

Making life better

Modest expectations with happy outcomes

In the last six months our housing and communities team has been able to make life a little more comfortable for growing numbers of you by putting your **household finances** on a sounder footing

Since July, when the team began holding **regular twice weekly advice sessions**, nearly 30 households have got rent arrears or other debts under control. Many now have a healthier income or have been given vital practical 'help in kind'.

We're here to help

Added together the cash value of the support given by Nicky, Colette and Asif comes to **£14,000**.

Importantly most had problems that could have been caught much earlier. They didn't ask, held back

by pride, not wanting to be a pest or have others know of their plight.

On one Staying Connected visit Nicky met a very independent and private tenant who, like many of you, had never asked us for help, on a point of principle.

We are delighted she finally did. There is more to be done but she and Nicky now have a great rapport. 'Nothing seems to be too much trouble for her to try to fix,' our tenant told us 'She's wonderful.'

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FESTIVE SEASON AND NEW YEAR SERVICES

Wishing you all a peaceful and happy holiday and new year

We close for the break at 2.30pm on Tuesday 24 December and will reopen on Thursday 2 January at 9.30am.

If you need an emergency repair during the break, day or night, please call our out-of-hours emergency service* on 0300 131 7300. *Please only call if your repair is an emergency.*

If you have a medical or other emergency use your pullcord/pendant to call Linkline.

* This service is run for us by Islington & Shoreditch HA.



MAKING LIFE BETTER

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Most of those we have helped are now getting more financial support they didn't know they were entitled to, including discounted services.

We have also drawn on our own hardship fund to pay for essential household and specialist health items tenants couldn't afford.

One tenant struggling with poor health got a demand from the DWP that they pay back a huge sum after a pension was wrongly cancelled. Nicky got their pension

reinstated and the demand pulled.

At our independent living service Colette has helped some of you for the first time get an extra £400 a month in attendance allowance, with one tenant getting twice that.

'I don't know what to do with the extra income!' one astounded tenant told us.

Others are getting wet rooms, after an occupational therapy check on their home and health needs. Many are also getting free travel, by cab, from their doorstep.

'Colette is incredible [and] always helpful. She assists with all kinds of daily ups and downs,' one told us.

'She is so capable, professional and efficient but also kind and understanding.'

Asif too has been deeply moved by an email thanking him and Nicky from another of you. 'I feel quite overwhelmed and am so grateful for the help you have both shown me,' the email read.

'That's why we're here,' Asif says. 'To help you when you need it.'

Please don't let misplaced pride hold you back. We can and will help. See right to find out more about our weekly advice and support sessions.



With the best will in the world...

I have lived in sheltered housing for 30 years, from my retirement at 60 to my 90th birthday this year. It is an ideal way to stay independent in old age, writes **Dot Gibson**

You have your own front door but also a manager (now called your 'independent living officer'), 24-hour access to help via a Linkline alarm system and proper fire and security checks.

Health problems

In 2021 I fell ill and ended up in hospital, followed by four carers a day for months, made possible by our free NHS. The discharge report after scans and surgery revealed problems that will get

worse as time goes by.

Carers got me 'up and running' so I regained my independence but knew I had to be prepared for those problems in advance.

This is where our independent living officer Colette came in! She understands that without financial help, ageing and a low income can mean neglecting regular nourishing meals, being cold in winter, and lonely, even in sheltered housing.

We saw from the hospital's discharge letter that some of my internal organs were suffering from ageing so I would need extra help to stay living independently.

Dot and her sons celebrating her 90th birthday in October, with the Pearlies

After a DWP form was filled in I was granted independent care allowance. It helps with my heating bills and shopping. I now regularly go to a hairdresser and a podiatrist. I am also buying a washer-dryer to avoid the stairs to the laundry. In the new year I will be getting regular home help.

I am lucky to have three wonderful, thoughtful sons and a big family. I am also lucky to still live independently and have Colette to keep an eye on me.

The moral of this story is that independence is not just a matter of willpower. It is not just 'keeping going that keeps you young'.

It is about having readily accessible help that will notice and act on your problems (health, financial and social) in time to do something about them.

So let's stand up for sheltered housing and make sure that assisting us old 'uns to stay independent for as long as we can is the important part of being an independent living officer!



