



Housing HIGHLIGHTS

Housing Services newsletter

www.slough.gov.uk
Slough
Borough Council

Prize draw
with TSM
survey

IN THIS ISSUE

- P2 Contacts and complaints
- P4 Housing Annual Report
- P14 Improvement works
- P16 Fire safety in the home

Issued by Slough Borough Council
for our tenants and leaseholders

ISSUE 63
October 2024

CONTACT INFORMATION

Housing Management

- North Slough email: _northteam@slough.gov.uk
- South Slough email: _southteam@slough.gov.uk
- East Slough email: _eastteam@slough.gov.uk

North team:

- Haris Syed
- Sam Sharif
- Sobia Ishaque
- Caroline Shannon (TSO)

South team:

- Sundeep Sharma
- Neil Weightman
- Lauren Hamilton
- Julia Costello (TSO)

East team:

- Rachel Fox
- Ilona Chomiak
- Razwan Khan
- Hanna Irfan
- Toni-Marie Happe
- Jessica Bunyan (TSO)

James Elliman Homes

- Officers: Nadia Marhri/Ade Naiwo
• Email: jehomes@slough.gov.uk

Rent queries

- Queries about your rent direct debits, or refunds: rentaccounting@slough.gov.uk
- Queries about rent arrears: rentrecovery@slough.gov.uk

Leaseholder enquiries

- Day to day issues email: Homeownership@slough.gov.uk
- Service charge invoices and payment queries email: revenues@slough.gov.uk
- Service charge costs/calculation queries email: neighbourhoodrecharges@slough.gov.uk

- Right to Buy queries email: rtb@slough.gov.uk

Repair reporting and caretaking

- Call Cardo: 0800 9151215
- Email: booking.slough@cardogroup.co.uk
- Web: www.slough.gov.uk/xfp/form/177
- Follow up enquiry relating to repair/caretaking: _RMIComplaints@slough.gov.uk



How to complain

We know there are times that we get things wrong.

If you are dissatisfied with the service that has been provided, we want to hear from you so we can put things right. You can do this by completing the [online form](http://www.slough.gov.uk/xfp/form/179) (www.slough.gov.uk/xfp/form/179) or emailing neighbourhoodservicescomplaints@slough.gov.uk.

If you wish to make a complaint in relation to the repairs service, email _rmicomplaints@slough.gov.uk

Details of our complaints process and access to the [Housing Ombudsman](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/) (www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/) can be found on our website [Complaints and neighbourhood services - Slough Borough Council](http://www.slough.gov.uk/complaints-feedback/complaints-neighbourhood-services) (www.slough.gov.uk/complaints-feedback/complaints-neighbourhood-services).



Resident involvement

We are delighted to highlight the National Involvement Week which ran from 14-18 October - #IW24! In this issue, we shine a spotlight on and celebrate all forms of resident, tenant, and customer-led involvement, from grassroots community initiatives to board decisions.

We like to celebrate our Resident Board members for their commitment, contributions and determination to ensuring continuous improvement in housing services delivered to residents. They work with senior staff and cabinet for housing to ensure that residents are the heart of key decision making. This year, the board members have influenced:

- the terms of reference for the board
- incentives for board participation
- communication with leaseholders about fire doors
- estate Inspection process to ensure it's fit for purpose and involves residents.

We have some long serving members who have dedicated more than 10 years to resident involvement, and we thank them for all their contribution and commitment. We also recognise and thank all the residents and community groups that are making a difference in their community.



Spotlight on Christine Griffin, Resident Board Member

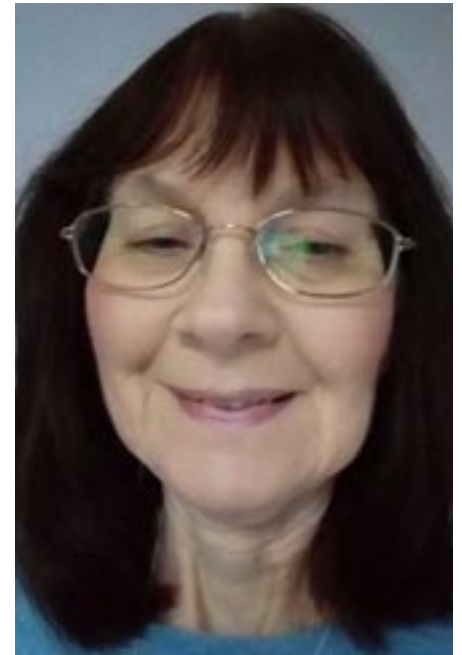
Christine Griffin is one of our longstanding board members. She moved to Cippenham in the 1970s and worked in the pharmaceutical industry for more than 25 years before retiring.

Christine's volunteering journey began when she joined the committee of the West Cippenham Tenant and Resident Association, where she helped with organising meetings and events for members.

Christine has been a member of St Andrews Church in Cippenham for more than 40 years. She became a member of the Church committee in 2012 helping with community events and preparation for services.

In the past she has volunteered for Citizens Advice Bureau and is currently volunteering at Burnham Library once a week.

Christine joined the Resident Board after reading about the opportunity to get involved in the housing newsletter. She joined the board not really knowing very much about what it involved.



Over the last few years, she has been involved in a number of things, the housing's resident complaints panels, procurement of the research company carrying out Tenant Satisfaction Measures surveys, the recruitment of the board's independent chair and most recently been on the Tour of Slough organised by housing.

It seems she is busier now than when she was working. When asked about why she volunteered, she responded: "I get a lot of satisfaction from helping people in making a difference in their lives, and this is one of the key areas I have enjoyed by being on the resident board complaints panel.

"I am pleased the council has implemented the Resident Involvement Strategy and has an Action Plan to ensure they comply with the new standards. I am looking forward to future involvement activities."

Annual Report 2023/2024

Introduction by Lisa Keating, Director of Housing

I am pleased to introduce housing's annual report for 2023-2024. I joined the council as Director of Housing in July 2024. During my time at Slough, I have had time to review the service and consider plans for improving customer satisfaction and building trust. The year ahead will be challenging as we continue to work through our financial situation as a council.



Social Housing Regulator

The Social Housing Act 2023 received royal assent in July 2023. This was a significant year as it saw the preparation for one of the biggest changes in social housing regulation for over a decade.

As part of these changes, the new Consumer standards came into force on 1 April 2024. The standards emphasise strengthening the resident voice.

In 2023 we also saw stronger links between the Regulator and the Housing Ombudsman. Giving the ombudsman powers to require landlords to go beyond the scope of individual complaints and seek to address any wider issues.

Resident Involvement

In December 2023 we developed our Housing Resident Involvement Strategy. This three-year strategy was approved by cabinet in December 2023 and the action plan to bring it to life was developed with our Resident Board. We have started making progress implementing the action plan with greater accountability of staff and councillors to residents.

