



Welcome to the spring edition of our Local Space newsletter

IN THIS ISSUE:

INVESTING IN YOUR HOMES

Local Space secures government funding to make homes more energy efficient

SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

It's now even easier to get in contact with us

MONEY MATTERS

StepChange debt charity can help you tackle debt

Changes to your rent and support available

Pay your rent and report a repair online

Cheaper broadband and phone packages

HEALTH & SAFETY

Please check your smoke alarms & carbon monoxide detectors

Protect your possessions with home contents insurance

Help to deal with damp and mould

GET INVOLVED

What would you like to see in our next newsletter?



INVESTING IN YOUR HOMES

Local Space secures government funding to make homes more energy efficient

In our last newsletter, we told you about the bid we had submitted for government funding to make our homes more energy efficient.

We're delighted to let you know that we were successfully awarded almost £1 million by the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero as part of their Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.1.

This funding will double the number of homes we planned to retrofit and upgrade to include around 100 more homes in East London.

Improvements will be made to Local Space homes that are most in need, and will include loft and wall installation, window and heating improvements as well as upgrades to lighting. These measures will improve the energy performance of customer's homes and reduce their energy consumption, which should mean reduced energy bills.

Local Space plans to invest £1m plus any grant funding we secure towards this work between now and 2030. This recent award of almost £1m in grant funding will see our programme of work for 2023 double in size meaning more homes will be made more energy efficient sooner.

In the coming months, we'll be contacting those customers who live in the 100 homes that we think would benefit from improvements, to discuss next steps. We'll want to explain the benefits, outline our proposal to make sure you're happy with it all, and that any disruption caused is kept to a minimum. We know many of our customers will welcome this work and we're excited to get started!

If you have any questions, you can phone us on 0208 221 4000 or email us at info@localspace.co.uk



SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS



It's now even easier to get in contact with us

It should be quick and easy to get through to us and our contractors. However, you've told us that you can't always get through to us. This is not good enough and we know we need to improve.

We've been talking to our contractors (who handle our repairs, heating, and hot water calls) to look at ways at improving how they manage your calls. In response, Axis Europe has introduced a call-back option for the times when all their call handlers are engaged and helping other customers.

This means that you can keep your place in the queue and carry on with your business, knowing that you'll be called back at the same time as you would have if you'd stayed on the line. The feedback from customers so far has been good. They're telling Axis Europe that they appreciate not having to stay on the phone and that their calls are being returned.

We plan to change our telephone system to ensure calls are redirected to available staff more successfully and we're increasing the size of the team to give us extra capacity to help deal with customer inquiries.

To report a repair, please phone 0208 221 4000 and select Option 2. Or if your tenancy is managed by Newham Council, please phone 0208 221 4014 and select Option 3.

MONEY MATTERS

StepChange debt charity can help you tackle debt

Are you struggling with debt and don't know where to turn? We've partnered up with StepChange, a specialist debt charity, that can provide help when you need it most.

They offer free and confidential advice to anyone who needs it, no matter how big or small the problem.

Whether you're dealing with credit card debt, loans, or overdrafts, their team of experts can provide guidance and support to help you get back on track.

Here are some of the main benefits of using their services:

- **Free debt advice:** StepChange offers free and impartial debt advice to anyone who needs it. You can get advice online or over the phone at a time that suits you.
- **Tailored solutions:** They will work with you to create a personalised debt management plan that fits your specific needs.
- **Creditor communication:** StepChange will communicate with your creditors on your behalf to negotiate repayment terms and reduce interest rates.
- **Debt tools:** They offer a variety of debt tools and resources, such as a budget planner and debt test, to help you manage your finances more effectively.
- **Confidentiality:** StepChange understands that debt can be a sensitive issue, so they maintain strict confidentiality throughout the process.
- **Non-judgmental approach:** Their team of trained advisors is there to help, not judge, so you can feel comfortable discussing your situation with them.



How to get in touch

- Visit their website at www.stepchange.org
- Call them on **0800 138 1111** Mon-Fri 8am-8pm, Sat 8am-4pm

If you're facing debt or rent arrears, please contact us as soon as possible – the earlier you speak to us, the more we can do to help.

