

Connections

KEEPING YOU INFORMED



**A 100th birthday
is cause for major
celebrations!** pg 30



Want to help
improve your local
area? Get involved
today! pg 11



Stop the
Clock
pg 4



Welcome

from Carl Byrne

Group director of housing

Hi, and Merry Christmas from everyone at Notting Hill Genesis. I know this festive period will feel different but we wish you and your family well and hope you have a safe and enjoyable break.

The year has been remarkable and difficult for everyone but we have been listening to the views of our residents and I am positive that we're making progress. Find out how we're doing by reading our Annual Standards Report (see pages 13-20).

One of the big benefits residents have enjoyed this year has been the ability to self-serve using our My Account platform.

It allows you to access our services when you want and where you want, whether from home or on the move using a mobile phone or tablet, or even from work on a desktop computer.

You can make payments, view your rent account, report and track repairs, give feedback and get in touch with your housing officer. It's also the best way to raise requests or make enquiries while we're closed over the Christmas period (see page 5).

My Account is already proving very popular. See page 7 for a review by one of our residents, Olivia.

Registering for My Account is easy. See the back page of this edition to find out how, so you too can enjoy the benefits of self-serve. If you do have problems signing up, your housing officer will be able to help you.

Finally, please remember that our offices will be closed over Christmas and New Year. Using My Account will be the easiest way to reach us during that time.

Take care and we wish you a happy 2021.



The year has been remarkable and difficult for everyone but we have been listening to the views of our residents and I am positive that we're making progress. Find out how we're doing by reading our Annual Standards Report (see pages 13-20)

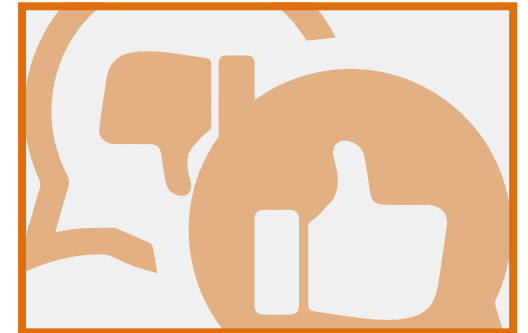


OUR 2020 PARTNERS

SEE PAGE 8

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STOP THE CLOCK

BLACK LIVES MATTER

More than 1,200 Notting Hill Genesis staff attended a special virtual Stop the Clock conference focused on diversity, including the Black Lives Matter movement, in October.

The event allowed colleagues to join external speakers to discuss a wide range of topics around racial equality. This is an important part of our culture as an organisation and will help us better understand the experiences of our BAME colleagues and residents.

Talks on the day included "Reframing Stereotypes and Archetypes", "The Power of Networks" and "How to be an Active Ally".

Wasiu Fadahunsi, director-level lead for improving diversity, said: "It was great to see that creating a truly inclusive and equal work culture is important to our staff at all levels. We welcomed many inspirational and uplifting speakers and I thank them all.

"But this is just the start; we are committed to working together over the coming weeks, months and beyond to learn from, educate and challenge each other about discrimination faced by many colleagues whether at work or outside."



The conference will inform what we do as an organisation to support and educate our staff, as well as better understand how our services impact different groups of residents and give them the opportunity to input into our initiatives in this area.

We will continue to work closely with our BAME staff network and have signed a pledge with our partners in the G15 group of housing associations to ensure our organisation reflects the communities we work in when it comes to diversity, especially at senior management, leadership and board level.

Look after your drains and prevent awkward emergencies

See page 21

Holiday hampers bring festive cheer to our vulnerable residents

For several years the women's volunteer organisation Junior League of London has been working with us to deliver holiday hampers to some of our most vulnerable residents in time for Christmas.

The volunteers raise funds by appealing for donations

from individuals or organisations. As the festive season approaches, a team of 80 put together packages of soft foods such as biscuits, canned goods, toiletries and even winter warmers like scarves or gloves into hampers and pass them on to us.

Thanks to their hard work, this year we've been able to dispatch

387 hampers

of seasonal delights, mostly to residents in our extra care and sheltered accommodation schemes.

Opening hours over Christmas

Our offices will close at 1pm on Thursday 24 December and reopen on Monday 4 January.

If you need an urgent repair while we're closed, please contact your local officer on their usual 020 number and you will be diverted to our customer service centre.

If you have a non-urgent enquiry, your My Account customer portal allows you to manage your account online 24/7, 365 days a year where you can:

- Report non-emergency repairs
- Make payments
- Check your balance

- Contact your local officer directly
- And much more!

If you report a non-emergency repair, you will be contacted by our contractor partners in the new year to book in an appointment at a time that suits you, while your local officer will pick up any other enquiries on their return to work in January.