Our Resident Board members will play a key part in monitoring our progress in making improvements and meeting standards. We have started to pull together a database of involved tenants whom we will keep involved throughout the process.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

2023 saw the introduction of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard, all social housing providers are required to collect and report on 22 performance measures. Twelve of these are related to perception surveys and 10 relate to housing management performance. Throughout the year our research partner MEL Research carried out the surveys and managed to get views from 1,040 tenants. These were all collated and ready for submission to the regulator in July 2024. The TSM results have highlighted several areas for improvement. I have begun to put in place a housing improvement plan which will be shared with the Resident Board and wider residents.

Improving Homes

Providing safe and decent homes for residents is high on the agenda for us at Slough. Throughout the year we continued improvement works across the borough both replacing roofs and windows; as well as installing solar panels in some of our bungalows and over 60s blocks. The improvements have been received well by residents in helping reduce heating costs.

Damp and Mould

Following the tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak; the adverse effects of damp and mould continue to be highlighted in local and national news. As a local authority, we know it's our responsibility to ensure our residents live in homes that are safe and of a decent standard; residents rely on us to look after homes effectively and meet

requirements designed to protect them from harm.

Throughout the year our repairs partner continued to see a high increase in calls relating to damp and mould. To respond to this, they created a dedicated taskforce responsible for prioritising and carrying out the necessary checks and treatment to resolve the issues.

Alongside this, as a council we have worked closely with our NHS partners and held local damp and mould advice sessions for families with young children across the borough.

Cardo Group takes over Osborne Property Services

March 2024 saw the change over from Osborne to Cardo Group. We are aware that the impact of Covid and Brexit saw a decline in the service provided by Osborne. Cardo is a reputable organisation and has lots of experience in repairs and maintenance. Cardo's senior management is committed to improving services for the duration of the contract.

Community Safety

Throughout the year our teams have worked with Thames Valley Police (TVP) to put in place a number of closure orders where criminal activity has been taking place on our estates. A closure order is a legal process which prevents people entering the premises they have been living in for a certain period of time.

Housing Management Information System (NEC)

The implementation of our new housing management information system, called NEC, is progressing. April 2023 saw the recruitment of the new project manager to speed up the implementation of the different modules to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of recording and accessing information on council residents and properties.

Resident Involvement



During 2023/24, we delivered on our plan to work with residents and staff to develop our Housing Resident Involvement Strategy. This three-year strategy was approved by cabinet in December 2023 and the action plan to bring it to life was developed with our Resident Board. We have made a good start on delivering the action plan covering the following five themes.

- Resident Involvement Culture.
- Strengthen the Resident Board and resident influence.
- Range of options for resident involvement.
- Appropriate resources and support to enable effective involvement.
- Inclusive and accessible engagement.

This new strategy was timely as we recruited a new Independent Chair of the Resident Board, Tim Blanc in December 2023. Tim has vast experience of working in the field of resident involvement and has been working with the Resident Board to monitor the effective delivery of the strategy.

April 2023 saw the introduction of Tenant Satisfaction Measures, a requirement for all social landlords to begin to collect and submit data for each financial year. Slough's research contractor MEL Research began surveying residents using mixed methods (online and telephone). Throughout the year they surveyed 1,040 tenants.

Plans for 2024-25

- Develop a Resident Involvement Policy with the Resident Board.
- Submit and publish Tenant Satisfaction Measures results.
- Recruit permanent staff to support the implementation of the action plan.
- Strengthen the current Resident Board and recruit new members, providing training and support.
- Improve and strengthen resident engagement.

Allocations and lettings

The council continues to experience a high demand for housing services from residents, and the number of applications on the housing register has doubled in the last year. The allocations team is continuing to work through and assess a backlog of applications. We have been working through the outstanding council voids with council colleagues, to speed up the viewing and letting process and working with Cardo our void contractor to ensure residents move into their new homes as quickly as possible.



199 homes were let in 2023-24

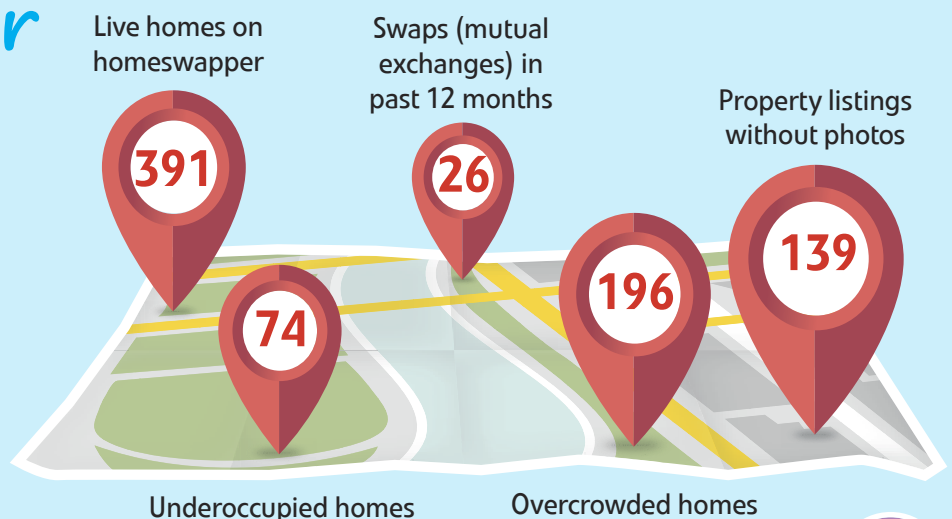
Plans for 2024-25

- Clear the backlog of housing register applications to ensure all households that need to have their applications assessed are notified of the assessment outcome.
- Continue to work through remaining elements of data cleansing from move to new Housing IT system.
- Develop a roadmap to deliver an online housing register application form, which will make the process of applying quicker and easier for residents, with the aim of delivering this form in 2025/26.

HomeSwapper

Homeswapper is the easiest way for tenants to swap (mutual exchange) council homes and housing association properties. The best way to get an opportunity to swap homes is by ensuring you have included as much information as possible i.e, contact details, photographs etc.

Home swapper shows that Slough currently has:



Communications and customer contact

Throughout the year we continued to keep you updated on housing news via our regular newsletter. Housing Highlights is an online newsletter, however as the year went on, we arranged for housing staff to begin distributing the printed newsletter to our de-designated blocks and to those who do not have access online. The hard copies can also be found in our libraries and hubs. The newsletter is published bi-monthly and can be found at www.slough.gov.uk/housing-highlights

In the early part of the year, we began holding monthly surgeries in our libraries and community hubs. Dates and times were publicised in our newsletter, our website as well as on social media.

The council's Customer Service Department provides the front door for residents contacting the council. They provide advice and support for the following services: Adult Social Care, Council Tax, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Housing Services, Environmental Services, School admissions and Electoral Services. The channels of contact are by telephone, face to face, email/Eforms. The team also process bus passes and blue badge applications.

Throughout 2023/2024 the new 'Interactive Voice Response' (IVR) was implemented. The queue options were improved to promoting online and self-serve take up, by removing dependency on temporary members of staff.

