

Spring 2023

Edition 13

doorstep

customer magazine



Peterson Asra

PA Housing

Welcome

I'm Mike, PA's new Interim Chief Executive. I started with PA in December and have spent the last few months talking to residents and visiting people's homes. It's clear from my discussions that we must do better for you. We know that the service, at times, is not what both you and we expect, so we're committed to changing this. It will take time but, each day, we will strive to be better.

As part of this, we'll be refreshing the way we engage with you. We want to hear what you think: the good and the not so good. As our residents, your voices need to shape our approach, then we need to listen and, most importantly, take action. We know that poor communication from us can be frustrating so this also needs to be much better. We need to let you know our plans quickly and effectively so you're not left in the dark.

By now, you'll have received your annual rent and service charge letters, both of which have increased this year. In respect of rents, we've followed the guidance

issued by the Government. For service charges, we've increased them to reflect the additional charges we're incurring – especially in energy costs. We've had little choice but to apply these increases, but we know the challenges many of you are facing due to the cost-of-living crisis.

Throughout this edition, we've shared information about the financial support that is available to you – not just from our teams at PA, but cost saving ideas from supermarkets and other shops too. There are also some great stories from around our neighbourhoods from residents who are making changes where they live.

I hope you enjoy reading this latest edition of doorstep, and remember to get your answers to our virtual Easter Egg Hunt in

quickly to be in with a chance of winning £250 in supermarket vouchers.

If you have anything you'd like to see covered in future editions of doorstep, or you have any feedback, please get in touch with us at doorstep@pahousing.co.uk

Michael McDonagh,
Chief Executive Officer,
PA Housing

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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Walton-on-Thames, Surrey KT12 1DZ. Community Benefit Societies No. 7536. Homes England No. 4849



4



12



18



21

Contents

- 4 | **The science of the dogs: Jody Foster**
- 7 | Your rent and service charge increase
- 8 | Work experience opportunities at PA
- 9 | We're here to help with the cost of living
- 12 | **Family fun for less**
- 14 | Leading the way
- 17 | Great Eggs-pectations
- 18 | **Leicester Musical Memory Box**
- 20 | PA Resident recognised
- 21 | **Supporting our younger residents**
- 24 | Advice about how to stay safe online
- 26 | Scrutiny Article

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 @pa_housing pahousing



The science of the dogs: How Jody Foster became her own boss

Don't stop retrieving! Jody never imagined that she would one day be leading her own dog walking and training business, but thanks to an unlikely circumstance involving a horse and a timely text message from PA, she's now making strides in her new business.

Pictured: Jody and her partner's Alaskan Malamute, Maya. "She's like our business mascot. When she comes to visit, the neighbours really love her. She has taught us a lot about dog behaviour. Her previous owners used a prong collar, which can be very painful and cruel, so she was saved from that environment."

At PA, we worked with Enterprise Cube for several years to provide a Be Your Own Boss course, which we offered for free to residents. The latest course is just about to get underway. However, whilst it may be too late to sign up for this course, we can still assist you with employment support.

Once I heard about Jody's success story, I got in contact, acting as PA Housing's inside man to get the scoop. This is what she had to say:

"My daughter and I have lived in a PA Housing property for 7-8 years now. I used to live in Walton-on-Thames, working in Carluccio's

restaurant, which gave me experience in the service industry and retail. I really enjoyed the customer relations part of it, learning how to get customers to come back.

"Around that time, I received a text message from PA about the Be Your Own Boss course, which I was able to get a place on. On this course, one of the key lessons I learned was not to be too harsh on staff. Team management skills are vital. Another skill that I learned was the bookkeeping side of things, logging data on Excel spreadsheets and saving money on expenses. Throughout, we got both group and one-to-one

support with the trainers which was really useful.

"With a small investment, I bought the equipment and saved for a studio to start doing professional photography, mostly of new-borns. I made this my proposal for the big Dragon's Den-style pitch at the end of the Be Your Own Boss course. In fact, the website – lilypadphotography.co.uk – is still live. When I moved from Walton to Cobham, I met someone who needed a study for portraits, so I agreed and worked with the Guildford Photographic Society, modelling wedding dresses too.

"However, when lockdown hit, I had to give up my access to the photography studio. Also, sitting around indoors editing photos all day could be quite dull sometimes. To get out the house, I started getting paid to walk dogs. While I was out, I photographed the dogs and sent the photos back to the owners. This soon caught on – and I had fun doing it, especially with that element of creativity.

