Spring 2025

Edition 16

COOISTEP customer magazine







I'm delighted to welcome you to our latest edition of doorstep: the magazine made for you, our residents. As always, we're covering the things that matter to you from across our regions, highlighting some of the stories that have made us smile over the last few months, but this time, there's a fun twist.

After last summer's blockbuster-themed magazine, the team wanted to make this edition pop by uniting us with music. Throughout, as we update you about what's happening in our neighbourhoods, sing the praises of some exceptional residents, and set the tone with helpful advice on fraud prevention and fire safety, the articles will reference and parody iconic songs and albums. Why not see how many you can find?

It's not just the songs we're listening to though; our priority is listening to you so we can continue to improve. For example, you told us that you wanted to see changes in our My PA app and so, in these pages, you'll find out

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about what we're doing to make that happen. We'll also be highlighting the new way to keep track of events in your neighbourhoods on our website, where to watch the updates from our virtual residents meeting, and much more. That's not to mention our music-themed competition, where you could be in with a chance of winning £100 in supermarket vouchers!

We're not perfect and things won't always go to plan, but we continue to focus on making you proud to live in your homes and neighbourhoods. We're all striving to work as one team and sing from the same song sheet (so to speak). So, without any further ado, let's tell you our stories, on the record.

Kind regards,

Michael McDonagh **Chief Executive**



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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.



NEVER IN HER WILDEST DREAMS: PA RESIDENT RECOGNISED IN NEW YEAR'S HONOURS LIST

30 years of volunteering and she's still not ready to shake it off just yet.

PA Housing resident Betty, aged 90, was awarded a British Empire Medal from the King for 30 years of voluntary service at the Leicester Royal Infirmary (LRI) café.

So, how did this all begin? Having previously lived in Norway for 3 years and then down south in the UK, Betty relocated to the Midlands with her daughter. In fact, Betty moved to her home with PA Housing in Leicester in 1987, making her a long-term resident of ours.

Betty's daughter – who sadly passed away 2 years ago – was very ill for a long time, and the LRI did a lot for her. As a thank you, Betty was looking for a way to give back to the hospital and the staff working there. On one of her visits with her daughter, she noticed the LRI café and, coming from a catering background herself, thought "I could do that," as a way of showing her appreciation.

30 years later and Betty is still in action at the café. Originally, she used to do 4 mornings a week but now she has reduced this to 2. On these days, Betty will take the 30-minute walk from her flat – never using the lift, always the stairs – smiling and saying hello to everybody she meets on the way to work. Betty will then start her shift at 8.30am and work until 12.30pm, although for anybody curious to try it, it's usually open until early evening.

When asked why she keeps volunteering,

Betty says, "It's about more than just pouring coffee," and recounts stories of comforting upset customers, making people smile, and – as the café is used by many of the doctors and nurses at the hospital too – playing a vital role in keeping our key workers going through their long shifts.

PA

Although Betty could hardly believe it when she first found out she'd been nominated for the medal, she's no stranger to recognition, having won a prestigious 'Volunteer of the Year' award in 2009. And now, due to her latest accolade, she's been on the front cover of the Leicester Mercury newspaper, on television for BBC East Midlands Today, and published on BBC News. A proper PA celeb!

However, it's not about the awards and acclaim for Betty, she really is just happy to stay active, sociable, and help where she can. She said, "While the awards and newspaper prints will make great keepsakes to pass down to my grandchildren, I'd like to think this award is for everyone in the team volunteering at the LRI, not just me."

Huge congratulations to Betty – staying humble and still volunteering in style.



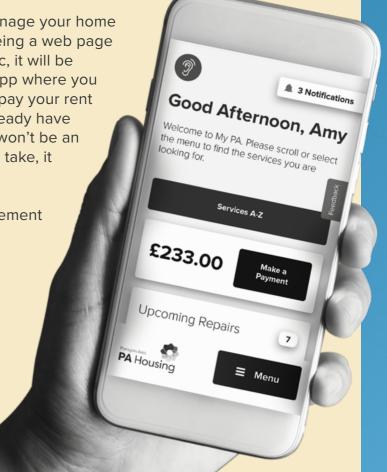
THE RUMPURS ARE TRUE

WE'RE UPDATING OUR MY PA APP

There's no longer any reason to rely on second-hand news, we can confirm that our My PA app is going to be updated in the very near future. We know that the current version isn't exactly the app of our dreams, and that it could be a lot better, but you can rest assured that we're never going back again. We're making progress and we won't stop thinking about tomorrow, so even when the updated app is live, we'll want to know your feedback so we can keep on improving.

