

WINTER 2022

Pioneer Press



THE NEWSLETTER FOR RESIDENTS OF WOMEN'S PIONEER HOUSING

A letter to all Women's Pioneer Housing Residents

Dear resident,

In November we were saddened to hear of the tragic and avoidable death of Awaab Ishak who, after long exposure to mould within his home, died just aged 2. Awaab's death has been a reminder to us all working in social housing sector how extremely important it is to ensure your homes are warm and dry, and free from damp and mould.

Having received information about Awaab's death, I wanted to write to you during this very cold period, and let you know what we are doing to ensure your homes are free from damp and mould and how you can help.

Throughout 2023, we will be adjusting our annual Health & Safety inspections to include checking that homes are free from damp and mould. This will start in January with homes previously reporting damp or mould, and will continue through to the winter period 2023/2024, as we know that homes are much more likely to develop damp during winter and autumn months. If you know or suspect that your home is damp or has evidence of mould, please let us know by contacting our repairs team repairsresponseteam@womenspioneer.co.uk or call 0208 749 7112.

Our surveyors will initially visit to try to identify the cause of any damp and mould and then work with you and contractors to remove the causes of damp and mould. Sometimes these may be very easy to spot, e.g. if there has been a recent leak or there is a 'cold' outside wall. In some cases though, we may need specialist help and it may take us a bit longer to stop any damp re-occurring.

Damp is a serious condition that can affect your health. Whilst there may be ways to reduce the risks of damp and mould by preventing a build-up of moisture in your home (often referred to as condensation), once your home and walls show evidence of damp or mould, it usually needs specialist help to remove it. If you have any signs of damp or mould in your home, it is important that you do not try to manage this by yourself but let us know. We can offer you guidance and treat any areas where moisture is collecting, then work with you to monitor the moisture content in your home to help prevent damp or mould returning.

In our final Pioneer Press for 2022, we have a short article about condensation, ahead of producing more information early next year.

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I hope you enjoy our final edition of Pioneer Press for this year and wish you a wonderful Christmas, and a safe and happy New Year.

Tracey Downie
Chief Executive

Resident Board members

Susan Bernard Head of HR & Corporate Services, reflects on a summer of recruitment for a very different group of people

Increasing representation from residents so that we can be sure you have a voice has been a key focus for us over the last few years. From the growth in activities of the Resident Engagement and Scrutiny Panel (RESP) and the establishment of the Homes and Services Committee, we continue to find inclusive ways to ensure your feedback is a central part in our decision making, informing and influencing services, future priorities and the strategic decisions that impact on all residents.

RESP and HASC are already delivering in these areas and the commitment and impact from members of both groups will continue to drive our work improving services.

For many years Women's Pioneer Board has had at least one resident. In November 2021, that member stood down although they remain active on HASC.

In the summer of 2022 we published an article in this newsletter and on our website for more residents to apply to join the Board, the voice of residents is crucial to decision making and I was pleased to be part of the conversation with some of you. Those conversations moved on and some led to applications, which led to interviews.



It really was a summer of interest which culminated in the final Board meeting for 2022 agreeing to co-opt three residents who were successful in the applications and interviews. We congratulate and welcomed Maryam Antonini-Soumaré, Cheryl Hudson and Leyla Rahman to their first Board meeting on 6 December.

We will be holding a Special General Meeting in the New Year to formally elect Maryam, Chery and Leyla to the Board along with the external candidates who were successful in their applications.

Representation and diversity on the Board has shifted considerably as a result of this campaign; three residents will work as members alongside the senior management team on the strategic decisions to shape the organisation going forward.

I am particularly pleased that we are seeing members who have been instrumental in shaping activities on RESP and HASC continuing in their commitment and engagement in a different way.

We thank Maryam, Cheryl and Leyla for their interest, congratulate them on their success and welcome them onto the Board of WPH.

Paying your rent and Direct Debit Prize Draw

Many of our residents call our phone line regularly to make their rent payment by card. As a result our payment line can become very busy and residents can't always get through. We would like to encourage you to set up Direct Debits, as this is the quickest and most convenient way to pay your rent.



If you pay your rent by Direct Debit and your rent account is not in arrears you will be entered into a quarterly prize draw to win a £50 voucher of your choice. Your Housing Officer will be happy to help you set up a Direct Debit over the phone and advise what you need to do to ensure you have an up to date rent account. We will then announce our first 2 winners at the end of March 2023!

We understand that Direct Debits are not suitable for everyone and you may still wish to pay your rent by card over the phone.

If you do not need to talk to us about your rent, we have an automated 24 hour payment line which you can access by selecting option 4 when you call. You will need your Allpay rent card with your 19 digit payment reference number to access this service, so if you need us to order one for you, please email housingmanagement@womenspioneer.co.uk with your name and address stating that you would like a rent card.