If you don't have access to the internet, our customer service centre will be open to help with routine enquiries between Tuesday 29 December and Thursday 31 December.

Your feedback

How to make a complaint or give praise

We try to provide the best service we can and we'd love to hear from you if you think the service you've received has been great. We do however understand that you may wish to make a complaint if you're unhappy for whatever reason. There are various ways you can do so, the easiest being through My Account but you can also contact your local officer by phone, letter or email.

What happens when I make a complaint?

Stage one

Your complaint will be handled by your housing officer. If your complaint is about the housing officer, it will be dealt by their line manager. They will aim to contact you within two working days to acknowledge your complaint. This will be followed by a formal written response to your complaint within 10 working days. Let us know if you'd like our written response to be translated into a preferred form or language.

Stage two

If you're unhappy with the outcome of your complaint at stage one, please contact the person who responded to the complaint within 20 days of receiving the response and state that you wish to escalate

your complaint, giving the reasons why. Your complaint will be reviewed by a staff member who wasn't involved in the original decision and you also have the option of having it reviewed by a resident from an independent pool. We aim to review your stage two complaint within 20 working days and will keep in contact with you during this time.

Positive feedback

Building good relationships between residents and the housing officers who look after them is at the heart of our mission. Our staff have worked very hard this year, often in challenging circumstances when many have had to get used to additional safety precautions around Covid-19, working from home, some even taking on educating and caring responsibilities for family members as local services became unavailable. If you think your housing officer has been doing a great job, please leave them feedback either by contacting them directly or through **My Account – Complaints and Praise** feature. Our staff are unable to accept gifts or hospitality so this acknowledgement that their hard work has been noted would give them a great boost.

Housing Ombudsman – new code of complaint handling

See page 10

My Account – a resident's view



Our My Account service is already helping thousands of residents access our services when they want, where they want and how they want, and one tenant has spoken about her experience.

Olivia, who lives in Kensington, has already benefited from being able to book repairs immediately and review her rent account at any time of day.

She said: "I've been using the system ever since it first became available and I really like having the option to self-serve where everything I need to do is under one umbrella.

"The system is really easy to use and allows me to book a repair and find a time slot that suits me even if it's outside office hours because I don't need to speak to anyone."

The system can be used on mobile phones and tablets, as well as desktop computers – it doesn't have to be a personal device.

Olivia added: "When I have needed to arrange a repair the system allows me to upload photos of the issue and that seems to have helped the operatives know exactly what is needed before they even arrive. And receiving reminder text messages so I don't forget a visit has been really useful."

She also has some advice on what we can do to enhance the system, adding: "Sometimes finding the right category for your repair can be tricky, so

I would like to see that improved."

That is something we will be working on in future to ensure the system is as resident-friendly as possible.

To sign up for My Account and enjoy the same benefits as Olivia, please visit www.nhg.org.uk/residents/my-account or speak to your housing officer.

We'd love to hear from you if you'd like to get involved in making improvements to My Account and helping other residents sign up. To find out more, email involvement@nhg.org.uk.

Our 2020 partners

Our resident support team works with local and national partners to offer support to anyone living in our homes. This partnership network has proved more important than ever during a difficult year.

Here is a reminder of organisations that can help you and how you can contact them.



GoodGym deliver small, free food parcels up to a value of £20 to residents over the age of 60 who are vulnerable, self-isolating or unable to go out due to their age or ill health. Please ask your housing officer if you wish to be referred.



The Warm Homes Fund in partnership with Essex Citizens Advice Bureau

For residents in Essex who are struggling to pay their energy bills. To find out more and self-refer, go to <https://www.nhg.org.uk/residents/support-services/resources/warm-homes-essex/>



Ingeus offer employment support for residents who've been unemployed for at least two years and are aged 18+. You must meet certain criteria to be eligible and live in one of the 12 central London boroughs. Email tenancysupport@nhg.org.uk to find out more.



Settled helps EU nationals and their families register for the government EU Settlement Scheme so they can continue to live, work and study in the UK after Brexit. You can self-refer for their support at www.nhg.org.uk/residents/support-services/resources/settled/



London Plus Credit Union helps our residents build financial resilience and manage their budgets. They promote an ethos of saving but also accept that people may need to turn to credit to meet key costs throughout the year. To find out more, call them on 020 7471 2620 or visit www.londonpluscu.co.uk.



Debt Free London have created a dedicated NHG phone line for our London-based residents. You can call for free, independent and confidential advice on **0800 808 5702** to speak to an adviser.



Settle supports new tenants aged 25 and under to settle into their new home. They work particularly with those who are vulnerable or marginalised and may benefit from dedicated support and advice on grants, employment, budgeting, debt management and anything else the young person may need to help sustain their tenancy. London only. Visit www.nhg.org.uk/residents/support-services/resources/settle/ to self-refer.



