

Summer 2021

Edition 10

doorstep

customer magazine



Paragon Asra

PA Housing

Welcome

We're all hoping that by the time this edition of doorstep arrives with you, that we've returned to some sort of normality and reached an end to the current restrictions. We're not going to dwell on the pandemic in this edition, but I just wanted to say a huge thank you to all of our customers for their continued patience and understanding over the past 18 months. We've had to make some difficult decisions which we know, certainly early on, affected the services we provide to you, but thanks to your support and the hard work of our employees we were able to come through this together stronger.

In this edition, we're sharing some of the great things that are happening in your neighbourhoods right now and how you can follow others' examples by getting more involved.

There are some important updates for you on the services that we provide, as well as some changes we've

made to help us with our goals of becoming more sustainable, and an introduction to a new contractor we have for London and the South East.

Many of you will also be reading this edition digitally. We've listened to your feedback and are trying to reduce the number of paper copies we're sending and are now at roughly 50% paper, and 50% digital. If you've received a paper version, but would rather not next time, please email us at doorstep@pahousing.co.uk and we can update your preferences. You can also do this via My PA.

Finally, we really hope you enjoy this summer edition of doorstep, but as ever, if there is anything specific you would like to see covered in future editions or you would like to be featured yourself, please get in touch!

Best wishes,

Ian Watts
*Executive Director of
Customer Services*

3 Bede Island Road, Leicester LE2 7EA

Paragon Asra Housing Limited is a charitable Community Benefit Society registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014.

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If yes, please email us at doorstep@pahousing.co.uk and we will add you to the mailing list.



f @PAHousingUK t @pa_housing i pahousing

We're one of the top 30 sustainable housing providers



It's great to have been recognised in this way so early on in our journey to net-zero carbon, and we look forward to building on this foundation going forwards. Improving our environmental performance is a key objective of our Corporate Plan and one of the corporate targets that we're all working towards this year.

In our first year we obtained planning consent for some high-efficiency new homes, launched our very successful Sustainable Finance Bond, introduced a number of community allotment schemes and made some significant reductions in carbon produced through business travel.

This year we have a real focus on putting plans into action, and by the end of the year we will have:

- Measured our baseline carbon footprint and established year on year carbon reduction targets.
- Started investing in improving our properties and offices, including installing

Electric Vehicle charging points at our offices.

- Produced a roadmap for the long term, improving the performance of our existing homes and offices so that we can target investment to make the greatest impact
- Moved forward in engaging with and supporting our customers to access information and initiatives in their communities.

The judges, who included Jade Lewis, Chief Executive of the Sustainable Energy Association; and Marcos Navoros, Sustainability Lead at Natwest, said: *"The idea of having a framework for sustainable finance is great, and PA have committed a significant £230m amount of investment in the 30-year plan. There are some really good steps listed to take the organisation in the right direction."*

Suzannah Taylor, Assistant Director Regeneration at PA Housing, commented: *"This is some fantastic early recognition*

for our work around sustainability, which will include us improving the environmental performance of our homes and supporting our customers to be able to make sustainable choices."

Housing Digital set out their search for the Top 30 Sustainability Housing Providers in the UK to prove that the housing sector is ready to face the climate challenge.

Entries came from housing providers of all sizes and from across the country, highlighting the breadth and scale of the sector's drive to help the UK become a net-zero economy by 2050.

Involvement in the Housing Digital Top 30 is a great opportunity for us to explore how we can partner with other like-minded organisations to achieve better results, and to learn from the top performers.

Our strategy looks across all areas of PA Housing's activities:

Property

Improving the environmental performance of our new homes, our existing homes, our estates and our offices.

People

Enabling and encouraging sustainable living, working and travel practices among our customers and our colleagues.

Partners

Working with our contractors and external partners such as Local Authorities and the GLA / Homes England to achieve wider sustainability goals together.

Our top tips on what you can do:

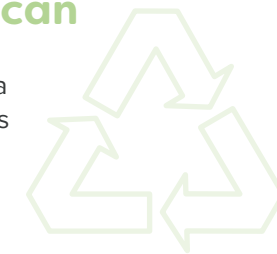
Turning off your lights

Why light a room you're not in? Remembering to turn off lights and lamps when leaving a room can be a simple way to help reduce the amount of electricity you're using and save money on your bills.