We'd like you to be able to manage your home your own way, so as well as being a web page that is available on PC and Mac, it will be available on mobile as a real app where you can report your concerns and pay your rent too. And don't worry, if you already have the app on your phone, there won't be an endless chain of extra steps to take, it should automatically update.

It's time to make home management (a little more) fun!



ALLIN ALLITS ANDTHER INSULATED WALL

Hey you, did you know that our contractors, Equans, have successfully upgraded the insulation of 100 homes as part of the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund?

This scheme has successfully improved the energy efficiency of residents' homes in the Highfields area of Leicester, making them more sustainable and cost-effective by installing external and internal wall insulation as well as loft insulation to make their homes warmer. New smart thermostats were also fitted to help measure comfort levels.

Our residents are expected to save hundreds of pounds on energy bills as a result of their Energy Performance Certificates being raised from a D or E to a C. They were delighted to have warm and comfortable homes over the winter. So much so, Equans achieved a 93% customer satisfaction rate for their work!

Many of our residents in the Highfields area speak Gujarati, Urdu, and Punjabi. Thankfully, colleagues from both PA and Equans were able to communicate in those languages to provide the support our residents needed during this project.

This wasn't the only extra consideration made for our residents as Nik, Site Manager from Equans, explained:

"A large proportion of the residents involved in our project are of the Muslim faith. While a lot of the residents agreed to the external and internal wall insulation work during the period of Ramadhan and Eid, closer to the time, the residents realised that they wouldn't want Equans working inside their homes during those times.

"As part of Ramadhan, families wanted to carry out a deep clean of their homes. Some people preferred to sleep more in the day and there were also more prayer times. During this period, around 5 weeks in total, some residents were happy for external work freezing but to carry on, so we adapted our programme, thanks to the delaying major internal work until after Eid. insulation, yo

"We also used a community bungalow as a site office, and we vacated and cleared these premises at certain times to allow for community and family celebrations."

Although there were some trials and tribulations like there being limited parking and room for storing materials in that area, the team knew that the show must go on and ensured that all the work was completed to the highest standard.

Wendy, 81, who has lived in her home for 35 years, said:

"I used to have to put my electric fire on as soon as I got up but now, I don't have to, so it's already costing me less to heat the house. My kitchen used to be absolutely freezing but thanks to the insulation, you can go in and put the kettle on and it's lovely and warm. It has made a huge difference to me, and I'm pleased I had it done."

Residents have already reported that their homes feel much cosier and less draughty, resulting in a more comfortably warm living environment that is cheaper to run.

WE MUSN'T START THE FIRE

Fire safety is an essential part of preserving our wellbeing and, let's face it, our lives. That's why, back in January, following a few recent fire service callouts, one of our Neighbourhood Coordinators, Elliott, organised a visit from







the crew at Painshill Fire Station to Churchfield House in Cobham, Surrey.

The aim of the visit was for the crew to stress the importance of using fire alarms, smoke alarms, and electrical equipment correctly to reduce the amount of calls they get about these issues. This involved knocking doors and doing safety and wellbeing checks with the residents at Churchfield House.

Residents were happy to see the fire crew and some even asked for photos with them. Many didn't realise the importance of not leaving certain electrical equipment on charge for too long and the building's 'stay put' policy during fires which is based around shutting fire resistant doors, windows, etc. Also, to avoid going into smoky corridors or allowing the fire to spread further until the fire crew arrives.

A big thank you to Painshill Fire Crew for their help and support. Knowing that the residents learned a lot from the visit shows just how essential it is to be aware

For more information, check out our page here: pahousing.co.uk/help-and-support/understanding-fire-safety of fire safety procedures. We've put a few reminders here for you:

- Know your home's evacuation strategy, making note of your closest exits.
- Be mindful of overloaded sockets or faulty electricals

 making sure you're not leaving big items like scooters on charge without supervision.
- Make sure you have fire alarms installed at each level of your home and regularly check if they work.
- If you have fire doors, please don't wedge them open as they prevent the spread of fires.
- No smoking in communal areas and keep cigarettes or other burning items like candles away from flammable materials like curtains or bedding. Ensure they're put out properly when not in use.
- Remember to turn off the cooker when you're done with it and take care when frying.
- Never light a barbecue on a balcony, roof terrace, or communal green space. Also, keep balconies clear of flammable items.