POP ALONG TO ONE OF OUR DROP-IN ADVICE SESSIONS

Housing officer Nicky Anderson's drop-in advice sessions are held **Wednesday and Friday mornings from 10am to 12 noon.**

Some are held at our 60 Morland Mews office with the others at our properties on a rotating schedule.

Dates and locations are on our website at www.barnsbury.org

You can book a session in advance or ask Nicky to call by when she visits your property. You can also make an appointment to see Nicky then or at other times in our office or your own home.

If you live at **Highbury View**, Colette can visit you at home or you can meet in her office.

We recommend booking ahead if you are concerned about privacy

To contact Nicky, Asif or Colette call ☎ 020 7704 2324 or email ✉ info@barnsbury.org

NB Nicky will be on leave between 18 December and the New Year.

An invitation from chief executive Susan French and housing and communities director Cheryl Whittle

Join us for us a chat, a cuppa and cake

**...at 60 Morland Mews
30 January 6pm to 7pm**



Schools' arts project digs deep for memories of Barnsbury past

Pupils of Thornhill and St Andrew's primary schools will be making artworks inspired by memories of Barnsbury past, gathered from a workshop held in the church hall and one at Highbury View



Highbury View residents enjoyed tea, cakes and sausage rolls on their trip down Memory Lane. Pupils from two Barnsbury primary schools will use these and other memories to inspire artworks to be exhibited in spring.

The long memories of Highbury View residents will be celebrated at an exhibition of artworks created by the primary school pupils in spring next year.

Living memories

A second workshop was also held at St Andrew's, which faces onto Thornhill Square, for others with living memories of Barnsbury, once

one of London's poorest and most run-down neighbourhoods. 'Those that attended the workshop at Highbury View really enjoyed it,' says independent living officer Colette Lyons.

'They have been invited to the opening of the children's art exhibition in spring and we are all looking forward to seeing how the project turns out.'

NO STRINGS HELP IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING TO TOP UP A PAY-AS-YOU GO METER

DON'T WAIT! OFFER ENDS SOON

For a limited time we can give no-strings help thanks to a generous offer from our partner charity HACT.

First come, first served. Get in touch with us NOW before funding runs out.

Call Asif or Nicky from the housing and communities team on 020 7704 2324 or email info@barnsbury.org

WHO ELSE CAN HELP WITH YOUR WINTER FUEL BILLS?

Ask your energy supplier for a grant.

Contact SHINE for free energy-saving advice and tips (see leaflet enclosed).

Ask us. We will do our best to help you.

NEWS IN BRIEF

COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

A stringent inspection of our policy for resolving complaints by Beever and Struthers has given us an unusually good rating for a social housing landlord. Beever and Struthers made just two minor recommendations.

You can download our leaflet on how to make a complaint from our website at www.barnsbury.org or ask us to send you a paper copy.

So far this year we have had six complaints and nine compliments.

A reminder that at any stage you can take a complaint with us to the Housing Ombudsman.

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 1484,
Preston PR2 0ET
☎ 0300 111 3000
✉ info@ombudsman.org.uk
housing-ombudsman.org.uk

CONSULTATION OVER SERVICE CHARGES

If you have been paying for new services since April this year then over the next few weeks we will be consulting you on them. We will be writing directly to all of you now paying these charges.

PERMISSION TO DIY SIR!

Please **do not start any home renovations** without first getting our permission, in writing.

As reported in your latest annual report, we ran up large bills this year putting right some badly bodged DIY and other unauthorised works carried out by a small number of you.

Introducing the new Resident Voice and a call for new members



Those of you who regularly give a tenant perspective on our work and standards have adopted a fresh new name for the role: 'Resident Voice'. They also want bright new minds to help them scrutinise and challenge our services and plans.

WHAT RESIDENT VOICE DOES

The Resident Voice meets with senior staff in the early evening five times a year. Members take a critical but helpful look at: how well we are serving you
any new or substantially changed policies or initiatives
our financial position.

REWARD FOR MEMBERSHIP

Current members tell us they don't want payment but it is there if you want it. For every meeting you come to you can claim a £25 shopping voucher.

NEXT STEPS

If you are interested in joining or want to know more email Cheryl at cheryl@barnsbury.org or call ☎ 020 7704 2324.

News of the Mews: what's in a name?