Recycle what you can

We know this will differ from area to area, but most local authorities will recycle most of your household waste. It may take a bit more effort to separate it out but, helping to minimise the amount of rubbish being sent to land fills is a great way of being more sustainable.



Donate unused items

If you don't use a product or wear a piece of clothing anymore, give it to a charity shop or someone you know would make use of it to help reduce waste.

Drive less

Walk or ride a bike to your destination instead of driving if it's close enough – it's better for the environment and your health. Using public transport is another good way to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



Find local suppliers

Shopping at local, independent stores like butchers and green grocers means the food you're buying normally comes from the local area, so can help to reduce the carbon footprint of the products you're buying. It normally reduces the use of plastic packaging too.

Eat less meat

The production of meat is one of the biggest contributors to climate change and the pollution of landscapes and waterways. By eating less of it, you can help to reduce the impact the meat industry has on the Earth.



PA resident turns 104!



If you follow us on social media you will have seen this story.

Hilda, who lives at our Extra Care Scheme, Albany House in Nottingham, celebrated her 104th birthday recently. Sadly because of the current restrictions we were unable to throw her a party like we have done in previous years, and her family were not able to visit her...

...But we didn't let that stop us! Her family stood on the street outside her window with banners, balloons and sang Happy Birthday to her. Her daughter also brought her a cake so she could blow out the candles as she waved to her adoring fans on the street below – very much like the Queen!



We can help you access work

The pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for many of our residents with lots losing their jobs or being put in a position where finding work has become far more difficult. This is not a situation that can necessarily be sorted out quickly or easily so we want to help where we can.

It does not matter whether you have recently lost your job, have been out of work for some time, looking to change careers or looking for a different job, we can help to support you.

We can do this in several different ways depending on what works best for you including face to face 121 support, group training, helping you to start your own business as well as on demand online support. Whatever works for you, we might well have the solution.

One resident who attended a project which helped her start her own business said;

"I really don't know how I could ever thank the trainers enough for their advice, help and kind words. I haven't even finished the course and it has already made a huge impact on me, and Changed how I see myself. It has boosted my confidence (especially with sales), that I know I can do this.

I can't thank PA Housing enough either. I know you've been offering this course for some years now, but, for me, it came at the right time in my life."

Who knows? in the next few months, this could be you!

We might not always have the right course running at the right time for you, but we'll always see what we can do to help.

If you want to know more, contact us at interested@pahousing.co.uk or visit www.pahousing.co.uk/accesswork

Listening to your feedback

Team Purple has been in place for two years and we're seeing some brilliant results from the members who are helping our customers and improving the services we provide. But you've told us that we've not been good enough at explaining who Team Purple are, what they do, and how they can help make things better for you and your neighbourhood. So, to help you, we've relaunched Team Purple with a new look.

By now, you should have received a little something from your Neighbourhood Coordinator: introducing themselves, explaining what they can do to help, and discussing how they're working to improve things for you. It also lets you know how you could get involved. If you've not had yours yet, keep an eye out as it's on its way! You'll also see posters on your communal notice boards which will let you know when events will be taking place in your neighbourhood. At the moment, this does not apply to our customers living in our Independent Living properties. Instead, your services are provided by our Independent Living Team, rather than Neighbourhood Coordinators, but they'll also use the scheme notice boards to keep you updated and they are there to help you with any issues you may have.

We want to provide you with relevant information when you need it, so we've also given our website a new look and updated it with useful and helpful information about how all of Team Purple (not just your Neighbourhood Coordinator) can help. You can simply search by your postcode to see what's happening in your neighbourhood.

Why not take a look?
[www.pahousing.co.uk/
neighbourhood](http://www.pahousing.co.uk/neighbourhood)



We're here to help

Do you need help with Welfare Benefits or the Government Schemes set up to provide financial assistance during the pandemic?