"In a strange turn of events, my dog walking business idea really took off when I had to relocate a neglected horse in Cobham. I'd sometimes water and feed her, and somebody nearby questioned what I was doing. I was just trying to help where I could, but long story short, I ended up with a free horse.

"In the search for somewhere to keep her, I found a bit of unused farmland nearby. As I was doing lots of dog walking, I contacted the landowner to ask if I could walk the dogs on there and how much he wanted for me to use the land. He said £300, so I was happy to pay that. This really kickstarted my dog walking business idea.

"Always wanting to learn more, I volunteered with the Dog's Trust – gaining experience with reactive, fearful dogs. After lockdown, I decided to keep learning so I could get better at training the dogs. I got on courses about puppy training, canine behaviour, and dog psychology, before qualifying as an Assistance Dog Therapist.

"Originally, I was only a one-person team, but I now have three full time staff, two part

time staff, and somebody who occasionally covers shifts with us. I still get involved in the field almost every day and often do shifts in the morning. My daughter also likes to join me in the half term holidays. Hopefully, one day, she can carry on and make this a family business. It can be hard work though, especially in cold weather, so I'm glad the Be Your Own Boss course gave me lots of helpful tips to keep the team motivated.

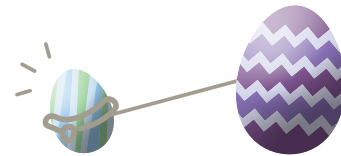
"The business is having a positive impact on the dogs. When we were walking a Labrador, I noticed that something wasn't right, so we worked with a physio who treated the problem and now they're zooming around like a new dog. Also, there was a small terrier called Sydney who was very fearful. He would get protective and





Pictured: Jody and her partner's Alaskan Malamute, Maya.

"I'd also like to shout out just how useful the course PA got me on was. Everybody learned something, and I made a lot of friends too."



needed a muzzle and safety line. But after two months with us, he is no longer as scared of other dogs or as aggressive.

"We're not a doggy day care (which is more about petting) or dog walkers that won't take dogs who need muzzles. Taking on that challenge and making a difference for these dogs is our Unique Selling Point, and it pays off. For example, we recently saved a dog from going to a rescue centre and the owners have kept them. We're also versatile with clients – and when we have a smaller number of dogs, we can do different walks depending on their individual needs. Seeing the dogs so happy really makes it a satisfying job – it's like my medicine!

"The business is now my main hobby. I like to put together a monthly newsletter with photos and stories, with a 'dog of the month' in each edition. Sydney was our dog

of the month this time. I'm also building an online shop: thetuckshopdog.co.uk but it's still a work in progress. The treats on there are all healthy and eco-friendly, and my own brand – sourced from a local butcher – is coming soon too. This is also one of the expansions that I've always wanted to do. These projects are an outlet for my creativity – designing the branding and enjoying the challenge.

"If we had the opportunity to expand and get more land in the future, it would be great to have an on-site vet, dog grooming, and a physiotherapist. The sky's the limit.

"I'd like to thank Maya, my partner's dog, for teaching us so much. I'm also grateful to the horse I took care of too. She has passed away now, but without her, I never would have had the idea to use the land. My message to people is not to walk away when you see a situation where you feel

you could make a positive difference to your own life and the lives of others.

"I'd also like to shout out just how useful the course PA got me on was. Everybody learned something, and I made a lot of friends too, such as Jayanne, who set up her own successful business, Cake Girl London. We encouraged each other and gave feedback on our services. For example, I taste-tested her cakes, whilst she got herself a puppy and asked for my advice. A lot of us from the group now use each other's services – they are useful people to know, and they have a positive energy that motivates me to do better.

"Without the course, I wouldn't be where I am today. I'm now able to fulfil my rent on time with money to spare. My partner and I are in a very good place. We recently went away to Cornwall with my daughter – it meant so much to be able to go on our

first holiday in 5 years. It was so special! The course also helped me to feel like I wasn't in a vicious cycle as a single parent – and now I can push for my dream of giving my daughter a better life. Without PA's text message, I'd be living a completely different life, and this is not something I ever thought I'd be doing. It's a mad story, really!

"It would be great if more people could take advantage of this employment support. Just having that help for people like me and that encouragement – 'If you've got an idea, let's hear it' – could help a lot of people to feel less trapped."

As Jody's story shows, employment support can be truly life changing. If you would like any employment or digital support, you can visit our Financial and Employment support page here: pahousing.co.uk/heretohelp

Understanding your rent and service charge increase

It's hard to escape the fact that prices across the UK are going up, including energy and food prices. The cost of our contracts at PA Housing is increasing too as our suppliers charge us more for their services. We have seen utility costs alone rise by more than 300% compared to what they were three years ago.

