

Ekaya
Residents'
newsletter

**Summer in
sunshine**



ekaya
HOUSING
ASSOCIATION

Summer in sunshine

Welcome to the latest issue of Ekaya's newsletter.



**Got a prepayment meter?
Act now or you'll miss out on
up to £400 of energy support**



**Take your ID
to claim your
energy support
vouchers**

Act by 30th June

Find out more by searching
"Energy Bills Support Scheme" on gov.uk



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Official opening for Quest Court

On 4 May, we celebrated the official opening of Quest Court – our latest new development.

Quest Court is made up of 16 homes – some for letting at London affordable rents and others for shared ownership.

The development came through our work with the L&Q-led Build London Partnership and brings our total stock to 500 units.

Quest Court is named in honour of one of our founders, Dorothy Quest, who delivered a rousing and reflective speech about Ekaya's journey – from its early days to now.

The official opening ribbon was cut for us by Tom Copley, Deputy Mayor of London for Housing and Residential Development. Other guest speakers included Jason Perry, the Executive Mayor of Croydon and John French, Head of Development Partnerships, L&Q.

Tracey Downie, our Board Chair, echoed her thanks for the hard work that had gone into realising this addition to our stock – given a particularly tight schedule.

Guests were entertained with wonderful rhythms from the steel pans of Solid Steel Acoustic Duo, while Tracey's Pantry Catering laid out a delicious spread of African and Caribbean cuisine.

Above, left to right: Tom Copley, Deputy Mayor of London for Housing and Residential Development; Jason Perry, Mayor of Croydon; founder Dorothy Quest; Nigel Staple; Ekaya Chair, Tracey Downie; Ekaya's CEO, Ben Laryea.

Right: Dorothy Quest (centre) with fellow founders Marion Schumann (left) and Maggie Scarlett (right).



Save and borrow with **London Plus**

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

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. If you can't avoid borrowing, a credit union loan can help you spread the cost of an expensive item or 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



Always pay your rent first

You are responsible for paying your rent on time and in full – whether you pay weekly or monthly.

Whether you pay your rent yourself, get Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit, it is your responsibility to make sure it's paid.

Don't risk your home

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 you can, by calling 020 7091 1800.

Your Housing Officer will help you

check that you are getting the benefits you are entitled to. They can signpost you to debt advice agencies in you need this. You could also use the Government's benefits checker online at www.gov.uk/check-benefits-financial-support



Cost-of-living update

Helping residents like you

From August 2022 until he moved on in June 2023, the Tenancy Sustainment Officer we employed together with three other partner landlords did a great job of assisting residents to raise their income.

In his time in the role, Taju Oyedeji helped with applications for additional benefits, grants from charities and local authorities, as well as sign-ups to the Thames Water WaterHelp scheme – adding hundreds of pounds to some tenants' incomes.

He also helped residents to appeal benefits decisions, manage their budgets and apply for a Personal Independence Payment if they were disabled.

It can feel difficult to share your financial details with someone else, but welfare specialists like Taju are there to help and know the importance of respecting your confidentiality at all times.

We are now reviewing the role of Tenancy Sustainment Officer with our partners and will let you know the outcome soon.

In the meantime, we can really recommend getting free professional support if you are struggling with your finances. There are often ways to boost your income that you may not know about.

There is plenty of useful benefits and other information online at www.turn2us.org.uk

Help with energy costs

In April, the Government stopped paying £67 each month towards everyone's electricity bills.

Many people with pre-payment meters have not yet used their energy discount vouchers. **You must use them by 30 June 2023.**

If you have lost any vouchers, ask your energy provider to reissue them.

From 1 July, energy providers will no longer be allowed to charge more for your energy if you have a pre-payment meter.

If you are struggling to pay bills, contact your energy provider to agree a plan you can afford and to find out about any grants they can offer.

Pensioners will again get an extra £300 on top of their normal Winter Fuel Payment. This will be paid in November or December 2023.

Cost-of-living payments

People who get means-tested benefits, will get three cost-of-living payments, adding up to £900, over the next year. The first payment was made this spring. Two more will be made in the autumn of 2023 and the spring of 2024.

If you get disability benefits, you will also be given an additional £150 in the summer of 2023.

