



New boss: housing ombudsman takes vacated top spot



Denise Fowler: taking over the reins in June

Women's Pioneer will soon, for the first time in 25 years, be led by a new chief executive. **Denise Fowler** joins us in June, fresh from her previous role as England's Housing Ombudsman

Ms Fowler has been the Housing Ombudsman for England since March 2015. Prior to this she was a senior lawyer in government, heading the legal teams in three government departments: Communities and Local Government, Work and Pensions, and Health. She has worked closely with senior ministers and policy officials and led major law reform programmes.

Before joining the civil service she worked in the voluntary sector, local government and private practice as, variously, a housing lawyer and adviser

and a partner in a legal aid practice.

Women's Pioneer chair Maureen Hopcroft said: 'Denise brings an impeccable pedigree and a unique perspective on our sector. We also want to thank Janet for guiding us successfully through two decades. Janet leaves us in a strong position.'

Ms Fowler said: 'I could not pass up the opportunity of leading an organisation with such a unique history and potential. Providing a voice for women's housing is as relevant today as it was in 1920.'

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NEW WEBSITE QUIETLY LAUNCHED IN FEBRUARY

If you haven't visited our website recently please do take a look. You'll notice a few changes. We've been working on plans for the site for over a year, prompted by comments from some of you and our own feeling that the website needed a refresh and a wider range of features. One aspect that some of you mentioned especially was making the site easier to navigate. It is now, and we've added a few touches of our own. We've also had some positive feedback already, including: 'I just wanted to let you know that I have seen your new website (I just paid my rent online) and I wanted to give you the feedback that I like it very much'. We always value your feedback so if you haven't had a chance to look yet please go to www.womenspioneer.co.uk and tell us what you think. You can email your views via info@womenspioneer.co.uk

PIONEER PRESS: TELL US HOW WE COULD DO BETTER

A letter sent in to *Pioneer Press* has challenged our description of negative feedback in an article on the latest resident survey.

Our correspondent felt that our description of feedback as 'some of your more brutal comments' was unnecessarily defensive and risked discouraging your honest comments.

Although the phrase was meant light-heartedly, on reflection we agree it should have been worded differently. We are always keen to hear feedback from you, be it negative or positive.

Please do continue to get in touch to tell us how you think we are doing. We would be delighted to regularly feature your letters in *Pioneer Press*. If you have any comments to make on articles we have run or subjects you would like us to cover, please write in to info@womenspioneer.co.uk or 227 Wood Lane, London, W12 0EX.



Emilia, left, with mum Marysia at the Women's March in January, prompted by a change of hands in the White House. Below protesters young and younger



PHOTOS: MAIN SELFIE BY EMILIA KUPCZYK, PROTESTORS BY JAMIE BECKWITH

On the march

Many of our staff (men included) attended the Women's March on 21 January. Emilia, age 12 and daughter of finance manager Marysia Kupczyk, gives her first-hand report

When my Mum announced one sunny Saturday morning that we were going on the Women's March I had no idea what it was going to be like. I expected an actual march but it was more of a slow wander.

First impressions

My first impression was that everyone had made a big effort to be there. It was amazing to see women, men and children come together for women's rights.

We joined at Green Park, as we were late, and marched with a terrifically long line to Trafalgar Square. Our view was blocked by

the many placards that were in our way. Most were funny and about Donald Trump. Some were political with straightforward messages. And some placards were just rude. Everyone seemed very upbeat and chatty, singing and chanting and some were wearing crazy outfits.

When we got to Trafalgar Square thousands of people were standing around, eating food and trying to listen to the speeches.

There were more people than I'd ever seen in one place. It was great fun to go and I never knew that so many people felt so passionately about women's rights.

WPH RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

An evening to remember * Saturday 17 December

It certainly was! The **Christmas Party and auction** to support the residents' association, held in December, was all and more than could be expected. Trish, Maggie and Penny report



PHOTOS: NICK BLIGH

The Christmas Party and auction to support the residents' association was more than could be expected.

Beginning with drinks and an opportunity to mingle with fellow tenants, the evening started with an affable and expectant atmosphere. We were not to be let down.

The performers' repertoire was familiar to us all. We sang along to some of their choices and they joined us at the tables.

The food was first class, provided by Mr Christian's who also donated a Christmas hamper for our auction.

The auction went well - a fun event that has helped enormously towards the association's expenses.