Money A+E is an award-winning social enterprise which can provide a free, 45-minute session to cover budgeting (income and expenditure), money, benefits and Universal Credit. Please speak to your housing officer to be referred.



Green Doctor advisers will discuss the best energy deals open to you and where possible help you apply for grants for energy and/or water debt. They can also refer you to extra support if needed. The service is for London residents who are on a low income, have a long-term health condition or disability, have children under five or who are over 65. www.nhg.org.uk/residents/support-services/resources/green-doctors/



Connect Well by **Living Well** provides free online and phone support for members of BAME, HIV+ and LGBT communities who are aged 18+ and live in London. Go to www.livingwellcic.com/signup/ to access a range of services including counselling, life coaching, hypnotherapy and wellbeing workshops.

Employment and training e-newsletter

To receive regular updates about our partners and projects, join our mailing list by signing up at <http://eepurl.com/gz3KAT>.

Housing Ombudsman – complaint handling code

Housing
Ombudsman Service

The Housing Ombudsman is an impartial service which looks at complaints made by residents of social landlords like us. You can contact the Ombudsman at any time for independent advice. Once your complaint has been through both stages of our internal procedure as outlined on page 6, you can contact the Ombudsman again for a further investigation.

From January 2021, the Housing Ombudsman will be introducing a new code of complaint handling. We've been busy ensuring that Notting Hill Genesis can meet the requirements of this code which sets out good practice that will allow us to effectively and fairly respond to complaints.

During the preparation work, we've been involving our residents

by drawing on their personal experiences to help shape our work, ensuring any changes we made to the way we handle complaints are resident-focused, based on your feedback and ideas.

Thank you to all the residents who worked with us on these requirements.

You can find out more about the code on the Housing Ombudsman website. We will also be posting an update on this work in the new year.

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ
0300 111 3000
www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Paragon evacuation

In October, following expert advice by building safety consultants, we asked residents living at our Paragon estate in Brentford to leave immediately to protect their health and safety while further investigative work is undertaken. All residents of the six blocks have now moved off site into short-term or medium-term accommodation. We remain in discussions with the affected residents about their long-term plans and are providing all with financial

support and access to a counselling service.

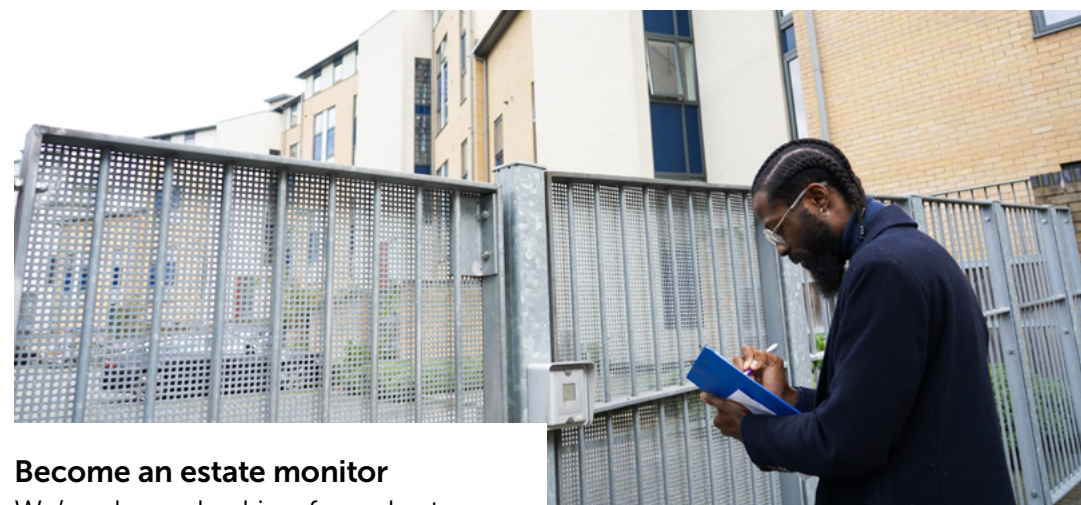
The Paragon estate was built by Berkeley First in 2006 for Presentation Housing Association, which became part of Notting Hill Genesis in 2009.

There is no suggestion that any other buildings in the Notting Hill Genesis portfolio will require a similar approach to that being taken at Paragon.

A day in the life of a
community caretaker
See page 22

Want to help improve your local area? *Get involved today!*

There are several ways you can contribute to your local community and help improve the services we provide as a landlord.



