

# Upgrading your homes

**We recently finished window replacements and other cyclical maintenance work at some of our Camden properties.**

**We're committed to improving the quality, comfort and energy efficiency of your homes. We hope the improvements we make will make your home more comfortable and enjoyable for years to come.**

As part of our ongoing maintenance programme, we will continue to assess properties for any additional work that may be required in the future.

We will let you know well in advance if your home will be included in our next round of works.

We're always here to help!

***Pictured on this page:** some of the homes that are now enjoying new windows.*





## Meet Veronica, our new Tenancy Services Officer

We're delighted to introduce Veronica Mathurin, the newest member of our team.

Veronica is our new Tenancy Services Officer, replacing Andrian David.

She will be assisting residents with all tenancy-related matters and can be reached on: 020 7625 1799 (select option 1) or by email at [housing@odu-dua.org](mailto:housing@odu-dua.org)

# What the 53-week rent year means for you

**Because of the way the calendar falls in this financial year, there are 53 Mondays instead of the usual 52. This happens every five-six years.**

A year with 53 Mondays affects our tenants, because your rent is due in advance every Monday.

### How do I calculate my monthly payments?

You will need to multiply your weekly rent by 53 and then divide by 12.

For example, if your rent is £120 per week, you would multiply this by 53 and then divide it by 12. This comes to £530.

### If you claim Universal Credit

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) is still calculating your monthly rent by multiplying your weekly rent by 52 and then dividing it by 12. It's up to you to pay us the difference.

For example, if your rent is £120 per week, your monthly rent payment will be £530. But the DWP will only pay you £520. You have to pay the extra £10.

### If you pay your rent weekly

There is no change. You should pay your rent each Monday as usual.



### If you get Housing Benefit

Your benefit will cover the change, as part of the normal payment cycle.

### What if I'm struggling to pay?

If you are facing financial difficulties, start by contacting your Tenancy Services Officer. They can help by agreeing a payment plan, advise you on benefits you might be able to claim and help you apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment from your local authority. If necessary, they can refer you for debt advice.

For more details, call on 020 7625 1799, or email us at [housing@odu-dua.org](mailto:housing@odu-dua.org)

## Have you got your FAB Card yet?

The Fit and Active Barnet (FAB) Card is a FREE annual membership, which gives people who live in Barnet discounted and free access to sessions and activities at Barnet's five Leisure Centres.

As well as up to 50% off most activities for adults, from Monday to Saturday children under eight get to swim for free, while kids aged eight to 15 swim for £1. You also get access to member-only activities.

If you're registered with the council because you're a carer, you get enhanced benefits, including free swimming.

To find out more, go to: [www.better.org.uk/fab-benefits](http://www.better.org.uk/fab-benefits)





# Winter Fuel Payments and Pension Credit

## Not everyone over state pension age now qualifies for winter fuel payments.

You will still get a winter fuel payment if you get Pension Credit or certain other benefits. Now is a good time to check if you are missing out on these benefits. **Nearly a million pensioners are missing out on Pension Credit alone!**



### Pension Credit

If you are over state pension age and you live alone, or with a partner who is also over state pension age, you can claim Pension Credit to top up your weekly income to the guaranteed level of £218.15 if you are single and £332.95 if you are a couple.

If you get Pension Credit, you will also qualify for winter fuel payments.

#### Pension Credit premium

If you are severely disabled, you could get an additional £81.50 each week. You would need to be claiming:

- Attendance Allowance
- the middle/highest care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- Armed Forces Independence Payment, or

- the daily living component of Adult Disability Payment, at the standard or enhanced rate.

You can call the Pension Credit claim line for advice by calling: 0800 99 1234.

### Mixed-age couples

If you are in a mixed-age couple, where one of you has not yet reached state pension age, you cannot get Pension Credit, but you may, as a couple, get Universal Credit instead.

If the younger partner is not working, they may get other means-tested benefits including Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance.

In all of these cases, as the older partner, you will also qualify for winter fuel payments.

For more advice about claiming benefits, call or email us.

### Winter Fuel Payments

If you qualify for a winter fuel payment:

- Your household will get £200 or £300 – depending on when you were born.
- You will get a confirmation letter in October or November
- Your payment will usually arrive in your bank account in November or December.

