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Domestic Abuse Services

For over 40 years, Housing for Women has been supporting women and children in London escaping domestic violence and abuse.



New Rent Collection Service



We are pleased to announce that Touchstone Property Services began collecting rental income on behalf of Housing for Women from the beginning of December 2023.

This means that Touchstone is now responsible for managing how you pay your rent to us. If you have any questions about your account, you should call them directly on **01225 259274**. You can also email them at **h4w@touchstoneresi.co.uk**.

You should have also received an introductory letter from Touchstone telling you about their income collection processes and how to contact one of their dedicated Income Collection Team members.

If you didn't get this letter, please let us know.

Ethel Fosu, Head of Housing, said: **“Touchstone Property Services comes highly recommended for their commitment to ensuring a seamless experience for tenants. We look forward to working with them to deliver an improved experience for our customers.**

“Please remember that although Housing for Women will still be your landlord, we will no longer manage your rent account or be able to assist you with queries about payments.”

If you have any concerns about this change, please get in touch with our Customer Service Team on 020 7501 6120 or email us at customer.service@h4w.co.uk



Our Christmas opening hours

Our offices will close at 4pm on Friday 22nd December 2023 for the festive period and remain closed over the Bank Holidays. We will reopen for business at 9am on Wednesday 27th December 2023.

Our office will also be closed from 4pm on Friday 29th December 2023 and reopen on Tuesday 2nd January 2024 at 9am.

If you need to report any repairs or urgent matters during these times, please call 0207 501 6120.

We wish all our customers and partners Season's Greetings!



Congratulations!

Congratulations to Ms Marie Louise Pambu and Ms Luula Haile, whose names were entered into our prize draw, having completed our Tenant Satisfaction Survey in the spring. Ms Pambu won a Salter digital hot air fryer, while Ms Haile received a Samsung Galaxy tablet.

Thank you to our contractors and partners who kindly gifted the prizes!

Ms Haile said: "I am delighted to win this tablet as I am currently studying and had no IT equipment. This prize will help me with my studies."



Ms Pambu said: "It was lovely to win this prize, and I look forward to using my new air fryer."



MCP Updates



We have been partnering with MCP Property Services to maintain your homes and provide repairs since Oct 2021.

Here's the progress we've made between July and October 2023:

95%



Customer satisfaction for MCP's reactive repairs was more than 95%

11 days

MCP completed responsive repairs within 11 days. Our target is 14 days

92%

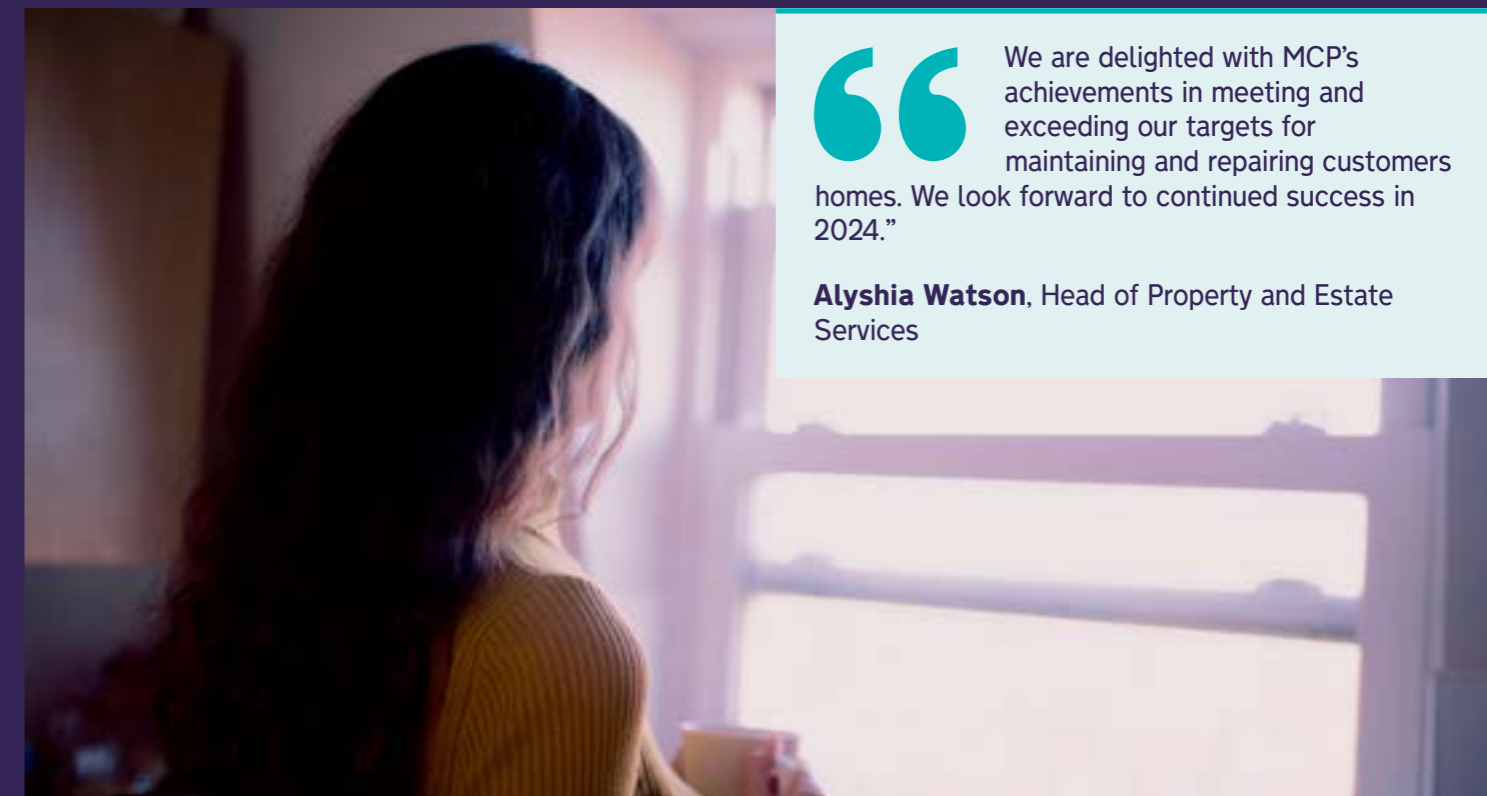


More than 92% of first-time fix repairs were completed by MCP during their first visit to your home. This beats our earlier target of 82%

97%



MCP attended more than 97% of the appointments they made with you. The target is 97%.



We are delighted with MCP's achievements in meeting and exceeding our targets for maintaining and repairing customers homes. We look forward to continued success in 2024."

Alyshia Watson, Head of Property and Estate Services

Active Asset Management

What is it?