Introduced SARA (chatbot) for services relating to School Admissions, Council Tax and Environmental Services.

Senior management carried out deep dive exercises for the council's high contact generating areas Housing Services, Adult Social Care and Council Tax. This highlighted areas for service improvements.



Plans for 2024-25

- Housing staff plan to continue housing surgeries in local libraries and hubs.
- Customer services to review customer facing inbox and respond within 5 working days, corporate target is 10 days.
- Plan to raise % of overall call target from 75% to 80%.
- Improve quality of service by setting objectives linked to the council's corporate plan.
- Cross skilling our team to build resilience within the service.
- Quality monitoring to ensure the learning is embedded.
- Holding Service Improvement meetings with housing specialist teams to talk through improvements.
- SARA chat box to handle electoral roll and housing related queries.
- Implement Live Chat.

218,460

contacts received
between April 23
and March 24



150,015 (68.7%)

(Housing Service calls -
9,083 calls offered
within an answer rate
of 61.9% (5,623))



**12mins
40secs**

Average wait time
(against target of 8 mins)



8,075 (3.7%)

Appointments only
measured; (residents
walk are not currently
captured)



60,370 (27.6%)
(Email/Eforms)

Resident safety

Keeping people safe has been high on the agenda for us and all local authorities. There are six big housing safety compliance areas - asbestos, fire safety, legionella, gas, electrics and LOLER (lift and hoisting equipment).

The Building Safety Act 2022 received Royal Assent on 28 April 2022. Grenfell was a primary reason for this act. Cladding material and installation; fire protection between flat floors; general fire protection; repairs and resident engagement all contributed to the failures at Grenfell. The act focused on blocks over 18 meters in height. Most of the issues highlighted in the act were well known before. We have two blocks (Broom and Poplar) which are affected by the act, both of which had extensive building work carried out. These were completed to ensure compliance. We are continuing to carry out fire risk assessments and monitor our blocks given the ever-changing fire regulations.

Independent fire risks assessments are carried out throughout the year, along with regular checks and inspections by our neighbourhood officers. In particular around the communal areas to ensure items are not stored there, keeping all exit routes clear in the event of a fire.

Our two high rise buildings Broom and Poplar have a dedicated neighbourhood officer who is responsible for continuous engagement with them as well as our eight de-designated blocks across the borough.

All blocks that have a 'Stay Put' policy have been written to and housing staff have been asking residents to complete personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs). The fire brigade will have access to the PEEPs in the event of a



237
fire risk
assessments



5,304
emergency
lighting tests



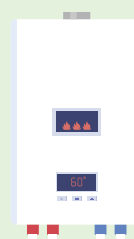
623
asbestos
surveys



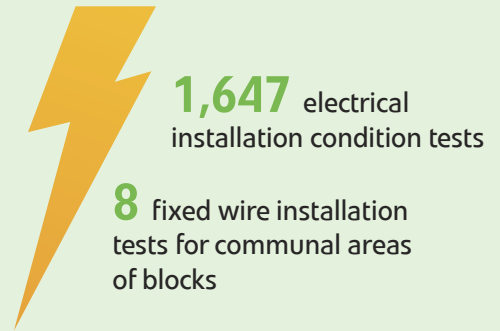
645
water
safety
tests



180
lift safety
inspections



157 boiler
replacements



fire and know who will have difficulty getting out of their flat and the building.

We are continuing to invest in fire safety as we are still upgrading flat entrance doors, communal doors, loft compartmentation, fire stopping, signage, etc.

The stock condition survey carried out during the year highlighted the need to upgrade lifts, particularly in our over 60's de-designated blocks.

Gas safety checks continue to meet a legal requirement. In 2023/24 we carried out 7,044 safety checks. These can only be carried out with your cooperation, so thank you for helping us to keep you safe.

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022 require additional smoke detector alarms to be installed in living rooms and additional areas depending on property size. This work has begun and continues in the year ahead.

Plans for 2024-25

- Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy.
- Cardo to ensure every property which is being tested has an additional smoke detector device installed.
- Cardo to undertake Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) for 2057 properties.
- Begin the annual lift upgrades programme.

Preventing fraud

The UK's housing crisis is continuing to affect communities and driving families and keyworkers into financial hardship. Ensuring we have measures in place to deal with housing fraud is even more critical.

The fraud team work closely with housing staff and are constantly looking for information that will help us to recover properties from perpetrators. To report fraud, complete our online form or call 01753 787876 (24 hours). This can be done anonymously.

During 2023/2024 the fraud team recovered four properties returning them back into stock. In two properties, the tenants had left the UK and two properties were unoccupied as elderly relatives were living with family. These two cases also produced recoverable overpayments of Council Tax Support.



Plans for 2024-25

- Recruit two permanent Housing Tenancy Investigation Officers to work closely with Housing Services Teams and to provide advice and guidance in the areas of fraud awareness prevention and the management of situations where fraud is suspected.

Right to Buy

During 2023/2024 the team continued to progress Right to Buy (RTB) applications for our residents wishing to purchase their homes. The number of properties sold was slightly up on the previous financial year, despite the number of applications going down. This is partly due to applications received in the previous financial year completing and the process being managed more efficiently.

Plans for 2024-25

- The Home Ownership Section is being upgraded on to the new NEC Housing IT system. This will include various modules going live this year, which include the service charges, Right to Buy and arrears modules. The new Housing system will allow homeowners to pay their service charges by Direct Debit for the first time.
- Recruit permanent staff into the Home Ownership team.



Housing Management

We are aware that having well maintained estates and homes has a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of residents. Our officers are regularly out and about visiting residents and estates. Estate inspections are important for keeping and maintaining standards, dealing with health and safety risks, and ensuring risks identified through independent inspection are addressed.

84% of block/estate inspections judged to be of a "good" standard

346 block/estate inspections



Plans for 2024-25

- Review tenancy audit process, agreeing criteria to determine tenancies to be audited.
- Agreeing housing officer tenancy audit targets.
- Minimising void periods through improving the viewing and sign-up process of ready to let properties.
- Improve estate inspection arrangements to include tenants, technical officers, Cardo staff and the grounds maintenance service staff.

Complaints

2023 saw the relationship between the Housing Ombudsman and Regulator of Social Housing strengthened. The figures show we have not been good at responding to complaints in a timely manner and not delivering the services our residents expect from us. We are committed to implementing the requirements of the complaints handling code to ensure we improve our service.

Plans for 2024-25

- Review our complaints process.
- Implement training for staff responding to complaints.
- Improve response time and standard of responses.
- Implement process for learning from complaints.



328 complaints received by the council relate to housing repairs (this remains the highest complained about area)



26% of repairs complaints were closed within the timescales



42 complaints were received for housing management

More than half of the complaints received were in relation to lack of response and communication

33% of housing management complaints were responded to on time



Homelessness

Slough, along with most other local authorities in the South East, is facing a considerable increase in presentations, to try to prevent homelessness. The main reason for this is an increase in S21 notices being issued by landlords who require their properties back, via the 'no fault' eviction process.