If you wannabe a Resident Liaison Apprentice for our kitchen and bathroom contractor, PiLON, then stop right now (thank you very much) and read this article because they're offering apprenticeship roles that could go to PA Housing residents.

After contributing funds to garden projects as well as food and energy vouchers in your communities, PiLON, are now offering apprenticeship opportunities where PA Housing residents get exclusive windows to apply. For example, 2 Resident Liaison Apprentice roles where PA residents have until Monday 11 May to apply before the vacancy becomes open to the wider public.

Both roles are full-time and on 18-month fixed term

contracts with the potential to The role will also involve become permanent. While 1 role is based at Eldon Trading Estate, Beeston, Nottingham, the other is at Lydden Road, Earlesfield, London so whether you're in the Midlands or the South, they're providing opportunities for you.

Variety in your role is the spice of life

The Resident Liaison Apprentice role is ideal for anybody who'd like to learn on the job and gain hands-on experience, and more roles like this will be available in the future. As a key part of the team, you'll learn about social housing refurbishments, how to handle resident communication, resolve queries, and how to support **Resident Liaison Officers with** their ongoing projects.

communicating with residents about PiLON's construction and refurbishment projects over the phone and email in a friendly and professional way. Other responsibilities include helping to schedule resident appointments, making sure residents are well-informed, maintaining accurate records of all communication with residents, gathering feedback, and preparing letters, newsletters and other communication materials.

If you're some kind of superstar with the following skills, show us how good you are:

- Willingness to complete a Level 2 Customer Service Practitioner apprenticeship and develop new skills.
- GCSE (or equivalent) in English and Maths, with a strong interest in customer

service and project administration.

- Strong written and verbal communication skills.
- Excellent organisational skills, attention to detail, and ability to manage multiple tasks effectively.
- Good problem-solving skills and the ability to stay calm under pressure.
- Basic knowledge of Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Outlook) and the ability to learn new systems.
- Ability to work well within a team and collaborate across departments to achieve project goals.

You don't have to be sporty or posh to apply

However, some experience in customer service such as retail or hospitality, administration, or community engagement will set you apart from the competition. A valid UK driving licence and access to your own vehicle would be a plus too.

This role is also peppered with perks. Here are some that PiLON offer:

- A salary of £26,210 or £28,810 per year, based on your region, with car allowance and a fuel card provided.
- 23 days of holiday per year excluding Bank of days increasing with length of service).
- Up to a £2,000 reward for successful a referral scheme.
- · A welcoming office with snacks, beverages, friendly colleagues, and team

up your career

Holidays (with the number recommendations as part of Savings on shopping.

socials throughout the year.

Support from trained Mental Health First Aiders if needed. Annual training budget so you can focus on your personal and professional development.

Could you be their next **Resident Liaison Apprentice?** Remember, PA resident exclusivity ends on Monday 11 May 2025.

It's not scary to apply, so come on, just say you'll be there and check out the QR code to see the full job description.

This is just one example of an exciting opportunity from our suppliers. For more, take a look at the

'Resident **Opportunities**³ section on the 'Careers' page of our website.





Our virtual residents meeting lands without any clashes or crashes

On 5 February this year, we held our third virtual residents meeting, where we invited you to join us online to hear from our Chief Executive, Michael McDonagh and other members of our Executive Team.

We welcomed just under 300 residents to the session, including 82 residents who had special viewings in some of our independent living schemes.

Our panel spoke for around 30 minutes about some of the changes and improvements we've made so far, as well as our plans to continue learning from past mistakes and from your feedback.

The second half of the meeting was a Q&A session with a selection of questions that had been submitted by you in advance. We also had colleagues from our Customer Services Team, off camera, helping to log specific issues that residents were raising about their homes and neighbourhoods.

If you weren't able to join us live on the night, you can see a recording of the session on our website by scanning the QR code below. You can enable subtitles in the video session if you need them.