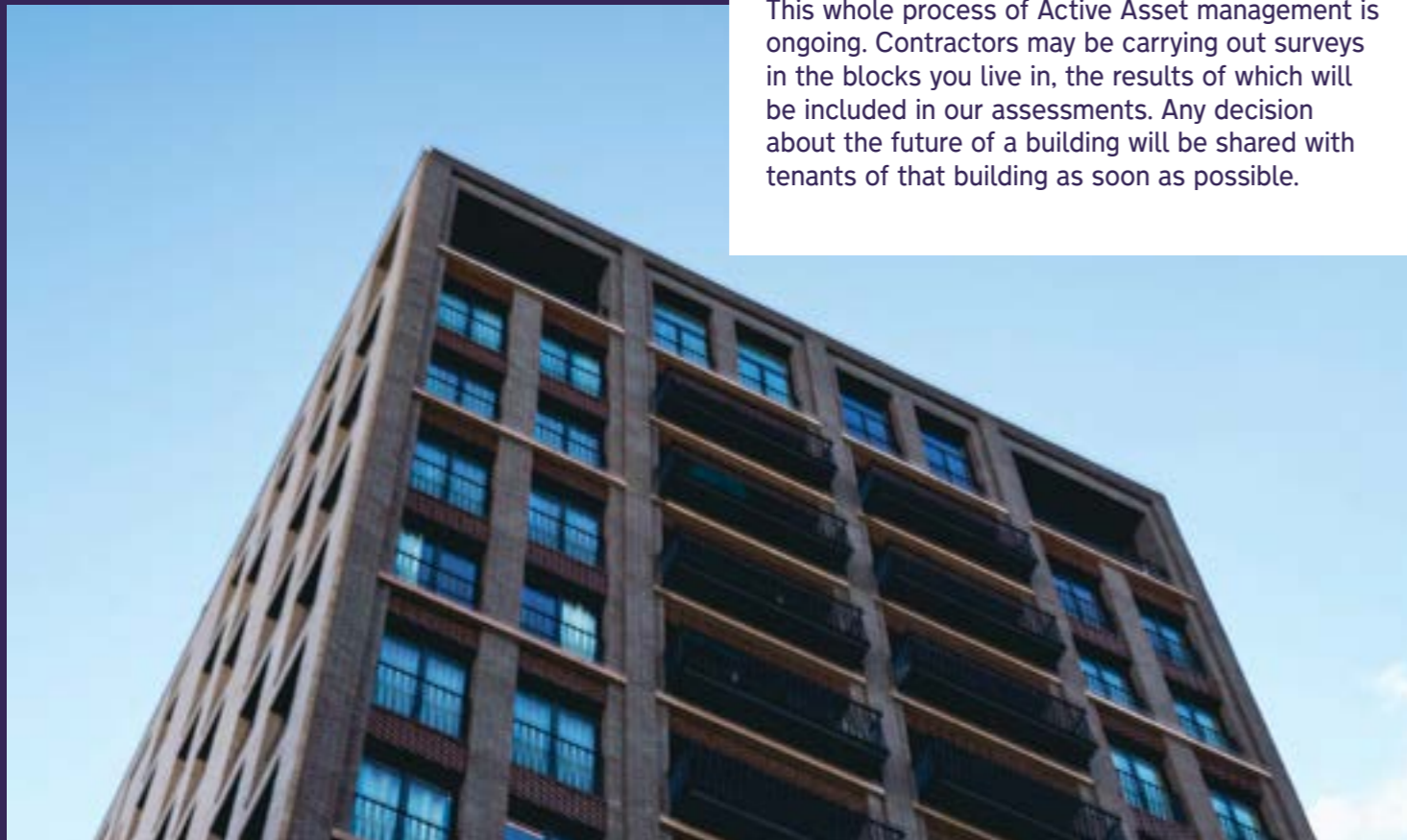
Like many other landlords we regularly review the condition of our stock. We then calculate how much money is required to maintain that stock or bring it up to date with current standards over a 30-year period and we also assess how much rent we will collect for that property over the same period.

This then gives us a framework to make decisions about our stock on a value for money basis.

If the costs are more the income over the 30 year period we must make difficult decisions, including:

- + Continue to invest in the property and maintain social rent levels – this may mean other properties will have less investment
- + Invest in the property and change tenure to market rented – for an initial investment this could bring significantly higher levels of income which we can invest in our remaining stock.
- + Decant the property and sell it on the open market – use the proceeds to fund investment in our remaining stock
- + Transfer the tenanted stock to another registered social landlord who is more able to invest in the property

This whole process of Active Asset management is ongoing. Contractors may be carrying out surveys in the blocks you live in, the results of which will be included in our assessments. Any decision about the future of a building will be shared with tenants of that building as soon as possible.



Just Ask is awarded Estate Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance contract

Following a retendering exercise, we are pleased to announce that we have awarded a 5 year contract to Just Ask Estate Services (Just Ask) to work with us to keep our estates clean and tidy for you.

Here's a summary of what Just Ask will provide

- + clean all communal entrance halls, lobbies, hallways, stairs/stairwells, lifts, landings, corridors, and other shared communal areas
- + collect and dispose of litter, tidy your refuse bin stores, and prune trees and shrubs around your estate.

Your Just Ask teams will be wearing purple and black uniforms. All staff will wear photo ID badges.



We know there is more work to be done to rebuild trust with customers around the delivery of Estate Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance. Please replace text with: Just Ask also understands this and are jointly committed to this new partnership to make our estates more inviting places.”

Alyshia Watson, Head of Property and Estate Services



Become an Estate Champion!

