

You, me and Barnsbury: lend an ear to what you and the neighbours think



Over the past year Anna, Ollie and Nick have been knocking on doors and making phone calls to ask how you feel about your home and neighbourhood and the changes you'd most like to see.

Now you too can listen to what Anna, Ollie and Nick have heard from some Barnsbury HA tenants.

Cross-section

The podcasts dip into these conversations to give us a taste of your thoughts on community spirit, mental wellbeing before and during lockdown, and us - your landlord.

'We think the podcasts are a great way to hear the different voices of residents,' said engagement and communications manager Patrick.

Community storytellers **take stock exchange** have completed three podcasts featuring some of you and your thoughts on community, wellbeing and us - Barnsbury Housing Association

'I personally found it insightful. It clearly shows that all of you have different experiences of our services - some positive but others negative. It's important that we recognise and act on this.'

We see the podcasts as just the starting point for a much wider conversation between you and us. **Turn to page three to read about our plans for *After the Podcasts...***

You can listen to the podcasts at home on Apple Podcasts, Spotify and all the other usual platforms. If you'd like them on a CD call in at 60 Morland Mews or call Patrick on ☎ 07926 130 067 and we'll pop one through your letterbox.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE YOU'LL FIND ...

- 2 Stop the stigma: can you talk about mental ill health?
- 3 We need to talk more: spring picnics to discuss the podcasts
- 4 Meet your neighbour: Joe Hagland takes the guest seat!
- 5 Volunteers wanted: summer fun to make up for two dud years
- 6 Safe, smart and spruce: taking care of your neighbourhoods
- 7 New guide to CCTV and video doorbells: check before you fit
- Rents to rise in April after four years of cuts
- 8 Help and advice if you're struggling with household finances





CHAT & ACUPPA

MORLAND MEWS COFFEE MORNINGS ARE BACK!

THURSDAYS 10.30AM AT 60 MORLAND MEWS

HIGHBURY VIEW COFFEE MORNINGS EVERY TUESDAY STARTS 11AM

We can help if paying your rent and other bills is now a struggle

We know some of you are now struggling with costs. We can help.

Hardship fund: we have boosted our hardship fund and made it work better for the sort of problems you typically need help with. You can apply for help from the fund to pay for food, energy costs, for vital household goods and more.

Benefits advice: if you are having trouble paying your rent and/or bills housing manager Asif Mahmood can offer useful advice and can help you claim any benefits you should be getting.

See also page eight for more information on how and where to get help with money matters.

Get in touch with Asif or Priscilla by email at info@barnsbury.org or call them on 020 7704 2324.

Stop the stigma: why not chat to someone about mental health today?

Two UK mental health charities last month launched a new initiative, **Time to Talk Day**, to bring our thinking about mental health in line with all body health needs

Mind and Rethink Mental Health hope **Time to Talk Day** will help people better understand mental health and ways to cope with it.

One-in-four affected

They remind us that in an average year one person in four will have a problem with their mental health. Depression and feelings of isolation were, for example, widespread during lockdown.

The next **Time to Talk Day** won't come round for another year but please don't stay silent. If you think someone close to you is struggling. Why not try some of the tips below suggested by the two charities?

Life & Progress: free tenant support & wellbeing service

Don't forget that as our tenant you can use the free, confidential tenant support and wellbeing service run by Life & Progress. Maybe you just need someone to talk to in difficult times. They're there to listen if that's all you need but can also call on other resources you may find useful.

Call freephone 0330 094 8845 or go to www.tsws-assist.co.uk
Username: barnsburytenant
Password: support

HOW TO START A CONVERSATION

There's no right way to start a conversation but these may help.

- 1 Ask questions then listen.** Try to avoid sounding like you're judging your companion. You could, for example, ask: 'How does that affect you?' or 'What does it feel like?'
- 2 Try to pick a good time and place.** Maybe when working side by side or out walking. It can be easier than face-to-face. But don't fret over the where and when so much that you never speak up!
- 3 Don't offer your own quick fix.** Coping with or recovering from mental ill health can take time. They've very likely already come up with some ways to cope or feel better.
- 4 Be patient.** They may not be ready to talk but you've already made it easier for them if they decide they want to talk later on.
- 5 Remember they're still the same person.** If they do open up to you they won't want you treating them any differently. Keep things simple by doing the things you'd normally do with them.

Find out more at * timetotalkday.co.uk

We need to talk: what do you think and how do we make things better?