Become an estate monitor

We're always looking for volunteers to help monitor and assess the quality of cleaning and gardening services where you live. This may include accompanying your housing officer on an estate inspection, or simply rating the services you receive by text message. If this sounds like something you'd like to get involved with, email involvement@nhg.org.uk or ask your housing officer to refer you to the resident involvement team.

Set up a residents' association

A residents' association is made up of residents living in a particular estate, street, building or area, who play an important part in dealing with local issues by representing the views of residents. Notting Hill Genesis can formally recognise a residents' association and provide a start-up grant as well as an annual grant to cover any running costs. Setting up a residents' association involves six easy steps:

New partnership with baby bank Little Village

See page 25

1. Decide on the purpose of your residents' association
2. Gain the views and support of fellow residents
3. Contact your housing officer to set up an initial meeting
4. Vote to decide on who will form your committee
5. Adopt a constitution
6. Gain formal recognition (optional)

For a complete toolkit and good practice guide, take a look at the resident involvement page on our website: www.nhg.org.uk/residents/get-involved.

Join a local scrutiny group - or create a new one!

We currently have a small number of local scrutiny groups who meet quarterly to discuss common issues, make recommendations for improvement and create local plans. Areas with active scrutiny groups are:

- Kensington & Chelsea
- Hammersmith & Fulham
- Outer West (Ealing, Hounslow, Hillingdon)
- Bolney Meadow (Lambeth)

Residents in our local scrutiny groups have achieved a great deal recently. They've helped improve communication to residents around

gas safety checks and identified and improved services on estates. They are currently providing local case studies for projects focusing on our repairs service as well as supporting residents who wish to sign up and use My Account, our online self-service portal.

If you would like to join a local scrutiny group or see a new group set up in your area, the resident involvement team will be keen to help.

Staff recruitment and training

Who best to tell us how to train our housing officers that the residents who access their support? We'd welcome your help in examining our recruitment and training for housing officers. Your input will help ensure that communication and the building of good relationships are at the forefront of our training process. You can get involved in various ways, including focus groups, email discussions, or by reading material from home and providing feedback. For more information on the above opportunities, contact the resident involvement team on involvement@nhg.org.uk or speak to your housing officer.



Annual Standards Report

2019//20

Welcome to our latest Annual Standards Report.

As a resident board member I am delighted to be able to update you on how we have performed in the last year, how we are delivering the resident promise made when NHG was created and how we are increasing resident representation and involvement.

I am pleased to be able to show improvements in the delivery of services, in particular the improvement in resident satisfaction from 65.2% to **68.5%**. Whilst this is still not as high as we would like, it shows that the changes we have made are starting to have a positive impact on the services residents receive, and innovative changes like the introduction of My Account and the roll out of our new repairs platform will continue to play an important role.

Stephen Bitti
Resident Board Member



Our resident promise

When Notting Hill Genesis was formed in 2018, a resident promise was established which sets out the commitment to bring about benefits to our residents. The promise was formed following consultation with many of our residents so we could ensure we focus on what matters most to them. The promise is made up of three elements and is referred to throughout this report:

- 1 **Our pledge and what Notting Hill Genesis stands for**
- 2 **The improvements we will make to our existing services**
- 3 **The new services we will develop with residents**

Supporting residents in their homes

The local officer

As part of our new housing model every resident has a named local officer. Residents can contact them for anything from questions about tenancies, making payments, reporting an issue or even just for a supportive ear.

Winning the trust of a particular resident who was in a very dire personal situation and had issues with using the services being offered via NHG. Being able to help this resident resolve their problems was very satisfying.

OWEN WIGGINS IS A FLOATING HOUSING OFFICER FOR OUR WEST LONDON REGION.



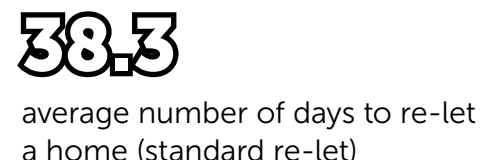
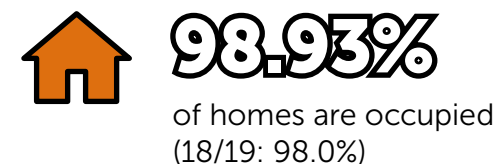
What residents told us	How we are responding
The turnover of housing officers is too high, and the consistency of service is poor.	We are appointing more permanent housing officers to reduce staff turnover and improve the consistency of the service our residents receive.
It takes too long for somebody to get back to me when I leave a message.	We are working with residents to improve our communication, by looking at the full journey a resident may go through when contacting NHG. We are focussed on increasing the number of calls answered, and calling you back more quickly.