Added to this the lack of affordable rental properties within Slough, which makes prevention more difficult and harder for residents to seek alternative properties in the private sector.

Plans for 2024-25

- To employ further staffing and restructure, to enable cases to be dealt with in a timely manner and to reduce waiting times in Temporary Accommodation.
- To work with Government to ensure the No Fault eviction process comes to an end. Currently there is no set time frame for this to come to legislation.
- To make full use of the Homeless Prevention Grant funding from Government, to prevent homelessness, whenever realistically possible.

2,767 approaches from households at risk of homelessness in Slough in 2023/24, compared to 2,086 last year (2022/23), showing an increase of just over 32%



119 preventions this year, compared to 122 in the previous year

Dealing with anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) in your neighbourhood can make life miserable. It is unacceptable behaviour that comes in many forms - such as noise, abusive behaviour, littering or fly tipping and we always want it to stop.

In 2023/24 we secured a contract with Mediation Bucks to train and support staff to intervene in anti-social behaviour cases to prevent things escalating. We also became members of Resolve, a specialist organisation who provide advice and expertise on managing anti-social behaviour.



In 2023-24 the council ASB enforcement teams have issued:



34 Community Protection Notices (CPN) warning letters

5 full CPN letters

3 Criminal Behaviour Orders obtained

11 Closure Orders obtained

1 Public Spaces Protection Order, in place to tackle street drinking

Plans for 2024-25

- A community initiative "Clear Hold Build" in Langley is a chance for partners and organisations to work together to improve life in Langley by tackling and addressing serious organised crime - building up the area through community initiatives, partnership work and community spirit. This is being jointly managed by TVP and the council.
- Launch of Mediation Service by Thames Valley Police (TVP) called Alternatives to Conflict that will be available for council referrals when dealing with escalating ASB cases.
- Overarching SBC ASB Policy to be finalised, allowing all officers investigating ASB cases to work to the same standards.
- Staff training to improve the management of Anti-Social Behaviour
- Continued use of closure orders and enforcement to recover properties.

Supporting the vulnerable

Our Tenancy Sustainment Officers (TSO) work within the housing teams and closely with partner agencies, supporting council tenants who are experiencing difficulties which impact their ability to manage their tenancy positively.

They are part of the 'Poverty Forum', an initiative where partners and stakeholders regularly meet to look at how they can support residents facing financial difficulties.

Our TSOs are usually found in resident's homes, listening to their stories and hearing what support they feel they need. This personal approach is often the key to enabling residents to make positive, sustainable changes.

They offer advice and support across various areas including benefit applications, access to grants, basic budgeting support, aids and adaptations within the home and signposting to other agencies and partners. The team has a wealth of experience working with people from all different backgrounds, facing various difficulties. One of the most important qualities in our TSOs is their ability to build relationships with, and advocate for, tenants who can struggle to engage.

Highlights include supporting residents who had been found in poor living conditions to access services which improved their physical and mental health; to apply for grants to replace broken



141 council tenants offered support



appliances - enabling them to cook nourishing meals and wash their clothes, and to begin to engage in social groups. This helping hand at the initial crisis point allowed the residents to gain confidence in their ability to manage going forward.

Two Occupational Therapists were employed to work closely with Tenancy Sustainment Officers and the repair, maintenance and investment contract team to:

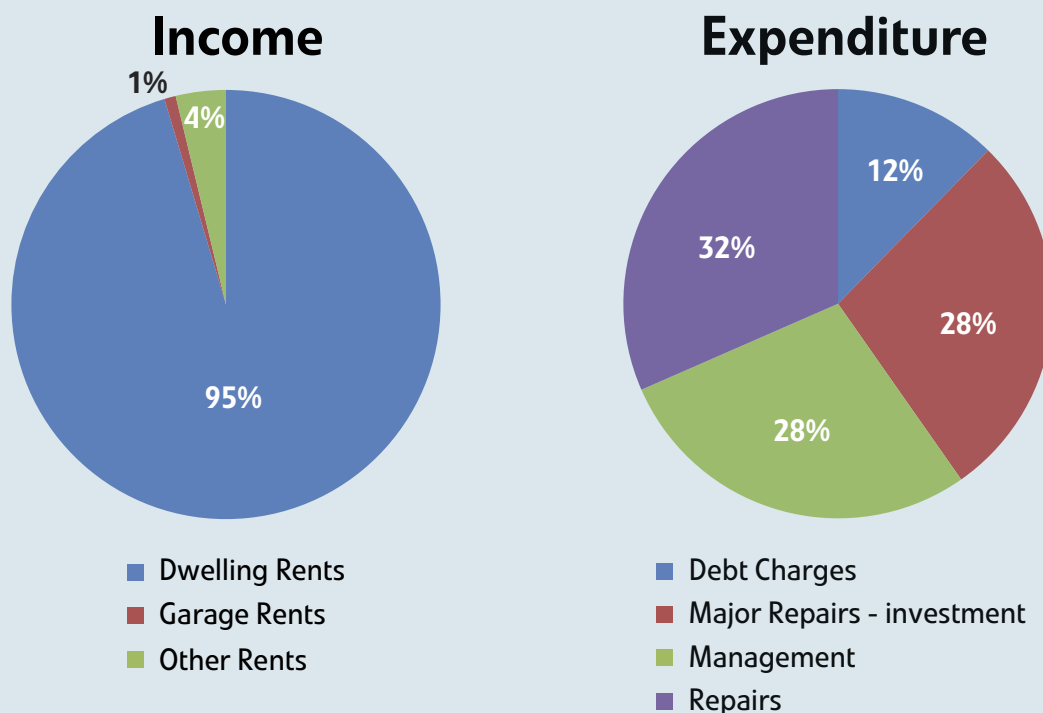
- a) visit void properties with prospective tenants to determine whether suitable or whether adaptations need to be specified
- b) ensure existing tenants have specified the correct adaptations so they can remain in their homes
- c) advise on equipment needs for residents.

Appointed a dedicated Senior Neighbourhood Officer to have a lead and responsibility for the over 60's de-designated properties.

Plans for 2024-25

- Continue supporting vulnerable residents, signposting to relevant support organisations.
- Continue to provide advice and support in claiming benefits.
- Investigate opportunities for supporting tenants who need help with their gardens.
- Investigate opportunities to set up or support an existing furniture recycling project.
- TSOs to support housing officers in viewing and sign-ups of vulnerable new residents.

Repairs and Maintenance and Housing Revenue Account Budget



Management costs

The directors' remuneration and management costs for 2023/24 is £577k. This includes an Executive Director and two interim housing directors.

Tim Blanc, independent chair of the Resident Board, started in December 2023. £2,022 has been charged for four months of 2023/24.