My first impressions



Our Chief Executive Tracey Downie, shares her impressions after her first 6 months in the role.

I joined Women's Pioneer Housing Association (WPH) knowing that I wanted to work in a housing association with a particular focus on equality and resident engagement. Leading WPH with our focus on ensuring single women have equal access to good housing, is very rewarding.

At WPH, I think we do things differently and this stems from our legacy. Our founders wanted to ensure that single women were able to live in good quality homes in the safer areas across London and I believe we are achieving this.

In these first few months I have been able to visit our larger schemes in Hammersmith & Fulham, Ealing, Putney and Kensington & Chelsea. I have been warmly greeted by residents welcoming me into their home and talking about the reasons for renting a WPH flat. I was surprised to see how many residents have been with WPH for decades and pleased to note that WPH residents come from such varying backgrounds and a wide range of professions.

Although many I have spoken to have

lived in and around West London for most of their lives and wanted to stay in West London, I have also met residents who have lived and worked in many different countries, and had fascinating stories to tell.

Our founders wanted single women to be able to live in good residential areas and, having visited many of our properties in London, I am happy to see that we are still able to offer homes that are aesthetically pleasing and very desirable.

Like many housing associations though we have homes that are no longer able to offer the level of quality residents expect. There are only a few of these and we are working to modernise these and where possible, build new homes to replace some of our outdated buildings.

I am keen to increase satisfaction with our services over the next 2 years. We will be working with resident groups, our scrutiny panel (RESP) and using your feedback to make the right changes to the way work.

I have also met members of our Resident Scrutiny Panel (RESP) and I am very impressed with the work RESP do. RESPs' professional and open approach to scrutinising our work and their commitment to engaging with us to help us improve services for all residents, is proving invaluable.

What I have learnt from residents

We don't receive a high volume of complaints and that's good. However, most of our complaints are about our communications. Feedback from sat-

isfaction surveys, mystery shopping results and reviews of our complaints all point to concerns about the way we communicate with residents. This is often around WPH failing to keep residents informed or not being clear about our service and what residents can expect. This is an area that we are collectively determined to improve on and in 2023, I am hoping we will be able to demonstrate these improvements.

Residents have also told me that we should make more use of stories about their housing experiences to promote our work, help to influence other Housing Associations, or help to secure charitable funding that supports our work. We feel that including our own residents' stories in our literature or on our website, will help to highlight the inequalities single women face, and ultimately promote our work so we can assist more single women find good quality homes.

I have also learnt that residents in some of our older homes want us to improve the energy efficiency (including windows) in their homes. This is particularly more important as we all struggle to deal with climate change as well as the rising costs of our utility bills. In the past our focus has been on improving kitchens and bathrooms. Over the next few years and as we are nearing the end of the kitchen and bathroom programme, we certainly will be prioritising work to improve the energy efficiency of all our homes and have already started to seek grants to help us do this.

What I'm working on for next year

There has been a lot of new legisla-

tion for social housing landlords over the past few years.

In 2023 we will continue to implement these and ensure we are meeting housing standards. One of our key areas has been to increase representation from residents giving residents a voice, and learning more from resident feedback. Just recently we invited residents to apply to join our management Board. I am really pleased that this recruitment was successful and we now have 3 residents on our Board who will be able to work with me and the senior management team on the strategic decisions that impact residents.

During the Summer I was able to speak to staff, representatives from RESP and review feedback from resident surveys and complaints that we have collected throughout the year. I have been using the outcome of these discussions and reviews to develop our new 5-year corporate plan for 2023 – 2027.

The corporate plan will set out our targets and objectives and what we expect to achieve within the next 5 years, taking into consideration new housing legislation and the results of the discussions and feedback during the summer. The corporate plan will be published next year.

I am keen to increase satisfaction with our services over the next 2 years. We will be working with resident groups, our scrutiny panel (RESP) and using your feedback to make the right changes to the way work.

I want to make sure that residents are satisfied that we are delivering a good service and look forward to working with many of you over the coming years as we strive to be an excellent social housing landlord.

Reducing our carbon footprint

Scientists, experts and governments around the world have been speaking up about climate change and its negative effect on people's lives. With global temperatures rising we see changes in rainfall patterns and rising sea levels. This increases the risk of heatwaves, floods and droughts among other unforeseen events.

In the UK we are already starting to experience some of these issues – in summer 2022 London experienced the highest temperature recorded in history. Even some of our residents have suffered damage to their flats due to floods in their residential areas. The climate changes we are facing affect our personal property, working and living patterns and our health.

Climate change exists largely due to greenhouse emissions – human made pollution – that blanket the earth and trap the sun's heat. To measure greenhouse emissions, we use the term carbon footprint which refers to the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of different activities. These can refer to individual, industrial or organisational activities. In the UK, the average carbon footprint per person is about 10 tonnes per year. These numbers amount to double the world average.