Charitable grants

If you cannot afford to pay basic household bills go online to www.turn2us.org.uk to search for charitable grants.

Ekaya's got a plan...

Over the next year, we will be following up on a special action plan designed to help our residents manage the cost-of-living crisis.

We're going to do more signposting to the specialist agencies that can help you with particular problems – for example, the StepChange debt management charity, local foodbanks and Ofgem, the energy regulator.

We will be sharing more information about the additional benefits you can claim and the help you can access from your local authority and charity funds. We will research what's available

and promote the service offered by our Tenancy Sustainment Officer.

Our staff will use a checklist, so that we have a consistent approach to getting you the information and support you need.

We'll hold a one-stop shop day, where you will be able to talk to staff from our repairs and housing teams, as well as our Tenancy Sustainment Officer.

We will start regular budgeting sessions for residents.

We will prioritise value for money. We want your homes to be energy efficient, so, when we draw up work plans, we will aim to reduce energy bills.

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?

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

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	Jul	Aug	Sept
<i>Housing Officer: Jennifer Lee</i>	11 Jul	9 Aug	12 Sept
Butchi Emecheta Court			
Gipsy Hill			
Knollys Road			
Leigham Court Road			
Louise Bennet Close			
Rosa Parkes			
Smedley Street			
Streatham Place			
Tasman Road			
Tulse Hill			
Buckleigh Road	27 Jul		
Daisy Lampkin Court			
Deeley Road			
Heyford Avenue			
Josephine Avenue			
Mary Dine Court			
North Street			
Sandmere Road			
Somers Road			
Sudbourne Road			
<i>Housing Officer: Patricia</i>	13 Jul	17 Aug	14 Sept
Axis House			
College Road			
Greenwich House			
Lou Hamer House			
Overcliff Close			
Paxton House			
Sandford Road			
Beeton Way	26 Jul	23 Aug	27 Sept
Foxbourne			
Howard Road			
Sanderstead			
Schumann Court			
Smith Court			
Southview Close			

Keep common areas clear

You must not leave personal items – including doormats, buggies or shoes – in the communal hallways or cupboards. These items create a fire risk.

Any items found may be removed and disposed of by the Housing Management team. So, please keep them in your homes.

Bin everything properly

Keep our blocks and schemes clean, tidy and free of vermin, by disposing of your rubbish properly. Always use the correct bins – otherwise, they may not be collected.

Use the recycling bins for: paper and card (but not food-soiled boxes or shredded paper); plastic tubs/food trays (but not plastic film), plastic bottles with lids; glass bottles and jars (but no broken or other glass) – put lids in separately; metal cans; milk and juice cartons. Remember to wash food containers first and drop items straight into the bins, as black bin liners are not accepted.

Use the waste bins for the rest of your normal waste, including polystyrene packaging, tin foil, old clothes and nappies.

Never leave bulky rubbish by the bins. It costs us a lot to get it collected and encourages fly-tipping. Call for a council bulky waste collection instead.

Useful tip: You can take used batteries to any large supermarket, blister pill packs to Superdrug and water filters to Sainsbury's.



Supporting people

Barrington Road service closed for now

It was the end of an era for Ekaya, as our long-running Barrington Road service for young mothers and their babies closed on 31 May.

Our remaining residents and six longstanding members of staff have now moved across to Evolve Housing and Support.

We would like to send our

thanks and best wishes to the staff who are leaving us, who had clocked up many years for Ekaya between them.

They are: Panchita Golding, Gail Holsten, Dawn May, Althea Nesty,

Oyama Ovat and Rosemary Owusu Antwi. We wish them well.

We are now looking at several options for the future use of the building.



