

Summer 2024

Edition 15

doorstep

customer magazine



Welcome

It's my pleasure to welcome you into the pages of our latest edition of doorstep magazine. The team have made a concerted effort to make this the most fun and visual edition yet, with articles that are relevant to you and about you, from across the areas that we work in. To celebrate the summer bank holiday, there is a blockbuster movie theme to the stories this time which we hope will give you a smile or two as we champion the changes we're making to improve our services, and some of our recent successes.

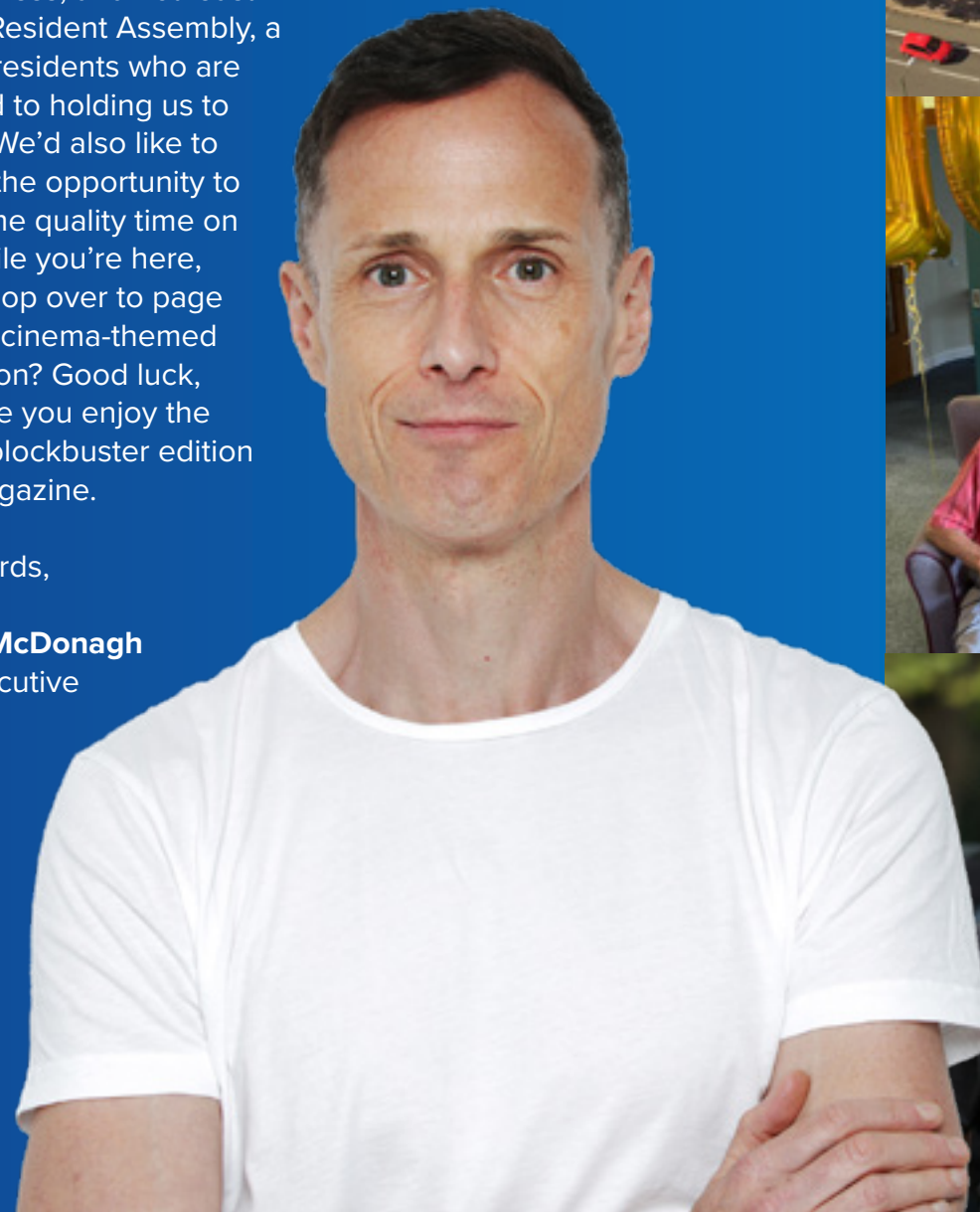
I've been the Chief Executive at PA Housing for over a year now and many of the stories featured here are things that I've been proud of over that time. It's been a privilege to have met so many residents since I've been here, and I hope that my tenure so far has been defined by putting residents first and being willing to make bold changes that directly act on your feedback. Of course, progress isn't just a straight line as there have been – and there will be – ups and downs. All the same, I want