Thanks to all who participated.

The venue, St Peter's Church, looked beautiful, almost magical. A huge thank you to St Peter's for its continued support for our meetings and parties.

Huge thanks to the stunning musicians: Rebecca Robinson, Mark Heller on piano, Stephen Priestly and Jaymie Kym McMellon.

Councillor Monica Press, who was there for the evening, said: 'This is one of the best Christmas parties I've been to in a long time.'

'Everything about the evening was perfect for me, including live music, delicious food and splendid company,' said a resident.

Our grateful thanks

Before Christmas, we were one of three 'good causes' picked by **Notting Hill Waitrose** for its green token scheme. Thanks to all of you who popped into the store to add your tokens to our pile. It raised us a welcome £160.

A massive thank you also to **Mr Christian's** of Notting Hill for its continued support, supplying the delicious food and wine served at our parties.

And finally thank you to **John Lewis** for its support and donations. We currently have lots of school uniforms, grey tunics and trousers and black tunics and trousers, and some beautiful women's lingerie.



PHOTO: PENNY SNOWBALL

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM US?

We would love more of you to tell us what you would like from the two parties we are planning this year. Numbers were up last year but we can do better. What entertainment would you like? Do you know a band we could invite? Would you like a concert, quiz, karaoke or dancing?

Our ticket price covered food and our musicians' expenses. They very kindly gave their time free. We have heard that the price meant some of you could not attend so we have applied for funding for our events.

Call Maggie on 020 7229 8471 or email us at womenspioneerresidents@gmail.com

'BEFORE WE GO'

Some time ago one of you raised a concern about what would happen after your death. Like many of us this resident lived alone and had no next of kin and few close friends.

We have since discussed it at a residents' meeting and have applied for lottery funding for **Before We Go** an idea Maggie came up with. This would pay for workshops on writing a will, for example, or planning a funeral, a 'declaration in advance' or drawing up a 'bucket list' of things we'd like to do before we go.

We hope it will help all of us cope with a matter rarely discussed. We are also planning a group to focus on older women and those with a life-limiting condition. **For details contact Maggie on 020 7229 8471 or email us at womenspioneerresidents@gmail.com**

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

We'd welcome more of you to join our committee and get involved. We only meet a couple of times each year. Our **next party** is in May. Please send suggestions by 28 April. **WPRA meetings:** St Peter's Church, Kensington Park Road, Notting Hill, 6.30-8.45pm * **AGM** 23 March * 13 April * 6 July * 17 August * 28 September * 16 November **Parties:** 27 May **summer party** * 8 December **Christmas party**

Scrutiny panel's report on: *service charges

Last year, the scrutiny panel teamed up with a consultant from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) to look at how Women's Pioneer calculates and manages your service charges. Scrutiny panel chair **Marcia Davies** reports

Service charges were chosen as the subject for our second review following concerns raised by some of you about increases in 2016.

New focus

Service charges are costs that you pay with your rent. They pay for things like electricity to light stairs and corridors, cleaning, gardening, and fire protection.

We formed a small sub-group and over several meetings last summer met with the Women's Pioneer staff responsible for drawing up the charges. They explained how charges are decided and we looked at a number of schemes to see how the

whole list of charges is put together. From that we came up with a list of nine recommendations to be discussed by senior management. We are pleased to report that they agreed with the vast majority.

Rachel from TPAS and I attended the January board meeting (pictured) where I presented the report. The



DOING IT DIFFERENTLY

- introduce a **written policy and procedure** for service charges
- buy a **computer programme** to help staff with the accuracy of the charges
- invite **tenants to do walkabouts with staff** to inspect buildings where charges are made
- look at any **large changes in costs** and quickly explain the reasons to tenants
- **explain more clearly** service charges when they go out every year. Letters will be checked by the scrutiny panel to make sure they can be easily understood.

board was happy with our report and our recommendations (above), and asked officers to make the changes.

We are asking staff to come back to speak to the scrutiny panel to make sure they keep to the timetable for making the changes.

Our next review will be on letting empty homes (what is known as the void process). We will keep you updated on this through *Pioneer Press*.

Raising the roof



Left: housing director Christine Desborough and housing assistant Michael Waters view the works in progress. Above, in January the road was closed to allow access for a huge crane to lift iron girders to the top of the building.