The pandemic has been a challenging time and we know that many of you may have been affected financially.

Maybe you lost your job, were furloughed, or forced to reduce your hours. Are you worried about what will happen when furlough ends? Maybe you aren't sure you're claiming everything you're entitled to. Are you affected by or worried about the Benefit Cap?

Our Tenancy Sustainment Team are here to help.

They offer support with:

- Benefit checks
- Applying for benefits
- Appeals
- Universal Credit claims
- Benefit Cap
- Discretionary Housing Payment

So far this year, the team have assisted 512 customers and have claimed just over £1 million in additional Welfare Benefits for them.

You can contact the team in a number of ways:

emailing income@pahousing.co.uk,
by using **My PA** or by calling us on
0300 123 2221

You can view examples of some of the issues that the team deal with on our website.

The team look forward to hearing from you.

SCAN ME





The illegal sale of puppies

Anyone who has wanted a new pet over the last few years will know how difficult and expensive the process can be. Due to the increase in the value of puppies, organised crime gangs are now involved in the selling of puppies.

Smuggling puppies from Europe is easier and safer than smuggling drugs and the penalties, if caught, are far less. Organised crime gangs are supplying puppies to individuals, which are then advertised on websites.

Sadly, these puppies have often not been cared for, have serious underlying health issues including Parvovirus, and come from mothers that have been overbred and have illnesses themselves. Most puppies end up being put down.

A PA property in the South East was recently raided by the police and the local authority and several illegally imported puppies were seized. The investigation is still ongoing, so we are unable to disclose further details.

There are several reasons why PA Housing need to be aware of this happening in our homes. Not only are the puppies often living in poor conditions, meaning there are clear animal welfare issues, but those responsible are breaching the terms of the tenancy of lease agreement and could also be receiving undeclared income if they're in receipt of benefits.

If you see puppies without their mother, and suspect something then please consider reporting it, you could be saving a great deal of heartache.

Get involved!

Have your voice heard!

What's more important than this?

There are many ways you can get involved, from Service improvement to projects within your own communities.

Please get in touch with us at:

getinvolved@pahousing.co.uk



We know we don't always get it right

We want to provide an excellent service to all our customers, but we know from time-to-time things can go wrong.

We're committed to ensuring the concerns of customers are investigated and responded to quickly. Complaints give us an insight into problems, and we want to learn from the feedback they provide to improve the way we do things.

So, after a full review by staff and residents of how we handle complaints, we've listened and launched a brand new complaints policy and system which we're confident will make things much easier for you if you do need to make a complaint.

The objectives of the new policy are to:

- Define a complaint and make it clear who can make a complaint and how
- Be clear, simple, accessible and to ensure complaints are resolved promptly, professionally and fairly
- Provide details of what customers can do if they are not happy with the resolution or decision, and what they can do to appeal
- Create business practices where all colleagues listen, update, resolve and learn from customer complaints to stop the same issues repeating

Key parts of the new policy are as follows:

- We continue to have a two-stage process for complaints to ensure our customers can challenge our decisions and for these to be reviewed
- Complaints will be case managed, and customers will have a single point of contact
- Regular updates, even without a definitive outcome, will be provided to help customers feel reassured and that someone is working on their behalf to put things right.

You can find out more about our complaints process at www.pahousing.co.uk/complaints

Start

Stage 1

Stage 2

Finish

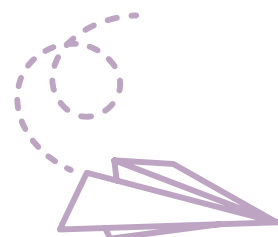
Make a complaint

You can give us a call, send us an email or fill in a complaints form online.



We'll get back to you within 24 hours to let you know we've got your complaint.

We'll investigate your complaint and find out what has gone wrong, and how we can fix it.



We'll report back what we've found out, what we're going to do to put it right and we'll say sorry.

We'll get back to you, like Stage 1, within 24 hours to acknowledge your complaint.

We'll investigate your complaint again and involve a relevant Head of Service or Assistant Director, before we get back in touch to discuss how we can make things right.