So, after an intensive review of the options, we've made the difficult decision to increase your total weekly charge to cover these costs.

We don't make a profit on the service charge. Your rent and service charges go directly to managing your home and neighbourhoods, including essential investment to maintain the quality and safety of your homes.

If you're concerned you won't be able to pay your new charge, please get in touch with us straightaway. Our teams are here to support you. We're here to help.

You can contact us via My PA or by emailing us on income@pahousing.co.uk. Alternatively, you can call us on **0300 123 2221** and select option 3 followed by option 2 to speak to our Income Team.

Work experience opportunities at PA



Do you know somebody who is looking to kickstart their career?

Here at PA Housing, we're offering exciting work experience opportunities across a broad range of departments.

A work placement with PA Housing can offer a host of benefits and experiences which could be invaluable to people from various situations and backgrounds. Our voluntary placements last a week and are designed to give those taking part an insight into the work we do in the housing sector.

The placements are also available to family members of our residents and staff. We hope that this experience will help them to develop personal confidence and provide evidence that they're motivated and driven when looking for jobs.

Throughout the week, we will advise volunteers about CV writing and job interview skills to support their employment goals.

Anyone taking part will also be supported by skilled colleagues who can act as mentors, passing on their enthusiasm and expertise.

Volunteers under 18 years of age will require parental consent. Although no payment is offered, we

will contribute towards any reasonably incurred expenses to cover travel to and from our offices.

We run opportunities from October to May each year. Please visit the application form below for the specific dates. If there is an area of PA that you're interested in, please highlight this in your application form, and we will try to accommodate your request.

Here's what some of our recent resident volunteers had to say:

"I enjoyed it. I suffer from anxiety, and I sometimes struggle when dealing with people. Everyone at PA Housing was so supportive in helping me to find a placement and made my time enjoyable with new challenges. No one else would give me a chance, so I was grateful that PA allowed me to do this. I've used their advice and applied for jobs myself. I now feel more confident that I can do it."

"It felt like the right place for me as they were accepting of my disabilities. My buddy didn't push me but helped me to step out of my comfort zone in a friendly way. Thank you to everyone at PA Housing; you have given me a greater appreciation of all the work you do."

Apply now on via the application form on our website.

Also, the Learning and Development Team can be reached at learninganddevelopment@pahousing.co.uk



We're here to help with the cost of living

If you're struggling with your finances or looking for ways to save money on your bills, please don't worry, our Tenancy Sustainment Team (TST) can support you. In the past year, our team has assisted 1,628 residents to receive a total of £3.42 million between them.

Knowing where to start when applying for support can be daunting. There is support out there if you need it; it's just about knowing where to look. When you speak to one of our experts, we will be able to run a 10-minute benefits check to see what you could be entitled to. We will do everything we can to help in our first chat.

What can TST help you with?

- Receiving Housing Benefit, including new claims, changes of circumstance, and suspensions
- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) for bedroom taxes, the benefit cap, and exemptions
- Universal Credit (both digital and offline)
- Applying for Universal Credit Limited Capability for Work Related Activity (LCWRA) – and we'll support you through to tribunal if necessary.
- New Style Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- State Pension
- Pension Credit
- Carer's Allowance
- Severe Disability Premiums (SDPs)

Although there are certain benefits that we can't support you with directly, TST can use specialist knowledge to point you in the right direction and refer you to a range of third-party organisations and charities that can.

Getting financial support to you in a flash

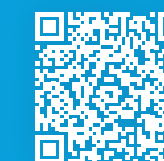
We know that times are tough right now. That's why we've teamed up with Lightning Reach, who work with a broad range of charities and organisations to bring you financial support, quickly and securely. Through just one website and one easy to complete form, Lightning Reach can find out if you're eligible for grants, local schemes, and

discounted tariffs from any of its partner organisations.

What's more, none of the payments that you receive from Lightning Reach have to be paid back. Once the money is paid to you, it's yours to spend or save.

Set up during the pandemic, Lightning Reach has already

helped over 25,000 people to find support and assisted in delivering over £2 million in grants for its users.



Why not give it a try?

Here are just a few examples of how we have helped residents:

- One resident was receiving £74.77 a week in Housing Benefit which was not covering their rent. Upon further investigation by our Tenancy Sustainment Officer, a substantial amount was awarded to the resident, dating back to 2018.
- Recently, we supported a resident in the Midlands with a claim to the Severn Trent Big Difference Scheme which reduced their monthly water costs considerably, freeing up finances to help with gas

and electricity. For more information, visit: stwater.co.uk/my-account/help-when-you-need-it

- We have been able to signpost residents to charities for help with reducing and managing their debts.