The big 'take home' from the **take stock exchange** podcasts is no one person speaks for you all. You each bring to any discussion your own experiences, hopes and expectations and your personality. It's neither true or helpful to say you all feel or think the same way

The three podcasts feature 13 of you talking on set topics. So what would you have said in their shoes?

Why not share your thoughts?

We want to take the subjects they focused on to more of you. Our plan is to hold small events where we, you and your neighbours can talk about what you'd have said if asked by **take stock exchange** and why.

We can also dig a little deeper, asking what we can do, together, to try to make things better for all.

We think the podcast approach works whatever you talk about. We'd like to start with the same themes but maybe later we could talk about other important issues.

The longer conversation

The podcasts give just a snapshot of hour-long conversations between

take stock exchange and the 13 of you who volunteered to take part.

All were promised all their details would be kept anonymous. But what we could do instead is give an outline of each conversation, using some quotes, to inspire more wide-ranging discussions without revealing identities.

In the community podcast, one of you suggested a lovely way to get to know your neighbours better.

“ Friendliness, just a smile and a nod when you're out walking. 'Morning! Cold today.' You start off with the weather then get to know that person.

Steady but cautious: slow return for staff to office-based work

The official line may be that the pandemic is 'over'. But many of us know to our own cost Covid is still very much among us. It is too soon to throw the doors open.

Hybrid working plan

Instead, and in common with other businesses, we are going for a staged return to business as normal. We have more staff now working occasionally at our Cloudesley Road office or 60 Morland Mews.

Number 60 is also being used by some of you as well, with sensible precautions, for coffee mornings, keep fit and other social uses.

For the next few months at least, staff will carry on working remotely for at least part of the week, visiting the office as needed. Much more often we will be out and about in the neighbourhoods you live in.

Staff will take a LTF test first if likely to find themselves mixing with others indoors or close up. We would appreciate your doing likewise, if and where possible.

Calling staff by phone: connection difficulties under investigation

Survey responses from some of you (see page 6) suggest some of you are still finding it hard to get through to us by phone.

Investigation launched

A new phone system put in last December now lets more of us pick up incoming calls. We're therefore sorry and disappointed that it hasn't solved the problem – and we are investigating.

If you are unable to get through to us by phone in normal working hours on 020 7704 2324 try emailing us at info@barnsbury.org or call 07926 130 067.

JOIN OUR SPRING PODCAST PICNICS

When the weather warms up Patrick will host a series of picnics. There'll be tasty food and a chance to talk to us and your neighbours about what you heard in the podcasts, what you think of what others said and what we can all do to make things better.



Look out for a picnic coming to a park or garden near you soon

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOUR



Joe from Highbury View

Joe Hagland, now 86, moved to Highbury View when he turned 70. One of our lockdown heroes for the help he gave to neighbours even as the pandemic raged, Joe tells us his six favourite words are: 'I can, I will, I must.' 'If you don't try you won't conquer,' Joe adds.

On... voluntary work

Joe has for nearly 10 years volunteered for Islington Age UK. 'Connecting with other people and giving advice. They can become close friends,' says Joe.

Seven years ago, Joe raised £100 for a Wolverhampton hospice then hand-delivered the cheque after he saw a *Crimewatch* broadcast on damage caused by metal thieves.

Hospice staff reported his kind gesture on Facebook then sent him a scrapbook they made with the 1500 (plus) messages people sent to Joe from right across the world.

Joe's proud of it but says: 'I've met some lovely people. It's lovely to have that rapport with others.'

On... Islington roots

Islington has many Haglands thanks to his grandparents' 23 children. Granddad and dad both worked for the railways. Joe too did his bit. 'Back then you had a job for life.' But two years of National Service in

the mid-1950s has stuck with him. 'I won't put a pair of socks on without them being ironed first.'

On... community spirit

Volunteering, says Joe, is the big thing. 'The virus is here but volunteering can make someone's life better. Do what you can in life because people appreciate it.'

Seeing or speaking to someone a few times a day helps break isolation he says. 'If you visit someone one day a week for an hour, you get to know them and them you. It's a good thing to listen.'

And for neighbours? 'Knock on someone's door. Ask how they're getting on and say you're willing to offer your help if they need it.'

On... loving Islington

'After growing up here all my life, it's the community,' Joe says. 'You ain't seen somebody for years then all of a sudden you meet them. You might have thought about them over the years but never thought you'd see them again. It's overwhelming.' We're sure the feeling is mutual.