We are looking for Estate Champions to monitor this new service from a customer perspective for each estate and give us feedback. If you are interested, please email our Customer Service Team at customer.service@h4w.co.uk (subject line Estate Champion).

Ealing DVA Services launches its new website

Our Ealing Domestic Violence and Abuse Service is pleased to announce the launch of its new website.

The site is a comprehensive and user-friendly tool designed to give women living in the London Borough of Ealing and across the UK information about domestic violence support they can access.

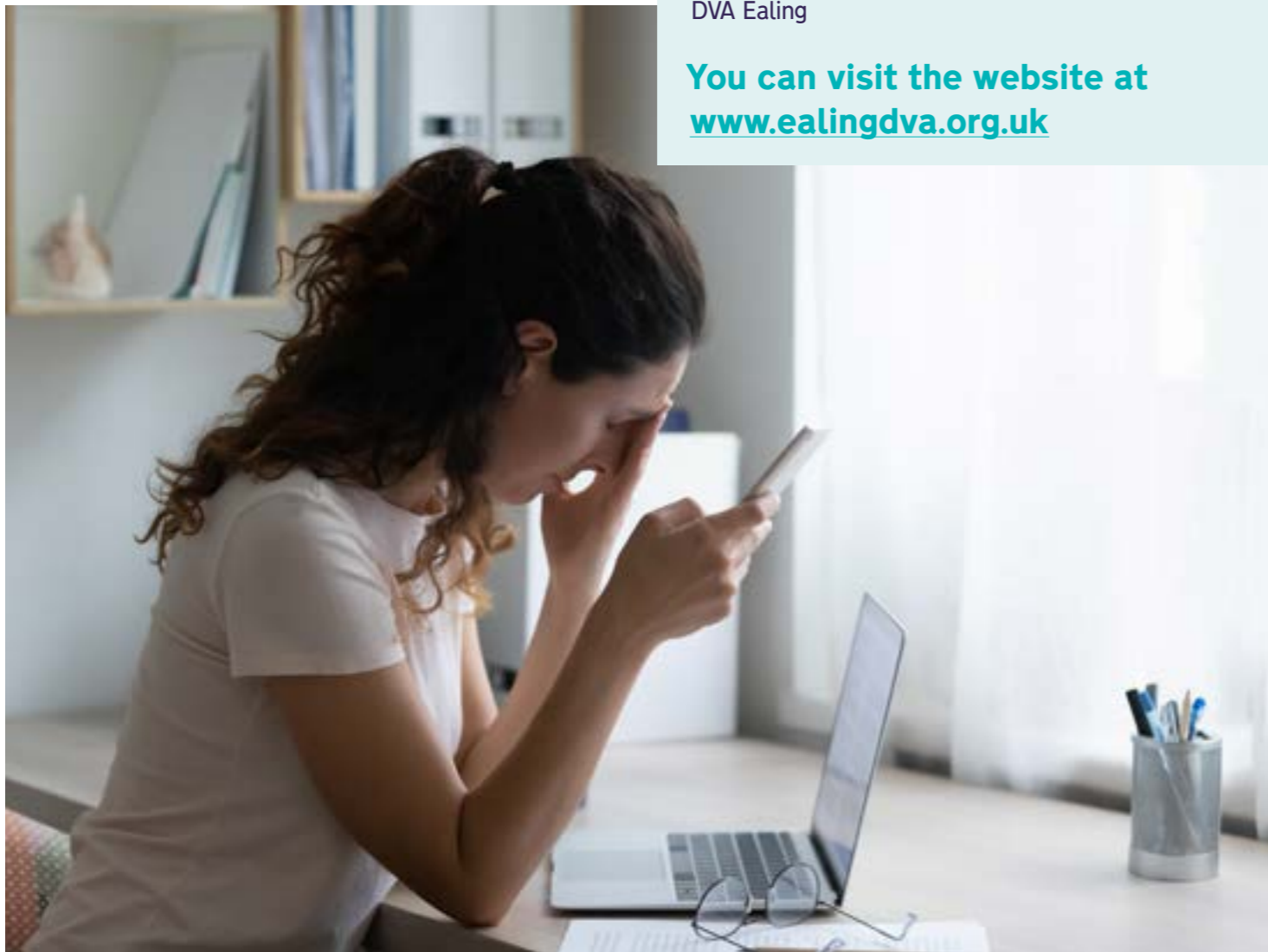


Our new website is an easy-to-use resource giving people access to information and guidance about domestic abuse.

