

Summer Newsletter

teachers' housing association

September 2024



Hello from Guy, our new Chief Executive

I have been with Teachers now for three months and am pleased to announce that I have recruited a permanent team to join me in running Teachers. Claire Boyer (finance director) started early August and Diane Palmer (operations director) will join the team at the end of September 2024.

In July the Board approved the new customer engagement and communication strategy. Thank you for the overwhelming positive feedback on our new direction of travel. We already started the work to implement our commitments. We are currently recruiting tenants to be part of our new Tenant Influence Panel who will play an important role in influencing Teachers' strategies, policies and housing management as well as challenging us constructively on our performance.

This year we are eager to start our stock condition programme whereby we will look to visit every single home to assess the condition. That will help us to come up with a clear and prioritised investment plan to roll out over the coming years.

I have met many of you as I travel up and down the country to see all Teachers' properties. Thank you for making me feel welcome, I look forward to bumping into more of you as I do my rounds on a regular basis.

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Making a complaint

We will do our best to give you a great service. We also know that sometimes we will get it wrong.

If this happens, please let us know. You can make a complaint in any way that you like: by email, by phone or in person.

We will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and respond fully within 10 working days from the date we acknowledge your complaint. If your complaint is not resolved it can be escalated to stage 2 for a senior manager to review.

You can see our complaints policy on our website or ask us or your scheme manager to give you a copy.

Improving what we do for you

Over the past few months we have started making some changes to ensure we improve our services and communication with you. We want to involve you in what and how we do at Teachers' and you would have seen opportunities to influence what we do.

We have recently updated the information on our website. We will continue to make improvements over the coming year, but we hope our tenants who have access to the internet will find the information useful.

Thank you to those who applied to be on our Tenant Influence Panel. We still have some spaces available, if you are interested, please email us at enquiries@teachershousing.org.uk with your contact details for an informal interview to talk through what being part of the panel will involve. There is also more information available on the website about the panel and its terms of reference (what it is set up to do).

We are currently in the process to recruit a second permanent housing manager to help manage properties alongside the very capable Sophia Greenberg. In the meantime we have Aisling Hodson in place while we bring a permanent member onboard.

Damp and mould

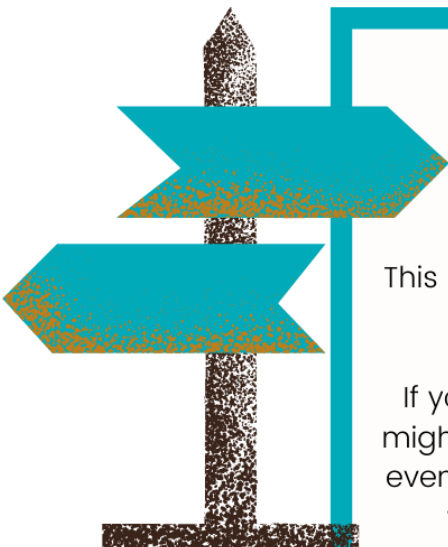
We take damp and mould very seriously at Teachers.

This is something that usually gets worse over the winter months, so we want to give you some helpful information now, before the winter months.

If you notice any musty smells, dark spots, or peeling paint in your home, you might be dealing with damp and mould. These can appear on walls, ceilings, or even around windows. It's important to act quickly! Start by ventilating the area well and wiping down any visible mould with a cloth and soapy water.

Then, let us know right away so they can address any underlying issues. Keeping your home dry and well-ventilated can help prevent mould from coming back.

If you have any concerns or need further assistance, don't hesitate to speak to us.



Keeping your homes safe – our health and safety obligations



**Your safety
comes first**

As your landlord we are responsible to ensure your home is safe. There are specific legal and regulatory requirements we must follow to do this. We want to share this with you, so we can work together on this. This is especially important where we need access from you where we need to do checks inside your home.

Gas safety checks

If you have a gas boiler in your home, our gas contractors will need access to your home each year to complete a landlord gas safety certificate and to complete any works that are required to allow them to issue a satisfactory certificate.

Electrical safety checks

We need to undertake checks of your fixed wiring every 5 years or when a new tenancy begins. These checks are made on the wiring which runs under the floor and behind the walls, from the incoming meter to sockets and switches.

Fire risk assessments

We instruct a specialist to assess the fire risk of common space, usually halls and stairs, of our properties. The cycle of inspection varies according to the risk from each year to every 3 years. You can help to keep your building safe by keeping your escape route clear of items such as bikes and pushchairs.

Asbestos checks

We instruct a specialist to check known asbestos in our common areas each year and instruct other checks if we think there is a risk eg big repairs which might disturb asbestos.

