners Hornsey Housing Trust, Shian Housing Association and Innisfree Housing Association.

Taju Oyedeji comes with a wealth of experience and is very excited about this new role. He is looking forward to meeting residents and to supporting people where they need it.

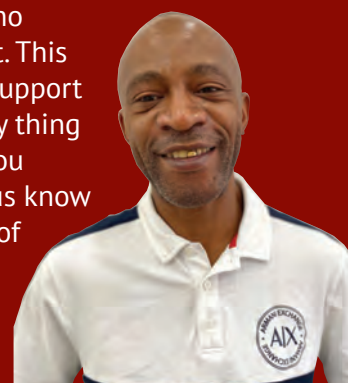
Taju will be able to help you with a number of things, including:

- maximising your income – by assisting you to apply for everything you are entitled to
- appealing benefit decisions, including for Housing Benefit, Universal Credit and disability benefits

- helping you deal with debt, including rent arrears
- managing your budget, and
- maintaining things at home.

If you would like to talk to Taju about how he can support you, please contact your Housing Officer on 020 7091 1800 and ask them to refer you. Taju will contact you directly to make an appointment.

Please note, this is a completely free service. There are no charges of any sort. This service is here to support residents. The only thing we will ask from you is feedback to let us know what you thought of the service once you've used it.



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Help with the rising cost of living

With prices rising fast, we know that most of you are having to make changes to your finances and some of you are faced with difficult decisions about your spending.

If you are struggling with day-to-day living costs, you do have some options to explore.

- Contact your local authority for help and assistance. Every council has a pot of money called the Household Support Fund that you may be eligible for. You don't have to be on benefit to qualify. The Government has provided this money to help people with the cost-of-living crisis.
- Check if you can apply for any other grants or assistance, by using the Turn2Us search options at www.turn2us.org.uk
- Contact your energy and water providers to ask about social tariffs and discuss your bills to check if they can help reduce your costs.

Government support schemes

If you pay council tax in bands A to D, you should have got a rebate from your council of £150 earlier in the year. People who don't pay council tax were encouraged to ask their council for help instead.

In April, the Government announced four extra grants during 2022-23

– paying some households up to £1,500 in total. These amounts will not count towards the benefits cap.

Support for everyone

If you have your own electricity meter (your supply is not communal), you will get a £400 grant this winter. This does not have to be repaid.

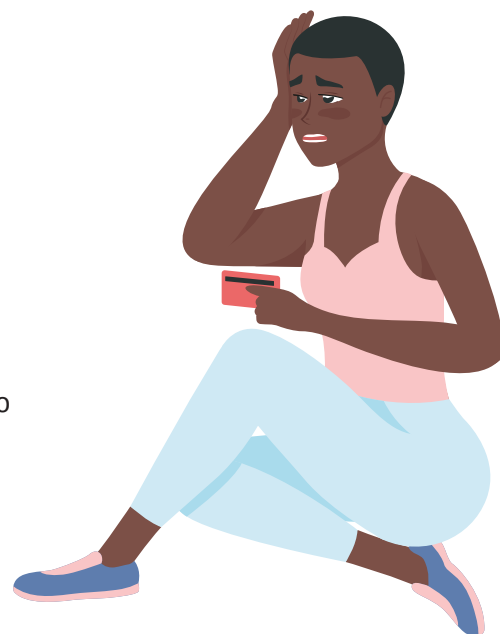
The money will come off your electricity bills between October 2022 and March 2023, or it will be added to your pre-payment meter. (You may get vouchers instead.)

People on benefits

You will be given £650 if you claim any of the following:

- Universal Credit
- Child Tax, Working Tax or Pension Credits
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support allowance, or Income Support.

The money is being paid in two amounts into the account your benefits goes to. The first payment was made in July and the second is due in the autumn.



People with disabilities

You will get an additional £150 in September if you claim certain disability benefits.

Pensioners

Older people will get an extra £300 on top of their normal Winter Fuel Payment – paid in November or December 2022.

Useful helplines

- **Money Advice Service:** phone 0800 138 7777
- **National Debtline:** phone 0808 808 4000
- **Citizens Advice:** phone 0808 223 1133
- **StepChange Debt Charity:** phone 0800 138 1111

Don't suffer in silence. Speak to us and/or try for additional support if you need it.

Paying your rent

As set out in your tenancy agreement, you are responsible for paying your rent on time and in full – whether you pay weekly or monthly.

Your responsibility is the same, whether you pay your own rent yourself, get Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit.

Rent arrears are a priority debt. Not paying could mean losing your home. If you are having difficulty making payments, you should contact your Housing Officer as soon as possible, by calling them on 020 7091 2800.



Your Housing Officer will help you check that you are getting the benefits you are entitled to. They can also signpost you to debt

advice agencies. You could also use the Government's benefits checker online at www.gov.uk/check-benefits-financial-support

Saving and borrowing with London Plus

We work in partnership with London Plus credit union, to give you access to affordable, ethical, savings and loans.

With household finances under enormous strain, it has never been more important to make the right choice when it comes to borrowing or saving.