BHA veterans may remember the party held to celebrate the Queen's 1977 Jubilee, pictured. Advertised colourfully in *News of the Mews*, which was at the time written and edited by BHA tenants, it promised fun, food, fancy dress and a super star prize... If anyone remembers what the prize was please tell us, if it's printable!

If you're up for helping with either event please call Patrick on 07926 130 067 or email patrick@barnsbury.org

Annual BHA fun day is back and, after a 45-year break, so too is the Big Jubilee Lunch

VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR SUMMER CELEBRATIONS

After missing two annual fun days in a row we are going to make up for lost time with **two events** this summer

SEPTEMBER FUN DAY

We're planning a whopper day for the first annual fun day in three years this September, with games, food, refreshments and music.

If you have any bright ideas for the day or there's something special you'd like, let us know.

BIG JUBILEE LUNCH

Or why not help us plan and run the **Big Jubilee Lunch** on Sunday 6 June, celebrating 70 years since Queen Elizabeth took the throne. There will be a barbecue, drink and music. We'd welcome volunteers to help decorate Morland Mews, set up the tables, chairs, and bunting, bake cakes, and make sure everything is spic and span.

YOU DO THE REVIEW

Get Into Dance with *Saturday Night Fever*



CREDIT: SADLER'S WELLS

Barnsbury HA tenant **Victoria**, a huge fan of **Get Into Dance**, reviews one of the shows

London theatre prices can be costly and we are all watching our purse strings, so I welcomed the chance to join Sadler's Wells' **Get Into Dance** to see shows for just £3 each. I went to a matinee show of *Saturday Night Fever* at the Peacock Theatre, Holborn. It was fantastic, with great high energy dance routines and a phenomenal live band. The Bee Gees singers were brilliant and all the performances were excellent.

The show was a trip down Memory Lane for those of us old enough to remember the film, the music and the flares. The audience was lively and so excited they sang and danced in the aisles. The front of house team was very helpful and we all wore face masks.

GET INTO DANCE: HOW IT WORKS

After you sign up you're emailed a newsletter with upcoming shows. Booking tickets is easy but you can't book online. You email an address in the newsletter then the ticket office emails you. You can then book by phone or in person at Sadler's Wells' Rosebery Avenue box office. Say you are booking via **Get Into Dance** and give your name and address.

You can book up to four tickets for any performance, if there are enough seats.

It is a wonderful, inexpensive day or night out for dance lovers and I'm really grateful to be a member.

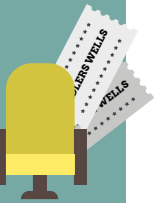
ARSENAL FOOTBALL COACHING SESSIONS LOFTING ROAD PITCH, 30, 31 MAY



May / June half term
* Spaces limited * Players must be registered before event.
Contact Patrick to register.

Patrick is working hard to bring back the social activities so many of you tell us you miss - at a price you can afford

DANCE AND THEATRE AT SADLER'S WELLS



All 30 tickets for *Saturday Night Fever* at Sadler's Wells in March have already been snapped up. Tenant Victoria, who reviews the show (left), says: 'I enjoyed it immensely. It really lifted my spirits.'

If you're one of the lucky ones going to the March show, look along your row to see if you can spot a familiar face. The tickets were block-booked, like we did for Christmas panto *Jack and the Beanstalk*, so chances are you'll be in good old BHA company.

TICKET GIVEAWAYS!

We'll soon be holding a prize draw for brand new dance spectacular *Remembering the Oscars* on 6 May with *Strictly Come Dancing* stars Aljaž Skorjanec and Janette Manrara.



Contact Patrick to get your name added to the draw. Don't forget to say how many tickets you want (no more than four to each household). Tickets will be given out in April.

Don't forget you can sign up through us for Sadler's Wells' **Get Into Dance**. It lets you buy 16 tickets a year at just £3 each, with up to four tickets for each performance. You'll need to be referred and we can do that for you. Email patrick@barnsbury.org

A DAY AT THE ZOO ON US !!



If you're happy to take part in a short survey and your household qualifies* you could get **free tickets** for London Zoo.
* low income or disabled/older household or with extra needs
Max five tickets per household.

ROUND AND ABOUT YOUR HOMES

Estate walkabouts: eyes and ears on the ground

Our twice-yearly estate walkabouts, launched last year, have led to lots of small changes that we hope are making a big impact.