Send us an email containing your full name, address, and a brief description of the help you need to tenancysustainmentteam@pahousing.co.uk and we'll attempt to get in contact with you the following day. Alternatively, you can get a self-referral form on our My PA app.

Help from supermarkets and other shops

In response to the cost-of-living crisis, many shops are offering some great deals for customers.

Targeted discounts

The NHS Healthy Start scheme, which Sainsbury's donates to, promotes a healthy diet for pregnant women, babies, and children under four from low-income households. If you use a Healthy Start card when shopping at Sainsbury's, you will be given a coupon worth

£2 to go towards any of the following on your next shop:

- fresh, frozen, and tinned fruit and vegetables.
- cow's milk or infant formula milk based on cow's milk.
- fresh, dried, and tinned pulses.
- Healthy Start vitamins to support you during pregnancy and breastfeeding.
- vitamin drops for babies and young children up to 4 years old.



Also, in Iceland supermarkets, over-60s can get 10% off their shop on Tuesdays.

Meal discounts

Morrisons has a scheme where children can get a free meal from the kids' menu or a chilled kids' snack pack at its cafés when a parent buys an adult meal worth £4.49 or over.

Asda is currently running an offer in its cafés where kids eat for £1 until March 2023. This doesn't require you to buy an adult meal as well. Also, they are selling £1 'winter warmer' soup, rolls, and unlimited tea or coffee to over-60s.

From 11 am at Ikea restaurants, kids can get tomato pasta with a drink for 95p or a meal for £1.50 that includes fruit and a soft drink. This offer is available at all Ikea restaurants in England.

Emergency Food

Food banks provide three days' emergency food at a minimum to people in crisis. If you need to access one, your local food bank will be able to tell you how you can get a voucher. Information about your nearest food bank can be found on the Trussell Trust, or by contacting your GP or local council.

Introducing the Company Shop...

Did you know that you can join the Company Shop if you receive a means tested benefit (e.g. JSA, ESA, Housing Benefit, and Council Tax Support) or if you're an employee or pension recipient of any of the following industries?

- The NHS
- Care and emergency services
- The prison services
- The British Armed Forces
- Charities (including housing associations)
- The fast-moving consumer goods supply chain.

The Company Shop offer discounted food from the biggest retailers, manufacturers, and food service and logistics providers to sell surplus stock that may have otherwise gone to waste.

Find your nearest shop on their website: companyshopgroup.co.uk

The government has also created a centralised website: helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk that covers the cost-of-living support on offer.

Family fun for less

The school Easter break will be here before you know it, so here are some free or cheap child-friendly activities that you can try to make this time eggs-tra fun.

A great thing about many traditional Easter activities is that you can do them from the comfort of your own home. Maybe you could try your hand at egg painting, an Easter egg hunt around the house or the garden (just as long as you remember where you put them all), or perhaps you could do a bit of Easter baking. Whether it's the Easter Bunny's carrot cake or some chocolate egg themed treats, BBC Good Food has a wide selection of tasty treats that you can try in their 'Easter baking' ideas range.



Did you know that many of London's most famous museums are actually free to enter? Here's a very short sample of the free museums and galleries that you can visit:

- The Natural History Museum (what could be cooler than an animatronic T-Rex?)
- The British Museum (which contains Egyptian mummies and the Rosetta Stone)
- The Museum of London (where you can learn about the city's history)
- Tate Modern (home to many modern art masterpieces)
- The National Gallery (home to many classical art masterpieces).

Alternatively, if you don't fancy the journey to get to them or all that queuing, The National History Museum has some virtual tours online including *Fantastic Beasts: The Wonder of Nature* exhibition, narrated by Sir David Attenborough.

For discounted days out in Leicester, when you book a day ticket to the National Space Centre in advance, it is automatically upgraded to a free Annual Pass. This will give you multiple chances to visit throughout the year.

Finally, Kellogg's are offering one free adult ticket to Merlin Entertainment Attractions when you buy one full-priced children's ticket (available until 30 June 2023). Find the 10-digit unique code printed inside promotional cereal packs or follow the booking link on [Snack Packs](https://www.merlinfun.com) and go to [merlinfun.com](https://www.merlinfun.com) to select which attraction you would like to visit. These include:

Thorpe Park, Alton Towers, Legoland, Madame Tussauds, The Dungeons, The London Eye, Sea Life, and many more.