As individuals, there are different ways we can help reduce our carbon footprint. A really simple way to contribute to decreasing emissions is to cut back on the amount of paper we use at home, work or school. Paper has a surprisingly high carbon footprint and paper production industry is responsible for about 7% of the global greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, discarded paper is a major contributor to the total waste in landfills.



Reducing the use of paper or even going paper free can have an immensely positive impact on the environment. Using digital technology to communicate is a great alternative to cut back on paper waste. Scanning, using digital documents, emails and text messages is a really simple way to make a difference in everyday life. When using paper is absolutely necessary, make sure to print on both sides of the page and recycle afterwards.

We can all contribute and move towards more sustainable practices. At WPH we invite residents to sign up to our email only communications. Plus, using digital alternatives has other advantages:

- It's quick and easy to use on your computer, mobile phone or other digital devices. You can access your email from home or anywhere you have internet access!
- It takes less time to reach you. In case of any urgent announcements, WPH will be able to contact you almost instantly even if you are not at home.
- Less clutter and fewer envelopes on your doormat.
- Easy to file and find information when you most need it.

If you would like to be added to our email communications list please visit: <https://womenspioneer.co.uk/sign-up-for-email-only/>

Filling out the form only takes a few minutes, and we will be in touch!

Condensation, damp and mould

What is Condensation?

This is when warm, moist air comes into contact with a cold surface such as windows or cold walls. It forms on cold surfaces when the water vapour in the air cools and becomes liquid. Often you'll see condensation on windows, metal pipes and concrete walls in the form of little droplets of water.

Why is it important to reduce condensation?

If not removed, condensation can lead to the development of unsightly mould growth. Mould will grow on organic materials where there is moisture and a lack of ventilation. All homes have plenty of organic materials such as wood, drywall and other building materials. Mould needs 24 - 48 hours of moisture to begin to grow. If organic materials stay damp for more than 24 hours, mould may start to grow.

How does condensation develop in my home?

Condensation forms through excessive moisture. Moisture is naturally occurring through day to day activities - cooking, taking baths and showers and even consuming meals creates moisture in the air. When there is a build-up of moisture though and nowhere for the moisture to go or your home is not warm enough for the moisture to evaporate or 'dry out', that moisture becomes condensation.

We can't prevent the creation of moisture but there are practical measures we can take to help keep moisture low.

How can I reduce the level of moisture in my home?

There are obvious things which cause moisture problems in the home and water leaks are one of them. These are things such as leaking pipes, leaking taps or a leaking shower. If you find or suspect that you have any of these issues, please report them to us so we can resolve them.

There are also some simple measures you can take to produce less moisture or to contain the level of moisture in your home.

1. If you use a room on a regular basis, such as a living room and the weather is not cold outside, open a window slightly to improve the ventilation in the room, and let any excess moisture out.
2. When cooking food, cover pans with a lid. This helps reduce moisture circulating in the air.
3. If you have an extractor hood, always use this when cooking as it is designed to help reduce moisture when cooking.
4. If they are not automated, do remember to switch on mechanical ventilation installed in bathrooms on when taking showers and baths. (Let us know if you have a mechanical ventilation system that is not working).
5. When you are running a bath, keep the door closed to prevent damp air circulating into other rooms and space.
6. When drying clothes indoors, dry clothes in a bathroom with the door closed (and windows open if you have one) until the clothes are fully dry. This helps to contain moisture within a single space.
7. If you have a tumble dryer, ensure it is correctly vented so that air and

moisture isn't being emitted into your home.

8. Do not heat up cold rooms in the evening by opening the door to heated rooms. The warm and humid air will condensate on the cold walls of the room.

What if I find condensation in my home

If you have condensation in your home, you may be at risk of getting damp and mould and it is important that you contact us. We will visit you and work with you to remove this risk of any damp or treat any damp or mould we find.



We will be producing more guidance and tips in January including safe household cleaning products that are readily available and can be used to help prevent mould growing on surfaces. This will be on our website which is updated regularly. Visit www.womenspioneer.co.uk/news/

To report a repair, we offer different ways to do this:
Online visit www.womenspioneer.co.uk/report-a-repair/

By email send it to repairsresponseteam@womenspioneer.co.uk
Or call us on 020 8749 7112 and select option 1

WPH Communications review

Since implementing quarterly service satisfaction surveys in 2018 to tenants, it became apparent to WPH, an area which can be improved within their services is Communications.

In late October 2022, RESP carried out an in-depth scrutiny review of WPH communications, with a view to improve services and therefore, residents' satisfaction with it. Members of RESP carried out the various tasks anonymously and reported back their findings to WPH

The review was comprehensive and involved a number of different exercises. RESP suggested and agreed the activities to undertake.