Most of the problems spotted just need small repairs but we've also:

- * fitted new gates at **Milner Square**
- * put in new lighting at **Beech Tree Close** to replace faulty lamps
- * replaced some sad looking shrubs along **Lofting Road**.



Next round of walkabouts

The next estate walkabouts are now being planned and invitations to join us will be going to all resident panel members. Until late spring we will be setting off at 10.30am to make sure we get the best light.

If you spot us walking around your neighbourhood please join us to make sure there's nothing we miss.

Good manners go far

It is always lovely for staff when one of you thank them for a job done well. We all respond best to a kind word. If standards slip or we aren't aware of a problem, a polite reminder is always welcome.

We also expect all our staff to be polite, friendly and diligent. We are told our frontline team - Spencer, Marius and Steve - tick all those boxes. This makes recent reports of abusive words to one of them all the more upsetting.

Most of you value the hard work they do, despite the many health and safety risks. For the tiny number less appreciative, a reminder that treating others as you would like to be treated goes a long way.

This year's plans

Improvements we'll be making to more shared areas this year include:

- * sprucing up two or three communal hallways at **Belitha Villas**. We will decorate the **Beech Tree Close** hallways once residents there have agreed the colour scheme.
- * we've been out with an Islington Council officer looking at options for putting in more **recycling facilities**. We'll let you know if that gets the go-ahead.

Tracking progress

To make sure action follows for every problem or eyesore spotted on our walks we have an action tracker on our IT system. This lets us see what is being done, by who and when. If nothing is done we get a sharp reminder.



Surveys back in

The good news is those of you at **Beech Tree Close**, **Barnsbury Park** and **Barnsbury Street** who answered mini-surveys on estate services were mainly positive.

The downside was only a tiny number of those we sent the surveys to responded.

From those who did respond, the highest praise went to:

- * estate staff **Spencer, Marius** and **Steve**, with 12 out of 14 rating their work excellent or good and just two saying average. One of you at **Barnsbury Park** said the standards have improved a lot.
- * **new lighting** at **Beech Tree Close**, with 100% saying it is now excellent or good.

Communal cleaning

We are told the cleaning in the parts of buildings you share, including windows, is not up to scratch, though signing-in sheets for the cleaners has made a small improvement.

We have taken cleaning standards up with the cleaning company but we are also putting the work out to tender again. The higher standards you and we both want are set out clearly in the tender documents.

IS YOUR HOME NOW TOO BIG FOR YOU?

If your home is now bigger than you need and you're thinking a smaller home would suit you better please get in touch with us.

We have many families who need a bigger home so would be delighted to swap home with you. We can also offer perks as an incentive and support, including help with moving and expenses.

.....
Contact Asif or Priscilla on
☎ 020 7704 2324 or email
info@barnsbury.org



CCTV or a video door bell could land you in hot water, warns director Viv

As the cost of CCTV has dropped growing numbers of householders are having it installed to protect their home. Video door bells that show on your phone who is at the front door are also increasingly popular.

Privacy law applies

Where both fall short is respecting the privacy of neighbours, indeed anyone walking past. That could lead to your breaking the law.

Housing director Viv Astall has drawn up some wide-ranging guidelines for anyone wanting to fit CCTV or a video doorbell.

The new guidelines explain your options, your responsibilities under relevant laws (and how not to break them) and how best to keep the peace with your neighbours.

The rules are complex. They cover what you cannot let your cameras record (shared and public areas and neighbours' properties), how you should store, secure and use any footage, other people's rights to see what you record, getting written permission before you install anything, your responsibility to have equipment safely and professionally installed, and the signage needed.

Please don't do anything before you've read the new guidance. And do ask yourself whether CCTV or a video door bell is really the best solution to your problem.

Guidance for CCTV in and around residents' homes can be downloaded from www.barnsbury.org or email us at info@barnsbury.org.

For more detail go to the information commissioner's website at <https://tinyurl.com/59mavmcb>

MONEY MATTERS

Rent and service charges to rise

After four years of small cuts to your rent it will in April be going up by 4.1% Your rents are now just a little higher than they last were in 2015 but we know no added cost is welcome.

The amount your rent goes up is set by the government, which agrees how much housing association rents should go up, or down, each year.

After four years of cuts

You will all have had a letter from us explaining the rise. We hope the letter makes clear that agreeing the increase was tough for our board.