Cardo Annual Report 2023/2024

CARDO



55,307
calls answered
(target is 5% or less
abandoned. Average for
Sept 23-Aug 24 was 9%
abandoned).



13 days
on average to first
appointment (the target
is 10 days. Additional
resource has been
recruited to offer more
appointments.)



Complaints
received **311**
Complaints
closed **238**



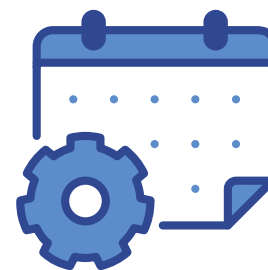
80%
Satisfied customer
based on most
recent repair



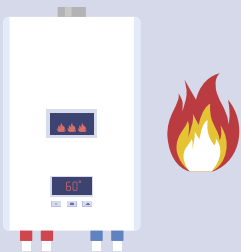
**19.8
days**
average for
Cardo to
complete voids
(target 20 days)



16%
Follow up
appointments



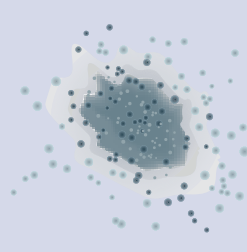
**20.8
days**
Average time
to complete
non urgent
repairs



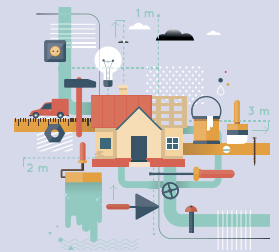
99.9%
Gas compliance



22,132
Repairs raised

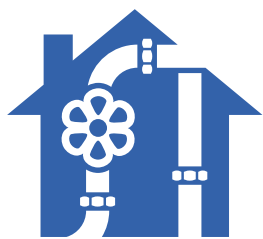


1,608
Damp and
mould repairs



£10m
Planned maintenance
programmes completed

Top three repairs issued



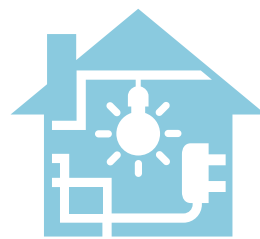
4,629 (21%)

Plumbing



4,214 (21%)

Carpentry



3,188 (53%)

Electrical

Repairs

Damp and mould continues to be a high priority with 27% of all properties reporting issues. We are now working towards longer term solutions to alleviate the issue of damp and mould. These solutions include sensors within a property to identify more specific issues, PIV systems (Positive Input Ventilation) as well as upgrades to existing loft insulation and extractor systems. This will continue throughout the year to reduce the impact of damp and mould in people's homes.

We have seen another annual increase on repairs over the last 12 months. The increase of approximately 6%, coupled with the damp and mould reported,

continues the trend of a high demand in the service and year on year increase.

We have recruited additional operatives and contractors to support the increase in demand. This will allow for greater appointment slots, and we can deal with repairs received quicker.

Customer satisfaction

Satisfaction with the Repairs service improved slightly from the previous year. Our focus continues to be on improved communication, staff training and development.

Planned Works

Planned works has seen another increase in terms of projects and spend - much of this is attributable

to essential works such as fire doors and alarm systems. There has also been a significant increase in roof replacements, changing many of the roofs that have caused leaks and repairs in properties for many years. Upgrade works at De-Designated blocks has been a large project that is to run throughout the year. The quality and scale of the work is a real positive for Cardo and SBC.

Compliance

Compliance continues to perform at a high level, month on month ensuring the housing and communal areas are safe and to standard. Our voids team continue to offer a good home for people to move in to and it is pleasing to note improved turnaround times.



IMPROVEMENT WORKS

The Safety and Quality Standard is one of the newly revised consumer standards which requires landlords to provide safe and good quality homes to tenants.

It is clear that as a landlord we must provide decent quality homes that meet the Decent Homes Standard. We recently reported results to the social housing regulator in response to our Tenant Satisfaction Measure which showed that at the end of March, 2.4% of our homes do not meet the standard.

Given this finding, we have planned works scheduled throughout the year, which we have already begun carrying out.

Clarendon Court

We recently carried out a window and door replacement programme for those living in Clarendon Court. The existing windows were



more than 20 years old and needed to be changed. The new windows will help to keep homes warmer and reduce energy costs for the residents, as well improving the look of the building.

A resident from the block told us: "When we first heard the windows were going to be changed, we had our reservations particularly around the damage this could cause internally to our home. We highlighted our concerns to both Slough and Cardo staff; we found them to be helpful and understanding.

"When the work began, we found the workmen were very careful and considerate when putting the windows in to ensure there was no or very little damage to our home during the process.

"Thankfully the work is completed, and we are really pleased. The new windows look so much nicer and have made a difference by making it warmer as well as increased the soundproofing."

Brammas and Spackmans

In the past, we have received several calls from residents reporting issues with their roofs causing damage to their home, particularly during heavy downpours.

Cardo is currently working on the blocks at Brammas and Spackmans renewing and resealing roofs. Whilst carrying out this work we have also given the corridors a fresh lick of paint and the walkways have been renewed. This has given the blocks a much-needed makeover.



TENANTS INCENTIVE (MONEY TO MOVE SCHEME)

Is your home too large for you?

Slough Borough Council has a limited supply of family sized homes. The council is committed to make best use of its available housing stock to meet the demand from households of all sizes who need an affordable home.

This scheme provides an opportunity for people whose council home is too large for them, to move to smaller alternative accommodation. The resulting vacancy can then be offered to a family in need on the council's housing register.

If you have a secure council tenancy and you are living in a family sized home and can downsize to a smaller property without being overcrowded, then you may be eligible for this scheme.

The following options are available but if you have rent arrears and have not kept your council home in good order, then you may not be able to join the scheme. You can contact your neighbourhood housing officer to discuss this.

Available options

- £2,000 per bedroom released
- Vulnerable tenants who are currently working with a tenancy sustainment officer will be offered advice or assistance with moving to a smaller property.

Eligibility

The Tenants Incentive Scheme is available to Slough Borough Council tenants who meet the following criteria:

- have a secure tenancy
- have kept their current home in good order. This includes decoration, repair and garden maintenance
- occupy a family sized home and can downsize to a smaller property without being overcrowded

- have a clear rent account or where the arrears on the account can be paid off fully with the incentive payment
- agree to provide vacant possession of their current property.

Tenants who cannot be considered eligible for the scheme are listed below:

- tenants who do not have a secure tenancy
- are subject to a possession order
- have rent arrears in excess of the incentive payment
- have re-chargeable arrears in excess of the incentive payment
- have not kept their home in good order including decoration, repair and garden maintenance
- have previously received a Tenants Incentive payment
- who succeed a tenancy under Ground 16, Schedule 2 of Housing Act 1985 and are downsizing to a smaller property.

How to apply

All applicants must be registered on the council's housing register and the council's allocations policy will apply.