All our residents can join London Plus, giving you access to key financial services.

- **Affordable loans** at a fraction of the cost of loans from most home credit companies or payday lenders. It's always best to avoid borrowing if you can, but a credit

union loan can help you spread the cost of an expensive item, or unexpected bill.

- **Safe savings** – you can save as little as £1 per day to build up savings for Christmas or return-to-school shopping. Having a little money put aside for a rainy day can help you avoid going into debt if something unexpected happens.
- **Day-to-day money management** – London Plus offers several services to help you manage your day-to-day spending.
- **A budgeting account**, which can help you to manage your



expenses and make sure that all of your bills are paid.

London Plus are fully regulated, responsible lenders. For more details about the credit union, go to www.londonpluscu.co.uk

Estate walkabouts

Be our local eyes and ears

Your Housing Officer visits your block or scheme every month to carry out an inspection – why not join them?

Residents who have taken part in walkabouts tell us they found them really useful. It helps you and us to meet the goal of making your estate pleasant and your building a nice place to live in.

We see walkabouts as one good way to involve you in monitoring and shaping the services we provide.

If you would like to get involved in the estate walkabout programme, phone your Housing Officer on 020 7091 1800, or email us at info@ekaya.co.uk



Scheme inspection dates

Scheme	Sept	Oct	Nov
<i>Housing Officer: Jennifer Lee</i>	8 Sept	6 Oct	10 Nov
Alice Walker Close			
Buckleigh Road			
Gipsy Hill			
Knollys Road			
Leigham Court Road			
Louise Bennet Close			
Rosa Parkes			
Butchi Emecheta Court	22 Sept	27 Oct	24 Nov
Daisy Lampkin Court			
Deeley Road			
Heyford Avenue			
Josephine Avenue			
Mary Dine Court			
North Street			
Sandmere Road			
Smedley Street			
Somers Road			
Streatham Place			
Sudbourne Road			
Tasman Road			
Tulse Hill			
<i>Housing Officer: Patricia</i>	15 Sept	13 Oct	3 Nov
Axis House			
College Road			
Greenwich House			
Lou Hamer House			
Paxton House			
Sandford Road			
Beeton Way	29 Sept	20 Oct	17 Nov
Foxbourne			
Howard Road			
Schumann Court			
Smith Court			
Southview Close			

Help us tackle fly-tipping

When bulky rubbish gets dumped at your estate or scheme, it's ugly, it can be dangerous and it's expensive to clear.

Since the beginning of this financial year, we have shifted a great deal of bulky and fly-tipped rubbish.

Every call-out to remove old mattresses, furniture and fridges costs us in excess of £150 – money we could be spending on improving your services.

Unfortunately, we also have to add these costs to your service charges. So, please consider others and avoid dumping rubbish on the estate.

The more bulk refuse or fly-tipping, the greater the cost to remove it and the bigger the increase in your service charge.





Employment and training **Help on offer**

Ekaya residents who need help to get work can tap into the help available from the Love London Working programme, as well as opting to join a CAP Job Club.

Love London Working is a training and employment programme delivered by Clarion Futures, on

behalf of its housing association partners. The programme helps unemployed people over the age of 16 into work. No matter how long you've been out of a job, or what barriers to work you may be facing – including problems with your health, disability or single parenthood, the team can assist.

They offer individual support with job applications, CV writing and interview practice. Plus, they have

a wide variety of jobs and work placements available to apply for straight away – located all over London. Contact the project at www.lovelondonworking.com

You could also join your local CAP Job Club – a friendly place, where you'll get practical help and gain the tools you need to find work, alongside like-minded local people. To book your place, go to capuk.org/get-help/cap-job-clubs

Supporting people

A new future for Abdul-Aziz



Former Kabo House resident, Abdul-Aziz has regained his independence and is now living in his own flat, while working and schooling.

Abdul-Aziz came to the UK alone as an asylum seeker and during his time at Kabo House, our staff worked with him to help him gain the confidence he needed to achieve his goals.

Kabo House is our semi-independent service for young people aged 18-24 who have been in the local authority care system. A stay at Kabo House gives them the chance to build the life

skills they will need to live independently in the outside world.

Kabo House residents have been doing well in the past few months, proving they can take care of themselves. They also understand how to set a budget, pay for items, pay bills, and accept responsibility and assistance.

We have young people who are in education and attending college full time. We also have people who work.

When they are ready, they know that their key worker will give them the help and encouragement they need to make a smooth move to fully independent living.

A Barrington Road success story

We always enjoy catching up with former service users, so we can hear how they're getting on.

In July, an ex-resident dropped in to visit her key worker at Barrington Road, with a good story to tell about her life.

Chanelle spent just over a year at Barrington Road with her daughter, making the most of all the support we provide.

We helped her to move on by assisting her to find a flat and furniture, and to get her gas and electricity sorted. We also helped her to get back into education.

Today, that daughter is six and Mum is doing well in the final year of her Community Science and Youth Development course at Goldsmith University, while also working part time.

We are delighted for them both.