to create an environment where we're proud to be one team, all working towards the shared goals of rebuilding your trust and improving your experience of being a PA Housing resident.

As well as some inspiring stories and some useful safety tips, we'll also be putting a spotlight on some of the new methods we're using to hear resident voices in this edition. These include doorstep surveys, a second all residents call, a new catch-all email address, and not least our new Resident Assembly, a group of residents who are dedicated to holding us to account. We'd also like to give you the opportunity to enjoy some quality time on us, so while you're here, why not pop over to page 14 for our cinema-themed competition? Good luck, and I hope you enjoy the summer blockbuster edition of our magazine.

Kind regards,

Michael McDonagh
Chief Executive



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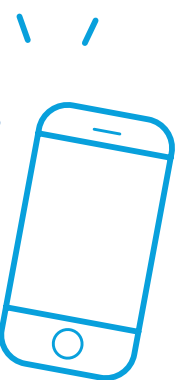
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Do you follow us on social media?

Our social media channels are a great source of information and a way of understanding some of the services we offer to you.

Take a look and follow us today.



f @PAHousingUK X @pa_housing @ pahousing

Resident Assembly... Assemble!

Back in April, we launched our new look Resident Assembly. They're a resident-led group who work in partnership with colleagues at PA to help us improve the services that we provide to everyone.

Although the Resident Assembly has existed in various forms in the past, this is a completely new group of residents who have come together from across our regions and across different types of home to be a collective voice for everyone. Their work is crucial in holding us to account and making sure the decisions we make are right for all residents.

Over the coming months, the Resident Assembly will be working on reviews of our repairs process and our communications to see what is working well and what isn't, then making suggestions on how we could do better. Each member of the Resident Assembly is also involved in a Service Improvement Panel (SIP).

Over the course of the year, these SIPs will be looking at service charges, antisocial behaviour, and our complaints processes.

So, without further ado, the team of heroic residents who have assembled to come to our aid are:

Linda Gray, Patrick O'Rourke, Jeremy Mahrer, Maimunah Sameja, Trish Newnes, Imad Alquasim, Manish Garg, and Sam Turton.

If you would like to know more or get involved, visit the PA Housing website or send us an email.

getinvolved@pahousing.co.uk
www.pahousing.co.uk



'You shall no longer pass!'

Gate repair at Court Gardens makes a huge difference

As an organisation, we're committed to being better than we were, really listening to you, and doing the right thing for residents and your communities. That's why we want to take those extra, proactive steps to go beyond what's expected of us and bring us closer to where we want to be.

Court Gardens in London is an area where PA owns 10 out of the 51 homes with 2 other, larger housing associations accounting for many of the others and for their own communal services. The lack of a secure gate to stop unwanted visitors going through this residential area meant that the residents (including from the other housing associations) experienced a lot of disruption. Previously, the area was used as a shortcut for football fans going to matches as well as a spot for drug use, fly tipping from non-residents, littering, and other antisocial behaviour

(ASB). These issues had affected the area for many years despite multiple reports and complaints about this to the housing associations in the area.

Upon starting as our Chief Executive at PA Housing, Michael McDonagh went to speak to local PA resident, Samantha, who PA had failed in the past with long-standing repairs and with complaints that had been upheld by the Housing Ombudsman. She had also appeared on ITV News discussing the problems she'd faced with our services. With the repairs in her home finally completed, Michael decided to be proactive with Samantha and the community, taking her on board as a Resident Advisor for Court Gardens.