Water safety checks

We instruct a specialist to inspect our known water assets if they are shared between households. The cycle of inspection varies according to the risk of the building. You should let us know if your water is too hot or cold and you should flush toilets and run taps and showers if you are returning home after being away for over a week.

Lifts checks

We instruct our insurer to check our lifts every 6 months and we send their reports to our lift contractors if any repairs are required.

Fire safety doors

We train colleagues to inspect our fire doors and report repairs. Sometimes our fire risk assessor will require a report from a door specialist or will raise a requirement to repair or replace them.

Paying your rent

Paying your rent and service charges is important. These payments must be kept up to date to keep your tenancy. If you are struggling, we are here to help you. Our aim is to do everything we can to support our tenants to sustain their tenancies, so you can feel safe and secure in your home.

How you can make payments

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to make payments.

Direct debit

Our preferred method of payment is direct debit. We can set that up for you and adjust it for you if you need to make a different monthly payment. You can get the form from the website or the head office.

Internet payment

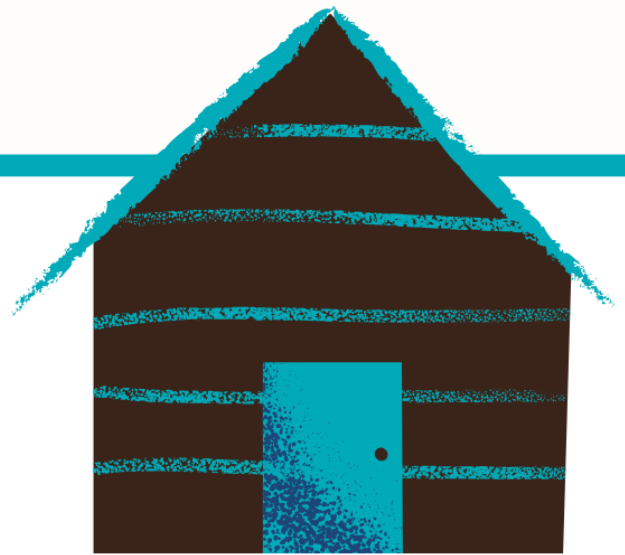
You can now pay online 24/7. Sign in (allpayments.net) to make a direct payment to us without speaking to Teachers', easy. You will need a payment reference number from us. This is not the same as your Teachers' tenancy reference number. If you don't have that number, please contact us at enquiries@teachershousing.org.uk and we will ping it to you. You can re-use the number each time you want to pay.

24 hour automated payment line

If you ring 0330 041 6497, you can make a payment at any time, day or night. You will need a payment reference number from us. This is not the same as your Teachers' tenancy reference number. Just contact us, and we will provide it to you. You can re-use the number each time you want to pay.

Phoning the office

You can still phone the office to pay if you need to, but we would encourage you to use one of the ways above if you are able to.



We want to hear your views...

Influence our new service standards.

At the end of this newsletter you will find some service standards we have put together on how we think we could provide services to you going forward.

If we put clear service standards in place it will help you, and it will help us.

We will work to provide services as promised in our service standards. You will know what to expect from us. And, you can hold us to account to keep the promises in our service standards.

Let us know what you think about these. Any feedback is welcome. Let your scheme manager know or email us at enquiries@teachershousing.org.uk. Please give us your comments by 15 October 2024.



SERVICE STANDARDS

PROPOSAL

We know it is important to you, and to us, to provide you with a consistent and reliable service.

Our service standards are our promise to you on what you can expect from us, and for you to hold us to account to.

DAY TO DAY CONTACT

You can contact us at any time by email or by phone or find information on our website.

CONTACT DETAILS

Email: enquiries@teachers.org.uk

Phone: 0207 440 9440

Website: teachershousing.org.uk

AVAILABILITY

The phone and email address will be monitored weekdays between 10am and 4pm. During that time, we will always have someone dedicated to the phone and email inbox.

PHONE CALLS

If we miss your call, we will return any phone messages within 1 working day.

EMAILS

For emails, we will respond within 2 working days. For more complex queries, we will acknowledge within 2 working days and provide a full response within 10 working days.





SERVICE STANDARDS

PROPOSAL

HOW WE WILL TREAT YOU

We will always provide you with a professional and friendly service. That means that we will be inclusive, treat you with respect, and listen to you. We want to get to know you by listening to and understanding your unique needs. This will help us to tailor our services to your needs and provide you with the help and support you want and need.



COMMUNICATING WITH YOU

If English is not your first language, we will provide a translation or interpreter if needed.