These are listed below:

Mystery shop: 16 scenarios were tested across different areas of the business using different communication methods.

Review of anonymous complaint: a complaint about an outstanding repair was reviewed which had communication failure and follow up at its heart. RESP members met with staff members involved and discussed where things went wrong and what lessons we had learned.

Discussion with customer facing staff on communications: RESP members met staff from different parts of the organisation to discuss challenges, struggles and successes with communications in order to understand and come up with joint solutions.

Call data analysis: calls over a period of 30 days were assessed, including their number, how many different

people called, if numbers were stored on the system, if CRM (Customer relationship management) records were made and the topic of calls.

Quarterly satisfaction survey comment analysis: comments from quarterly satisfaction surveys were analysed and themed with recommendations for improvement.

The Customer Service Standard was reviewed: this document outlines how long it will take WPH staff to respond to an email, letter and phone call and what residents can expect when they contact WPH.

Meeting other organisation's residents: RESP tried to set up a number of meetings with other organisations who handle calls in different ways. RESP managed to meet Octavia residents who have a call centre. **Survey:** a survey was designed by RESP which included three new tenant satisfaction measures from the regulator, alongside asking tenants how they communicated with WPH and their satisfaction with those methods. 650 residents were emailed, we received 36 responses.

Findings and recommendations: When going through the multiple recommendations and findings from the review it was clear that a list of small actions which solved small individual elements wasn't going to be appropriate. A couple of examples below will help illustrate this:

Staff were not updating systems as systematically as they should, the system also wasn't allowing them oversight of their tasks in an easy manner.

This means management oversight can be missing too. One solution might be to implement a new IT system which removes steps involved in recording contacts and provides management data oversight, but this is also about culture and ownership of the staff member taking the initial contact, as well as the volume of calls that are received, making it hard to get contacts recorded before the next call comes in. So then further solutions follows that we need to improve our website, and perhaps bring in alternative methods of contact to calls via self-service.

The issue of ownership and response came up. This was usually when a staff member received a query that they needed to contact colleagues for answers on, once more than two people were involved in finding a resolution ownership can get lost. The resolution might be found and put in place, but then there is confusion over who has informed the tenant, sometimes no-one does. The solution here is multi-fold as is it about ownership, multiple roles across different teams having responsibility for different parts of a process and cross team working practices. It is also about management oversight, of a system which can track whether a resident has been responded to or not. RESP has suggested four strategic solutions to be implemented as part of the new Corporate Plan:

1. Fostering professional ownership of outcomes and communication
2. Systems and data to support staff to do their jobs
3. Building relationships with tenants
4. Sharing information

WPH has also agreed to set up a rolling mystery shop programme involving residents from beyond RESP. What are Key performance indicators?

We're introducing our Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) are a quantifiable measure of performance over time for a specific goal or objective. KPIs provide targets for us to attain, milestones to gauge progress, and insights that to help us make better decisions. They show the path we're on to deliver reliable services to you and we are committed to routinely sharing our performance in key areas.

When we measure our performance we typically report on a quarterly basis showing the last 3 months. This helps us build a picture comparing the current quarter to the previous one and showing how we did over the course of a calendar year. Our latest quarterly data is up to 30 September 2022 the third quarter of the year.



Resident Satisfaction

Women's Pioneer uses external consultants Acuity to conduct resident

satisfaction surveys on our behalf and you may have been contacted by them to provide your feedback. Acuity have undertaken three resident satisfaction surveys so far this year and we are sharing our performance over a rolling 12 month average (Oct 2021-Sept 2022) comparing this to overall results for 2021 and 2020.

Themes from satisfied residents included:

24 residents commented that they liked our communication and that we were responsive, quick and we listened.

The second highest positive comment was about the location, convenience and amenities of where they live.



Themes from residents that are dissatisfied included:

Some residents felt that rent and service charges were not providing value for money and that service charges were being placed on things they didn't feel they benefited from. Staff turnover is high and residents don't know who the staff are. Simple repairs are handled well but not complex ones.

We are looking at your suggestions on how we can increase satisfaction levels including the availability of staff out of hours, more regular rent statements and more home visits.

WPH PERFORMANCE		
	Q3 2022	Rolling last 12 months
Satisfaction with the overall service	72%	78%
Satisfaction with overall quality of the home	63%	70%
Satisfaction that landlord listens to/actions upon tenants views	61%	65%
Satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service	79%	81%
Satisfaction that Women's Pioneer provides a home that is safe and secure	81%	83%
Satisfaction with the health and safety of the home	70%	79%

The colour chart indicates the shift in performance compared to the last period
Green indicates an improvement
Yellow indicates no change
Red indicates a decline

Performance reporting under each strategic objective:



Objective 1: Providing high Quality homes and Services Repairs Completed on Time

Between July 2022 and September 2022 we completed 468 repairs and 449 were completed on time or 96%. Our target is 98% and we are working with our contractors to provide sufficient information about the repair reported to us so they have the necessary parts to complete the jobs on time and to complete what we call a “first time fix”.