Knowing that the larger housing associations, who owned more homes in the area, were aware of the broken gate and the ASB it

was failing to prevent, it was thought that they'd need to be involved in the process of fixing it. However, as this issue hadn't been dealt with for so long and was still an ongoing issue for them, PA acted for the benefit of all the residents in the area and decided (with all the necessary permissions) to repair the gate themselves and give fobs to all 51 households.

This was not a simple process as it involved sending letters about the plans to all the residents and asking non-PA residents to fill out forms so that we could collect the essential information for them to have their key fobs.

Since the gate has been repaired, the residents of Court Gardens have experienced a major reduction in ASB in the area.

Samantha received thank you letters from non-PA residents for getting the gate repaired,

although she commented that: "I may have mentioned the issues with the gate and made complaints to the other housing associations about it myself, but it was PA that carried out this huge task. It's amazing, given the issues I've experienced with them in the past, that the residents of Court Gardens and I can now sing PA's praises for listening to us and acting on the issues that matter to us. This is the attitude housing associations should have – looking at what can be done to make life better for all residents in the community, not just those who live in the homes they own."

We will be following up with Samantha and the residents at Court Gardens for further updates on this story so stay tuned for more!



HONEY, I DOWNSIZED MY HOME

How one resident changed her life with support from our team

Our story begins with a resident who had been in rent arrears for a while. When she was referred to our Tenancy Sustainment Team (TST) for support, she was living in a 3-bed house, under-occupying her home by 2 beds. She was finding the cost of this unmanageable. In the past, she'd refused to engage with support to claim extra benefits, even though she had quite high rent and council tax arrears.

On their first visit, the team made a point to sit and listen, finding out how she lived day to day. Immediately after this, they arranged for her to be sent an electric blanket, some hardship support, they discussed if she needed more help from her GP, and they began her benefit claims.

TST then persuaded her to have a new medical

assessment so she could apply for extra Universal Credit payments. Again, this was something the resident had always refused to consider but some face-to-face chats allowed the team to explain that this was needed.

On further visits, TST discussed downsizing with the resident as another way of saving money. This is a conversation they've had with her in the past but, due to the resident's mental health, she didn't previously consider this as an option. However, when a suitable home was identified by the Home Moves Team, she agreed to go to a viewing with some confidence-boosting support from a TST colleague, who she'd now built a positive relationship with.

The colleague from TST also went out of her way to help the resident with the

application process for her move. The resident received the keys to her new home and a family on the waiting list were nominated for the 3-bed home, so it's a win for all. Upon receiving her benefits, the resident's council tax arrears of over £2,500 were written off and her rent arrears have reduced from over £2,000 at the end of 2023 to below £1,000 now. She has also agreed to an ongoing payment arrangement to clear the rest.

On top of the financial gains, this is an example of how our TST leave no stone unturned to get the best outcome for you, our residents, and that sometimes downsizing with our Home Moves Team can make a big, big difference.



ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE... EAST MIDLANDS

Did you know that we own a Grade II listed building in Nottingham? 174 Derby Road, or the Derby Road Drill Hall, is a former military installation that currently serves as PA Housing accommodation.

The building was designed by architects Arthur Brewill and Basil Baily in the Baroque revival style and was completed around 1910. It was first used as the headquarters of the Seventh (Robin Hood) Battalion, The Sherwood Foresters who were called to arms at the drill hall in August 1914 before being sent to the Western Front. The drill hall was also the headquarters of a volunteer calvary unit called the South Nottinghamshire Hussars.

During World War II, the battalion underwent changes and became the Forty-Second (Robin Hoods, Sherwood Foresters) Search-Light Regiment, Royal Artillery. It continued to evolve after the war, with further changes in 1947, 1955, and 1971.

Years later, the unit moved to Chilwell and the Derby Road Drill Hall was closed down. It then became a postal sorting office until it was put

up for sale in 1985 and later converted into housing.

Building conversion

Halsall Lloyd Partnership were the architects who did the conversion for Leicester Housing Association in 1995. The building was converted to provide office accommodation on the ground and first floor, with the second and third floors providing seven two-bedroom flats.

The demand for office accommodation went down over time and so, in 2013, Halsall Lloyd Partnership were asked once more by Leicester Housing Association - Asra to convert the ground and first floor office accommodation into flats for rent too.