Come summer there will be four new flats at sheltered scheme Mary Flux Court, built by raising the roof to the same level as neighbouring buildings. **Andrew Richards** has the story

Stairs to the new upper floor have been fitted by sacrificing one flat on the floor below. Eight other flats on that floor have also been remodelled in a scheme that, on completion, will have cost us over £1m.

Builder Rosewood Ltd started on site last August. As well as building the new flats, they have been improving other parts of the building, a move

that saves money and gets the most disruptive works done together.

Colour coded

Improvements include redecorating exterior woodwork and all the halls. Doors on each floor will have a unique colour palette with new signage in the hallways and lift to help people find their way around the building.

Feedback from tenants suggests most are pleased with how Rosewood has handled any difficulties that have cropped up.

The lift shaft has been extended to the new top floor and the old lift has been decommissioned and a new one installed. All works look set to be completed by July. The new flats will be let to women aged 60 or over.

Getting out and about: mobility services

If you live in Kensington & Chelsea or Westminster and find it hard to use public transport because of your age or a disability, Westway Community Transport may be able to help you.

- We run a volunteer-supported:
- **community car scheme** - a pre-booked subsidised taxi service that can take you wherever you wish
 - **Shopper Services** (to designated supermarkets on set days), and
 - a **mobility scooter loan**.

Both of the two boroughs subsidise the cost of our transport service for their locals. If you'd like an idea of what using it might cost you, just ask Richard Yeatman, door to door services manager at Westway, on ☎ 020 8964 1114.

“It's a total bargain compared with the cost of a taxi.”

Jacqueline Shaw, Women's Pioneer tenant and volunteer driver

Can you spare a few hours per week to work for us?

Volunteering is a great way to not only help your community, but also learn new skills and meet new people.

Would you like to do some flexible voluntary work?

Join our team of volunteers. We pay out-of-pocket expenses and provide support and training. Positions available:

- **drivers**
- **passenger assistants**
- **gardeners.**

To find out more call ☎ 020 8968 2040 or visit www.westwayct.org.uk

Westway CT is an exempt charity and registered society providing essential transport and training services for individuals and groups.

Joining is easy! Please call Richard Yeatman ☎ 020 8964 1114 or visit www.westwayct.org.uk



CULTURAL PURSUITS



Mary Smith Court tenants were treated to a performance of children's classic *Little Lord Fauntleroy* by the London Children's Ballet in February. Scheme manager Gabriella Baranek, who organised the visit, said they were delighted to have the ballet back after successful visits in previous years.

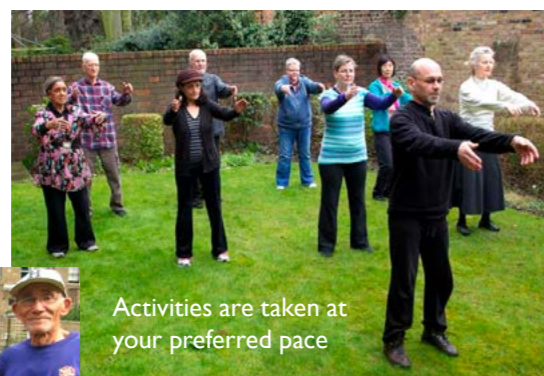
Mary Smith Court has also hosted therapeutic art classes organised by Age UK and open to all our sheltered tenants. The classes have now finished but another course can be arranged if enough of you are interested. Keep an eye on your sheltered scheme noticeboards for more details..



ACTIVITIES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

WHO ARE OPEN AGE?

Life doesn't have to slow down or stop as you get older. **Open Age** were established in 1993 and we work with older Londoners aged 50 or older to create chances to get together, learn new skills and develop new interests. This way we help you stay healthy in mind and body and living life to the full.



Activities are taken at your preferred pace



WHAT IS LINK UP?

Link up is friendly and patient.

We provide one-to-one encouragement (including home visits) so you can attend activities at your own pace.

We'll work with you to identify interests and activities.

We can go with you to the first few sessions if you wish.

We can connect you to other services in your area that can further support you, including transport services.

OPEN AGE LINK UP

- Are you aged 50 or over and living in Kensington & Chelsea?
- Would you like to take part in leisure activities while socialising and making new friends?
- Would you like a choice of over 360 low cost or free activities?

Open Age main office:
St Charles Centre for Health & Wellbeing, Exmoor Street
Charitable Incorporated
Organisation No. 1160125

For friendly advice about **Open Age activities**, please call **Catrin and Donna** on 020 8962 5584.