Overall feedback from the session seems to have been positive, with many commenting on improved sound and image quality. However, we're aware that some residents struggled to access the meeting due to technical difficulties, and others expressed their frustration at not being given the opportunity to speak on the call itself.

We're committed to hosting another meeting in September 2025. We'll continue to listen to your feedback to make these meetings as easy to access and beneficial for you as possible.

Thank you for joining us!



TH

Throughout this edition of doorstep, we've been saying thank you for the music by referencing some iconic albums. And now, here we go again, we have a music-themed competition that will have you saying "Gimme! Gimme! Gimme that prize!"

While we're not offering any money, money, money, we are offering £100 in supermarket vouchers of the winner's choice to one lucky person. And knowing you, I reckon you have pretty good chance of winning. Just ask Claire in Surrey who won £100 in supermarket vouchers after taking part in our competition in last summer's edition of doorstep. Aha!

So, voulez-vous (would you like) to take part? You just need to have a dream and take a chance on victory by looking for the gold disc icons hidden throughout this magazine. Then, send the total number of gold discs to **doorstep@pahousing.co.uk** by noon on **Wednesday 14 May 2025** to put your name in the draw to win – now, that's the name of the game!

Only a real super trouper will be able to spot them all, so even if your name isn't picked, we hope you'll still feel like you win if you lose. One thing to remember though, if you are a chiquitita or chiquitito (a little one under the age of 18) we do need to ask: does your mother – or other parent or guardian – know that you want to take part? Please ask their permission.

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 Wednesday 14 May 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 supermarket.

GOING FOR **GOING FOR THE COMPETITION WHERE**

THE WINNER TAKES IT ALL

FROM ABBEY MILL IN LEICESTER TO ABBEY WOOD IN LONDON:

Our Neighbourhood Team have you covered

Because we want you to have speedy access to information about your neighbourhood, our Quality Assurance, Neighbourhoods, and Communications Teams have come together to create something on our website that will change the game. The end result of their work is the new 'Your Neighbourhood' page on the 'Residents' section of our website where you can search your postcode and find signposted support and upcoming events that are specific to your neighbourhood. It also includes action plans for improvements in your neighbourhood, drafted by your Neighbourhood Coordinator (NC) with help from you.

On the site, you can find schools, crime statistics, and medical services in your area as well as links to news stories that are relevant to you. The page will also tell you the name of your local NC – whether that's John, Paul, George, etc. – and a bit of information about them as a person. It's worth noting that if more than one result comes up for your postcode and you're still uncertain about who your NC is, you can double check this on our My PA app.

Another feature of the 'Find your Coordinator' page is that you can submit your feedback directly to your NC online – whether that's about what you'd like to see in your area or the neighbourhood webpage itself. We did a soft launch of phase 1 of these webpages on Valentine's Day to make sure there are no glitches to begin with. The pages are a work in progress, so we welcome any suggestions you may have to make sure you're kept up to date with real-time information about your community.

We're proud that we have some of the smallest neighbourhood patches out of our peers (similarly sized and bigger housing associations) with an average of around 350 homes per NC. This means there's a greater potential for your NCs to get to know you, your specific community, and your individual needs. We hope that these pages will make this even easier.

If you think that's beatable, then we're happy to hear your comments, which you can submit by completing the feedback and suggestion form on your NC webpage. Please remember: if it seems like there's limited information on your page at the moment, we'll be building on it over the coming months with your support!





Resident speaker box



EXCITING CONTENT

Roses may be red, and violets may be blue, but the poem below is all about sharing the love in a different way – with a bit of creativity!

Michael is a resident at Albany House in Nottingham, one of our independent living services for people over 50. At Albany, we provide personalised care and support to assist vulnerable people in maintaining their safety, independence, and sense of joy because that's the way we move.

Kindly, Michael has shared this poem with us to say thank you to Gemma and the rest of the team at Albany. Within, he tells us some of his favourite things about living there – just being honest about what a day in the life of Albany is like and having fun alongside his fellow residents.

Alright, alright, alright, enough of my nattering, let's all say, "Hey ya," to Michael as we hand you over to him for some fresh, clean rhymes.