Repairs with a First Time Fix

We use Plentific, a network of trade contractors to undertake repairs you report us alongside a panel of tradespeople.

Repairs completed first time over the last 12 months is 85%. Generally we find Plentific contractors don't always keep a supply of parts and need to order materials once they have reviewed the job. This means repairs are not completed until the 2nd visit. We have used Plentific for nearly two years now and are reviewing the service to assess its value for money.

Complaints Handling

We have a two stage complaints procedure and 100% of complaints received have been responded to on time at the first stage. Our target is 95%. Complaints that move onto Stage 2 are investigated by a Director and we aim to respond to 95% of these on time. We have not achieved this target with 83% of these complaints being responded to on time. We know this is a key area for improvement.

Percentage of Calls Answered

Between July 2022 and September 2022 we received 4996 calls to our main switchboard. We aim to answer 90% of calls received and are currently achieving just below this target at 89%



Objective 2: Supporting our residents' independence and well-being

In the Quarter 3 residents satisfaction survey, 86% of residents surveyed said they were satisfied that being a Women's Pioneer tenant helps maintain their independence and well-being. 100% of residents in older women's housing are satisfied.



Objective 3: Growing locally to provide more homes

The development of new homes is a lengthy programme of work over many months with a long lead that may take several years to deliver new homes. This is tied into decisions we make on how to finance new homes which is through borrowing from our bankers. The targets we set represents this and we won't be able to report new homes each quarter. In April this year we completed the development of 9 new—homes in Putney.



Objective 4: Being a leading voice for Women's housing

We work to highlight the importance of women's housing and aim to influence others to recognise this. We do this through appearances in journals, publications and working in partnership with organisations aligned with our values setting yearly targets around this. So far in 2022 WPH has appeared in 2 publications, we also appeared in a number of housing publications about our development at Wood Lane along with several media enquiries for interviews which our partners responded to.



Objective 5: Developing our Organisational Strength

We will have strong governance and stay financially robust managing our finances and supporting our staff team to deliver excellence professionally. We measure how long our empty properties are vacant aiming to make them ready to let as soon as we can to meet the demand for women in need of homes. When a property is let we also need to make sure we collect rents and minimise arrears as rent are our sole source of income.

Vacant Homes (Void) Performance Targets

We aim to let a vacant home within 28 days of it becoming vacant if the refurbishment works are not extensive. We call these works minor and we call empty homes voids. Our target is to complete any works within 21 days and then let these homes within 7 days comprising our overall target of 28 days. We call this our void target.

Over the course of the last quarter we had four minor voids and it took us 34 days to refurbish and let three of them. One of these homes took 120 days to let. This is a long time and far longer than we ideally want but was because we had to offer the vacancy to our partner referral agencies and people who viewed the property did not accept the offer of accommodation.

Income Collection

Current tenant arrears at the end of September 2022 were £293,000 which as a percentage of annual income is 3.99%. This compares to £302,000 (4.25%) at the end of September 2021.

Staff Turnover

Staff turnover is a measure of the number of staff that leave over a specified period of time. For the period Oct 2021 to Sept 2022 the total number of staff who left WPH was 12. This represents a turnover level of 30%.

Thoughts on love

Published author and comedian Sadia Azmat has written a reflection on love, relationships and more.



Love is a drug and creates the same types of emotions as getting high. It's easy therefore to crave it, sustain it and even become addicted to it. The truth is as humans we need love. It does at times see us at our most vulnerable and therein lies a certain element of risk.

People aren't always upfront about their agendas, motivations or sometimes they can even be in denial about their issues. In short, it isn't always easy to know who you're dating. In relationships, it's a balancing act of knowing how much to let go and how much to hold back. In the early 'getting to know you' phase there's a lot more romance, fun, and little pressure, it's tempting to get carried away. As women we're built for emotional, monogamous relationships. Personally, I want to get married yesterday! But it's also important to take your time and not rush things to assess that he's right for you and equally that he has to put the effort in to demonstrate he is worthy of you.

There is a transactional exchange, as well as everything else, that people rarely talk about. As a couple you tend to pool resources including sharing bills etc. Both parties do receive other perks by being together that us single people don't. It's important to be aware of this so that certain measures can be put in place to protect both parties. Sometimes agreements may be a practical solution, so that the love doesn't blur the commitment towards financial agreements.

together often for financial security, fear of what people would say/think or for children.