Residents can find the contact details for their housing officer or property management officer in the following ways:

- **Checking 'My Account'** - www.nhg.org.uk/residents/my-account
- **Using the live chat service** or submitting a contact form on the Notting Hill Genesis website

Tenancy management

As part of managing tenancies for our residents, housing officers manage rent accounts, ensure any empty (void) properties are fit to use again, and help new and existing residents to move into their new homes. Here are some figures for 2019/20 to show how these services are doing:



Within this number:

- 78** mutual exchanges between existing tenants
- 164** transfers of existing tenants
- 892** new tenants (of these, 13 were relatives of existing tenants housed under the household members scheme.)

Supporting residents

Supporting our housing officers, the welfare benefits team help our residents to resolve issues with benefits claims and help them get the income they are entitled to.

The welfare benefits team helped our residents to claim an additional **£1,852,536.49** of payments in 2019/20.

Our services

Complaints

We aim to provide the best possible service, but we understand that sometimes our residents may need to make a complaint. We welcome any form of feedback, including complaints, so that we may improve our services for all residents.

Here are some figures from 2019/20 to show how we are managing and responding to the complaints we receive:

- X** Top three complaints themes:
1. Repairs
 2. Heating and hot water
 3. Housing management

2,790 Total number of complaints received

96% of complaints resolved at stage one of our process

4.9% of complaints escalated to stage two

42 Number of cases determined by the Housing Ombudsman Service

22 Number of cases with a maladministration or service failure finding

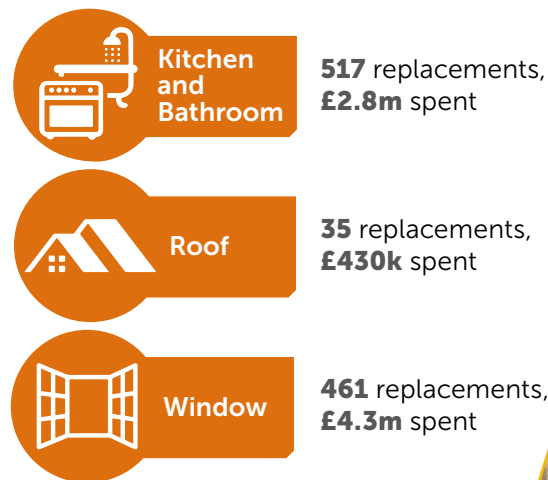
Repairs

Residents can report and track repairs by using the My Account service. Below are the figures for 2019/20 to show the number of repairs carried out and the total spend:

Number of repairs	% of repairs completed in target time	Total amount spend on responsive repairs
114,633	66.8%	£13,292,550

£19,600,000

Total amount spent on planned investment



Average days taken to complete repairs	Number of emergency repairs completed
13.8	21,100

64.3%
Customer satisfaction with recent repair

He did the job well, explained everything and was polite



Safety and compliance

Residents have made it clear that we should work together on any decisions involving safety and compliance. We know that there is still further work to be done, but some key areas where we have started to do this in 2019/20 are:

Estate inspections:

We now have over 450 resident monitors who help to raise the standards of services at a scheme, block or estate. To find out more about this initiative, email estateservices@nhg.org.uk.

Fire safety – oversight and scrutiny group review:

In June 2020 the resident oversight and scrutiny group carried out a review on fire safety, making a series of recommendations to the organisation to improve the services we provide.

For more information on the review and a full list of recommendations, contact our Resident Involvement team by emailing involvement@nhg.org.uk.

Regeneration projects

Our regeneration projects are about more than bricks and mortar. We are invested in our communities and as part of that provide grant funding for local projects. The total we provided in 2019/20 was:

£265,635

Figures for 2019/20:

100%

of properties with an up-to-date fire risk assessment and target

24,755

Number of fire risk actions completed in 2019/20

£12,159,205

spent to improve fire safety in 2019/20

99.87%

of gas safety checks complete and target

We also help local people into work through apprenticeships either with NHG or our partners. We have provided **41 apprenticeships** through our regeneration projects, 28 at Woodberry Down, 11 at Aylesbury and two at Grahame Park.

New builds

When Notting Hill Genesis formed we set out our commitment to provide more of the new homes so desperately needed to tackle London's housing crisis. We have also launched our first **London Living Rent homes**. The scheme was set up by the Greater London Authority and gives residents the opportunity to pay a lower rent so they can save a deposit to buy their home. More information about London Living Rent can be found on our website.

Figures 2019/20:



New homes delivered in total

1170

New homes delivered for rent

849

New homes delivered for sale



Resident involvement

Figures for 2019/20:

62

Number of resident involvement (RI) activities

In 2019/20, 349 residents took part in 62 different activities and made a total of 53 recommendations towards service improvement. Recommendations are agreed suggestions or feedback from residents which have or will be acted upon by NHG as well to improve the services they receive. As of April 2020, 30 of these recommendations have been delivered.