The deciding factors were:

- * Our own costs, repairs and building materials especially, have jumped in the past year and are still going up.
- * We're doing a huge amount of work to make all your homes more energy efficient, so future heating bills should be lower.

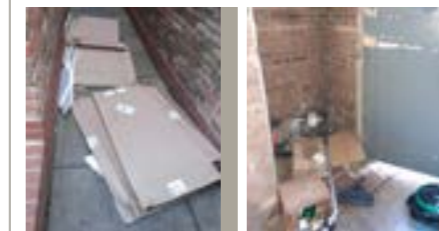
This increase is not applied to service charges. We calculate those by adding up the costs we expect we'll have to pay over the next year for the services you get. Your letter included a guide showing how your service charges are worked out.

If the April increase is likely to cause you serious problems please tell us. See also pages two and eight for how and where to get help with household finances.

Your new rent is set using the government formula which adds 1% onto the inflation rate as measured by the Consumer Price Index (3.1% in September 2021).

Daylight slobbery on Morland Mews

We know **Morland Mews** has a small number who show little respect for the neighbourhood but this one really took the biscuit. Even as the bins were being emptied, these items were flytipped. The people responsible were spotted and photographed. We are taking this matter further.



Please do not dump rubbish. If you need recycling bags call in at **60 Morland Mews**. If you have bulky waste call **Islington Council** on ☎ 020 7527 2000. The fee for up to 3 items is £30, cut to £15 if you are on benefits.

Safety checks on smoke and fire alarms

A reminder that it is up to you as the householder to regularly test any smoke or CO₂ detector alarms fitted in your home to check that they are still working.

It is also your responsibility to tell us if there is a fault with either alarm so we can replace it.

Smoke and CO₂ alarms are vital ways of detecting a potentially deadly threat to the safety of you, your household and maybe even your neighbours.

If you have any trouble reaching the alarms to check them, please let us know and we will help.

HELP WITH MONEY PROBLEMS

Safe saving, fairer loans

London Capital Credit Union is a safer alternative to payday lenders if you need a loan, and most likely less costly than high street banks. You'll need to open an account, but as an official partner to the credit union, we and the credit union will team up to give your new savings account with them a £20 boost.

www.credit-union.coop
☎ 020 7561 1786



Help and advice with debts

If you have already fallen into debt contact charity StepChange for free, expert advice.

www.stepchange.org * ☎ 0900 138 111

BHA HARDSHIP FUND

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

We may be able to help you with a one-off grant for food, energy bills, children's clothes, vital household goods like basic furniture or white goods, or digital devices so you can use online services.

020 7704 2324 * info@barnsbury.org

Life & Progress: free tenant support & wellbeing service

Life & Progress gives confidential help with diverse problems, from isolation, grieving and depression to being a parent or caring for an older relative, coping with a disability, legal or financial matters and more.

Call freephone ☎ 0330 094 8845 or go to www.tsws-assist.co.uk
Username: barnsburytenant
Password: support.

Free, expert confidential help seven days a week
24/7

R U FIT

Get back into shape
1hr TUESDAY SESSIONS
10am * 60 Morland Mews
MIND & BODY

FREE

For further info ring/text Jane 07443 903 237

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE? GET HELP NOW

SOLACE IN ISLINGTON

☎ 0808 802 5565

Solace in Islington offers free, confidential support for women and men. ☎ 020 3795 5070
advocacy@solace.org, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

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

NATIONAL DOMESTIC ABUSE HELPLINE
☎ 0808 2000 247

NEW TO THE RESIDENTS PANEL

Rachel Adelson-Kettle



How long have you been a Barnsbury HA tenant?

I moved into a flat at 60 Barnsbury Street with my mother in the late 1960s or early 1970. We were one of, if not the first, BHA tenants. I still live on Barnsbury Street.

What motivated you to join the resident panel?

As I have been a resident for so long I wanted to get more involved as a tenant to see how I could put forward suggestions and be part of the process to ensure positive outcomes for other residents.

What expertise do you bring to the role?

I work for Islington Council's safeguarding adults unit so feel I can help promote a better understanding for tenants who have or may need care and support. I am willing to get involved to help make sure tenants have a voice and are heard.

You have been to one panel meeting already. What did you think of it?

I found it engaging and interesting and it helped give me a greater understanding of how BHA and tenants can work together to achieve their aims.