I understand change can seem a little unsettling at the start but the reality is you've probably been putting up with things for too long as it is, and these things are unlikely to improve without the person behaving like this seeking professional help, if at all.

If you wouldn't treat someone the way you're being treated then why should that behaviour be acceptable to you? A good partner should be uplifting and helping to build your confidence not break it down.

Often women fail at putting ourselves first, when it's our right to prioritise our safety and wellbeing. The truth is no one deserves this type of treatment and it's never too late to put an end to it.

Out of all of the reasons you're trying to convince yourself to stay in an unhappy relationship, not one of those reasons was why you started seeing them and if you're not happy, or just settling, it will continue to be a problem. The best relationships have at the heart: clear and honest communication. If you're feeling like you can't bring these up to them that's a huge red flag.

Often in relationships that are coercive one party tends to feel like they might 'get in trouble' and little by little make so many compromises that they lose their sense of self and identity. A relationship shouldn't be something that makes you feel afraid or stop being yourself.

It doesn't need to get this far. There

In my book, Sex Bomb, I discuss some of the ways that a relationship can become all consuming. A toxic relationship isn't necessarily obvious to spot – especially when you're in it – and if you could have a healthier relationship with yourself.

One of the most common signs of a bad relationship are when your partner is too controlling, often to keep a relationship favourable for them and on their terms.

A few ways to help spot that something may not be right are:

Feeling isolated: This can be when a partner tries to control your social life and interests and expecting you to 'ask permission' or declare your plans ahead of time. They may even keep track of your online activity.

Becoming withdrawn: feeling more quiet or less confident. Not having your usual drive or personality. Nervousness/anxiety out of not wanting to upset your partner or make them angry.

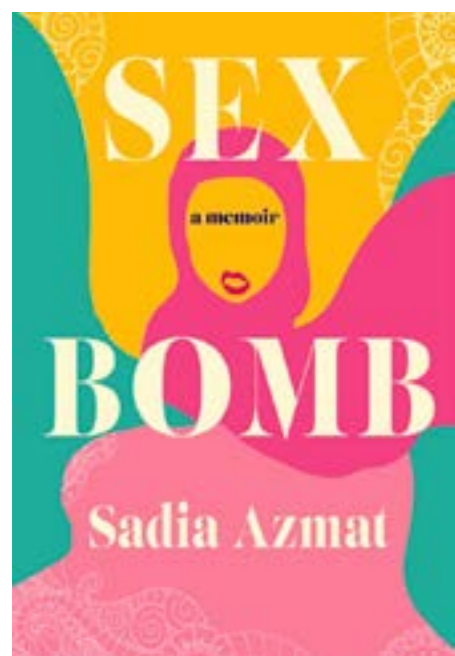
Loss of interest or focus in day to day activities.

My honest advice would be, as hard as it is to leave a relationship, when you have feelings for someone, you have to ask yourself one question: are you happy?

It can be easy to rationalise staying

are so many ways of protecting and loving yourself, and having strong networks outside of the relationship are really important.

It starts with us, and no matter how long it's been going on, there is help available. The journey starts by reconnecting with yourself, your passions and goals.



Sadia Azmat is a comedian and author of the memoir *Sex Bomb* which explores the complicated relationship between culture, religion, identity and sexuality within the British Asian community.

If you are interested in ordering her book you can do so on the following link: <https://www.headline.co.uk/titles/sadia-azmat/sex-bomb/9781472285799/>

Health and safety update

On 15 November 2022, we held our third Resident Action Forum at Mary Smith Court, to discuss the proposals for upgrading the fire alarm and detection systems in our General Needs homes.

Our fire risk assessor Jeremy French, from Assured Fire safety Consultancy services, provided a presentation that explained the need for early detection within homes to give residents as much time to evacuate as possible.

To do this, additional detectors are required within homes include the kitchen, Lounge, hall and separate bedroom if there is one.

Many residents have questioned the need for these additional detectors and feedback from many of you who responded included the view that additional detection was excessive and not required by law.

This article explains why we are proposing to take this action.

As a landlord, we must meet the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire safety) order 2005.

This requires us to carry out fire risk assessments and ensure that there are sufficient measures in place to enable persons within a building to escape safely in the event of a fire or any emergency with a need to evacuate.

It is this second point that relates to the fire alarm and detection systems within buildings. We must ensure that all occupants can hear the alarm when it goes off and to give occupants sufficient time to evacuate.

Most of our homes are in converted Victorian houses where the structural fire safety measures are not to the same standard as modern purpose-built blocks.

The time that a fire can be held within a flat is not as long as those in purpose-built flats and therefore, we need to compensate for this by providing everybody with as early a warning as possible.



The smoke alarms you currently have in most flats, will only alert the occupant. If a fire spreads, the main alarm will not go off unless the affected resident activates the alarm or until there is smoke in the corridors, compromising the escape route for other residents.