Across the grass, The squirrels run; Joan and Pete sit In the morning sun. Daffodils in bloom And blackbirds sing; It's a beautiful morning In early spring.

l've lived at Albany For a couple of years, There's been some laughter; There's been some tears. With a café and hairdresser, A day centre too, There's lots of facilities For me and you. Carol and Sharon, On a Wednesday night, Do the bingo, So that residents might Win a few bob On their houses and lines; Although I've won nothing Many times.

Before I moved in, I was in a bad place, But now I'm in A better headspace. I'd like to thank the staff, They have so much to give, With their experience I have a great place to live.

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THE REGULATOR FOR SOCIAL HOUSING WHO ARE THEY?

As a social housing organisation, it's our duty to comply with the requirements set out for us by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH), which is something that we'll be exploring in a series of future articles. But what is it that they do? I can explain.

The RSH is there to make sure we're efficient, financially stable, well governed, and able to deliver quality homes and services for the current generation of residents and generations to come. Since 1 April 2024, the RHS's inspections of social housing providers now involve seeing if they're compliant with the consumer standards they've set as well as their governance and financial viability standards (which were already in place).

Some of their key economic objectives include ensuring that we're financially able to supply our services, we provide value for money, and we use your funds responsibly and legally.

There's no substitute for being open and honest, which is why the RSH ensures that we make certain information available to you. Each year, when they do an in-depth analysis of our services and our communication with you, they'll be looking at how we've communicated with you about topics such as fire and electrical safety, how to make a complaint, our commitment to equality and diversity, and much more. Alongside our news stories, we regularly update the homepage of our website with advice on the above so you can stay safe and make your voices heard. For more

For more information on RSH, you can visit: gov.uk/government/organisations/regulator-of-social-housing/about

The new consumer objectives are there to make sure you're getting a good service. These include ensuring your homes are safe and of appropriate quality, boosting the wellbeing of your neighbourhoods, giving you the opportunity to hold us to account, providing you with choice and protection, and being transparent with you.

information on complaints, we have a dedicated page on the 'Contact Us' section of our website.

We also have an annual Residents Impact Report where you can track our performance against our targets and get a breakdown of our spending. That's not to mention this magazine, which we release twice a year, to let you know some of what we're doing at PA and to signpost you to valuable support.

Another RSH requirement that helps us to improve our services is the annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (or TSM) surveys undertaken each September where we knock on your doors to discuss your views and concerns. Compliance with the RSH standards is important because doing so helps us to help you. There's still a lot we can learn from the RSH, and their requirements enable us to plan our roadmap for improvement, miles and miles into the future.

COMMUNITY EVENTS TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT

In our Neighbourhood Team, we dare to be bold. It's our aim to know the people behind the door and what you want from your communities so that we can make those improvements and put the work in that you deserve. Here are a few illustrative examples from the last few months:

Got litter... in a bag

Victoria, Neighbourhood Coordinator (NC), noticed that there was a lot of litter around the grounds that made Dover House look untidy. During a monthly meeting with grounds maintenance contractor, John O'Conner, Victoria praised the job they do but said there wasn't enough time on their visits for all the litter to be cleared. So, the manager of John O'Conner suggested this action day where the contractors, Victoria, and her assembled team from PA could go to battle against the litter.

Armed with gloves, litter pickers, and scores of bin bags, the team picked litter from 8.30am until 2.00pm. By the close of the day, the contractors at John O'Conner said that they'd collected enough rubbish to fill 4 of their trucks! Passers-by congratulated Victoria on a job well done.

Building bollards in a blur

Nikki, NC went above to get new bollards installed, and her work has made the area safer and a nicer place to live for PA residents. When asked how and why this came about, she said:

"I raised a request for bollards to be installed on Manordene Road following repeated complaints about a resident parking on the grass. This parking behaviour was causing significant damage to the grass area and creating an obstruction and safety risk for other residents. I believe these bollards will effectively prevent vehicles from parking on the grass."









Noodling with a few repairs

STREET GNED

Working alongside Surveying Manager, David, NC Anjala organised a repairs action day following several requests from residents. Tasks included fixing guttering issues, inspecting roof vents, replacing all door stoppers, decorating walls, and putting carpets back into place.

David liaised with Wates, who sent a supervisor, roofer, and other operatives as well as Dyno-Rod drain engineers. Thanks to their efforts, most issues were resolved that day. Anjana had the chance to speak with a resident who was extremely pleased with how the day unfolded. They expressed appreciation for the involvement of such a dedicated team and felt that PA had truly listened to their feedback.