The scheme is administered by the Housing Allocations Team and you can:

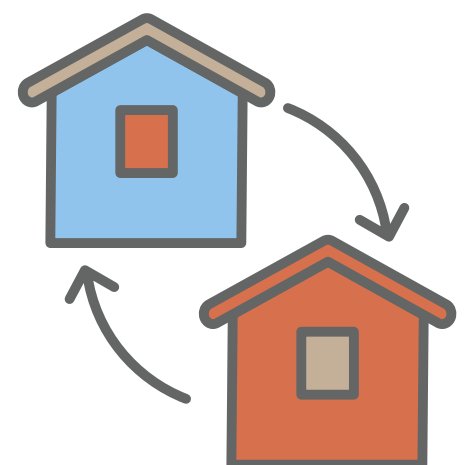
- telephone 01753 475 111 and ask for further advice and an application form
- download the application form from the Slough website at: www.slough.gov.uk/housing/how-to-apply

Payment

- The incentive payment will be paid into your bank account approximately 10 working days after you have returned the keys for your old property.
- Payment will be minus any arrears on the rent account or re-chargeable repairs to the property once the tenancy has been terminated.
- Payment will only be authorised following an inspection by the council of the vacated property.

Other information

- The council operates a recharge policy which is managed as part of your tenancy and details are available by contacting your neighbourhood housing officer.
- If your circumstances change after you have moved, the council's housing allocations scheme rules apply and you can re-apply.
- The council reserves the right to refuse your request subject to demand and availability of funding.



Fire safety in the home

Following the recent high-rise fire in the centre of Slough, it's a timely reminder to brush up on fire safety and plan your escape route.

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service has some tips to help reduce the risk of fires and fire spread in your home.

- Install smoke alarms and test them weekly.
- If you have a balcony do not use a BBQ and ensure you minimise the amount of combustible material on the balcony.
- If you smoke, ensure you dispose of smoking materials correctly.
- Clean and maintain your electrical appliances and ensure you register your appliances so you will be informed if they are recalled www.registermyappliance.org.uk/registration
- Avoid cooking when you've been drinking alcohol and avoid leaving children or pets in the kitchen unattended when cooking.

- Do not overload plug sockets.
- Don't run appliances such as washing machines and tumble dryers while you are out or asleep.
- Have a bedtime routine that includes closing internal doors and unplugging electrical items.
- Ensure you, and all occupants in your home, know your building's escape plan. Your landlord has a legal duty to give you a copy of the escape plan for your building, so ask for a copy if you don't already have one.
- Keep exits clear both in your home and in communal areas.
- Never wedge open fire doors.

RBFRS have more advice on different topics, including smoke alarms, cooking, electrical, smoking, oxygen users, and making an escape plan.

View their website for more information - it could save a life.

Visit: www.rbfrs.co.uk/your-safety/safety-at-home



TENANT SATISFACTION SURVEYS

The regulator for social housing expects all social housing providers to gather data and feedback to them.

MEL Research, our contractor, will soon be starting to carry out surveys of tenants and leaseholders. All responses will be kept anonymous, and the information we receive will help us to understand where change needs to happen.

If you are contacted, please take this opportunity to tell us what you think. By taking part you will be entered into a prize draw for one of three cash prizes (£100, £75 and £50).



New community equipment drop-off sites

The council has two new drop-off sites for small to medium sized community equipment. These facilities are part of our ongoing commitment to improving community social care services and enhancing accessibility for our residents.

When equipment is dropped off at the allocated sites, NRS Healthcare will collect, clean, repair and recycle/reuse it by providing it to others in need.

Locations of drop-off sites

1. Observatory House Car Park, 25 Windsor Rd, Slough SL1 2EL. Opening times: Monday-Friday 9am-5.30pm. To access, please speak to reception to be let through the gate.
2. Chalvey Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC), White Hart Road, off Spackmans Way, SL1 2SF. Open 7 days a week. Opening times for Chalvey Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) (www.slough.gov.uk/household-waste-recycling-centres-waste-transfer-station/opening-hours-chalvey-household-waste-recycling-centre). Access by vehicle only. Access requirements for Chalvey Household Waste Recycling Centre. (www.slough.gov.uk/household-waste-recycling-centres-waste-transfer-station/access-requirements-chalvey-household-waste-recycling-centre).

At both locations, residents will find a dedicated container clearly labelled for the return of community equipment.



Items accepted:

- adjustable bed rails
- adjustable shower chairs
- bathing equipment
- commodes
- perching stools
- rollators
- toilet frames
- other similar small community equipment.

Items not accepted

Please note that due to size and safety restrictions, the following items cannot be accepted at these drop-off sites:

- mattresses
- profiling beds
- mobile hoists
- wheelchairs
- any other large community equipment.

This is to make sure the containers can be used efficiently and remain accessible to all users who need to return smaller items. You can return

larger items by calling NRS on 0344 893 6960 who will be happy to arrange collection.

Cllr Anna Wright, cabinet member for adult social care, mental health and learning disabilities, said: "Rather than leaving the equipment you no longer need getting in the way at home, pop it down to Chalvey HWRC or Observatory House. By reusing and recycling equipment, access to items needed is improved for our residents, as well as being kinder to the environment. All equipment is cleaned, repaired, and stored by NRS Healthcare ready for the next user."

If you have any questions about what can be dropped off, or if you need further information about the new community equipment drop-off sites, please do get in touch by:

- email: reablementadmin@slough.gov.uk
- phone: 01753 475 111, option 1 for Adult Social Care.

HWS HEALTH & WELLBEING SOLUTIONS

FREE Strength and Balance Classes in Slough

helping you stay on your feet

- Do you want to improve your strength and balance and increase your physical activity?
- Do you want to know how to lower your falls risk?

If so we offer:

- History taking
- Mobility screening
- Medical conditions
- Post and health care
- Injury needs
- Continence
- Theme based checks

This FREE service is available to people aged over 60, living in Slough or registered with a Slough GP. Slough residents under 60 with mobility issues can also be referred.

Contact the team today to learn more!

www.healthandwellbeing.slough.gov.uk
0800 041474 / 01753 23444
sls.lsc@slough.gov.uk

Slough Health & Wellbeing Solutions

Community Safety Reassurance

Slough Borough Council's Community Safety Team does an annual survey on perceptions of crime and safety in Slough which is shared with the Safer Slough Partnership (SSP).



SSP is Slough's community safety partnership, which seeks to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime. The SSP is made up of multiple agencies such as the fire service, police, probation, social services, as well as the voluntary sector, to address local issues.

In response to our 2024 survey, whereby 51% of respondents said they felt unsafe alone outside in daylight, this article aims to debunk misinformed perceptions of safety in Slough.

You said:
"Crime is increasing in Slough"

Reality:
Crime has been consistently lower this year compared to the year previous (see chart 1).

Chart 1



(Source: police.data.uk)

You said:
"Anti-Social Behaviour is rife"

Reality:
Slough has Anti-Social Behaviour rates lower than both the National and South East average (see chart 2).

You said:
"The police don't do anything"

Reality:
From August 2023 to July 2024.