This involved the creation of eight self-contained flats (one and two-bedroom) with communal areas too. This is generally how we find the building today, with PA as

the landlord for the residents who live there.

Derby Road Roof Replacement

A replacement of the building's roof was recently completed in June 2024 which should keep water leaks at bay and preserve this landmark building for many years into the future. This gave us the opportunity to take some photos and share some of the fascinating history of this building with you.



KNOCK DOORS

Episode II - The TSM Survey strikes back

A short time ago, in neighbourhoods not so far away, we performed our annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (or TSM for short) Survey, where we knocked on your doors to find out how you were feeling about our services. It taught us a lot about the areas where we were doing better and the ones that we seriously needed to improve.

Since then, we've passed on what we've learned and begun to change our approach to repairs, antisocial behaviour, complaints, and more. Now, we'd like to hear what, if anything, has changed, improved, or worsened over the past year in our second annual, in-person survey.

Please be honest with us – even if you think that these aren't the answers we're looking for – because failure is the greatest teacher, and we'd like to grow beyond our mistakes.

Don't worry though, it's not a trap. If you don't want to take part, we'll respect your decision, and nobody will force the issue. However, we'd much appreciate it if you could help us by answering these questions because hearing from you is our only hope of making the change that you want to see.

We'll be chatting with you on your doorsteps from Monday 16 to Saturday 28 September, so be on the lookout for our blue lanyards.

May the PA Housing colleagues be with you!



TO A CENTURY AND BEYOND!

Two residents celebrate milestone birthdays

First, at The Firs, a retirement housing scheme ran by PA, located in the heart of Claygate, Surrey, residents gathered to celebrate Gladys' birthday, who is now 103.

The festivities for Gladys' big day included eating cakes and listening to music as well as reminiscing about her childhood and other events in her life. Here are some pictures from the big day...

Then, over at Churchfield House in Cobham, Surrey, one of our residents, Silvio celebrated turning 100 after being given a £50 voucher to cover the drinks and food for his birthday party. He also had the honour of receiving a telegram from the King and Queen Consort.

Roll on the next celebrations!



Competition time!

‘You’re gonna need a bigger popcorn bucket!’

You may have noticed more film references and puns than usual in this edition of doorstep. Don’t worry, we haven’t gone completely shark-raving mad, it’s all part of our themed, summer blockbuster edition of doorstep magazine. Now, as a

gesture of good will, we have a little competition for you to get your jaws into.

Tired of surfing the same channels and streaming apps looking for something to watch? Well, wave hello to our latest

competition. In celebration of this film-themed edition, we’re giving away a £100 gift card for a cinema chain of the winner’s choice so you can make a splash in your household by treating yourself or your loved ones to some fun cinema experiences.

All you have to do to be in with a chance of winning is search through the pages of this magazine and tell us how many popcorn buckets you can find. Reel them in and email the correct number of popcorn buckets hidden throughout the magazine to us at **doorstep@pahousing.co.uk**.

Please get your answers to us by the deadline of noon on **Friday 4 October**, which is when we’ll be randomly selecting the winner from a fishbowl of all the correct answers.

Good luck!



You must be a PA resident over the age of 18 to submit a response. Children will have to ask a parent or guardian for permission to participate. One entry per household. A winner will be selected at random on the deadline of 12.00pm on Friday 4 October from all the correct responses. Any entries after this time will not be accepted. Once the winner has been selected, we will be in contact to ask their preferred cinema chain. Supermarket vouchers are also available to the winner, if preferred.

THE SPARK KNIGHT RISES

Be the electrical safety hero that your home needs right now.

Why is electrical safety so serious? Some dangers of faulty electrical equipment can include damage to your home through fires or explosions and physical harm to you like burns and shocks – some of which could be fatal.