349

Number of individuals who took part in RI activities

Working on the scrutiny panel has helped me to understand the systems and decision-making processes within NHG. I am a leaseholder but feel that my experience over the past few years is similar to that of tenants, at least those living in our street

40

Number of resident associations in 19/20

Here are what some of our residents have said about their involvement over the past year:

Along with other residents, I recently took part in helping identify accessibility issues at NHG offices. This exercise proved invaluable



Read the Annual Standards Report in full on:
www.nhg.org.uk

Keep your home running smoothly this winter

Two residents living in a basement flat in Moorhouse Road, Westminster recently endured an experience they wouldn't wish on anyone. "It was truly shocking to wake up to sewage, up to our ankles, in our kitchen and living room. We had to leave our home so things could be repaired and put right. It's an experience we won't forget."

We've recently seen a big rise in requests to unblock toilet drains but usually the problem is entirely preventable. Blockages are typically caused by inappropriate waste being flushed down and settling in the pipes including:

- Wet wipes – even wipes that claim to be flushable should be disposed of in a bin
- Cotton wool and cotton buds
- Paper napkins and kitchen roll – these are made of tougher material than toilet paper and often trap grease and food waste in their fibres
- Plasters
- Cat litter – this settles in pipes like sand and carries on absorbing liquid, expanding even more. Clay

litter hardens when wet, becoming as hard as cement.

- Food – including bones, cores and peels
- Fat, grease and oil – fats, especially those we cook with, clog together to combine into a build-up known as a fatberg
- Nappies
- Hair

If you flush any of the above out of sight, there's a strong chance you're not actually flushing it away. Keep your toilet waste to the three Ps – pee, poo, paper – and help you and your neighbours live comfortably and safely in your homes.

A day in the life of a... community caretaker

Continuing our series in which we look at the various roles of staff in Notting Hill Genesis, we focus on community caretaker Benjamin Sowa.



When did you join NHG?

I joined in October 2019 having moved to the UK from Ghana in 2018. In Ghana I was a project manager with a private firm working on social and economic issues in the community for stakeholder engagement on behalf of an oil company.

What is your role?

I am a community caretaker at the Adastral North estate, near Grahame Park in Colindale which has around 90 properties in 14 blocks. My role is to ensure the estate is in good

condition. I maintain health and safety standards in communal areas and act as a contact between my managers, the housing officers and the residents, which I enjoy. I also help update newsletters and notice boards.

What can a typical day look like?

I usually get to the estate by 7:30am and walk round to assess what needs to be done that day. Fly tipping and dumping in particular are an issue. I service five blocks a day, Monday to Wednesday, making sure they are clean and, these days, sanitised. On Thursdays I get the waste and recycling bins ready for emptying, checking where possible that the recycling is not contaminated with non-recyclables. On Fridays I attend to any outstanding issues and finish litter picking on the estate.

How has the current lockdown or Covid-19 conditions changed your job?

The one area that has changed a lot is contact with residents as we're all trying to stay safe. It's hard not to be able to talk to residents the way we used to. I now always have my

Sign up now and take control of your account

See back page

mask and gloves on and I make sure door handles and such are always sanitised.

What do you find the most rewarding?

Knowing I'm playing a part in a larger picture, helping and reassuring residents so they're happy and feel safe.

What are the frustrations?

Bulk waste and fly tipping. It happens frequently and it's not always from our residents, but it's manageable.

What do you do in spare time?

When I first moved to the UK I did a plumbing course and I'm keen on DIY so I'm always looking to do jobs around the home. I like to draw and paint, especially with my daughter who is one and a half years old. I also like reading a lot.

Is there a situation with a resident that stayed with you?

Seeing a big 'thank you' drawing displayed from one of the residents' children during the first lockdown. It really meant a lot to know I was doing something right.



What is the one thing you would like residents to know about where you work?

When I started my role, my manager asked me to put my picture on the notice boards. I put a message next to it which said, 'I am here to serve. Help me do the best job I can'. Building a relationship with residents is good for the estate.

Funniest thing a resident has said to you?

I overheard a resident speaking in Fante, a dialect of Akan, one of the 80 languages spoken in Ghana. I greeted her in that dialect. She was in shock. As we talked it turned out that she was from the same area of the coast of Ghana where my father is from. Other than Fante and English, I also speak Ga, Twi and some Russian as my mother was Russian.

Benjamin was interviewed by one of our involved residents.

Keeping our communities safe

Information is needed to help detect and prevent knife crime, but there are barriers that stop this being shared. The Hard Calls Save Lives campaign aims to help people overcome some of these barriers and encourages them to make a call to Crimestoppers if things don't feel right.