Property Services update

Better repairs handling

We've been working to improve the repairs and maintenance service, and have reviewed the way repair requests are handled internally so that we don't miss anything.

We've also asked our main contractors to make sure they contact you within 48 hours of receiving an order, to book an appointment with you.

At a recent Customer Panel meeting, residents challenged us about this, so we are asking our contractors to show that they really are making these appointments on target.

You should also receive a text message from Ekaya once your repair has been booked. But we



know this is not happening at present and we are working to address this.

We are aware that some residents have not reported repairs to us, because they don't want people in

their homes. Whilst Covid 19 has not gone away, the risks have reduced, so if you need a repair, do contact us.

We can also visit to inspect your home if you prefer this.

Repairs service out of hours



We have a contract with Pinnacle to provide our out-of-hours emergency repairs service.

If you have an emergency repair, outside of office hours, please call Pinnacle on 020 3701 3535. Please note this is for emergencies only. You can be recharged if our contractor is called out to something that is not an emergency.

Your repair is an emergency when it is needed to prevent danger to life, restore essential services and make safe any faults with the building's structure.

Examples include:

- no drinking water supply
- complete power failure
- total loss of heating (November to April), where you have no other source of heating, or
- a burst pipe.

We also take your personal circumstances into account when deciding if something is an emergency – for example, if you have disabilities.



Happy Nursery Days

We've been very busy at the nursery, making preparations to say goodbye to our 16 pre-schoolers, who will be starting primary school in September.

Some of the children have been with us since they were babies, so we have had the pleasure of supporting them to grow and develop into the wonderful young people they are, equipped to go on to 'big' school in September.

For the first time since Covid-19, parents were invited into the building to celebrate this milestone with our pre-school graduates. Children celebrated their achievement with a performance, dressing up in

graduation gowns. They received certificates for their graduation and had their photographs taken. After the formalities, we had a celebration party to send them off.

On behalf of all of the staff at Happy Nursery Days, especially the pre-school staff and management, we congratulate our young people who have successfully graduated.

We are extremely proud of them and we know that they are all very well equipped to move on to the next level of their education.

It has been a joy to watch them grow and develop through the different stages. We wish them all the best for the future.

We're now getting ready for our summer school, which will run over the summer holidays, and we're looking forward to the new academic year from September.

Resident

involvement update

News from the Customer Panel

Last year, we created a new resident involvement strategy with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service and Ekaya's Customer Panel.

We want to make sure you have the chance to influence how we provide services and can hold Ekaya to account for the service you receive from us.

At the last Customer Panel Meeting, the Panel challenged us about the time our contractors take to book appointments with you for routine repairs. Our contract states that this should happen within 48 hours of the contractor receiving an order from Ekaya. We are currently checking this, as we know this is important to you.

The Customer Panel also agreed to review our draft response to the latest version of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

Complaints are really important to us. We know we don't always get it right and complaints are a way for us to acknowledge this, put things right, apologise and learn lessons to improve for the future. The latest review will be complete by October and we will publish the results on our website.

Mystery shoppers

Last year, we invited residents to join our mystery shopper group. The purpose of the group would be to test our services anonymously, to check that our team are doing what we say we will do.

After some initial interest, no one came forward to take part,

so we weren't able to start this. We're still really keen to make this happen, so please get in contact if interests you. We will provide you with training and materials. All you need is a little time to take part.



Local meetings

One of the positive things that has come out of the Covid-19 pandemic is our extended use of technology to keep in contact with each other and with you.

Many of our staff have now been working remotely for a long time and we've been using Zoom and Teams to keep in contact with each other and to meet as a team.

Last year, we trialled using online meetings for our residents and this proved to be a big success. We are now rolling this out across our service.

These local meetings give you a chance to talk to us, ask questions,

raise concerns and ask for services, all from the comfort of your own home. Before Covid, you would have had to come to our office or a local meeting hall.

Your Housing Officer will contact you when there's a meeting for your local area, so please do join us if you can.

If you prefer to meet our staff face to face, our Housing Officers still carry out monthly block inspections and you are very welcome to join them.

For more details about resident involvement at Ekaya, please email resident.consultation@Ekaya.co.uk



Feedback on complaints

Between April and June 2022, we received three complaints. Two were about repairs and maintenance and one referred to our housing services.

We responded to two of these complaints within our target of 10 working days and resolved both of them.

The third complaint was more complex and we needed extra time. Our staff have been working with the resident to address their concerns before responding.

We have learned several lessons from complaints this year.

- We should make sure we communicate clearly and in good time with contractors, customers, our own team and external bodies – including other landlords providing a service to Ekaya residents.
- Where there is a problem with a repair, this should remain under review until the matter is resolved.
- Once something has been resolved, we should check back

with the resident to make sure they are happy with what has been done.

- We will provide refresher training to staff on complaint handling, to make sure they are aware of their key responsibilities for responding, addressing the problem and learning lessons.



Call for help:

999

Emergency

111

*Health
non-emergencies*

101

*Police
non-emergencies*

112

*Emergencies from a
mobile anywhere in
the world*



ekaya
HOUSING
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