Here are 10 helpful signals to observe, so you can keep safe and be a watchful protector over your home:

1. Regularly check for damaged wires and cables, ensuring they’re all clean and in good working order, then replacing any that are frayed or faulty.
2. Stay vigilant: avoid leaving items to charge overnight or unobserved for long periods as they can overheat and cause fires.
3. Mixing water and electricity is not your ally! Keep water away from any open sockets, switches, and appliances.
4. Make sure to unplug your gadgets before you clean them, repair them, or if they’re not in use.
5. Be careful where you use portable electric heaters. Keep them standing flat and away from flammable items – like capes!
6. Checking the wattage of bulbs can be the bane of our lives but overloading them with power can break them and cause them to explode.
7. Avoid knock-off, copycat electrical equipment that doesn’t meet UK safety standards. Some cats may have nine lives, but these certainly don’t! Always buy electricals from a retailer you can trust.
8. Finding a space to charge our devices can drive us bats but be sure not to overload plug sockets and extension leads with too many cables if you don’t want to watch the world burn.
9. Allow air to be mobile and move around the room by keeping vents clear and sometimes opening windows and doors. This way, you can keep electrical appliances cool and save them from overheating.
10. It’s no joke. Make sure to read the instructions before using electrical appliances to ensure you’re using them correctly. You never know, you might add some extra skills to your belt!

BACK TO BLACK (AND WHITE)

PA Housing colleagues at one of our independent living schemes for older people, Albany House, wanted to do something fun with our residents to prevent isolation and encourage friendship amongst them.

Samantha, Extra Care Scheme Officer took the lead and found an activity that ensured all were included: the cinema! She asked the residents what they wanted to see, and they all agreed on the new Amy Winehouse film.

Then, she called the cinema and managed to nab a cheeky discount for our residents. She also arranged all the transport to ensure that people with wheelchairs and walking frames could get there safely.

All the residents dressed to impress, and some had their hair done for the day.

As 2 of the residents hadn't been to the cinema for decades, going back to the 80s and 90s, they were particularly excited. The last films that they had gone to watch were Friday the Thirteenth and Titanic respectively.

While they were there, the residents indulged on popcorn, sweets, and drinks in their very comfy recliner chairs. The Showcase Cinema was very accessible and could meet all the needs of the residents.

The residents of Albany House enjoyed the Amy Winehouse film and now, they're already looking forward to seeing a showing of the new Beetlejuice film in September 2024.



'I'll be back'

HOW TORI'S WEEK at PA GAVE her VALUABLE OFFICE EXPERIENCE FOR her FUTURE CAREER.

One day in May, I was looking through my emails and I stumbled on an email from PA, offering work placements to residents. I applied and was then given the opportunity to have an insight into the operations of PA Housing. Here's how it went...

Before my week of experience, I had no indication of how the company operated and to what extent they support residents. As a resident myself, I find often myself ringing up regarding repairs and queries. However, what I didn't know was the depth at which PA functions and how many departments the company needs to ensure that all residents feel supported. And even though, at times, there are complaints (including from myself), I've now seen a portion of how PA operates and how they're improving their efforts to decrease the amount of complaints being made. Furthermore, my comprehension of how

PA Housing functions to support residents has improved. Prior to my work placement, I was unaware that the organisation was constantly looking to improve its employees through training so they could provide better customer service overall. Most importantly, when shadowing the Gas Team, I felt more confident that I would be safe within my home due to the processes that I was shown and how dedicated they are in checking in on us.

I also didn't know all the small details that the Communications Team provide to residents to let them know about specific events and news throughout the business. Above all, though, they stay true to the brand and provide simple contact between the PA and the resident.

The employees of PA have been incredibly helpful, and as someone who experiences anxiety, I have been made to feel quite welcome. I feel very comfortable asking questions



to get more insight into any area that I have had the chance to learn from. Additionally, I was able to share my enthusiasm for HR and ask questions that will ultimately benefit my future job, which I am grateful for.

To conclude, I have had a very interesting and exciting week at PA Housing and next time when I ring regarding an issue, I will remember my work experience.

TORI

PA Housing resident

If you're interested in doing work experience with us, please pop an email over to learninganddevelopment@pahousing.co.uk

Hasta la vista!

There's no place like *your* home

We want your neighbourhoods to be safe and welcoming places because we know that this has a huge impact on your wellbeing and quality of life.

It's the role of the Neighbourhood Team to ensure your neighbourhood is a place you're proud to live in. So, where we can, we'll provide a service to meet your unique needs which means that we'd like you to feel listened to and be actively involved in shaping the local community.