- No. of suspects charged ↑ 1.6%
- No. of local resolutions ↑ 1.52%
- No. of cautions given has ↑ 0.28%

In other words, there is a steady increase in productive police outcomes.

(Source: police.data.uk)

You said:
"There are not enough services for victims of crime"

Reality:
There are a plethora of services available, for example:

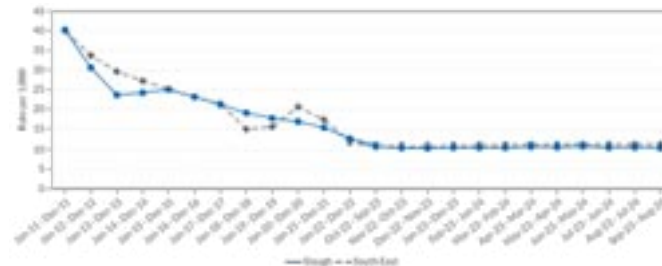
- **Victim First Hub**
victims-first.org.uk
 - o Emotional support and Counselling service
 - o Telephone helpline 0300 1234 148

- o Free legal advice (for domestic abuse victims)
- o **SAFE! Project** (Support for young people affected by crime) 0800 133 7938
- o **Hope after Harm** (sexual violence service) 01844 202 001
- **Hestia Domestic Abuse Service** 01753 477352
 - o Advocacy, outreach and educational services
- **Modern Slavery helpline** 0800 0121 700
www.modernslaveryhelpline.org

This is not to say that Slough is perfect, there is a lot more that must be done. But we can assure you that we are dedicated to helping residents feel safe. Please support us by reporting all criminal activity and anti-social behaviour to police on 999 in an emergency, or 101 in a non-emergency.

You can also report anti-social behaviour to the council via the online form www.slough.gov.uk/xfp/form/232.

Chart 2



(Source: police.data.uk)



Slough Child and Family Wellbeing

is the new name for the Public Health Nursing Service in Slough for children and young people, from pre-birth to age 19 years (up to 25 for those with SEND).

Our service offers to support every family to help build the foundations of a healthy life, improve child health outcomes, and reduce inequalities.

t: 0300 247 0073

w: sloughchildandfamily.co.uk



Scan the QR code to access our website.



Childhood vaccinations

Parents and carers are urged to check that their children are up to date with their immunisations, including both doses of MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella), in the wake of rising measles cases across the country.

Measles is highly infectious and nine out of 10 unvaccinated children in a classroom will catch the disease if just one child is infectious.

Whilst measles can be mild for some children, one in five will require a hospital visit and the infection can lead to complications in one in 15, such as meningitis and sepsis. There is no specific treatment for measles and vaccination gives the best protection from serious illness. Measles can start with cold like symptoms such as a runny nose, sneezing and a cough, with a rash not showing until they have been infectious for up to four days.

Slough Borough Council's Public Health Team advises that anyone who has missed any of their vaccinations can catch up at any time and parents/carers should check their child's red book or ask their GP practice to make sure their child is fully vaccinated.

If parents do not want their child to have the MMR vaccine that contains porcine gelatine, they can ask for the Priorix vaccine.

Find out more about the MMR vaccine on the [NHS website](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/mmr-vaccine). (www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/mmr-vaccine)

You can contact the Berkshire School Aged Immunisation Team for advice and to book appointments, Monday to Friday from 9am to 4pm (term time only) by calling 0300 365 0077 or emailing Eastschoolimms@berkshire.nhs.uk

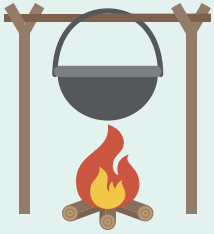




Indoor Air Pollution

refers to the air quality within buildings that pose health risks to its occupants.

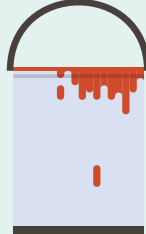
Common Sources of indoor air pollution:



1. Cooking/heating using wood



2. Smoking



3. Household paints



4. Pesticides



5. Cleaning agents

Tips on how to improve air quality inside your home/workplace/school:



1. Use low watt bulbs or energy saving lights.



7. Segregate your waste properly.



2. Limit the use of air conditioning units and keep the temperature a few degrees higher.



8. Use natural lighting by opening curtains during daytime. Regular cleaning/removing mould/opening windows to ventilate or using a dehumidifier can help.



3. Dispose of refrigerant and refrigerant equipment and used coolant properly.



9. Avoid using aerosols.



4. Minimise the use of wood or coal when cooking/heating.



10. Ventilate properly when you use products that may release air pollutants.



5. Use extraction during cooking and keep the kitchen well ventilated, when cooking with gas.



11. Do not allow indoor smoking.



6. Don't burn your household waste.



12. Inspect your fuel-burning appliances for leaks and have them repaired immediately.

Changes to visa documents

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) are developing a digital immigration system. This means they are replacing physical documents with an online record of your immigration status. This is known as an eVisa.

An eVisa is an online record of your immigration status and the conditions of your permission to enter or stay in the UK. You will need to create a UKVI account to access your eVisa. Creating a UKVI account is free and straightforward.

Updating your physical document to an eVisa does not affect your immigration status or the conditions of your permission to enter or stay in the UK.

The documents being replaced are:

- Biometric residence permits (BRP)
- Biometric residence cards (BRC)
- Passport endorsements, such as indefinite leave to enter wet ink stamps
- Vignette stickers in passports, such as entry clearance or visa vignettes.

If you use a physical or legacy paper document to prove your immigration rights, go to www.gov.uk/evisa to find out what you need to do next. You must make this change by 31 December 2024.

There is no need to wait, you can open an account now. If you are able, please help family and friends to complete the process too.

This video has a full explanation of how to create an online account www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lqAbBCfBYI



Housing surgeries

Senior Neighbourhood Officers from the tenancy management team will be at local community hubs once a month, so residents can discuss any issues or ask advice.

The housing surgeries will be running on the fourth Thursday of each month in Britwell and Chalvey, and on the fourth Wednesday of each month in Langley, from 10am-4pm.

An officer will be based at Langley, Britwell and Chalvey Community Hubs, for tenants to go along to talk about their property, tenancy or neighbourhood.

The next dates are:

- 27 November - Langley Hub, Langley Library, Trelawney Avenue, SL3 7UF
- 28 November - Britwell Hub, Britwell Centre, Wentworth Avenue, SL2 2DS
- 28 November - Chalvey Community Hub, Ladbrooke Road, SL1 2SR

All future dates can be found on the [Your Tenancy](http://www.slough.gov.uk/council-housing-tenants/tenancy/6) page of our website (www.slough.gov.uk/council-housing-tenants/tenancy/6).



Are you over State Pension age, or know someone who is?

Pension Credit tops up pension income and can help with day-to-day living costs.