Our mission is to empower women, including recognising the signs of violence. Reaching out for help is a crucial first step, and we hope our website will help women do this.”

Kizzy Anderson, Service Manager at DVA Ealing

You can visit the website at www.ealingdva.org.uk



Black History Month (BHM)

We celebrate BHM every year as part of our commitment to promote diversity and inclusion across our organisation. Here are some of the highlights from this year's Supported Housing events.

Our Greenwich DVA Service celebrated Black History Month with a 'Get together' at its refuge. Our residents and their children enjoyed several fun activities, including yoga, musical statues, African bead jewellery making, face art/painting and nail makeovers. There was also delicious food to share with cultural dishes ranging from African to Indian cuisine. The day was a great success!

Our Ealing team also welcomed service users and their children to its BHM celebrations. The event was open to both women from Ealing's domestic abuse Refuges as well as those from its Floating Support services. Everyone had a wonderful time listening to music, playing games and painting. The fun was topped off with delicious food, kindly donated by Nando's.



Thank you Mother Ariadne

Our Greenwich Domestic Abuse and Violence Service is pleased to be supported by Mother Ariadne van den Hof.

As a local vicar, Mother Ariadne works with several schools that collect and donate gifts for our refuge.

During this year's harvest festival, she sent us a selection of long-life foods, sanitary products, toiletries, and new bedding.

These were used in the Welcome Packs we give our new tenants when they stay with us. This way, every woman and her family have a selection of essential items in their room when they arrive. Surplus items are donated to residents at our refuge who are experiencing financial struggles.



We would like to thank Mother Ariadne for her kindness and hard work. Her thoughtfulness and the kindness of the schools supporting her work means a lot to our staff and the women and families who stay with us.”

Caron Stowe, Service Manager at Greenwich

E-scooter and e-bike safety

The London Fire Brigade (LFB) has reported a record number of fires caused by lithium batteries in e-bikes and e-scooters.

LFB said that many electric bikes and scooters caught fire while being charged, with many blazes caused by unregulated batteries bought online. So far this year, three people have died, with 51 people injured in fires believed to have been caused by faulty batteries that do not meet UK safety standards.



At Housing for Women, we want you to know the potential fire risks caused by e-scooters and e-bikes.

What do you need to do?

If you own an e-bike or e-scooter or any other electric chargeable device, please make sure you:

- + make sure the battery and charger meet UK safety standards and that you always use the correct charger
- + never charge your vehicle while sleeping or not at home
- + unplug the charger once it's finished charging
- + don't cover the charger, as this could lead to overheating
- + never tamper with the battery, and always follow the manufacturer's instructions

and

- + never keep an electric bike or scooter on a fire escape route. This blocks the escape route and can cause added dangers, including toxic fumes from exploding batteries.

If you see an electric bike or scooter battery catching fire, leave the building at once and call the fire brigade. Do not tackle the blaze yourself or try to move the vehicles.

Some helpful tips for the festive season

[Money-saving tips over Christmas](#)

With budgets continuing to be squeezed due to the cost-of-living crisis, visit our website for some tips to help you [save money over Christmas](#).

[Safety at home this Christmas](#)

Keep your family and home safe this Christmas by following the safety advice on our [website](#).



Some tips to get you through the winter

[Keep your home warm this winter](#)

Make sure your home is ready for the colder months. These tips on our website will help you save money on your energy bills and prepare your home for winter.

[Cold weather safety tips](#)

With winter now in full flow, here are some tips to keep [safe during the cold weather](#).



Damp and mould

During the winter season, we all want to keep our homes warm. Unfortunately, damp and mould can appear if you don't keep a small amount of fresh air flowing throughout your house or flat.