We'll report back with what we found out during the new investigation, let you know what we're going to do to put it right and we'll say sorry.



Complaint resolved*

By now, we hope we've reached a resolution and you're happy.



*If we can't agree at the end of Stage 2, the next step is to take your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

The Community Fund

Do you have an idea for your community that you'd like to put forward? Will your idea add value and improve the quality of life of a local PA Housing community?

If so, we'd like to hear from you – apply using our online form: www.pahousing.co.uk/communityfund

The grant is managed by a resident committee who award the funding. They've met many of the beneficiaries and always like to see support gained from neighbours and locals in the community.

The projects, events or purchase of equipment examples include:

- A resident chef running a community café and growing allotment vegetables to support a cooking and growing club.
- Community activities organised by a Social Committee, Residents' Association or Tenants' Group.
- Courtyard improvements to create a relaxing space with picnic benches, raised flower beds and rotational washing lines.
- Offer of chair exercise programmes at independent living schemes.
- Redecorating materials for a refuge to create a playroom and relaxing courtyard aimed at families fleeing domestic violence.
- Secluded outside seating areas and flower beds at estates and schemes.
- Support for an independent living befriending service aimed at those who have little contact from family and friends.
- Tree planting for youth clubs, preschools and allotment sites.



Resident Scrutiny

The resident scrutiny team is a skilled and dedicated group of residents who analyse and monitor our services. Scrutiny ensures that residents are measuring, testing and monitoring the services they receive and are integral to the improvement of services to the organisation.

The team undertakes a minimum of 3 scrutinies a year. There are many potential areas for scrutiny and the team uses different methods for identifying services that could be investigated. These include areas where residents have raised issues or service areas where poor performance has been identified. Once the team have completed their scrutiny, they report back to PA Housing on what it has found, good or bad, and make recommendations that will improve the service.

We offer a wide range of training for all new and existing members of the team, from IT skills, report writing, presentation skills and any other areas you feel would enable you to play an active role within the team. We also cover any out-of-pocket expenses and arrange transportation if necessary.

The team are always looking for new recruits to join them and we can alternate approaches depending on how much time you are able to commit. If you would like to know more about scrutiny or discuss scrutiny with a resident scrutiny team member, please send a message to getinvolved@pahousing.co.uk and we will be in touch.



Spotlight on: **Kathleen Harris-Leighton,** Resident Board Member

Hi everyone,

My name is Kathleen and I live in Leicester. I've been an active Involved Resident within PA Housing since 2017. I got involved with various resident groups because PA Housing wanted to hear our views and opinions and work with us to improve the service.

I believe that, as a resident, if you are not happy, then you should consider getting involved with likeminded residents. Together as a group of empowered residents, we can improve our communities and homes.

I recently became a Resident Board Member for PA Housing and am now the Chair of the Customer Services Committee. I'm passionate about the Resident Voice and making sure as many of your views are heard and listened to by PA as possible.

I look forward to meeting with you all at the next Resident Involved Group meetings.

Kindest regards
Kathleen

Rent statements go paperless

From July 2021, and as part of our commitment to be more sustainable and minimise our impact on the environment, we're no longer going to send you paper quarterly rent statements by post.

Instead, you'll be able to access your rent statement at your convenience using My PA which is the quickest and easiest way to pay your rent, report and track repairs, and update your personal details.

If you're not already registered, find out more at www.pahousing.co.uk/mypa and sign-up today.

If you don't have access to My PA, if you need to request a one-off paper statement, or if you wish to opt in to continue receiving a paper rent statement, please call us on **0300 123 2221** and select option 3.

Squatters removed from Loughborough property



Our Tenancy Solutions team, a key part of Team Purple, have successfully regained possession of a flat in Loughborough this week after it had been taken over by squatters.

The outgoing tenant had left in a hurry and rather than following the correct process to end his tenancy, he chose to leave his

keys in the hands of some rather undesirable 'friends of friends'. Neighbours had started to complain about the excessive noise being made by a group of men who it appeared had begun to live at the flat, and it quickly became apparent that they were responsible for a big fly tipping problem at the scheme. The squatters seemed to be taking items from local skips, or the roadside, and bringing them back to the flat to fix or try and sell on.