Did you know or maybe remember that Morland Mews estate started out as the **Barnsbury Mews estate**?

Years of confusion

People too often confuse Morland Mews (the estate) with Gissing Walk, Lofting Road, Pugin Court and Morland Mews (the road) so we are bringing back the old name.

If you live on the estate you will not need to change anything yourself.

There is no need to update your address on any official documents, with your bank, for welfare claims or for any other purpose.

The Royal Mail and couriers will still deliver any post or parcels that say 'Morland Mews estate'.

What we hope it will do is make clearer when we and you are talking about the part of the estate that is Morland Mews and when we mean all of the estate.

DOMESTIC ABUSE IS A CRIMINAL ACT

SOLACE IN ISLINGTON
☎ 0808 802 5565

If you need free, confidential support because of domestic abuse call Solace in Islington. Solace helps women and men.

advocacy@solacewomensaid.org
Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm.

**IF YOU ARE IN DANGER
RIGHT NOW CALL THE
POLICE ☎ 999**

KEEP YOUR LOVED ONES SAFE OVER THE HOLIDAY

To help keep you and your loved ones safe during the festive break we have put together some basic **fire safety tips**, with special thanks to South Yorkshire Fire Brigade for its very helpful website



CHRISTMAS TREES

If you have a real tree water it daily and keep the base full of water. Dry trees burn easily.

If you go for a fake tree, make sure it is fire retardant.

Keep your tree away from heat sources like candles and radiators and away from safe exit routes.



FAIRY LIGHTS

Check for damage (worn wiring, plugs or bulbs) before they go up.

Only use lights if they have the mark for British Standard or CE.

Turn them off and unplug them at night and if you leave the house.

CANDLES



Battery-powered candles are safest.

Keep candles well away from anything that might burn, including a shelf a metre above it.

Put them out if you leave the room.

Use a stable holder that will also catch the (very hot) drips.

COOKING

Never leave it unattended.

Keep anything that could burn well away from the hob and oven.

ELECTRIC BIKES

The number of house fires caused by electric bikes is rocketing. Most house fires have broken out:

- while the bike's battery or generator is being charged up
- if the bike's battery has been modified or tampered with.

Always keep eBikes and eScooters well away from anything that could catch fire and away from the safest exit route out of your home.

BALCONIES

If you have a balcony do not store anything on it that could catch fire.

Never burn anything on a balcony. So no barbecues or braziers.

SMOKE, HEAT AND CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR ALARMS

Test all your alarms every month following the manufacturer's instructions.

Tell us if there is a fault or if an alarm is missing. We will replace it or fit a new one for free.

ESCAPE PLANS

Know the escape plan for your home. If you live in a building shared with others it will be on the landing wall or by the front entrance to the building.

If you have children visiting or living with you practise the escape plan with them.

PLEASE DON'T FORCE NEIGHBOURS TO SHARE YOUR FESTIVE HI-JINKS!

Noise nuisance is the biggest cause of all complaints we get about antisocial behaviour. So please think of other people over the festive and new year break if you're having friends or family over to celebrate.



Reasons to be thoughtful

Some of your neighbours may be working night or double shifts, they might be ill or recovering, or they might have young children taking a nap, or needing one themselves after a long sleepless night.

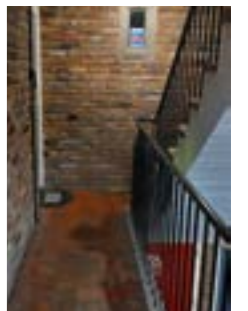
We have updated our policy on dealing with antisocial behaviour and have a new, easy-read guide if you are experiencing it. You can find both at www.barnsbury.org

ANYTHING LEFT IN SHARED PARTS OF YOUR BUILDING COULD COST LIVES

A bike doesn't need a battery to turn into a fire safety risk.

Fire hazard

This picture illustrates why we follow Fire



Brigade advice to the letter on keeping shared areas clear at all times. Imagine a bike chained to this railing (as one was). House fires can send out dense, blinding and choking smoke. The only safe escape may be feeling your way along the floor. The bike would slow you down, possibly fatally. Please take bikes into your home or leave them outside the building.