To check in detail if you are eligible, go to [www.gov.uk/pension-credit/eligibility](https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/eligibility)

For help and advice, call the Winter Fuel Payment Centre on: 0800 731 0160 or use the online form at: <https://secure.dwp.gov.uk/contact-winter-fuel-payments-centre/date-filter>

### Other help with heating bills

You could also get:

- a **Cold Weather Payment**, if you get certain benefits and the temperature drops to zero degrees Celsius or below for seven days in a row
- the **Warm Home Discount** – this is a £150 discount on your bills if you get Pension Credit or live in a low-income household, and/or
- help from the **Household Support Fund**, if you're eligible under your local council's rules – check on website for your local authority.

Be aware that this year, you won't get a cost-of-living payment, as you did in the past two years. This is because this scheme came to an end in 2023.

# I'm fed up. How do I complain?

If you're dissatisfied with our service, or something we (or our contractors) have done or failed to do, you have the right to raise a complaint.

## Start by contacting us

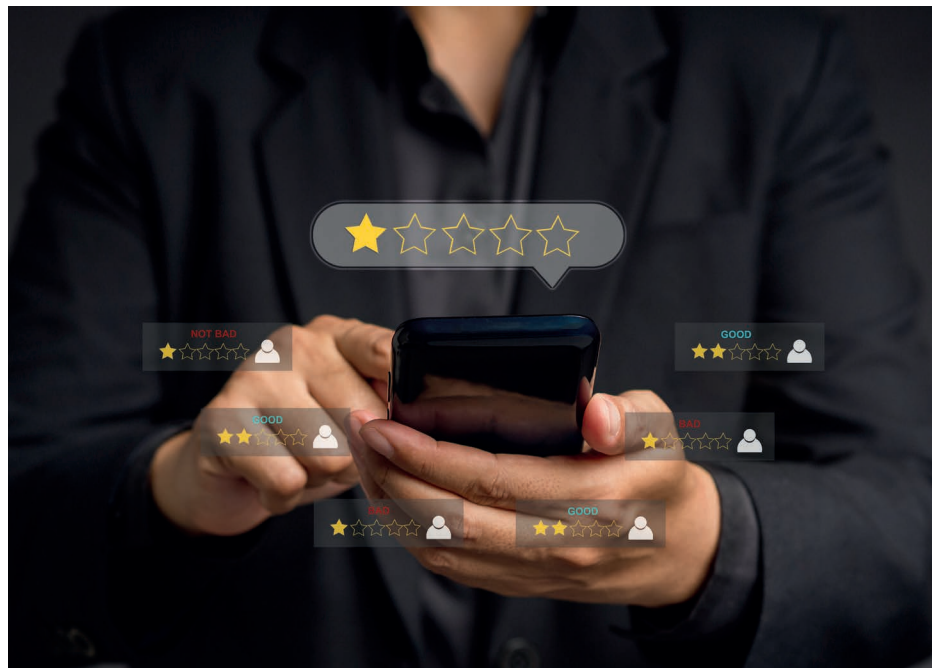
Get in touch with us to make a complaint in a way that works best for you. You can reach out in person, over the phone, by email, or by sending a letter to our office.

Whenever possible, we prefer receiving complaints in writing. Please include your full name, address, details of the issue, and how you'd like us to resolve it. This helps us address your concerns more efficiently.

## How we will respond

### Stage 1

At **Stage 1**, we aim to address your complaint quickly, offering an apology, explanation, or immediate action where needed. We'll acknowledge your complaint within five working days and provide an initial response, giving you time to share any extra information before we make a final decision within 10 working days. If



delays occur, we'll inform you with an explanation and a revised timeline.

If you're still dissatisfied after Stage 1, you have 28 days to let us know why you'd like a further review.

### Stage 2

At **Stage 2**, we conduct a more in-depth investigation. We'll acknowledge your complaint within five working days and discuss it with you if we need more details. You'll receive an updated pre-decision, allowing time for further input. We aim to issue a final decision within 20 working days, or we'll provide reasons for any delay.

For more information about how we handle complaints, including our definition of complaints and the types we can't accept, refer to pages 24-25 of your updated *Tenant Handbook*. Alternatively, you will find our complaints documents online on our website at [www.odu-dua.org/publications/#policies](http://www.odu-dua.org/publications/#policies)

### Still unhappy?

If you're not satisfied with our final response, you have 12 months to appeal to the independent Housing Ombudsman.

Visit [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk) for more details.



## Our Community Support Fund

We are pleased to report that several tenants have applied for our Community Support Fund, and we have successfully made our first payments to households in need.