We'd also like to provide high-quality, consistent services that provide value for money and Neighbourhood Coordinators (NCs) who are present and active in your communities.

We know that we can't do this alone, so we're working closely with partners like the local authority, police, our contractors, and support services to make this happen.

To achieve our goals, we will focus on 4 key points:

- Being heard
- Your neighbourhood
- Proud to pay
- Being visible.

Being heard

We want to ensure that you feel engaged and listened to in your neighbourhood. The Neighbourhood Team will be present in the local community, actively listening to your needs. We recognise that every interaction with you is an opportunity for engagement and learning.

We'll engage with you by working with your local Resident Representatives, holding PA on Tour events, coffee mornings, tenancy surgeries, and completing surveys to hear your views. These will be our 'You and your neighbourhood' doorstep surveys which we'll perform twice a year and yearly face-to-face Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) surveys. Then, we'll use your feedback to improve your neighbourhoods.

Your neighbourhood

To ensure that you have a safe, welcoming, and vibrant neighbourhood, it's key that we know your community. Your NC is responsible for making sure services are delivered and support is in place in your area. That's why they should be present, getting to know you and understanding the unique, local challenges.

We also have guides that will enable our NCs and other PA colleagues to have a better understanding of your neighbourhood.

Based on your feedback, we'll be putting together local action plans which will allow us to make a positive difference in your community. We've reviewed our inspection processes to ensure our NCs get the full picture of any issues, allowing us to resolve them more effectively. Also, we've made it easier for NCs to report issues while out and about and send service requests to other teams.

Proud to pay

Key to creating places where residents are proud to live is ensuring we're delivering

high-quality services, well maintained neighbourhoods, and services that are good value for money.

To achieve this, we're working with our Contracts and Partnership Team to quickly raise any quality control issues in your neighbourhoods and ensure your contractors are held to account.

We'd like to keep you informed about the steps we've taken with the contractors providing services in your neighbourhood. NCs provide vital support and information for the setting of your service charges and their local knowledge is critical in ensuring that we charge you correctly and accurately for the services you receive.

Being visible

Being visible and present in your neighbourhood is key to building a connected local community. We promise to engage with you and local stakeholders to have a clear presence in your neighbourhood for the benefit of all residents.

We'll be flexible and accessible to you so you can access our services. We know that every interaction with you is an opportunity to build relationships and improve our services.

We've Got Mail

New ways to communicate with us at PA

We've listened to your feedback around how we communicate, and we've made changes so that things are easier and more convenient for you.

You said that you wanted our office opening times to extend beyond 9.00am – 5.00pm so that you could call us outside the hours of a typical working day. That's why we've acted and extended our working hours to:

Monday to Friday, 8.00am – 6.00pm.

Saturday, 9.00am – 12.00pm.

That's not all though as we've given our website a refresh to make it more user-friendly. You can still find us at www.pahousing.co.uk but the fresh, new look is designed to make it more convenient to find the information you need.

You also told us that there are too many different email addresses to remember for different teams when trying to contact us. In the spirit of being united as one team, we'll soon be launching a new email address for you to send all your queries to. Then, your message will be assigned to the right department for the task.

Soon, contacting us will be as simple as saying "Hello!"

Gardeners of the Galaxy

On 1 May, a team of colleagues from PA gave up their day job to help transform some tired green areas at Layton Burroughs in Mansfield.

The team of volunteers wanted to make a difference to the space where our residents live and help tidy up some neglected areas. This meant shifting over 4 tonnes of topsoil and gravel, planting, and giving everywhere a general spruce up.



"Layton Burroughs is in my patch as a Neighbourhood Coordinator, and I noticed that the green areas could use some care and improvement. Although this was originally my idea, our teams pooled their resources to make this happen and I'm grateful for their help."



- Stefan, Neighbourhood Coordinator

It wasn't just PA Housing colleagues getting involved though, we were also joined by gardening contractors, the council wardens, representatives from the police, and — at some points — a few residents, who were helping to do some planting too. It was a true team effort!