If you are over State Pension age, you may be eligible to claim **Pension Credit**, even if you own your home or have savings. People who claim **Pension Credit** may also be able to get:

- The **Winter Fuel Payment**^{*} and other help with heating costs
- Help with rent and Council Tax
- A free TV Licence for those aged 75 or over
- Help with the cost of NHS services, such as NHS dental treatment, glasses and transport costs for hospital appointments

You could be eligible for **Pension Credit** if your weekly income is below £218.15 or, if you have a partner who lives with you, £332.95. Qualifying income level may be higher in some circumstances.

Don't miss out.

Check your eligibility at gov.uk/pension-credit or by calling **0800 99 1234**

Eligibility criteria apply
^{*}or the equivalent in Scotland.



GREEN DOCTORS

THAMES VALLEY'S WINTER OFFER

Green Doctors Thames Valley help to reduce energy bills, by personally installing various effective draughtproofing and energy saving measures. They also explain how to create noticeable reductions in energy and other utility bills by easy lifestyle changes.

Over winter, Green Doctors are also able to offer the following (depending on eligibility):

- emergency fuel and supermarket vouchers
- funding to conduct surveys ascertaining reason for mould/damp/excess heat loss in a property (which can aggravate health/respiratory problems)

- winter warm packs
- multiple other onwards referrals to more support services/grants.

To access the winter offer, act fast before funding expires and the winter weather firmly kicks in.

Book your free consultation at <https://groundwork.my.salesforce-sites.com/thamesvalleygreendoctors> or call 0300 365 3005.



Struggling with your energy bills?

Green Doctors Thames Valley can help

0300 365 3005

Our Green Doctors can help you:

- Save money on your energy bills
- Switch energy providers
- Claim your Warm Home Discount
- Get prepayment meter support
- Tackle energy or water debt

Green Doctors are part of Groundwork South, a charity that helps people save money, stay warm, and use less energy.

Book your FREE consultation at: <https://groundwork.my.salesforce-sites.com/thamesvalleygreendoctors>

The money you deserve



If you're eligible for the Warm Homes Discount but not claiming it, you are missing out on £140.

And if you're getting into debt over your energy bills, there may be grants that can support you.

We'll check what support you are eligible for and help you to apply for the money you deserve.

The supplier you want

Changing your energy supplier can save you hundreds of pounds a year.

We're here to guide you through the process, making sure you get a reliable service at the best price.

It's quick to change and with our help it's easy too.



The control you need



The in-home display, offered with your smart meter, shows you the amount of energy you use in pounds and pence, helping you stay on top of your spending.

Even better, smart meters enable accurate, not estimated bills.

- Eligibility may vary
- Consumer action required

THE SERVICE IS FREE






Call the Green Doctors now
0300 365 3005

Groundwork South is a registered charity No 293709 | Company Registration 1762077

Grow your family with adoption



Can you give a loving home to a child?

Coram Ambitious for Adoption welcomes people with a whole range of backgrounds and life experiences, who are able to reflect and support the needs of the children waiting for adoption.

When you adopt with us you won't be alone. We'll guide you through the adoption process - all the way to becoming a family, and beyond.

If you want to find out more, scan the QR code or visit coramadoption.org.uk today.



Slough Children First are proud to be part of the regional adoption agency Coram Ambitious for Adoption.



Repair priorities

When you report a repair, the work will be prioritised as below.

Priority 1: Emergency repairs: risk of immediate danger to people and/or significant damage to property (e.g. this could be a substantial leak or flood that can't be contained by the tenant).

Priority 2: Urgent repairs: risk of danger to people and/or damage to property if not attended to within three days.

Priority 3: Routine repairs: low risk of danger to people and/or further damage to property.

You can expect us to respond within the following timescales:

Priority 1: We will attend within 2 hours to make safe with the objective of completing the repair within 24 hours or the next working day (if attended by the out of hours service).

Priority 2: To be completed within 3 working days.

Priority 3: To be completed within 20 working days.

When you call to report a repair, the call taker will tell you how the repair has been prioritised and book an appointment with you within timescales above.

This guide shows which repairs are the council's or the tenant's responsibility. You should check this guide before contacting the council to request a repair. Any SBC repair that has been caused by damage or neglect will be rechargeable. We may agree to undertake some tenant responsibility repairs in exceptional circumstances and recharge.

Information for leaseholders

Repair responsibilities for leaseholders differ depending on your lease agreement. Please check your lease for confirmation of responsibility for repairs.

Repair description	Council tenancies SBC	Council tenancies Tenant	Lease hold
The structure			
Roof and chimney stacks/breasts (brickwork, flashing, cowls and protective fittings)	✓		
Chimney cleaning		✓	✓
Walls, foundations and flooring (floorboards, MDF panel or concrete screed and lino in kitchen/bathroom/wet rooms)	✓		✓
Heating, power and sanitary installations			
Central heating boilers and radiators	✓		✓
Council-supplied gas and electric fires	✓		✓
Electricity wiring and gas and water* pipework from meter or point of entry into the property *the council may be responsible for water supply pipework outside the property and some pipework passing through leasehold properties	✓		✓
Blocked and damaged drains and sewers	✓		
Slow-draining/blocked sink, hand basin and bath waste traps/u-bends		✓	✓
W.C. pans, sinks and cisterns	✓		✓
Fixtures and fittings			
Laminate flooring, carpets and other non-council floor coverings		✓	✓
Kitchen sinks, units and worktops	✓		✓
Toilet seats		✓	✓
Curtain battens, rails, shelves and coat hooks		✓	✓
Standard light and fluorescent light bulbs and starter fittings		✓	✓
Electrical sockets, light switches and pull cords	✓		✓
Sink plugs and toilet chains		✓	✓
Smoke alarm batteries		✓	✓
Hard-wired smoke alarms	✓		✓
Shower rails and curtains		✓	✓
Doors and windows			
External doors, hinges and locks	✓		✓
Internal doors and hinges and privacy door locks		✓	✓
Window frames and glazing panes, latches, locks, putty and sills	✓		✓
Failed seal in double glazing units (not caused by pane break)	✓		✓
Gaining access/lost keys		✓	✓
Gardens			
Individual washing lines and rotary driers		✓	✓
Washing lines/driers in communal areas	✓		
Dividing fencing and gates for tenants/leaseholder gardens * The council will maintain any estate boundary fencing		✓	✓
Garden sheds, greenhouses and patios		✓	✓
Decoration			
Internal decorations including minor plastering		✓	✓
External decorations	✓		
Other repairs			
White goods and non-council appliances		✓	✓
Improvements and alterations by you or previous tenants		✓	✓
Communal and external areas			
Footpaths to your front door	✓		
Estate paths across grounds	✓		
Gates and fencing to alleyways and drying areas	✓		
Play equipment	✓		
Door entry systems *Damage to door entry system handsets may be rechargeable	✓		
Refuse and recycling			
Cleaning individual refuse/recycling bins		✓	✓
Replacing lost or stolen bins (via MyCouncil)		✓	✓