Forty year tour of duty: a fond farewell to super-cleaner Margaret

Longest serving employee Margaret MacDonald is retiring in spring, after working as our cleaner for nearly 40 years

Back in 1977 Margaret saw an advert for a local cleaner in a newsagents in Ladbroke Grove. She replied and was invited to our then head office on Buckingham Palace Road.

Dickensian head office

'It was an old Victorian building, straight out of Charles Dickens.' Any worries about the Ghost of Christmas Past were quickly dispelled. She was welcomed in by the secretary and after a brief interview offered the job.



Hardworker: Margaret MacDonald

Margaret started off cleaning 34 Kensington Park Gardens. Over the years she has cleaned many of our buildings across Earl's Court and Notting Hill.

It has been a difficult decision to leave but Margaret felt the time was right, saying she didn't want to end up as the ghost of a cleaning lady haunting Horbury Crescent.

Margaret has always had a smile on her face and residents have already told us how much they will miss her. She is hard working, conscientious and good humoured and we wish her a long and happy retirement.

A few words from our departing chief

Chief executive **Janet Davies** retires at the end of April after 25 years in the post. *Pioneer Press* asks Janet for her thoughts on Women's Pioneer and her hopes for the future

What have you enjoyed most about your career in housing

Seeing new homes built and the smell of new plaster. We desperately need more genuinely affordable housing in this country and every time that a housing association produces a new home is a good moment.

As you leave us, how do you see our future?

There is lots for my successor to do and I'm sure Denise will enjoy it. We're not perfect by any means but we are ready for growth, supported by our board and the hard work of staff. We've had to set up a new structure to make the most of the opportunities and it is now in place.



I'm lucky to have met quite a few of you and heard snippets of your interesting lives. Everyone has a story to tell.

Our centenary is coming up in 2020 – what's planned?

It will be a celebration of 100 years of Women's Pioneer. We have been researching our history and know there are deep ties between our history and wider social changes in the UK, notably the suffragists. We are important to London women and that will continue. Most importantly we are providing new homes. I am thrilled that the Mary Flux Court development is going so well.

What are the challenges now for the housing sector?

The obvious one is the shortage of housing in many parts of the country. It's good that politicians have woken up to the problem but so far there's been a lack of solutions, from all sides. In London, many people in ordinary jobs don't stand a chance of owning or renting a home they can afford. The government white paper is a missed opportunity in my view.

What will you miss here?

I certainly won't miss commuting. But working for a housing association gives you a connection to so many things in the world - politics, economics, design, social care. Housing is a fascinating world and Women's Pioneer is a wonderful microcosm of it all. I will miss my colleagues and the wonderful friendliness of our tenants. I'm lucky to have met quite a few of you and heard snippets of your interesting lives. Everyone has a story to tell.

What are you most looking forward to in retirement?

Enjoying London and everything it has to offer and having more time to pursue my interest in the arts. ✨

NEW START Linda Davies

I started in mid December as **Dain Court's scheme manager**. My role is to offer guidance and assistance with an array of daily life issues, from welfare benefits to completing forms and handling building maintenance matters.

Useful experience

My professional background has primarily been in social services. I have previously worked in financial, administrative and social care roles, and I am drawing on these experiences on a daily basis.

As a scheme manager, you have to be a good communicator as well as flexible and practical.

I am enjoying working independently alongside the constant stream of tenants and their families, friends and carers, and the contractors and other visitors to Dain Court.

I am really enjoying my role and working with the diverse group of 33 tenants here, and learning more about west London.



PIC: PIERRE MARCAR

Retiring: chief executive Janet Davies talks to corporate services manager Susan Bernard at the last of our Mary Smith lectures, held in 2008

Around the houses

Meet the managers... in Notting Hill

Our next *Meet the Managers* will be from 3-6pm on 17 May at St Peter's Church, Kensington Park Road, W11 2PN. Having held both meetings at Earl's Court last year, we're very pleased to bring it closer to those of you living in Notting Hill this time.

We only started the events last year but quickly realised their value. Topics raised ranged from complex service charge queries to requests for repairs. The benefit of having face to face discussions, some of them quite challenging, is that they are much more direct and personal than corresponding by post or phone.