Property Services update

Damp and mould

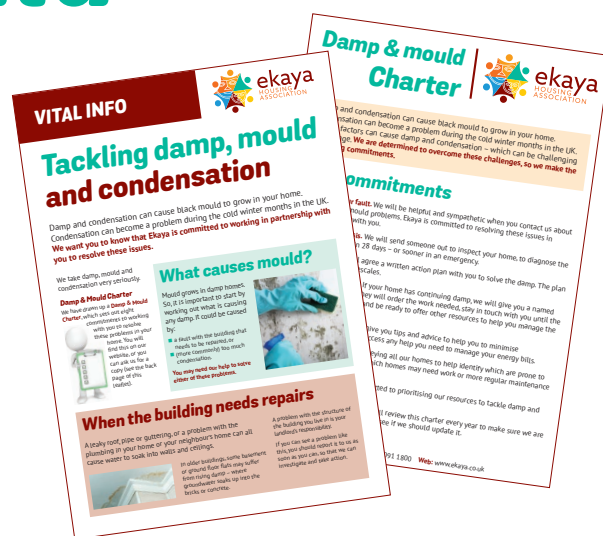
We're committed to working with our residents to resolve any problems you have with damp, mould or condensation in your home.

We want you to know that we take damp, mould and condensation very seriously.

We have drawn up a damp & mould charter, which sets out eight commitments to working with you to resolve these problems if they occur in your home.

We recently sent you a new leaflet with vital information about how these problems arise and what we can all do about them.

For a copy of either leaflet, call or email the office.



Fire safety reminders

Your safety from fire remains one of our top priorities.

We have almost completed our checks on the smoke and carbon monoxide alarms we provide by law. We have also changed the fire safety and resident notices in our buildings.

We recently sent you a Fire Brigade leaflet, giving you clear home safety advice.

You must keep communal areas clear of personal belongings – or we may need to remove them. Items left in corridors, stairwells and cupboards are a fire hazard. They can catch alight, or cause an obstruction to people trying to leave the building. They also

make things more dangerous for firefighters.

Be aware that the door to your flat is a fire door. This is why it has a self-closer and a seal around the edges to keep smoke out in a fire. You must not alter your door in any way.

We are currently checking all our fire doors for defects.



Give access to your home

When you book a repairs appointment, or you are sent an appointment for your annual gas safety check, please make sure you are in at the time agreed.

If you cannot be in for an appointment, please email or phone us as soon as possible, so that we can arrange a more convenient time.

When no-one is in, our contractors charge us for a missed appointment, which wastes a repairs slot and our valuable repairs budget. We may decide to charge the cost back to you.

Email us at info@ekaya.co.uk, or phone 020 7091 1800.

We have almost finished our latest stock condition survey, which gives us the information we need to plan major works programmes. Thank you for giving our surveyors access when needed.

Happy Nursery Days



Good Ofsted rating

Happy Nursery Days has received a welcome boost, following its recent Ofsted inspection.

The nursery has gone from a disappointing 'inadequate' rating following an inspection last autumn, back to its previous 'good' rating, thanks to hard work from our staff to bring things back on track.

If you are looking for a nursery space for your child from age three months to five years, please contact Alma.Boci@happynurserydays.co.uk or call 020 8674 7804 for more information. (See below for open day details.)

Busy children

The children have enjoyed a fun few months, including dressing up for World Book Day in March and celebrating the Coronation in May.

WORLD
BOOK
DAY
2 MARCH 2023



Happy Nursery Days – Open Day
Saturday 2 September 2023
11am–2pm

132A Upper Tulse Hill, Valens House, SW2 2RX

- High quality care
- Home cooked nutritious meals
- Highly Qualified experience and dedicated team
 - 2,3,4yr old 15&30hours Funded places
 - An excellent range of stimulating resources
- A huge outdoor play area for children to explore all year round
- Flexible opening times 7:30–6pm, only closed for Christmas and Bank holidays

For more information, please call 02086747804

A bright future in childcare

We currently have three vacancies in the Nursery – why not join us!

We are looking for a new room leader, who would need an NVQ Level 3 in Early Years Care and Education, or an equivalent qualification.

We are also looking for two practitioners – already at Level 1 or willing to work towards it.

We would be particularly pleased to hear from residents who would like to work in childcare. If this would be your first role in early years care, we would be happy to pay for and support your NVQ Level 1 while you work on site.

To find out more, email recruitment@ekaya.co.uk

You are also welcome to attend our open day on 4 September (see advert opposite).



Resident

involvement update

Annual survey in 2023

We will be carrying out our latest resident satisfaction surveys from September – and we are really keen to hear your views. Major surveys give us valuable feedback about how satisfied you are and how well we are doing.