Sheltered, fed and clothed: make sure you can pay for basics

Every year the cost of festivities leaves many of you struggling to pay one vital bill: the rent that keeps a roof over your head

Since April four tenants have been taken to court to get an order forcing them to pay the rent they owe us or let us repossess their home. All four risk being evicted.

Unpaid debt

Each one owed us more than £5000 in unpaid rent. Another 40 owe us more than £1000 in rent arrears. Four owe us over £1000 for garages they use for storage.

We think it highly unfair that those of you who do pay your rent are left subsidising those making no or little effort to pay their rent.

Our housing and communities team has worked hard this last year to help those of you finding it a struggle to pay the rent. With our support many of you have paid off arrears and found your household finances in much better shape.

The flipside is those who refuse to engage with us. We will continue to take a harder line on unpaid rent.

Please keep up rent payments over the break. If you are already behind, do not put your home further at risk by missing more payments.

If you have any worries about paying your rent, we are here to help. Please call 020 7704 2324.

Your rent is due weekly, in advance, on the Monday of each week (one month in advance if you pay monthly). If we do not get your payment by Friday on the week it is due your account will go into the red. If you are charged monthly, please make sure you pay every calendar month and not four-weekly.

KEEPING ARREARS AT BAY

- * Pay rent with a debit card using our website or over the phone.
- * Call us about setting up a standing order. It will pay your rent on time every time.

- * If you fall behind with the rent get in touch with us at once so we can help. Do not ignore it.
- * Read any letters you get from us carefully.
- * Get independent advice if you need it.

£23,000

spent on court costs could have paid for a new kitchen or bathroom for four other tenants.

£125,692

is the total owed by 44 tenants now at risk of losing their home.

85%

of you do the right thing by paying your rent on time. Thank you from all of us.

If you qualify for pension credit get your claim in before 21 December

A recent pension credit campaign by Islington Council resulted in 132 local pensioners getting a £4k a year income boost from payments they were due but hadn't claimed.

Might you qualify?

If you're over state pension age and on a low income you may be entitled to pension credit and it might top up your weekly income. Apply by 21 December to make sure you don't miss out.

Pension credit can also unlock other valuable benefits, including help with council tax, housing costs, and health-related expenses.

To find out if you qualify or to get help applying for it please call our housing and communities team on 020 7704 2324 or email us on info@barnsbury.org

TELL US HOW THE LAST REPAIR WE ARRANGED FOR YOU WENT AND YOU COULD WIN A £50 SHOPPING VOUCHER!

If we arranged a repair for you recently tell us how it went and you could win a £50 shopping voucher in our next prize draw. Your comments help us identify and fix any shortcomings in our service.

<https://tinyurl.com/k7uhc3w3>



Use your phone's camera to scan the QR code

NEW GRIT BINS

Following a spell of icy weather earlier this month we upped the number of grit bins in and around our estates and other properties and have topped up salt levels.



Please make sensible use of the grit supplied to help us keep your paths and pavements safe for everyone when temperatures drop.

DAMP REPORTS DOWN

After last year's push to identify damp and mould in your homes, we are cautiously pleased that only one case was reported this year.

If you do find damp and/or mould in your home please tell us. We take this very seriously, will investigate and will get any problems remedied.

VITAL CHECKS HELD UP

Some of you are still not letting in contractors we have asked to carry out vital safety works or repairs.

We are right now organising inspections to fire-safety doors in your homes but still need a small number of you to let our contractor in to check your fire alarm and/or electrics.

The cooperation we have had from the vast majority of you so far with these and gas safety checks has been much appreciated.

A reminder if you are going away for longer than a week to please let us know so we can agree a way to get into your home without causing damage in an emergency.

Warmer homes works risk some disruption

Contractor Purdy is preparing for the next big phase of retrofitting works on Barnsbury Mews.

Drilling and extraction

Cavity wall insulation between the inner and outer walls of a building improves energy efficiency.

But the first phase can be noisy as clearing debris and old insulation from the bottom of the outer wall involves drilling and mechanical extraction. Purdy began this on 13 November and is nearly finished.

Works to 77 homes began with asbestos surveys, now almost all done. Then came, technical surveys, with just 20% left to be completed.

At the next stage scaffolding will go up around buildings, scheduled to start in early January. You will all be told before it goes up and will get a diagram showing where it will go. We do recommend telling your home insurer about this.