What we are proposing is to provide the additional detection within the flats so that if there is a fire and either the occupier is overcome or is not in the flat, the alarms will go off throughout the building. The systems will be designed so that false alarms are kept to a minimum and each flat will be able to silence their own alarm unless the issue is serious.

I appreciate that many of you feel that you can hear the alarms sufficiently well at the moment.

This may be the case but there are sound levels that need to be met when designing systems and the current arrangements in most flats will not meet these requirements.

It was suggested during the Resident Action Forum meeting that we are only required to provide a detector on each storey of a home. This is the minimum requirement but when other factors are risk assessed such as the time available to evacuate; age and disability; parents with small children or the reliance upon the tenant affected to press the alarms when evacuating, then the automatic solution that we are proposing is necessary.

We appreciated the questions and comments made by those of you who joined the meeting for those people and others concerned, this explains our proposals to exceed minimum standards shows our analysis reflects our desire to reflect what we know about the characteristics of our buildings and the make up of your homes.

We will be sending out consultation notices in the near future and the property services team will review comments and feedback. We will need to reiterate our legal obligation to meet requirements set out in law but will respond to the observations received.

Communal Boiler gas prices

A number of our buildings have large communal gas boilers. We have 24 in total. If you are in a building with a communal gas boiler this will be supplying heating and/or hot water to your property. The cost for the gas supply is applied in your service charges which changes in July each year.

Women's Pioneer use a utility broker who negotiates the best price for all our communal boilers. For 2022 we were able to secure a very good price before global gas prices increased. On average the 2022 gas price was secured was 3p per Kilowatt (kw). Kilo Watt is the unit rate that gas usage is measured in.

During the course of 2022 our broker has been monitoring gas prices. In September last year prices started to rise as demand increased when the economy fully opened up after Covid. In February this year, prices then rose significantly as a result of the war in Ukraine. At the end of May there was

a brief fall in prices and our broker was able to negotiate a 2023 gas price of 8.5p per kw. Although this is almost a threefold increase in price, if we hadn't fixed then we may have ended up paying more - the unit price in August and September 2022 was over 20p per kw.

Recently the government announced assistance with gas bills which capped the unit rate. This assistance will be until the end of March 2023. Our broker understands the cap is set at around 7p per kw. Therefore, when the new prices are applied to our contract, these should be capped at around 7p for a while.



Below is an illustration of the 2023 prices using one of our buildings that has 24 properties. The estimated gas usage for the building is 220,000kw.

The increase in the gas charges will be applied to the service charge in July 2023.

If your building has a communal boiler and you would like more information on these charges please contact your housing officer who will be able to assist. If you are worried about your bills please contact our Financial Inclusion Officer either via the website or email housingmanagement@womenspioneer.co.uk

Year	Standing Charge Per day	Usage Charge per kw	Annual standing charge	Annual Estimated usage	VAT 5%	Total Annual estimate	Cost Per property 1 year
2022	£5.66	3.17p	£2,065	£6,974	£515	£9,554	£398
2023	£4.18	8.30p	£1,525	£18,260	£989	£20,774	£866

Welcome to new staf

We had new staff appointments arising from retirement, internal promotions and completing recruitment to existing vacancies and welcome two new members of staff since the last issue.



Ana Costa Teixeira – Finance Assistant

Ana joined us in August and replaces Rachel Manchester who became our Management Accountant in the summer. Ana recently graduated completing a Masters degree in Finance.

She has made an immediate impact utilising the skills attained from her academic experience towards a career in finance and in her role uses her knowledge of data and statistical analysis to support our day to day accounting practices and business planning. Ana works alongside our finance colleagues.



Kelvin Okotume – Building Surveyor

Kelvin joined us in November filling a role previously supported by agency workers whilst we recruited to the permanent role. With experience both in social housing and building consultancies and a Masters degree in Building Surveying, Kelvin will support our activities in reactive and planned maintenance, preventative planned maintenance and voids management. In his role Kelvin will support the organisation to continue to carry out the core objective of providing quality homes to residents. Kelvin works alongside our property services colleagues.

Do not look now:

Answer to our Winter edition Quiz

1. B. -27.2 degrees C
2. C. From June to September
3. C. They are completely dark
4. A. Chinophobia
5. B. The tilt of the planet's axis is pointed away from the sun
6. B. 6 sides

number.

The operators at Orbis will take your details and the details of your emergency and contact one of our approved contractors. Therefore, if you have an issue with for example,

your boiler, they will call S&S Burners to attend and repair it.

The service provided by Orbis will start on Monday 12th December 2022.

From 12thDecember, if you need to report a repair when the office is closed, simply call the WPH office phone number:

0208 749 7112

The call will automatically be diverted to Orbis, who will take the details of the repair required and call the relevant contractor.