Take the 60-second debt test

www.stepchange.org/debt-test.aspx

A promotional graphic for StepChange Debt Charity. It features a yellow background with two speech bubbles: a red one saying "Find it hard to talk about debt?" and a purple one saying "WE HEAR YOU!". To the right, the StepChange Debt Charity logo is displayed above the text "FREE, PERSONALISED ADVICE. DAY OR NIGHT, ONLINE 24/7." and the website "www.stepchange.org/online". Below this, a short paragraph states: "The UK's leading debt charity can help you take control of your money. Use our online advice service and debt solutions." At the bottom, there is small text: "©2020 Foundation for Credit Counselling has StepChange Debt Charity Scotland and StepChange Debt Charity. Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Registered charity no. 1018830 and SC046263."/>

Find it hard to talk about debt?

WE HEAR YOU!

StepChange
Debt Charity

FREE, PERSONALISED ADVICE. DAY OR NIGHT, ONLINE 24/7.

www.stepchange.org/online

The UK's leading debt charity can help you take control of your money. Use our online advice service and debt solutions.

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Changes to your rent and support available

In February we wrote to customers to inform them about rent changes happening from 3rd April 2023.

We know that many of our customers are struggling and are feeling the impact of rising food and energy costs. Please know that we are here to help you. Please get in touch if you are in arrears and are struggling to pay your rent.

The earlier you speak to us, the more we can do to help.

The information below may help answer any questions you may have about your rent increase.

If you have anything else you'd like to ask us, please get in touch on 020 8441 4000 or by emailing info@localspace.co.uk

What help is available if I'm struggling financially?

- We've increased the amount of money available via our Hardship Fund to provide customers who are experiencing financial hardship a one-off grant of £400. We can also help with any issues you're experiencing with Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, and can help you apply for council financial support, such as Discretionary Housing Payments.
- We've also partnered with specialist debt charity StepChange, which offers free, impartial debt advice to help people get their debt under control. Please speak to your Housing Officer if you'd like help with any of these things.



I have received my rent review letter, but my rent is paid by Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. Do I need to do anything?

- Yes, you need to share a copy of this letter with your local Housing Benefit office, so they can adjust the rent level. If you're claiming Universal Credit, you'll need to upload the letter you received from us to the Department of Works and Pensions portal online, so that they can adjust your entitlement accordingly.

I have received my rent increase letter and I pay by direct debit; do I need to tell my bank about the new amount?

- No, you don't need to change your direct debit with your bank; we will automatically adjust this for you.

I have received my rent increase letter, but my rent is paid by standing order. Do I need to do anything?

- Yes, you're responsible for telling your bank about the new rent and it's important that you do so. You may wish to consider moving to Direct Debit so that the change happens automatically in future. If you wish to change, please contact us.

I have received my rent increase letter. Does this amount include my arrears or court order arrangement?

- The rent amount on the letter doesn't include any rent arrears or your court order arrangement. The amount shown on your rent letter needs to be paid in addition to any arrears or court order arrangement you may have previously agreed.

Pay your rent and report a repair online

It's easy to keep on top of your rent payments by signing up for My Account.

Our online service is available 24/7 to check your account details, make a rent payment, and report a repair.



What can I use My Account for?

- My Account will alert you if you are due to make a rent payment.
- View your account details and make a rent payment.
- View your historic transaction details.
- Report a repair and upload a photo of the issue.

How can I access My Account?

To access My Account, you'll need your tenancy agreement number and an activation code which you should have received last year.

Get in touch

If you're having trouble logging in, please contact us on **0208 221 4000** or email us: info@localspace.co.uk

Cheaper broadband and phone packages

If you, or your family members, are struggling with broadband or mobile phone bills, please check if you're eligible to switch your package to a social tariff, which could work out cheaper for you.

Social tariffs are cheaper broadband and phone packages for people claiming Universal Credit, Pension Credit and some other benefits. Some providers call them 'essential' or 'basic' broadband. They are delivered in the same way as normal packages, just at a lower price.

The benefits include:

- Current prices range from £10 to £20.
- Most tariffs offer superfast broadband at speeds over 30 Mbps.
- The price won't go up mid-contract.
- It could cost nothing to switch.

A full list of broadband and phone social tariffs can be found on Ofcom's website here:

Social tariffs: Cheaper broadband and phone packages – Ofcom
www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/costs-and-billing/social-tariffs

Ofcom is the independent regulator for communications services



HEALTH & SAFETY

Please check your smoke alarms & carbon monoxide detectors

Your health and safety are our top priority, so we'd like you to check all your smoke alarms, heat alarms, and carbon monoxide detectors and report any faulty ones to us.

As your landlord we need to:

- Install one smoke alarm on each storey of your rental property.
- Install one carbon monoxide alarm in any room that contains a solid fuel-burning appliance, for example, a gas fire, gas heater, water heater, or boiler.