As usual, our middle management team will be at the meeting: **Matthew Wicks** (*housing*), **June Gasper** (*finance*), **Jamie Beckwith** (*estate services*), **Roger Barton** (*asset management*), **Susan Bernard** (*corporate services*) and **Aidan McCarthy** (*housing inclusion*).

Come along between 3pm and 6pm to let us know what's on your mind, whether there's anything we can help you with, or just to have a chat over a cup of tea and a biscuit.

Our meetings are usually busy so to make sure you get to speak to the managers you want, call 020 8749 7112 in advance to book a place or email info@womenspioneer.co.uk

Faster procedure for handling complaints

If you think we have treated you unfairly or a service was poor, please call us for a complaints form or an appointment on 020 8749 7112 or email info@womenspioneer.co.uk

To get independent advice contact your MP or councillors or call the Housing Ombudsman Service on 0300 111 3000. www.housing-ombudsman.co.uk. Chief executive designate Denise Fowler will not be personally involved in any complaints brought by Women's Pioneer tenants in her last months with the HOS.

Launch of London-wide response to domestic abuse

In January we became one of the first London housing associations to sign up to Safer London's new initiative to speed up the process for finding safe new homes and support for victims of domestic abuse. **Aidan McCarthy** reports

Michael Waters and I were at the launch event in the main chamber at City Hall where two of London mayor Sadiq Khan's deputies spoke. James Murray, responsible for housing and residential development, and Sophie Linden, who covers policing and crime, said the mayor was 100 percent behind the agreement.

The agreement, so far signed by 18 London housing associations and 29 London boroughs, sets out to help people at high risk of harm who have a social housing tenancy by quickly finding them a new home in a safe area, with protected tenancy rights.

As well as providing protection and

support, the agreement hopes to avoid people risking homelessness and to better coordinate use of all available properties.

Coordinated response

The **pan-London housing reciprocal agreement** replaces earlier initiatives limited to smaller parts of London that lacked central coordination.

The central role of Safer London and the support of the mayor make it much more likely to prove effective. We are expecting more councils and housing associations with properties in London to sign up and are proud to be one of the first.

Transfer: grab while the offer's hot

Demand from those of you who want to move to another of our homes continues to far outweigh supply, writes housing assistant **Michael Waters**. It leaves applicants with a long wait before we can make an offer.

Priority ranking

So how do we make the process fair? When a property comes up that we are able to offer to our own tenants, we first consult our database to find suitable applicants.

We take into account preferences over location and size, how long you have been waiting, and priority factors like medical need. I then invite up to 10 of you to view the flat, starting with those with the highest priority.

Ten may sound like a big number but, despite the high demand, it is very

often an applicant lower down the pecking order who takes the flat.

The reasons vary. We regularly review everyone on the transfer database but circumstances can change suddenly, making a property no longer suitable. Some will find the flat doesn't meet their expectations. Or a tenant may accept the flat only for something to come up that forces them to pull out.

Sometimes not everyone invited to a viewing turns up. If you are invited please make an effort to turn up even if you are low on the priority order.

If those with a higher priority turn it down, you'll no longer be eligible if you change your mind later on. We have had cases of people as low as 12th on a list take a flat. Or you may think the flat won't be right for you only to be pleasantly surprised when you see it.



HOUSING NEWS

Government pledge to boost build rates - but is it enough?

The government's housing policy is undergoing a rethink. Housing director **Christine Desborough** sums up the main points of a new housing white paper launched in February

England's housing market is broken, the government has admitted. Sajid Javid, secretary for Communities and Local Government, launched the housing white paper, *Fixing our broken housing market*, stating that average house prices had jumped to 7.5 times average incomes. He added that rents in many places swallowed more

than half of take-home pay.

Mr Javid laid the blame mainly on very low rates of house building over the last 30 years. He said this needed to rise to 225,000 to 275,000 new homes a year. Just 190,000 were built in 2016. He also said new urban developments will need to be denser and homes might need to be smaller.

Main points from the housing white paper

- Every council will have to draw up and regularly review an 'honest assessment' of local housing need.
- Developers will be forced to start building within two years of getting planning permission or consent will lapse. They now have three years.
- A bigger, more flexible affordable homes building programme for housing associations and councils, with £7.1bn of public funding announced already.
- Smaller building firms will get help to expand, including support for off-site construction, where parts are assembled in a factory.
- An end to 'leasehold abuse' locking home buyers into leases with spiralling ground rents.
- Encouraging 'build to let' where private companies build lots of rental flats for tenants.
- Building on brownfield sites. The government has said it will release enough land for 160,000 homes during this parliament, and expects councils to do likewise.
- An end to lettings fees in the private rental sector (does not apply to housing associations)
- No relaxation of Green Belt rules so even scruffy bits of otherwise unused land will sit doing nothing.