We hope that this has been useful. Have a cracking time!

Neighbourhood



Champion

leading
the way

Our Housing Services Team, fondly referred to as Team Purple, consists of over 250 staff, all doing their best to provide you with a positive customer experience.

Since it was founded in April 2019, the team has been working hard to engage in your neighbourhoods, showcase your achievements, and inform our colleagues at PA Housing about the latest updates from your neighbourhoods... whilst maybe taking a few nice photos for Twitter along the way!

In 2020, we also introduced our first Neighbourhood Champions as a way of promoting your voices and giving you the power to make a difference in your communities. Neighbourhood Champions are residents who give up their free time to support our Neighbourhood Coordinators in their day-to-day activities.

Many have really enjoyed it and formed some friendships along the way! They've become our eyes and ears on the ground. Thanks to their dedication and support,

they've helped to bring about real change in their local neighbourhoods.

June, Nelson Close

June signed up to be a Neighbourhood Champion in early 2019 and quickly got to grips with the role. She formed a great working relationship with her Neighbourhood Coordinator, Paul Pearce.

Nelson Close is a high-profile scheme for PA Housing and, sadly, had historically become known for high levels of antisocial behaviour (ASB).

When Paul started managing the scheme, he wanted to tackle this reputation and work with residents to come up with new ways of improving the situation through regular engagement.

June was Paul's on-the-ground helper. She kept in contact with him regularly to let him know about any issues that residents were having with ASB such as drug use and damage to



Paul Pearce

Neighbourhood 5

property. With her help and insight into the history of the scheme, Paul was able to get to work on making things better. Over the last couple of years, June has worked hard to provide information on all kinds of things, including identifying prolific fly tippers. Paul was able to speak to them about their behaviour. June, alongside other brilliant residents at Nelson Close, has allowed Paul to have enough background information and evidence to be able to support the installation of CCTV in the neighbourhood.

“This has pretty much eradicated ASB like drug use and damage to property at Nelson Close, and it has earned us compliments from the local police regarding the reduced number of attendances that they now need to make.” – **Paul Pearce, Neighbourhood Coordinator**

Thanks to her continued feedback and contact with the Estates Team, Paul was able to have all 10 blocks added to the contract and they've never looked better. Not only has it reduced the number of complaints, but it has dramatically

improved the condition of the neighbourhood and our residents' homes.

The other issue that June helped to tackle was poor car parking. June would report cars that were badly parked or parked on grass verges to Paul so he could take evidence and use it to build a case to improve the car park, repaint the parking bay lines, and install bollards to stop the damage to the grass areas.

June's commitment as a Neighbourhood Champion, and the great relationship she managed to build with her Neighbourhood Coordinator, Paul, has improved Nelson Close dramatically. It is now a nicer, cleaner, and safer place for all our residents to call home.

To find out more about what our Neighbourhood Champions do and how to get involved, head over to: pahousing.co.uk/neighbourhood

My PA – the fastest and easiest way to manage your home online.

Secure and simple, you can access it 24 hours a day without having to wait in a phone queue.

- Check when your annual gas and electricity safety inspections are due.
- Quickly diagnose and report your own repairs.
- View the status of current repairs.
- Choose a convenient time for a contractor to visit.
- Pay your rent or set up a Direct Debit.
- Send any other enquiry through My PA to avoid the queue.
- View your account balance or any personal details.
- Receive important notifications.
- Request a new fob or keys.
- Request a refund.

Register now on our website at:

mypa.pahousing.co.uk

You only need an email address and your payment reference number from your rent statement.



Great Eggs-pectations!

Win a **£250** voucher for your favourite supermarket

Calling all PA Housing residents – it's competition time!

Your mission:

The Easter Bunny's job is no yolk. It has the tricky task of delivering Easter eggs to children all around the world. This year, it got a little scrambled and accidentally went off the beaten track. Many of its eggs were whisked away and scattered throughout this magazine!

Now's the time to hop into action. It's up to you to use your eggs-ray vision to find and count them all in time for Easter. To make sure the

children don't miss out, you'll have to beat the egg timer and send in your responses before it runs out at 12 noon on 31 March 2023.

Once you've looked through the magazine back to front, the right way round, and sunny side up, tell us the total number of Easter eggs in this edition of doorstep by emailing us at doorstep@pahousing.co.uk

If you send us the correct total by the deadline, you will be put in the running to win £250 in supermarket vouchers, which you could use to buy some Easter treats of your own.