Due to the pandemic, the eviction of these squatters has been a long time coming due to the restrictions in

the court system which prevented us from being able to take steps immediately to properly end the tenancy and then tackle the squatters.

When the bailiffs finally got inside, they were shocked to find every room in the flat crammed with household waste, broken appliances, car parts, bikes and all manner of other items. In some places the rubbish was nearly five feet deep, and the bailiffs had to literally climb into the flat to access all the rooms.

Neighbours and local residents expressed their gratitude to PA for resolving this ongoing issue and for restoring some peace and quiet to the block of flats.

Whilst it's great to get the flat back in our possession, there's a huge task ahead to get it cleared and back in good order for a new tenant.

Well done to all involved in this successful case.

Help us to help you!

We regularly need to check that the information we hold about your household is correct and as up to date as possible. We do this by asking customers to complete a Housing Details Form (HDF), and if you haven't already received it, you will do soon.

Please rest assured that the information you supply is totally confidential and will be held securely. It will only be used to check, improve, and tailor our services to you.

Why do we collect your household data?

Put simply, if we can't justify collecting personal data, we shouldn't be doing it.

However, it's up to us to show how we improve services to our customers by understanding them better. For example, knowing if you're overcrowded in your home so we can help find you something more suitable or knowing if someone has a mobility issue is vital if they live in a block of flats should we ever need to evacuate the building.

What's in it for me?

We may need to contact you by phone, email, text, or letter, so it's important to let us know if your details change. For example, if you raise a repair, we need to know how to contact you to arrange an appointment.

Can I complete the form on My PA?

Yes! If you are a registered My PA user, you will have already been sent a link. Please log in and click on the link located on the main dashboard.

If you're not already registered for My PA and want to know more, turn to page 20.

Thank you to all our customers who have already completed their HDF. This is already helping us to make changes. If you've not managed to complete yours yet, we ask that you return it to us as soon as you can.

Should you have any questions about the form, please contact us via email at housing@pahousing.co.uk

SCAN ME



Introducing K&T Heating

K&T Heating
Part of the Sureserve Group

We're very pleased to announce that from 1 August 2021, K&T Heating have been appointed as our gas heating contractors in London and the South East.

They will be responsible for carrying out the following in your home:

- The annual gas service and safety check of all gas appliances
- The annual service of your carbon monoxide detector and smoke detector
- The servicing and repair or unvented hot water cylinders and air source heat pumps, such as NIBE units
- All heating repairs, except for electric storage heaters
- New heating installations where they are required
- In addition, they will also be carrying out the 5 yearly electrical wiring tests.

K&T Heating were chosen following a thorough procurement exercise and because they share many of our values around customer service, sustainability and

trying to give back to the communities we serve. We're confident they will be an excellent addition to PA Housing and you'll be very happy with the services they provide.

Who are K&T Heating?

K&T Heating have been around since 1988 and cover London and the South East, making them a great fit for our geography. They provide gas servicing, maintenance, repairs and new boiler installations to over 30 public sector, local authority and housing providers like us.

All K&T Heating operatives will wear clearly identifiable uniforms and travel in vans displaying the K&T Heating logo. They will always also carry identification which they will show you before entering your home.

K&T Heating will also be writing to you in the coming weeks to introduce themselves as well, and if your annual gas service is due from October this year, they will be contacting you to arrange that service appointment.

How to contact K&T Heating?

You do not need to contact them about your annual gas servicing, they will write to you first with the servicing appointment and useful information. Their letter will explain how to contact them about this.

For **all heating repairs**, you'll need to contact us if you need to report a repair, or if you need to arrange any of the other services listed above.

If your property was previously serviced by TSG, from 1 August you will need to report all heating repairs through us.

Please either:

- Call us on **0300 123 2221** and press option 1 for the Repair Hub.
- Email **repairs@pahousing.co.uk**
- Use My PA to log your repair, but only if it is not an emergency.
- Please do not contact K&T Heating directly to report repairs.