We know that it can be difficult to pick up the phone. But every little bit of information is useful in the fight against knife crime. If you are concerned about knife crime in your area, there are things you can do to help make your community safer.

Did you know:

- **Crimestoppers are not the police** – they're an independent charity working to help communities.
- **Everything shared is 100% anonymous** – calls are never recorded or traced and you will not be asked to reveal your name or personal details. Information from anonymous calls will be sent to the best people to deal with it, without witness statements or courts.
- **No information is insignificant** – information, however small, could be the last piece of the puzzle. All information is reviewed and, where possible, acted upon to help to stop crime.
- **You will be listened to** – local residents know best when things don't feel right in their



neighbourhood. Crimestoppers will know what to do with these concerns and pass them on anonymously, without any judgment.

- **Every call is important** and could save the life of someone's son or daughter. If you think you know something about knife crime, call Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**.

Some FAQs:

What happens after somebody provides information to Crimestoppers? You can find out more about the process on <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information/what-we-do-with-your-information>

Where can I find out more about Crimestopper's anonymity guarantee? Information on Crimestopper's anonymity guarantee is available at <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information/our-guarantee-of-anonymity>

Where can I direct anybody affected by knife crime to? <https://www.knifefree.co.uk/worried-young-person/> for advice on how to have a conversation with someone you're worried about. www.victimsupport.org.uk/ for free, confidential services for those affected by crime. You can also find additional information on the Crimestopper's website <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/hardcallssavelives>



New partnership with baby bank Little Village

Welcoming a new addition to the family can be stressful at the best of times, but even more so amid a pandemic and national lockdown affecting jobs and support networks.

Young parents are particularly struggling to meet the costs of new babies so to help, Notting Hill Genesis recently partnered up with Little Village, a London-based charity that provides essential items of clothing, toys and equipment.

We hope the partnership will give crucial support to our residents who are parents of babies or young children.

Little Village's dedicated volunteers collect donations of good quality, nearly new clothes, toys and kit for babies and children from birth to five years of age. The donations are distributed to local families dealing with challenging circumstances such as homelessness, unemployment,

low wages and domestic violence.

In the lead up to the festive season, we worked with Little Village on a Christmas appeal. Our staff were encouraged to donate gift cards which were then distributed to our families in need. The Argos gift cards arrived prior to Christmas, giving parents the opportunity to choose their own personal presents for their children.

If you are a parent and feel you would benefit from the service Little Village provides, please get in touch with your housing officer or support worker who will be able to take you through the referral process. You can find out more about the charity on their website – <https://littlevillagehq.org> – and watch the inspiring work they do on the video <https://vimeo.com/292332095>.

Rocking later life conference is going digital



Our care and support team is working with industry partners on a conference aimed at improving the lives of older people.

“Rocking later life – Making the most of yours” was originally scheduled for May at London’s Living Room at City Hall, but when the impact of the pandemic became clear, we were forced to change our plans.

We decided to make the conference go digital. Technology has never been so valuable for keeping us in touch and although a

digital conference won’t be the same as getting together in person, it will allow us to deliver it to many more people who can participate safely from their own homes.

The conference will be launched in January with a fabulous line-up, including:

- Singing for the Mind – Music for Dementia 2020 campaign
- Oomph! Wellness – on the

importance of keeping active

- Volunteering in later life – a tour of Westminster’s historic Church Street with one of our long-standing volunteers
- Humanist Sophie Lovejoy giving her humorous yet serious take on what can be done with ashes – “a dead interesting talk!”

The conference will help older residents have a positive experience of using modern technology, encouraging the online participation that has been so important since lockdown and social distancing were introduced. We hope this will reduce loneliness and social isolation – two of the big issues for many of our older residents – which is likely to be felt more keenly due to the pandemic.

We’re working with our partners on funding the purchase of tablets and data which will enable customers who are not currently online to become digitally engaged.

More details will follow soon.

Every Kinda People – the music of our residents’ lives

Our volunteering programme recently collaborated with an oral history partner Digital Works to produce a series of podcasts celebrating the ordinary – and extraordinary – lives of 10 of our social housing residents.

The series follows a musical timeline with each episode allowing the resident to talk about pivotal moments in their lives while their selection of favourite songs weaves life and music together. Subjects of the podcasts include a resident who once worked as a carer to Nina Simone and a Trinidadian steel pan expert.

We believe you’ll find the songs that emerge as diverse and memorable as the residents themselves.



To tune in and hear the podcasts, now available from the internet streaming platform Mixcloud, go to www.mixcloud.com/everykindapeople/



Care and support residents getting used to their new tech in preparation of viewing the conference

Singer Dan raises smiles at Mildmays



The Covid-19 pandemic has forced many changes to what was once our normal way of living, but one change you probably wouldn't have expected is the return of the old-fashioned serenade!