Because we are committed to giving you and your family a safe, warm, and comfortable home to live in, we want to reassure you that we take damp and mould extremely seriously – we will thoroughly investigate every report about the condition in your home.

Please get in touch with us if you notice signs of damp and mould so we can visit your property. When calling, please send photos and/or videos so we can assess the extent of the problem.

We will then visit your property within 10 days for immediate treatment – known as mould wash. We'll also give you practical advice for dealing with damp and mould.

If we need to investigate further, a surveyor will come and visit, where they will identify what remedial works are needed. They will then put together a treatment plan to make sure the damp and mould problem has been fixed once and for all.

To report damp and mould, please call us on **0207 501 6120**.

Here are some tips and advice to tackle damp and mould:

Minimise the amount of moisture in your home

Normal ordinary daily activities can produce a lot of moisture. This can be reduced by:

- + keeping the trickle vents on your windows open if you have them
- + covering pots and pans when cooking
- + drying your clothes outside when possible. If not, dry them in your bathroom with the window open and the extractor fan on
- + open a window or use an extractor fan (report it to us if your fan is broken) when cooking or bathing. Leave your windows open, or fans switched on for at least 20 minutes afterwards
- + when cooking or showering, it's a good idea to keep the door closed to stop moisture from going into other rooms
- + try not to use radiators to dry your clothes. This stops them from working properly, leading to a colder home and higher heating costs.

Improve air movement

- + avoid pushing your furniture or other large items directly against the wall and leave a small gap to allow air to flow. If you have a condensation problem, mould can form behind furniture or other items pushed against internal walls.

- + keep air bricks, trickle vents and extractor fans clear and open
- + avoid trying to draft-proof kitchen and bathroom windows, as these are prone to causing a build-up of condensation. This leads to damp.

Minimise cold surfaces

Heat your home to a reasonable level of warmth to help avoid damp building up. If you don't want to heat the whole of your property, open the doors to unheated rooms. We suggest heating your living room to 21 degrees and bedrooms to 18 degrees. These rooms do not need to be kept at these temperatures constantly, but you should aim to reach these levels for some of the day.

Wipe away condensation

First thing in the morning, use a dry cloth to wipe away condensation from windows and other areas of moisture which have built up overnight. If possible, ventilate these areas.

Treat outbreaks of mould

Use an anti-fungal spray to clean affected areas. This should stop mould from settling in and spreading further.

If none of the above tips resolve damp and mould in your home, you must contact us.

Please contact our Customer Service Team at: customerservice@h4w.co.uk or by calling us on: **0207 501 6120**.

KEEPING YOU INFORMED

We always want to ensure we deliver great homes and services for you; in fact, it is one of our key goals. An important way we do this is how we communicate with you. This includes giving you essential information and keeping you up to date.

Newsletter

Each quarter, we publish our Residents Newsletter, 'Connect'. A link to the digital newsletter will be posted on social media. It will also be emailed to you. We no longer print the newsletter because we want to be more environmentally - friendly. If you want a printed copy, please get in touch with our Communications Team at communications@h4w.co.uk or call our Customer Services Team on 0207 501 6120.

Annual Review

We publish our Annual Review every year, setting out what we have achieved in the previous twelve months.

We'll look at some of the highlights from 2023, share experiences from some of our tenants and service users, and publish figures showing our impact while delivering value for money for our customers. The next edition is due next March. We will let you know when it's published.



Our website

Our website has a lot of helpful information about what it is like to live with us. It's also a great resource, from getting involved with your housing association and neighbourhoods to accessing your housing services on our Customer Portal to the latest news.

Social media

You can stay updated with community information, Housing for Women updates, and news from the housing sector on our social media pages. We're on X (formerly Twitter), Instagram and Facebook. To better understand how you use social media and how we can reach you, we will be conducting a survey in 2024. Stay tuned for more information.

What is 'Connect'?

'Connect' is designed for you, and so if you have anything you would like us to cover in future issues or you have a comment to make, please do let us know by writing to: Connect Editor, Housing for Women, Sixth Floor, Blue Star House, 234 Stockwell Road, London SW9 9SP or emailing customerservice@h4w.co.uk.

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Housing4Women

Registered Charity No. 211351