As a Local Space tenant, it's your responsibility to follow our fire safety advice to reduce the likelihood of a fire happening in your home.

You're personally responsible for:

- Making sure that any alarms within your property are working throughout the term of your tenancy. Remember to test them all monthly and report any faulty smoke or carbon monoxide alarms to us.
- Making sure your fire doors are maintained and close them before you go to bed at night.

What do I need to do?

- Please test your smoke alarms, heat detectors, and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Report any faulty smoke alarms or carbon monoxide detectors to us by phoning 0208 221 4000 or by emailing info@localspace.co.uk
- We'd also like to hear from you if you need help with testing your alarm, are unsure if you have the correct number or type of alarms, or have any other queries.
- If you have a hearing impairment that makes it difficult to know if an alarm has been activated, please let us know so that we can discuss what will best suit your needs.

You can find more information on smoke alarms and fire safety on our website.

www.localspace.co.uk/health-and-safety/fire-safety-advice/



Protect your possessions with home contents insurance

Did you know that under the terms of your tenancy agreement you may under certain circumstances be liable for the repairs to your home?

Don't worry, help is at hand! Local Space has teamed up with Thistle Tenant Risks to offer you the My Home Contents Insurance Scheme.

It's a good idea to consider what a home contents insurance policy would cover you for in order to help you make an informed decision on whether you need one. Contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions.

No matter how careful you are, there's always a risk that your belongings could be broken, damaged, or stolen.

Find out more on our website

www.localspace.co.uk/home-contents-insurance/



10 reasons to choose My Home Contents Insurance Scheme

- 1) Covers loss or damage to food in a fridge/freezer (excludes damage caused if the electricity supplier deliberately cuts off the supply to your home)
- 2) Covers theft, water damage, fire and many more household risks
- 3) Cover for fixed improvements you have added as a tenant of the home such as fitted kitchen units and bedroom furniture (up to 20% of the contents sum insured)
- 4) Covers theft or attempted theft of contents in sheds, outbuildings and garages (up to £2,500)
- 5) Covers damage to external glazing for which you are responsible
- 6) Covers replacement and installation of locks for outside doors and alarms, if keys are lost or stolen
- 7) You don't need to have special door or window locks (just a lockable front door)
- 8) Up to 20% of the contents sum insured for damage to your landlord's fixtures and fittings which you are legally liable for as a tenant (excludes loss or damage whilst your home is unoccupied)
- 9) Flexible regular Pay-As-You-Go payment options (fortnightly and monthly premiums include a transaction charge)
- 10) Optional covers such as full accidental damage cover can be included for an additional premium

Exclusions & limits apply. A copy of the policy wording and/or the Insurance Product Information Document (IPID) are available on request.

Ask your landlord for an application pack or to apply for cover today, call My Home on:

0345 450 7288

email: myhome@thistleinsurance.co.uk or visit www.thistlemyhome.co.uk



My Home Contents Insurance is underwritten by Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance Ltd authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority. Registration No. 202323.

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Help to deal with damp and mould

We want our customers to live in dry and mould free homes. Please get in touch with us if you're experiencing problems with damp and condensation so that we can fix them, particularly when it's caused by a repair problem or if it's affecting your health.

How to tell us about your damp issue:

- **Complete our short online questionnaire** – this will help us to know if you have any extractor fans, any outstanding repairs, what space is provided to dry your clothes, and if any of your family have asthma or other severe bronchial disorders.

To complete the questionnaire or to find out more visit our website

www.localspace.co.uk/helpwithdamp/

- **Email us** – at damp@localspace.co.uk with details about your damp issue.
- **Visit our website** – for more information about spotting the signs of damp and condensation and for advice about how to tackle this:
www.localspace.co.uk/helpwithdamp
- **Call us** – on **0208 221 4000**.

Find out more on our website

www.localspace.co.uk/helpwithdamp/

(The photo right is an example of a property with a damp and mould issue, not a Local Space home).



GET INVOLVED

What would you like to see in our next newsletter?

We're always on the lookout for customers who are interested in getting involved in our newsletters.

Whether you want to share photos of recent events in your community, or suggest a topic for us to cover, we'd love to hear from you! This newsletter is for you, and we want to make sure it reflects your interests and concerns.

Please get in touch with your ideas by emailing info@localspace.co.uk

At home with
LOCAL SPACE



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www.localspace.co.uk

Local Space is a charitable registered society
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