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 6 April 2023 from all the correct responses. Once the winner has been selected, we will be in contact to ask you what your preferred supermarket is. The deadline for submissions is 12 noon on 31 March 2023 - any entries after this time will not be considered.

Tales from our social value projects

Vicarage Fields in Walton-on-Thames

Using some of the funding set aside to improve our neighbourhoods, Lucy (Estate Services Inspector) felt that Vicarage Fields could use a lift of colour with the addition of a new planter in the middle of the communal lawn. Our Estate Services Team created the raised bed with evergreen plants and a weeping cherry for the spring blossom. When consulted, the residents were very happy with this new addition to their shared green space.



Elmgrove Point in London

After receiving reports about pigeons nesting and messing in the communal areas, our Estates Team introduced new measures to stop the problem and improve the appearance of those areas. This involved installing prickly metal strips.

The RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) was consulted to ensure that the birds wouldn't be hurt. Based on their advice, the following steps were taken:

The pigeons were flushed out safely before the places they were living were sealed up.

Smaller spikes were used on the rails, so they won't harm children or anyone who puts their hands on them.

The windowsills are also now covered with small spikes, so pigeons will not be able to land and roost there.

The small, toughened plastic spikes outside won't degrade or rust.

We're pleased that we've been able to find an affordable, permanent solution to this issue that was affecting our residents.

Imre Close in London

There were ongoing issues with fly tipping and dumped rubbish in this area. We met with the local authority many times to try and resolve matters.

Our teams devised an action plan. The main issue was that entry to the estate was completely open to the public, meaning that anybody could gain access and offload their fly tipping. The bin store was also no longer fit for purpose.

We worked hard to ensure regular collections were being made whilst work began. Residents were consulted on our proposed solutions,

which included making the bin store doors more secure, only allowing our residents access, and installing a gate at the entrance to the block.

Now that this has been completed, it's great to see the positive results of teamwork.

Berry Park Lea in Mansfield

After we had installed a bin store area, residents asked if it could be improved further by adding some fencing to make it more appealing to the eye. Once this was completed, residents were pleased with the result.

Larch Street in Leicester

The play area near this scheme looked very tired and in need of a refurbishment. Alongside contractors at the Bell Group, we put together a plan to revamp the area.

Kaushal (Resident Liaison Officer) proposed a community litter pick to build a sense of togetherness. As a way of allowing the children in the area to make the newly decorated play area their own, with their parents' permission, we invited them to place their handprints on the slide and write their names against them. They thoroughly enjoyed the day!

Edison Drive in London

This neighbourhood has three blocks and two communal gardens. When Tanya, our Neighbourhood Coordinator in the area, noticed that the smaller garden was overgrown and contained a broken steel bench, she spoke with the residents to ask if anyone used it. They said that they didn't, but they would if it were better maintained.

Once the funding was approved, the residents chose to have three planters and some hanging baskets in the garden. Also, Tanya got the help of a Handyperson and went to the shop to buy as many flowers and plants as she could carry!

Lastly, a new bench was bought using the Neighbourhood Improvement Fund to replace the old bench in the communal garden.

Tanya completed the project alongside two residents by clearing the bushes and the old bench, then planting new flowers and plants.

Feedback from one of our residents

"Thank you very much for the raised beds and the benches in our garden. As a result of your hard work, we now spend more time there. It's a very nice environment to socialise or just enjoy the peace and quiet in. My daughter sometimes uses the bench to do her schoolwork. I'm also creating a new plan for my gardening next spring."

I cannot express how much this new renovation has lifted my spirit. So, I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for acquiring the funds for this project."



PA Resident recognised in New Year's Honours List

Wellingborough councillor and involved resident at PA Housing, Tony Aslam has been recognised with a British Empire Medal for services to the community during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Tony was out on the frontlines during the worst of the pandemic, assisting the community and making sure nobody was left to struggle.

"It's absolutely wonderful and an honour to receive this prestigious award."

After four decades of volunteering, he was able to supply guidance and support to vulnerable people who needed food and medicines. He was a link between local authorities and people who were unable to leave their homes, promoting safety and social distancing guidelines.

As well as being involved in numerous groups here at PA, which aim to improve things for all residents, he is also involved in several wider community projects to help people with their mental wellbeing. Alongside volunteers and professionals, he successfully assisted people in their recovery from mental and emotional distress and family or relationship breakdowns.

Huge congratulations to Tony on this recognition.



Supporting our younger residents into a bright future

Working with Tutors United and Appello, we were able to provide tutoring and deliver a free laptop to one of our young residents – Year 6 pupil, Zianna – to help her with her studies.