Improvements to the out of hour repairs service

At present, if you have the need for an emergency repair when the office is closed, we provide you with a list of telephone numbers that you can call to contact the relevant contractor.

We appreciate that this can not only be confusing but also take time on the phone so have been looking at ways in which we can improve this service.

We have been in contact with a number of organizations who provide an out of hours call handling service and have decided to enter into contract with Orbis Protect. To make contact with Orbis, you will only need to call the WPH office number (0208 749 7112) and the call will automatically be diverted to Orbis, so no need to look for a different



Events during the holidays

Celebrate the festive season at Winter Wonderland:

Experience Hyde Park transformed into an extravagant winter spectacle filled with fairground rides, ice skating, charming Christmas markets and fun family shows. 18 Nov- 2 Jan

Admission to Winter Wonderland must be pre-booked .Entry is free during off-peak times and costs £5 or £7.50 for peak hours. Charges apply for rides, ice skating, big top shows, the observation wheel and other attractions.

Opening Times -Daily (except Christmas Day): 10am to 10pm

<https://hydeparkwinterwonderland.com/>

Enjoy the spectacular Winter Lights Festival in Canary Wharf

See over 20 stunning light installations with illuminated art and interactive displays. Winter Lights festival is the largest of its kind in London, transforming Canary Wharf with over 20 stunning installations, leaving the dark winter evenings aglow.

The spectacle showcases light art and interactive installations by some of the most innovative light artists across the globe with some new commissions alongside pieces never before seen in the UK

Wednesday 18 December - Saturday 28 January, daily, 5-10pm

<https://canarywharf.com/whats-on/winter-lights/>

Magic awaits at the immersive Christmas at Kenwood

The historic palace is trans-

formed into a festive spectacular with an illuminated walking trail and seasonal favourites such as mince pies and mulled wine.

Take an enchanting journey into a glittering wonderland with Christmas at Kew at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew.

The popular after-dark Christmas event hosts a trail through the famous botanic gardens, lit up with lights and spectacular projections.

Get together with family or friends to follow the illuminated path around the gardens and be treated to immersive installations and spectacular displays.

2 Dec-1 Jan 2023 from 4.30pm to 9pm daily. Adult tickets from £29.50

<https://christmasatkewwood.com/>

London's various Christmas light displays are switched on from early November

And they're free to visit. Wander round Regent Street, Oxford Street, Covent Garden, Carnaby Street and Bond Street in central London in the dark to see London at its twinkly, festive best. If you can spare a couple of £s or you have a freedom pass for an even better way to see the lights hop on a bus.

Enjoy the Ever After Garden of over 20,000 glowing roses light up Grosvenor Square this winter, as they return to Mayfair. It provides somewhere for Londoners to remember absent loved ones in the run-up to Christmas, and there's the option to dedicate a rose, for a minimum donation of £10 to The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity.

It's free to visit, but as it's for charity, do considering donating if you can.

Open 3pm-9pm until Christmas Eve

www.royalmarsden.org/support-us/give/ever-after-garden

Watch the spectacular New Year's Day Parade:

Cheer on the marching brass bands, colourful performers and elaborate floats. Sunday 1 Jan at Piccadilly, Regents Street St James's, Pall Mall, Trafalgar Square and Whitehall.

Free Standing for general public.

<https://lndp.com/>

London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) – Friday Lunchtime Concerts from 23 September

Location – LSO, St Luke's 161 Old St, London EC1V 9NG

After the rush of Christmas visit the tranquillity of a hidden pathways of exotic plants, nestle in one of the hidden benches or enjoy a show at the amphitheatre at Crossrail Place Roof Garden.

Crossrail Place sits almost on the Meridian line and the planting is arranged according to the hemisphere where they are from. Find out whats on before you go as you might enjoy a free show.

Entry is free

<https://canarywharf.com/open-spaces/crossrail-place-roof-garden/>

Contact us

Our office on Wood Lane is staffed for prearranged appointments only.

General enquiries - Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 5.30pm

Phone **020 8749 7112**

Email **info@womenspioneer.co.uk**

Repairs enquiries - Call the team directly Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 5.30pm:

Phone **0208 749 7112 select option 1**

Email **repairsresponseteam@womenspioneer.co.uk**

Online **<https://womenspioneer.co.uk/report-a-repair/>**

Housing enquiries - Call the team directly Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 5.30pm:

Phone **0208 749 7112 select option 2**

Email **housingmanagement@womenspioneer.co.uk.**

If you would like to pay your rent call **0208 749 7112 select option 3.**

Feedback: We always welcome your feedback. Please email **feedback@womenspioneer.co.uk**

Or you can write to **227 Wood Lane, London, W12 0EX**

New out of hours service

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