Government rethinks curious notion of 'affordable rent'

In 2011 the government redefined 'affordable rent' as 'up to 80% of [local] private rents'. It seems it has now recognised that in many areas these rents are very high and is trying to come up with a better definition. Mr Javid said: 'We will provide clarity over future rent levels. In return, we expect them to build significantly more affordable homes over [this] parliament.'

A white paper is a policy document that sets out the government's proposals for a planned new law

“

Sajid Javid has the right analysis [but this] has failed to offer us anything of substance.

Dan Wilson Craw, Generation Rent

Pros and cons: wider reaction to the white paper

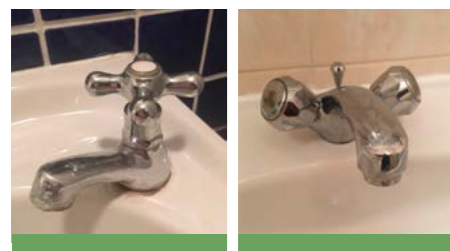
'Feeble' was the stark comment by **Labour housing spokesman John Healey MP**, adding that Javid's statement to the House of Commons would desperately disappoint millions of people struggling to cope with the cost of the housing crisis.

Campaign groups said the white paper offered little to the growing number of private renters. Dan Wilson Craw of **Generation Rent** said: 'Sajid Javid has the right analysis about the plight of renters, but his white paper has failed to offer us anything of substance. Until the government builds enough to overcome the housing shortage, high rents [in the private rented sector] will continue to stifle living standards.'

Shelter, which advises and supports people faced with bad housing or homelessness, stated: 'It's good to see the government paying much needed attention to the country's appalling housing crisis in its new white paper... Our broken housing system [is] fuelled by the shocking lack of affordable homes available to rent or buy, so the government is right to want to 'get Britain building'. The white paper poses the right questions. **What we need now is quick and bold action that helps people in need of a decent home tomorrow not in 10 years.'**

robertson's repairs ...a leaky tap

If your tap is dripping even when you've turned it off then the rubber washer in it may be damaged or corroded. Replacing it is a cheap and usually simple job that we expect you to do



The tap on the left is a basin tap. The tap on the right is a mixer tap. Both are older types of tap we are gradually replacing with taps that do not use a rubber washer. They look different but work on the same principle so changing a washer is roughly similar.

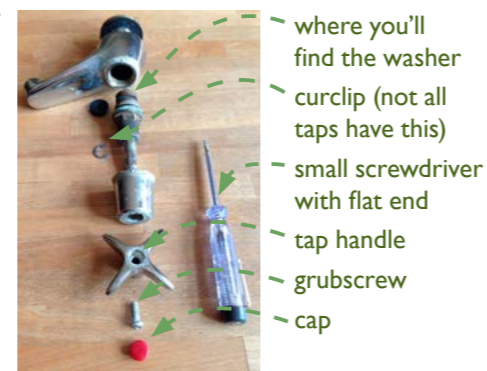
For detailed instructions try www.plumblocal.net/how-to-replace-a-tap-washer.html

THE TOOLS/THE PROCESS

You'll need a new washer (try a shop like Robert Dyas), a spanner and two screwdrivers - a small one with a flat end and one with a cross-shaped point. Some old rags or thick electrical tape may prevent scratches on the metal cover of your tap.

1 Before you start, turn off the water supply at the stopcock, turn on the tap and let it run dry. Put the plug in the sink hole so nothing small drops down it by accident.

2 Take off the tap handle. Most taps have a cap at the top and you may spot a small recess. Use the flat end screwdriver to prise the cap off. Underneath you'll find a small (grub)



screw with a cross-shaped indent. Unscrew it to lift off the handle.

3 You will then find more parts to dismantle, including nuts (use the spanner). Do not force anything if it won't turn (look on the internet for advice). Some taps have a small piece of metal called a curclip. This too needs to come off - don't lose it! When you try to put it back on it will need a bit of force. Try using the screwdriver handle.