To bring some much needed cheer to our residents at 73 Mildmays, our extra care service in Islington, we enlisted the help of singer Dan Beaulaurier from **Healthy Generations**.

Since the summer, Dan has been coming along every Wednesday afternoon with his guitar and repertoire of old favourites such as Take Me Home Country Roads, Red Red Wine and covers of songs by Ray Charles, Bob Marley and Johnny Cash.

He would perform outside to conform to the rules around social distancing and residents came out to their balconies to listen from there. Resident Jennifer liked being able to get a clear view. "Listening to the music makes me want to dance. I wish he would come every day," she said. Fellow resident Keith added: "He helps me forget about lockdown and takes me away from Boris and Covid!"

As autumn arrived and the weather worsened, we could no longer ask the residents, many of who are vulnerable, to stand on their balconies and listen to Dan perform. Instead, we clear a route for him to stand on the balcony on each of the three floors so that he performs three sets, a little closer to his audiences though still outside and distanced, his excellent music resounding on each floor. Many Mildmays residents agree these live concerts are the highlight of the week.

The project is funded by grants from Islington Council and the NHG Welfare Fund.



Royal Albert Wharf rainbow wins an award

An art project that brought a community together to celebrate the heroes of the pandemic has earned an international award.

You may remember how as we settled somewhat uncertainly into lockdown during the first wave of the epidemic, images of rainbows began to appear in windows and chalked on pavements or hanging from trees. The artists behind these images were usually children and had created them to cheer up passers-by who may have been doing a bit of rainbow-spotting during their daily exercise. It was also a way of giving messages of support to key workers such as NHS staff.

This rainbow movement inspired an East London resident Andrew Morris to design a rainbow on a large scale and with a little help from his neighbours install it on a footbridge over the basin near their homes in the Royal Albert Wharf in Newham.

Andrew, who runs the architecture-design-art Studio Curiosity, sourced 5,000 metres of biodegradable acetate in various colours. With the help of Notting Hill Genesis and RAW Labs, an art centre managed by the Bow Arts Trust,

he and 50 other residents of Royal Albert Wharf got busy cutting the acetate into ribbons and wrapping them mosaic-style on the railings of the bridge.

The project was completed over two weekends with installers complying with social distancing. Some vulnerable residents who were shielding were able to participate from home by cutting the acetate to size for the installing team to collect. Residents whose balconies overlook the basin were able to watch the rainbow on the footbridge grow.

Like real rainbows, the RAW rainbow was only designed to be temporary. It was taken down in the summer but the acetate pieces are with RAW Labs now and will be re-used in future art projects. Memories of the rainbow however prompted residents and visitors to give it their vote in the Public Installation competition from the influential architecture and design magazine Dezeen. The rainbow won Installation Design of the Year with 62,000 votes, beating competition from New York, China and Saudi Arabia! Congratulations to Andrew and the RAW rainbow team!



A 100th birthday is cause for major celebrations!

It was a special day for everyone at Mildmays on 30 November, as resident Phyllis Pritchard marked her 100th birthday.

This was an occasion to celebrate but lockdown restrictions prevented Phyllis's only relative from coming to London to visit. Nevertheless, everyone at Mildmays ensured Phyllis's birthday was special and memorable, with residents presenting her a framed poem they'd written for her.

The Mildmays staff also arranged

- A card from the Queen
- A personal video message from the Islington Mayor
- A bouquet of flowers from Notting

Hill Genesis

- A serenade of her favourite songs, performed from a balcony nearby by talented singer Dan (see page 28)
- Care staff singing Happy Birthday outside her room – which was a little unusual as they were all wearing masks
- A socially distanced afternoon tea party with a special birthday cake and sandwiches, which were carefully distributed to the other residents in the home

We talked to Phyllis to learn more about her and ask for advice on how to live to a ripe old age.

She was born in Holborn and has lived all her life in London. Her family was a happy one and she had two sisters and a brother. Phyllis worked in the Post Office and was also a dressmaker – she's once crocheted collars for the royal family. Sadly, she has no close living family left in the UK now and her remaining relative, a niece, lives in Spain.

When asked what her secret was for such a long life, Phyllis said:

"I don't really know – but try to be happy, keep busy and show an interest in things around you. I used to love walking. I used to take a bus from Islington up to Hampstead Heath then walk with friends and family over to Parliament Hill Fields."

When asked if she had any advice for the young generation she said:

"I have no advice – they need to find their own way!"

Finally, Phyllis said being 100 felt no different to being 99 and when asked what she is looking forward to, she replied: *"The coronavirus lockdown being over!"*

Happy 100th Phyllis!



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