Sally, Resident Involvement and Business Initiatives Coordinator at PA, was aware that Zianna had been receiving after school tutoring from Tutors United – an award-winning non-profit organisation that we work in partnership with. Tutors United train university students to assist children with their literacy and numeracy skills. For PA residents living in the Midlands, they run private tuition classes online for Year 4, 5, and 6 pupils (8 to 11-year-olds) with the aim

of ensuring that children's backgrounds don't affect how much they achieve.

We have a long-standing relationship with Appello, who provide a lot of innovative Technology Enabled Care for our residents. They kindly donated the laptop as part of our combined social value work.

Sally and Marco (our Junior Communications Officer) went to have a chat with Zianna's mum, Andrea, to deliver the laptop and find out what it would mean to them as a family. Inside, was a beautifully decorated Christmas tree and Zianna was decorating biscuits with her friend. Their excitable, fluffy Pomeranian dog, Jayla also kept them company during their visit.

Andrea had this to say:

"I'm feeling very blessed today, it makes me feel empowered as a parent. I think this donation of a laptop will give Zianna that extra push to be the best she can be academically. In this day and age, it can be easy to be led astray by peer pressure and social media, but I'd like to think that this will provide some encouragement and show her that it's okay to learn.

"Without your help, I don't think I would have been able to provide this for her because things can be difficult. This has really made Christmas for us, and it has definitely made my day.

"This started when we received a flyer through the

door about Tutors United from PA. When I read it, I was immediately very interested and impressed, so I jumped at the chance. I spoke about it with Zianna, and she was unsure at first, but her friend (who's here with her today) said, 'Wouldn't it be nice not to struggle and to find things a little easier?' and she listened to her. She was a very positive influence.

"I've always been an activist for young people, promoting social change, but now that I work as a teaching assistant, I see things differently. I've noticed that Maths and English – because they're so important and essential for so many jobs – can be a real source of anxiety for children.

"My older daughter had some tutoring too as she struggled with Maths through her GCSEs. So, I wanted Zianna to get all the support she needed as well. As a parent, I like to do everything I can to help my children to believe in themselves and fulfil their dreams. I'm dyslexic, so I struggle with these subjects myself, but it's great to be able to inspire my children to do better.

"The tutors are great because they're recruited from universities, so it gives them work experience and helps the children at the same time. The classes are informal and fun, but the children make a lot of progress with their

English and Maths skills. It can be tough for teachers in schools when they're dealing with big classes and behavioural difficulties. That extra 1 hour and 30 minutes out of a child's day can really make a difference and steer them away from peer pressure and distractions. Some children may not see English and Maths as being important outside of school, but these skills allow them to grow as young people.

"I've been with PA for 5 years in this house. I'm grateful as they're one of the few housing associations offering young residents this chance to progress academically. Then, when I got the message from Sally

yesterday that Zianna would also be receiving a laptop, I was overwhelmingly grateful.

"I think that the laptop will give her more structure to her learning and provide the encouragement and incentive to get her studying.

"It's important to spread the word and to show that there is support out there – whether you're a single parent like me or not – so I'm glad that I've had this opportunity to raise awareness and encourage others to take part in these schemes. It has been so successful for us; it would be great if there was enough of a push and demand to set up more of these programmes



nationally that go beyond Year 6.

"As a family, we would like to say thank you to you both and everybody involved in this. You are my angels of the day and you've made our Christmas. I'm a healer, so I'm also celebrating the Winter Solstice today which is when the Sun comes back to life, and we can look all forward to a brighter future (which I think is very appropriate for Zianna today).

"This opportunity will really give her a confidence boost. Zianna is actually a prefect at school because she's a caring, nurturing person who really loves to support

others – so whatever she does in the future, I think it will involve helping people."

Sally was very pleased that PA was able to work alongside these organisations and support one of our young residents.

Iain Hockings from Appello said: "We are absolutely delighted that Andrea and Zianna are so pleased with their new laptop. Having access to a range of online material makes individuals' lives easier, more efficient, and independent. Appello has invested in PA Housing's social value projects and has contributed in many ways, including updating residents' emergency call systems.

"We were so pleased to receive such positive feedback from this gesture. We really look forward to hearing more success stories as time goes on."

If you have any questions about whether your children would be eligible for either of these programmes, or a similar one, please contact our Resident Involvement Team at GetInvolved@pahousing.co.uk

ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

The importance of home contents insurance

No matter how careful you are, there's always a risk that your belongings could be broken, damaged, or stolen so home contents insurance can provide some peace of mind. Crystal Insurance Scheme is a specialist home contents insurance for social housing residents.