This year's survey will be worded a little differently, because we will be using some of the questions drawn up by our regulator. (See opposite for more details.)

We have commissioned Acuity – a specialist independent company – to run our survey for us. They will contact you by email or phone. We get a better response rate using these methods, so we will not be sending out postal surveys this year. This will also save us printing and postage costs.

Acuity operate to strict data protection and confidentiality guidelines, and you can opt to keep your replies strictly anonymous.

We would like to thank you in advance for completing the survey. You will be helping us to see where we need to improve.

From our regulator

22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Our regulator has drawn up a new set of 22 tenant satisfaction measures (or 'TSMs') for us to use and report back on at least every two years.

The idea is that every social landlord will answer the same questions, so that we can more easily compare our performance.

We can answer some of the TSMs using records we keep internally. But others will be included in our annual and other resident surveys.

Here are the 22 measures.

1. Overall satisfaction
2. Satisfaction with repairs
3. Satisfaction with time taken to complete the most recent repair
4. Satisfaction that your home is well maintained
5. Satisfaction that your home is safe
6. Satisfaction that your landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them
7. Satisfaction that your landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them
8. Agreement that your landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect
9. Satisfaction with your landlord's approach to handling complaints
10. Satisfaction that your landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained
11. Satisfaction that your landlord makes a positive contribution to local neighbourhoods
12. Satisfaction with your landlord's approach to handling antisocial behaviour
13. Complaints relative to the size of your landlord
14. Complaints responded to within the complaint handling code timescales
15. Antisocial behaviour cases relative to the size of your landlord
16. Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard
17. Repairs completed within the target timescale
18. Gas safety checks
19. Fire safety checks
20. Asbestos safety checks
21. Water safety checks
22. Lift safety checks. ✓

Join Kate Parsley on the Board



I have been the resident rep on the Ekaya Board since December 2020.

During this time, I have provided a tenant perspective to discussions, e.g proposed changes to policies, and I have also seen the outcome of visits to my own home. This has helped me understand the complexity of managing hundreds of homes and also given me an opportunity to advocate for residents.

If you are interested in understanding more about how Ekaya works, or in contributing to the organisation's success, consider applying and join us on the Board soon!

Are you a resident interested in a unique opportunity to help direct and monitor the work of Ekaya?

The voices of our customers are key to everything that we do at Ekaya. We cannot achieve our mission without residents helping to shape decisions at every level of our organisation – especially at Board level.

We're looking for someone to be a new Resident Board Member and to play a key role in the most senior governing body of Ekaya.

We encourage residents of all ages and from all cultural backgrounds to apply, because we believe having a diverse Board will help us make better decisions.

You don't necessarily need experience on another Board to apply, however, you'll need to demonstrate that you've got the right skills for the role or that you can develop them with our support.

Email us at recruitment@ekaya.co.uk if you would like more information. To apply, send your CV and a cover letter of no more than two sides to recruitment@ekaya.co.uk

Complaints in 2022-23

We reduced the number of formal complaints we received to 15 in 2022-23 – less than half of the 35 complaints we received in the previous year.

We think the reduction in complaint numbers is due to the hard work we put in to improve our services, ways of working and ways of communicating with you.

Of the complaints we received, 13 were closed at stage one and two at stage two. However, we only managed to respond to 10 of these complaints within our target times – so this an area we are working to improve.

What we learned

Learning from your complaints is the most important part of our process. Last year, we learned a number of important lessons.

We are making sure our staff understand and follow our policies and procedures properly; involving their line manager when needed.

We are more closely monitoring our contractors – especially around making appointments and completing repairs by a promised date. We are also inspecting more completed repairs jobs.

We are giving our contractors more demanding targets for completing some types of work.



We are making sure everyone involved communicates better when things get complicated.

We are ensuring all our teams have all the skills and knowledge they need. To boost good practice and staff morale, we also record any compliments we receive.

Call for help:

999

Emergency

111

*Health
non-emergencies*

101

*Police
non-emergencies*

112

*Emergencies from a
mobile anywhere in
the world*



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Ekaya Housing Association

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Web: www.ekaya.co.uk

Office hours: 9am to 5.30pm