Recognition for digitally involved customers

The Digital Team here at PA have launched a new badge recognition scheme on My PA that allows customers to build a portfolio of online badges which show their achievements of being involved. They can be shared on their CV, LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook profiles.

Molly Gilbert, Digital Engagement Officer explains:

"We wanted to find a way to recognise customers who get involved with us or lend a helping hand when needed."

We're using a system called Credly, a digital credential software which

helps people connect and verify their skills with us. Credly are used by lots of other companies such as Microsoft so it allows our customers to build an online dashboard of badges from several training or experience sites.

Molly continued:

"Providing a badge for customers who are going above and beyond can help increase their employability and, we hope, encourage people to get more involved with PA Housing."

So far we've issued nearly 50 badges to our neighbourhood

champions and My PA beta testers and they have been well received with many choosing to share their achievement on their social media accounts.



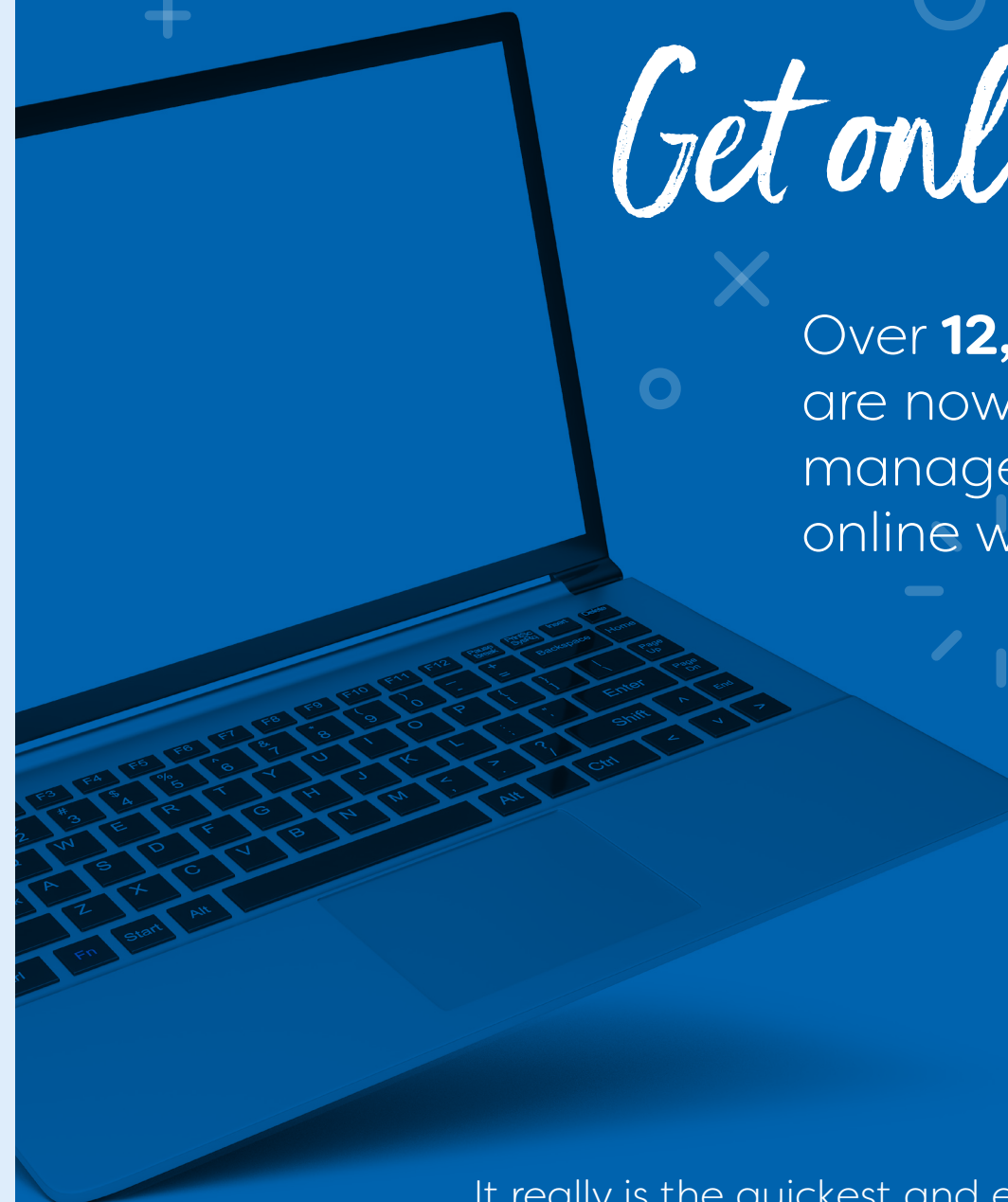
Molly Gilbert
Digital Engagement Officer