Rustling up new seating

When Sharan first took over as NC for Sabarmati House, she thought the building and community there were lovely, but she saw that the communal areas needed some love. The chairs on the first and second floors – including in the main entrance – were left as unwelcoming wooden benches for nearly 2 years after it was said that the cushions weren't in line with fire safety standards. The cushions on the third-floor benches left a lot to be desired too.

Sharan found a supplier that would install more comfortable and fire safe seating for the residents to sit and chat on. The residents are overjoyed with their new red seats, with one resident saying, "We love the seating area, it's soooooo nice!"

THE EDUCATION OF ALISSA

Find out about the next marketing superstar.

In February 2025, I visited PA Housing for work experience as part of my marketing course I'm studying.

At first, my intention was to improve my interpersonal skills and try to find my feet within work. However, I took away a lot more than that at the end of my experience. Despite the short period of time I spent with staff at PA, I was shown so many different sides to the company. It proved how much work each department puts in behind the scenes into ensuring their residents are comfortable and their needs are attended to. It also displayed to me the importance of each role and how everyone equally plays a role in ensuring everything runs smoothly and is well-organised within the company.

The efforts put into making sure they communicate messages with residents effectively and their ability to problem-solve was really eyeopening and has taught me a lot personally about how to operate a company efficiently and how to deal with different types of customers.

Overall, work experience with PA Housing has been a great experience and it was a privilege to work with such an amazing and dedicated team of people. My experience was both personally fulfilling and has broadened my understanding of the business as well giving me an insight into real-world work. I'd definitely recommend PA Housing to anyone who would like to do work experience - even if you're not interested in the profession specifically. It is so diverse and there is so much to learn.

By Alissa

If you or somebody you know would like to do work experience here at PA, or for more information, send an email over to **learninganddevelopment@pahousing.co.uk**

SCAQABI

A little bird told me that sometimes, residents can be concerned about the potential for fraudsters to pretend to be PA Housing colleagues – whether that's on the phone, via email, or in person. That's why we thought we'd share some helpful tips about avoiding fraud and scams to make us all feel a bit more at ease. So, let's get to it – we won't keep you waiting in vain.

In person

Is somebody on your doorstep asking to come in and look around? Perhaps they want to discuss private information about you and your home on behalf of PA?

You should be wary if:

- They're claiming to be a contractor or surveyor, but they haven't organised a time or appointment with you. If you're going to have work or a survey completed in your home, we will usually give you an appointment or period of time when this will happen.
- It's another member of staff (such as a Neighbourhood Coordinator) who doesn't have the correct identification, which should include a designed blue lanyard with an official PA Housing name badge on it.

If you find yourself in one of these situations, don't reveal personal information or feel pressured into letting them in. You can call us to make sure they're who they say they are or close the door if you feel uncomfortable.

On the phone

If you receive a call from somebody who claims to be from PA Housing and they're asking you to read out your bank details, this should immediately raise suspicion because we wouldn't do this. In fact, never feel pressured into saying your bank details aloud over the phone under any circumstances as this is a key warning sign of a scam.

In situations where you feel uncomfortable or you're uncertain the caller is who they say they are, you can always hang up and call the organisation directly to check that they're actually from where they say they're from. Sometimes, putting the number into a search engine such as Google can tell you if the number has been associated with fraudulent activity.

Online

The internet may be a great place for connecting with people you know, but it's not all 'one love' – there are some fraudsters out there that want to take advantage of any loophole they can. Beware of offers that are too good to be true and don't click attachments from email addresses you can't trust or verify. Also, make sure to use strong passwords that can't easily be guessed and remember not to share them with anyone.

We hope that you've found this useful and that you can rest assured that with a bit of vigilance, every little thing is going to be alright.

HELLO, IT'S US

Did you ever find it confusing that there were different email addresses for housing, repairs, and income queries? We've listened to you and made this process easier for someone like you – because now, it's all in one place.

To contact us, all you need to do is say 'hello!' That's right, our new email address for your PA Housing queries is simply hello@pahousing.co.uk

When you send us an email, you'll get a personalised response and a reference number for your case. We'll also tell you who you can expect to be contacted by.

There's no longer any need to be rolling in deep thought, trying to remember all those pesky other addresses. Just say hello!