The scheme can offer you insurance for items such as furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, bedding, electrical items, jewellery, pictures, ornaments, and much more.

To find out more about the Crystal Insurance Scheme, you can call Crystal on **0345 459 7286** or visit their website here: crystal-insurance.co.uk

Advice about how to stay safe online

It's important to be vigilant online. A few simple steps can potentially save you from losing money through online fraud and scams. Here are some helpful tips about how you can increase your online security:

Two-factor authentication

Most online services like email and banking now offer the option of adding two-factor authentication to the login process. This usually involves texting a code to your mobile phone, or perhaps downloading an app to verify your identity when logging in. This means that even if someone guesses your password, you still have control over allowing the login.

Password strength

Short passwords made up of just numbers or letters can easily be found out by hackers. When creating a password, perhaps try picking three random words which will allow you to create a strong password that is easier to remember.

Also, ensure that you don't use the same password for everything because you don't want someone breaking into

your bank account because they guessed the password to a social media account.

Password managers (for example, on your phone) can be a very helpful. This is a piece of software that securely stores all your different passwords so that you can always find them.

Don't ever share your passwords with anyone. For example, bank employees will never ask you for your password. This is a common trick in telephone scams.

Face and fingerprint

As an alternative to traditional passwords, consider using your fingerprint or face scan on your smart phone or tablet as it is completely unique to you and much harder for a hacker to fake. Many new devices now support fingerprint scanning, and a lot of banks now offer face recognition to log in or authenticate payments online.

Think before you click

When browsing and shopping online, it's easy to fall into the trap of assuming a site is safe. Scammers will often create very realistic looking websites but, in

reality, they are trying to steal your password or perhaps your credit card details. This kind of activity is very common at busy times like Christmas, Black Friday, or January sales, but it can happen at any time.

Links to these sites will often come in an email or text message. If you're unsure about the link you are clicking, go to a trusted search engine and type in the full address of the site you want. Also, check if your antivirus software is up to date.

Remember: if an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is!

If you would like more information about staying safe online, please get in contact with our Digital Team at digital@pahousing.co.uk

Have you tried our ASB Toolkit?



The ASB Toolkit provides useful information on tackling different types of antisocial behaviour including some other useful contacts.

www.pahousing.co.uk/asbtoolkit



Do you have any queries around how we manage and use your personal data?

Scan the QR Code or visit our website to find out more about our Customer Privacy Notice



Did you know that there is a group of residents who help to make improvements at PA?

There are many ways to get involved and make a difference in your community. This can include anything from completing a short survey about a service you've received to joining a dedicated customer group or committee.

One of the ways you can get involved is by joining our Challenge and Change Scrutiny Team.

The only way we can really know if we're doing well or not is by asking the people who receive our services – you! You're the experts, so you should have your say. By being involved, you can influence the decisions that we make as a business which will help to shape and improve our services.

Who are the Challenge and Change Scrutiny Team?

The team is a group of residents who look at how

we're performing and how our services are delivered to you. Using this information, they can then challenge us with these areas of improvement. This is usually done by looking at a specific area of the business for a couple of months to review how we're doing and then making suggestions on what we could be doing better.

Based on what they say, we produce reports for the Board on areas that are important to residents such as repairs, antisocial behaviour, and grounds maintenance. We then act on their recommendations to make services better for everyone.

How can you get involved?

The Challenge and Change Scrutiny Team are always looking for more people to join and help with the scrutiny process. It's a great opportunity to work with other residents and PA Housing staff, talking about how we

provide our services and the things that matter to you.

If you would like more information on becoming a Scrutiny Member, please get in touch by emailing getinvolved@pahousing.co.uk

More ways to get involved

There are activities to suit everyone depending on how and when you would like to get involved – whether that is locally, like becoming a Neighbourhood Champion, or on a wider scale like joining one of our other resident groups (for example, our Service Improvement Panels).

You can find out more about all the different ways to be involved on our website: pahousing.co.uk/getinvolved

“By getting involved and having your say about what you think works well and what doesn't, you can be a part of making positive changes. There are so many ways for you to get involved. This means that there is something for everyone, no matter how much time you have to spare.”

**Joan –
Scrutiny
Team Member**

Mission Statement:

“We review how well services are working and suggest improvements for all residents whilst holding PA to account.”



Do you have damp and mould in your home?

Please get in touch with us as soon as possible so we can treat the mould and assess how we can stop it coming back.

0300 123 2221

You can find out more about how we treat damp and mould, and what you can do to help on our website:

pahousing.co.uk/dampandmould