After that new insulation will go into the cavity between inner and outer walls and brick work repaired.

Purdy resident liaison officer Nikki Hobbs is for now based at our 60 Morland Mews office. If you have a query call Nikki on 07841 996 301 or retrofit project manager Avis Venning on 07598 403 052.

Passing flytippers scuppered by bin store shuffle

Asif tells us great work by Marius has solved a long-standing problem with the Gissing Walk bin store by turning garage 65 on Lofting Road into a new bin store.

Magnet for trouble

'The bins were a magnet for flytippers,' Asif says, 'and people from the other side of Lofting Road were using them too.'

Barnsbury Mews now has four collection points for general waste, three for recycling, and three for food waste. We are very pleased to report a big jump in recycling right across the estate.

Heart-rending message from abandoned chair

Please do not overfill your bins, especially over the holiday break when collections may be delayed.



If anyone knows who dumped this chair please pass on a message that it would like a more dignified farewell at the council dump after all the years of good service it gave you.

More seriously had Marius not taken this chair out of the bin the council would have fined us. That cost is added to service charges.

SUSPECT A GAS LEAK? THIS IS AN EMERGENCY!

Call the National Gas Emergency Service **NOW** on 0800 111 999.

If they think it necessary they will send out a Cadent engineer.

IF YOU GO FOR A REAL FIR CHRISTMAS TREE, DON'T FORGET TO RECYCLE IT

If you are having a traditional tree this year please get it recycled using one of the council's services:

- * the signposted park drop-off points open on 30 December until 20 January. Those closest to your homes are Barnard Park on Charlotte Terrace or by the Highbury Crescent playground.
- * collection service if you live in a street-facing property: leave your tree out on the edge of your property on your normal recycling day after 6 January.
- * the Hornsey Street Household Reuse and Recycling Centre accepts Christmas trees and green waste all year round.

Please make sure you take all your decorations off the tree first.

Please do not dump trees on pavements or roads or next to the bins on Barnsbury Mews estate. Find out more at www.islington.gov.uk/christmas

NEW FILM RELEASES AT THE BARBICAN FOR 60+ BUFFS



If you fancy an antidote to festivities the Barbican is showing *Thelma* at its **Senior Community screening** on 23 December. June Squibb plays 93-year-old Thelma, who is out for revenge after being scammed by a crook for \$10,000. Screenings of new releases start at 11am every other Monday. Tickets for over 60s/retirees are £6 (plus £1.50 booking fee)*. Come alone or with a friend. Up to three under-60s allowed. *20% off and no fee for members <https://tinyurl.com/2xh3aer7>

BARNSBURY HA HOMES ON OFFER FOR A SWAP

Now on offer	Size/style of home	Tenant wants...
Lofting Road (in three-storey block with shared main entrance)	one bed, first floor flat in block 13-23, own balcony	one bed ground floor home for health reasons
Morland Mews (in three-storey blocks with shared main entrance)	one bed flat in block 9-21, first floor with own balcony	one bed ground floor property
	one bed flat on first floor	one bed flat on ground floor for medical reasons
Gissing Walk	three bed maisonette with two double bedrooms and one single bedroom	larger three bed property
	two bedroom house with two double bedrooms, front door to walkway	three bedrooms needed for growing family
	spacious studio flat with separate kitchen and bathroom, front door opening to walkway	one bed property
Barnsbury Street	very spacious five bed home on third floor of block with shared main entrance, Nos 60-62	two bed property, ideally on the ground floor
	three bed house with two double bedrooms and one single bedroom, shared use of courtyard	one bedroom flat with a courtyard garden
Claringbull Court	two bedroom adapted property with stairlift. Spacious bedrooms and living area	one bedroom ground-floor property

We keep a list of tenants wanting a home swap, with another of our tenants or elsewhere in the UK so get in touch if you want a swap. If you want a smaller home we have a package of incentives and more ways to help. Email Asif.info@barnsbury.org or call ☎ 020 7704 2324.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY, PICTURE OR LETTER FOR US?

If you have a story, letter, picture or good idea for *Barnsbury News* please email editor Lisa Thompson at Lisa@barnsbury.org or call us on ☎ 020 7704 2324. We do edit contributions, usually for space or confidentiality. We will not publish personal attacks on anyone.