COMPLAINTS

We will do our best to be a great landlord. Sometimes we will get this wrong, and we will welcome your complaint so that we can put things right for you and learn from our mistakes.

All stage 1 complaints (new complaints) will be acknowledged within 5 working days and responded to within 10 working days from the acknowledgement. If your complaint is escalated to stage 2 (the final stage), we will acknowledge it within 5 working days and respond within 20 working days.

This is in line with our complaints policy and the expectations of the Housing Ombudsman.



SERVICE STANDARDS

PROPOSAL

REPAIRS

We will use contractors or handy people, depending on where you live, to carry out repairs on our behalf. Our repairs service will carry out repairs as follows:

Emergency repairs: 24 hours

Urgent repairs: 5 working days

Routine repairs 28 working days

DEALING WITH DAMP AND MOULD

We take any cases of damp and mould very seriously. It is important to be aware of damp and mould and how to prevent it. We have helpful information on our website about damp and mould and we will include information about it in our communications to you.

Once you have reported damp and mould, we will be in contact within 2 working days.

Once we have completed any damp and mould works, we will always check in with you afterwards to make sure you are happy with the service that we provided and that any damp, mould and condensation problems are resolved.

KEEPING YOUR HOME SAFE

We want your home to be safe. Once a year we will need access to carry out a gas safety check, if you have a gas supply in your home. We will need access every five years to carry out an electrical safety check in your home.

Legally you must give us access to carry out these safety checks. We will always request access in advance and arrange a time that works for you.





SERVICE STANDARDS

PROPOSAL

MANAGING ASB

We believe everyone has the right to live peacefully in their homes. We will provide advice and useful information to help you deal with any anti-social behaviour via our website.

Your housing manager will be able to assist and support with any anti-social behaviour. They will respond to any contact within 2 working days, unless it is an emergency, and agree the next steps with you.

AIDS AND ADAPATIONS

Throughout our lives our needs can change. If you find that you need adjustments to your home so you can get around more easily and safely, please contact us.

We'll assess your requirements in support you in line with our aids and adaptations policy.

COMMUNAL AREAS

We will inspect your scheme at least four times per year to ensure we are satisfied with the external appearance, cleanliness, external and communal repairs, and any health and safety checks. We will communicate in advance when this is planned for and welcome any tenants to join us.

We will carry out a home condition survey at least once every 5 years. This will assess the condition inside your home so that we can plan for cyclical repairs and any kitchen and bathroom replacements.





SERVICE STANDARDS

PROPOSAL

RENT AND SERVICE CHARGES

Rents will be increased once per year, from 1 April. We always send you the rent information in advance of 1 April. We will increase rents in line with the government's rent rules.

We operate variable service charges for all homes. This is set annually and changes on 1 April each year. This means that every year you pay service charges based on an estimate of the costs for that year plus the difference from the last known year of actual costs. So, if there was a shortfall in our estimate it will be added to the new estimate. If the estimate was higher than the actual costs, your estimated charges will be reduced.

We will answer any rent and service charge queries within 1 month.

Where possible, we will meet at your scheme once per year to discuss the service charges for the following year to give you an opportunity to give input.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

To continue to look after your home, we need you to pay your rent and service charges. This should be done on the 1st of the month, in advance.

We offer the following payment options:

- Direct debit (preferred option)
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- Internet payment through a link on our website
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- 24-hour automated payment line – 0330 041 6497

What we will do is:

Send you a quarterly rent statement so that you can see your balance.

Support you to make any claims for housing or other benefits.

Signpost you to any support agencies if you are struggling to pay your rent and service charges.



SERVICE STANDARDS

PROPOSAL

SHELTERED SCHEMES

For tenants living in our sheltered scheme, we will:

- Provide an emergency call system in each property which is monitored 24/7 either by scheme staff or a central control centre.
- Provide support accessing additional support if required, including assistance with benefit claims and occupational therapist referrals.
- Complete regular Health & Safety checks in both individual properties and any communal areas.
- Complete a personal support plan with each tenant annually, unless a disclaimer is completed.
- Hold an annual tenant meeting/scheme walkabout in the summer months, to take place at the scheme.
- Hold an annual service charge consultation meeting at the scheme.

TENANT INFLUENCE

We have a Tenant Influence Panel in place that gives tenants the opportunity to influence our strategies and policies, scrutinise our performance and carry out deep dives into specific topics.

We will also provide a variety of other opportunities for tenants to influence what we do and how we do it.

These are meetings, consultations, surveys, focus groups, estate inspections, newsletters, performance. We will also support any resident-led activities.