4 Once you locate the washer, which looks like a black plastic ring, lever it off and fit the new one.

5 Now put your tap back together, turn the stopcock back on and test.

EMERGENCY REPAIRS OUT OF HOURS

If you have a genuine emergency when our office is closed please call the number below for the type of repair you need. Please let us know when our office reopens if you needed help in an emergency.

Plumbing, electrics, or other problems that need to be dealt with by a builder: Just 24/7 ☎020 8979 2220

Broken windows or if you're locked out or have lost keys (you will have to pay for this): Just 24/7 ☎020 8979 2220

Power cut to the whole house: UK Power Network ☎0800 056 6341 or ☎0333 32 32 105

Gas leak – if you smell gas or suspect a gas leak: National Grid ☎0800 111 999

Lift breakdown: 21st Century Lifts ☎020 8676 5700

Heating and hot water system for all flats in your property: S&S Burners ☎020 8330 7992

Gas fires and boilers that we have installed in your flat: Daynight ☎07860 234 899

Faulty fire alarm in a shared part of your building: Chameleon ☎01757 244 511. Leave your name, address and phone number, and a brief description of the problem. The duty engineer will call you back at once.

TV aerials and entry phones: this is not an emergency situation and can wait until we reopen.

DON'T LOOK NOW: ANSWERS TO OUR IRISH BRAIN-TEASER

- 1 Snakes
- 2 Prime minister
- 3 Guinness
- 4 Tipperary
- 5 Ulster, Munster, Leinster, Connacht
- 6 President, Dublin
- 7 Game of Thrones
- 8 W B Yeats
- 9 Constance Markievicz

SPRING BRAIN-TEASER: THE IRISH CONNECTION

This year's mental gymnastics start in the Emerald Isle, a country with a long-standing and very special connection to Women's Pioneer. Aidan McCarthy tests your knowledge



- 1 St Patrick is reputed to have banished which animals from Ireland?
- 2 Taoiseach is the Irish equivalent to which position in Britain?
- 3 What famous drink is brewed at St James' Gate, Dublin?
- 4 According to the music hall song popular during the First World War, it's a long way to... where?
- 5 Can you name all four provinces in Ireland?
- 6 Mary Robinson was the first woman to be elected to what Irish political office in 1990?
- 7 Etheldred Browning, the founder of Women's Pioneer, was born in the Donnybrook area of which Irish city?
- 8 Which big budget fantasy television series is filmed on locations including Ireland, Spain, Malta, Croatia, Morocco... and Northern Ireland?
- 9 Which Irish poet told a rioting audience at Dublin's Abbey Theatre in 1926: 'You have disgraced yourselves again.?'
- 10 In 1918, which Irish woman became the first woman to be elected to the House of Commons (although she did not take her seat)?



INTO THE KITCHEN AT FORK-POINT

sweetcorn and courgette fritters

tested by corporate services administrator Kim



INGREDIENTS

one (198g) can of sweetcorn, drained
two chopped spring onions
approx half a courgette, grated
1 teaspoon of smoked paprika
50gm self-raising flour (six tblspns)
5 eggs, one beaten, four for poaching
40ml of milk (just over three tblspns)
4 tablespoons of sweet chilli sauce, mixed with the juice of one lime
1 tablespoon of vegetable oil

COOKING METHOD

1 Mix the sweetcorn, spring onions, courgette, paprika, flour, beaten egg, milk, salt and pepper in a large bowl.

- 2 Put a large pan of water onto boil and add a tiny drop of vinegar.
- 3 Heat the oil in a large nonstick pan. When the oil starts to spit, add four heaped spoonfuls of mix, leaving space for each to spread. Turn when bubbles come to the top and the underside is brown. Repeat until all the mix is used. Keep in a warm place.
- 4 Drop each egg into the lightly boiling water and nudge with a spoon so they don't stick to the pan. Cook for about three minutes until the white is set but yolk is runny. Lift out with a slotted spoon or plastic fish slice.
- 5 Top the fritters with poached eggs and dribble over the lime/chilli sauce.

free events

April to June

Saturday 8 April **ST MARGARET'S HOUSE** **SPRING MARKET**

The Gallery Cafe Hall, 21 Old Ford Road, E2 9PL. From 11am to 4pm. Stalls selling homeware, food, vintage clothes, kidswear, crafts, illustration and anything else in between.