Well done to everyone who has received a badge so far!

To find out more, please get in touch with us at digital@pahousing.co.uk or call us on **0300 123 2221** and ask to speak to a member of the Digital Team.

Get online

Over **12,000** of you are now registered to manage your home online with My PA.



It really is the quickest and easiest way to check your rent balance, make a payment, and diagnose and report your own repairs. We're also introducing a new message and notification centre, job adverts and a marketplace so there is plenty to explore.

Why not give it a go?

SCAN ME



pahousing.co.uk/getonline

Fire safety at home

Fire in the home is always a frightening, distressing and potentially fatal experience. It's important to know the risks so you can take care to avoid them.

We install detection systems designed to suit all our different properties and to cater for everyone. If you have particular needs, such as being unable to hear alarms or having mobility challenges, we will work with you to devise a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) if possible.

Our specially trained advisors carry out regular

fire risk assessments to ensure our preventive and protective measures are the best they can be. We update our provision and policies in line with the latest advice from the government and emergency services.

Fire and Safety Advisor Michael Wright said: *"We want you to be happy and safe at home, so PA Housing does all it can to protect you and your property from fire. You can be sure that prevention and protection measures we provide meet the highest standards, but there are also many things you can do to look after yourself."*

Cooking appliances

Around half of home fires are caused by cooking accidents. Follow some simple rules to stay safe. Take care if you're wearing loose clothing – it can easily catch fire. Keep tea towels and cloths away from the cooker and hob. Don't leave children on their own in the kitchen. If you have to go to another room, turn off the heat and move the pan to a cool ring. When you're done, make sure you switch off the cooker.

Take extra care when frying. Never leave a chip pan unattended. If the oil starts to smoke, turn off the heat and leave it to cool. If your chip pan catches fire, don't throw water on it. Don't take risks: turn off the heat if it's safe to do so, leave the kitchen, close the door behind you, and call 999.



Electrics

Faulty electrics (appliances, wiring and overloaded sockets) cause around 6,000 fires in the home across the country every year. Don't ever plug in too many appliances to the same socket. Try to keep one plug to one socket. Certain appliances, such as washing machines, must have a single plug to themselves, as they are high powered.



Smoke alarms

Your home should have at least one smoke alarm and you should check it regularly. You're four times more likely to die in a fire if you don't have a smoke alarm that works. There are several different kinds, but most have an obvious test button. If your alarm doesn't work when you test it, let us know. A working smoke alarm could save your life.



Emollient creams

If you need to use these extra-strong moisturisers for skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis or bed sores it is particularly important that you take care. Residue from the creams can build up in furniture, clothes and bedding and make them highly flammable. Keep well away from fires or any kind of naked flame.



Candles

Two fires a day are started by candles. Keep them away from flammable materials like curtains. Put candles out when you leave the room, and make sure they're put out completely at night. Keep pets away, and don't leave children alone with lit candles.



Smoking

Every six days someone dies from a fire caused by a cigarette. Stub cigarettes out properly and dispose of them carefully. Put them out. Right out! Use a proper ashtray – never a wastepaper basket. Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach.

Take extra care if you smoke when you're tired, taking prescription drugs, or if you've been drinking. Never smoke in bed. You might fall asleep and set your bed or sofa on fire.

Everybody is unique



PA Housing is proud
to support and celebrate diversity
among our customers and colleagues.



See our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy online at pahousing.co.uk