We created this fund as part of our commitment to supporting Odu-Dua tenants who need financial help.

If you are facing unexpected financial challenges. Please do apply. Call us on 020 7625 1799, or email us at

[housing@odu-dua.org](mailto:housing@odu-dua.org) to find out more. Your application will be carefully reviewed by our Tenants' Panel.

We look forward to continuing this important work.



# Voluntary Right to Buy

**The Right to Buy scheme allows council tenants, and housing association tenants with the Preserved Right to Buy, to buy their home at a discount.**

The previous government had plans to extend a similar right to all housing association tenants. Because this extension scheme was not based on legislation, it was called the Voluntary Right to Buy.

These plans have now been dropped

and we know this is disappointing for residents who were hoping to buy their social homes.

However, the National Housing Federation, who carried out the Voluntary Right to Buy pilots for the previous government, say that



selling existing homes will make waiting lists longer.

The new government is prioritising increasing the amount of social housing across the country instead.

## Take good care of your garden

**A well-cared-for garden enhances your home's appearance and benefits your whole neighbourhood. But if you fail to look after it, we could take action.**

### Your responsibilities

To keep your personal garden in good condition, you need to:

- mow and weed the lawn regularly – aim to mow every one to two weeks in the summer and less often in winter
- prune shrubs and hedges to stop them growing over public pathways or neighbouring properties – a couple of times a year would be good
- weed garden beds, paths and driveways – do this by hand, or with a hoe, and consider 'mulching' (which is when you cover the soil with a layer of leaves, grass clippings, or compost to suppress new growth and improve the soil)
- clear fallen leaves, debris and litter – especially in the autumn
- look after patios, fences, or decking, keeping them free of moss or weeds, and
- avoid letting rubbish or non-garden items build up.

Don't forget that your plants will need watering in dry seasons.

### What if you need help?

If you're finding it difficult to maintain your garden due to health reasons, your age, or other factors, please contact us.

You may be able to apply for an award from a community support fund. Or you might do better to move to a property without a garden.



## Key performance indicators: Apr to Sept 2024

Rent	Target 2024-25	April to June 2024
Rent arrears	3.25%	3.94%
Rent collected	100.5%	100.1%

## We're listening and acting

### Thank you for taking phone calls from Acuity, our survey company.

We have contracted Acuity, an independent research company, to call residents who have recently used two of our core frontline services: repairs and your contact with staff.

We want to hear about your experiences, because they show us where we need to make improvements.

In future, when we have enough data to share, we will publish these satisfaction results in our newsletter, along with some of the comments you leave.



## Please use your bin chutes responsibly

Misusing chutes can lead to blockages, bad smells and attract vermin – as well as increasing your service charges, as we pass on the cost of sorting things out.

Keep things running smoothly by remembering the following.

- Use the right size bags, so they don't block the chute, and secure them properly, so their contents don't spill out.
- Don't throw down bulky items like boxes, furniture or large plastic containers into the chute – contact your local council to get your bulky waste items collected.
- Don't throw down items for recycling. Put paper, cardboard, glass and plastic bottles and trays in the recycling bins.

- Clean up after yourself. If you accidentally spill any rubbish or notice something amiss, please take a moment to clean it up.
- Report problems promptly. If there's a blockage or other problem, let us know straight away. Let us fix things before they become a larger problem.

By following these simple rules, you'll be contributing to a cleaner, healthier, and more enjoyable living environment for everyone.



**Phone:**  
020 7625 1799

**Email:**  
repairs@odu-dua.org  
housing@odu-dua.org

**Office address:**  
84–88 Kingsgate Road  
West Hampstead  
London NW6 4LA

**Website:** [www.odu-dua.org](http://www.odu-dua.org)

### Type of repair

All non-gas repairs during normal office hours

Non-gas emergency repairs outside office hours

Gas boiler/gas central heating breakdown (including an out-of-hours emergency)

Gas leak/smell

Total loss of gas/electricity

Total loss of water/external leak

### Who to contact

Email [repairs@odu-dua.org](mailto:repairs@odu-dua.org), OR phone 020 7625 1799 (option 2) to be directed to the team at Shian HA

Phone 020 7625 1799 (option 5) to be directed to Pinnacle

Phone 020 7625 1799 (option 3) to be directed to K&T Heating, OR 020 8269 4500 (direct line)

Phone the National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999

Call your energy provider

Call Thames Water on 0800 316 9800