DON'T BE A WALL-Y USE AI SAFELY

We've heard a lot about Artificial Intelligence lately, it's the latest media buzz-phrase and all the major companies are promoting the inclusion of AI to improve their products and services, whether it's using Generative AI to improve your writing, an assistance bot on your favourite website, or an AI enhanced toaster so your breakfast is just to your liking every time (no, really, they're out there!).

But what is AI, and how can we ensure we're using it safely?

Essentially, AI is the concept that machines and computers can 'learn' from their environment, and from previous inputs, and use that learning to improve future outputs. The idea of artificial intelligence is not particularly new, it has been around since the 1950s, but recent developments in computing technology have led to a surge in its use in everyday situations. While AI is undoubtedly an incredibly useful tool which can be used to enhance many aspects of our lives, from improving your grammar to generating amazing artwork, there are a few things to be aware of.



Protect your sensitive data

Just as you don't give away your sensitive personal data to people in the street, be very careful about what information you put into an AI tool. Once you enter information into a tool or website, you lose control of that information – it could be processed anywhere in the world, stored indefinitely, or used to train the output of other AI tools. Never enter sensitive information such as passwords, bank details, names, and addresses into an AI tool.

AI isn't always right

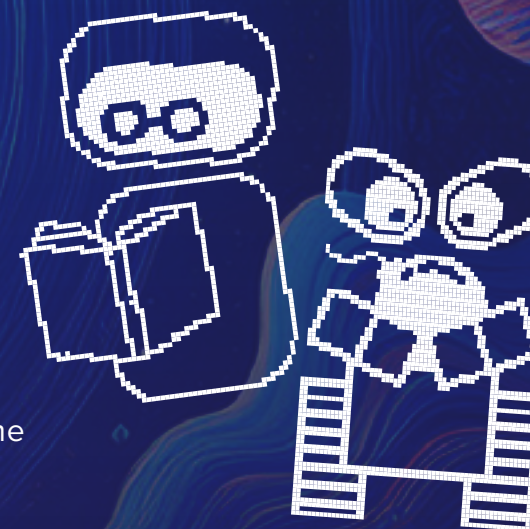
Don't assume that a 'fact' generated by an AI tool, or an answer to a question posed, is actually correct. An AI tool can only draw information from the set of data that is fed to it. If that data contains incorrect information, that will find its way into the answers produced. Always double check any important facts with another reliable source.

Your responsibility

If you're using an AI tool such as ChatGPT to enhance your essay, improve your CV, or put together a winning business proposal, you are ultimately responsible for the use of the content generated. Double check any output for accuracy and ensure it's appropriate for the purpose you intended. It's considered good practice to disclose any use of AI in reports and essays so readers can be aware.

Use safely and enjoy the benefits

Undoubtedly, Artificial Intelligence in its many forms is going to become ever more present in our lives, and may help us overall, from solving complex scientific problems to assisting in the production of art and music. If you've been using AI for a while now or are just thinking of dipping a virtual toe in, please remember to do so safely as you enjoy the benefit of the perfect marmalade on toast!



AI can be susceptible to misinformation

As we often see in the news and on social media, some people will go to great lengths to promote their preferred point of view, and this sometimes includes feeding 'opinions' to AI tools in an attempt to influence the answers it gives. If your AI tool of choice starts to give highly biased answers about subjects like politics or religion, it's worth considering if there may be ulterior motives behind it.



AI has no concept of 'right' and 'wrong'

An AI tool doesn't have a 'moral compass'. While most tools try to implement protections if asked potentially dangerous questions, such as how to make an atom bomb, these controls can often be bypassed fairly easily. While that is an extreme example, it's worth remembering that children or vulnerable people may be exposed to potentially dangerous content if using AI tools unsupervised.



WHO'S GONNA VIDEO CALL?

Save the date!

On **9 September 2024**, from **6.00pm – 7.00pm**, we'll be inviting you and all our residents to join us on a Microsoft Teams video call.

The call will be hosted at our Bede Island office in Leicester, where Michael McDonagh (our Chief Executive) as well as some of our Executive Management Team and directors will be there to give you updates from around the business and answer your questions.

If you'd like to register to virtually attend the call, you can register at **pahousing.co.uk/allresidents** or with the QR Code below. Once registered, you will automatically get login details for Microsoft Teams so you can join the call.

We can't wait to see you there!