Sunday 9 April **ACCEPT YOURSELF:** **YOU ARE ENOUGH**

The Neighbourhood Centre, St Mary's Church, Upper Street, Angel, N1 2TX. From 4.30pm-6pm. Free talk organised by Inner Space.

Thursday 13 to Sunday 16 April **RENDEZ-VOUS 2017** **TALL SHIPS REGATTA**

Greenwich town centre and the Royal Arsenal Riverside in Woolwich, SE18 6TL. All day event. Come down to enjoy maritime entertainment, live music and fireworks everyday before a huge *Parade of Sail* starting at 5pm from Deptford Creek on Sunday 16.

Saturday 15 April **TCF'S APRIL HANDMADE** **GIFT FAIR**

St Mary's Church Hall, opposite St Mary's Church, Church Street, Twickenham, TW1 3NJ. From 1.30pm to 5pm. Always have a wide range of craft/handmade items available.

Sunday 16 April **FAMILY DAY: EASTER** **AT KEATS HOUSE**

Keats House, 10 Keats Grove, NW3 2RR. From 1pm to 4pm. Find all the Easter bunnies and make a carrot cone to carry home your chocolate prize.

Saturday 22 April **FEAST OF ST GEORGE**

Trafalgar Square, Westminster, WC2N 5DN. From noon to 6pm. A feast of English food, live music and free fun.

Tuesday 25 April **WAYS TO RELAX AND UNWIND**

The Canvas Cafe, 42 Hanbury Street, E1 5JL. From 6.30 to 7.30pm. Free talk organised by Inner Space.

Sat 29 April to Monday 1 May **CANALWAY CAVALCADE**

Little Venice (between Blomfield Road, Warwick Ave and Warwick Cres), W9 2PB. From 10am to 6pm, on Monday 10am to 5pm. Organised by Inland Waterways Association volunteers, there will be boats, trade show stalls and boaters gathering at the festival this May bank holiday weekend.

Until Sunday 30 April **GIRLS, GIRLS, GIRLS**

Seven Dials Club, Earlam Street, WC2H 9LA. From 10am to 4pm. London-based visual artist Grazie's first solo show – 'a riotous celebration of life and the love of being a woman'.

Monday 12 to Sunday 18 June **CRYSTAL PALACE** **OVERGROUND FESTIVAL**

Crystal Palace Park, Thicket Road, SE19 2GA. Times TBC. The main park event at Crystal Palace Park will be held on Saturday 17 June with the return of the Crystal Palace community fringe festival events taking place between Monday 12 and Sunday 18 June 2017.

Until Sunday 3 September **TUNNEL: THE ARCHAEOLOGY** **OF CROSSRAIL - MAJOR** **EXHIBITION**

Museum of London, Docklands, E14 4AL. From 10am to 6pm. The wide variety of items on display explore 8,000 years of human history, revealing the stories of Londoners, ranging from Mesolithic tool makers and inhabitants of Roman Londinium to those affected by the Great Plague of 1665.

Weekly **VARIOUS FREE CLASSES**

At the Katherine Low Settlement, 108 Battersea High St, SW11 3HP. See www.klsettlement.org.uk

Weekly at Mary Smith Court **MONDAY COFFEE MORNINGS**

Starting 11am.

ENGLISH CLASSES.

See www.womenspioneer.co.uk for details or call ☎ 020 8749 7112.

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UPDATE: THE 'VOLUNTARY' RIGHT TO BUY FOR HOUSING ASSOCIATION TENANTS: STILL NO NEWS

Still no news on the right to buy proposed for housing association tenants. We are waiting to hear the results of the government's second pilot. Its website says more details will be given shortly. As soon as they are, we'll let you know. You can also find out what is being said about the pilot schemes via our trade body, the National Housing Federation. Check out its website at <https://tinyurl.com/lbkvw4o>

Ordering repairs

Call the team direct on Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 5.30pm: ☎ 020 8743 4422
Email: repairsresponseteam@womenspioneer.co.uk

For a serious risk to health and safety or to our property out of hours, see page 10 for numbers to call in an emergency.

These numbers are only to be used for a situation that cannot wait until our office reopens.

Contact us

Our Wood Lane offices are open from Monday to Friday, from 9.30am to 5.30pm.

Call in or write to: **227 Wood Lane, London W12 0EX**
Phone us: ☎ 020 8749 7112

Contact us by email or internet: info@womenspioneer.co.uk

www.womenspioneer.co.uk
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