

An NÚacht “The News”

“Go n-éiri an bóthar leat... (May the road rise up to meet you)”

Welcome to the Spring edition of our newsletter for residents of Innisfree



I am writing these few words on the Day of Reflection marking one year since the national lockdown came into effect on 23 March 2020.

None of us could have anticipated then what would happen since, with the worry, hardship and loss, but also – thankfully – the kindness, generosity and support shown within communities.

As you know, like many businesses we changed the way we delivered our services to you during the year, with our staff working from home rather than being based in the office. From your feedback it seems as though you’ve still been able to get what you need from us – even though sometimes that has taken a bit longer or has been provided in a different way. Thanks again for your patience.

And though we wouldn’t have chosen to have had to deal with the pandemic, we still have some new ways of doing things that are good and that we’ll keep doing in the future – for example “meeting” tenants on zoom calls. (Though there’s nothing like being able to meet you in your own home!).

And what about how our lives have changed during lockdown? Our family is older now, but I’ve been struck by some of the stories of parents helping their children with home schooling while juggling work and home commitments of their own. I know from my own Mother how much more



isolated she has felt – just not being able to get out and see neighbours and friends.

So thank goodness we now have the protection of the vaccine and we are seeing schools and some businesses back in operation – hopefully with more to come soon. There has been a bit of craic around our (virtual) office about who among us is “senior” enough to get the vaccine – and, yes, I’ve had the benefit of my advancing years and got my first injection last week! Hopefully, many of you will also have been part of the vaccine rollout – and it’s such an important responsibility for us all to get this protection, both for ourselves and for others.

Inside this issue...



Page 3
Our emergency repair service



Page 6
Become an Estate Champion



Page 10
Aids and adaptations

Continued over

Our news

Personally, I haven't baked bread or read any of the books on my "must read" list or taken more exercise, other than walking the dog! But I have rediscovered some of my DIY skills (even bought a new drill) and have found this to be the right outlet for me.

The young Dublin poet, Stephen James Smith wrote a piece called "We Must Create" and it reads to me like a great invitation for each of us to find our own way of coping.

Please all stay safe – and I hope soon to be meeting more of you on your doorstep!

Best wishes

John Delahunty
Chief Executive

We Must Create

*We must create to know who we can be
I say this for you, I say this for me
We must create to know who we can be*

*From scrawling with crayons to Lego bricks
From knitting needles, soft textile fabrics
To air-guitaring auld Jimi Hendrix
We must create to know who we can be*

*There are creative accountants, CVs
Tinder profiles where you look the bees knees
But best not to force it, it comes with ease
We must create to know who we can be*

*We heard a song sung, it helped ease the pain
We didn't feel so lonesome as we sang the refrain
We forgot that feeling until we heard it again
We must create to know who we can be*

*From nursery rhymes to white collar crimes
What have you to say in uncertain times?
Have you a chance to change the paradigms?
We must create to know who we can be*

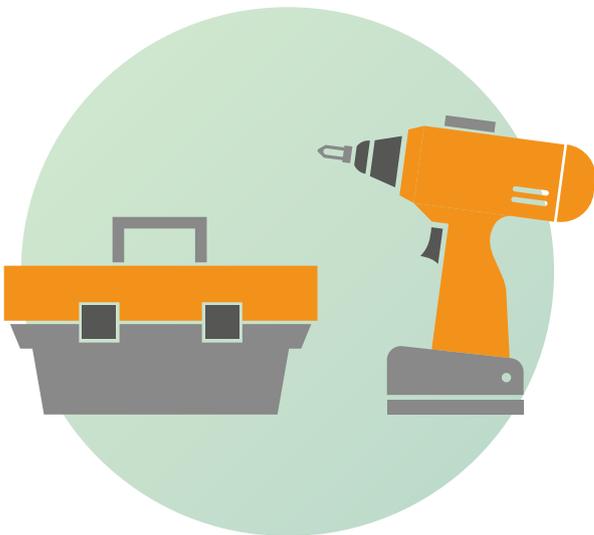
*You may rise then fall, or fall then rise
An arc of a story contains no surprise
But how you tell it, therein the art lies
We must create to know who we can be*

*We must create to know who we can be
I say this for you, I say this for me
We must create to know who we can be
We must create to know who we can be*

By Stephen James Smith

Using our emergency repair service

Here at Innisfree, we operate a service which allows you to report **emergency** repairs at your property when our offices are closed. The service is provided by our partner, the Pinnacle Group, who will take your out of hours calls and send out the appropriate contractor to deal with your problem.



Pinnacle will make every effort to fix the problem for good when our contractors attend but, in some instances, this may not be possible. In which case they will make things safe for you until we can get someone round to fix the problem permanently.

If you find yourself in a situation which requires emergency attention when our offices are closed (Evenings, Weekends and Bank Holidays) you can call our regular phone number **020 7625 1818** and select **option 1** and you will be transferred to a Pinnacle call handler who will deal with your call. We aim to respond to emergency repairs within four hours.

Further details of our repairs service can be found on our website www.innisfree.org.uk/tenant-services/repairs/

Did you know? You can also report non urgent repairs on our online My Tenancy portal. Find out more here <https://innisfree.mytenancy.co.uk/>



Wet wipes down the toilet, or not!

Blockages in household pipes can be particularly nasty, stopping wastewater from leaving your property.

Sewers are only designed to take the water from your toilets, sinks, baths and showers along with human waste and toilet tissue. Everything else should be put in the bin.

Blockages are usually caused by:

- fat, oil and food leftover from cooking that congeals in pipes setting hard;
- wipes – even ones that say ‘flushable’ – don’t break down and block pipes;
- sanitary items (e.g. towels and tampons) and nappies.

Please remember this and be kind to your drains!

Money Matters

Changes to your rent and service charges 2021/22

As you know, each year we need to review the charges we ask tenants to pay and the Board of Innisfree has considered this very carefully because we are aware of the pressures on everybody's household budget.

The Board discussion included taking account of the very unusual circumstances we have all experienced this year with the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We know that many households have had a change in their employment circumstances, with furlough arrangements and many businesses closed and working shorter hours. However, we have decided that this year we do need to increase rents and this increase will be, on average, 1.5%.



Do please get in touch with us if you have any questions or comments about the rent and service charge increases. You can let your Housing Officer know or contact us at the office on the usual number **020 7625 1818**. And remember, if you are in receipt of Universal Credit, you must notify DWP of this rent change **as soon as possible**.

If you would like to view your current rent statement you can login to MyTenancy here <https://innisfree.mytenancy.co.uk/> or contact your housing officer on **020 7625 1818**.



Support for unpaid carers

If you look after a family member or friend, you may be able to claim a benefit called **Carer's Allowance**.

This allowance is for people who spend at least 35 hours a week caring for someone who needs 'substantial and regular' care. This usually means they wouldn't be able to manage everyday tasks without your help.

The person you are caring for must be claiming certain benefits, such as PIP or Disability Living Allowance, and there are certain conditions you must be meeting as a carer, such as earning less than £128 per week [not including pensions] or being over 16.

If you would like to find out more call the Carer's Allowance Unit on **0800 731 0297**.

Support with council tax

You should now have received your council tax bill for the new financial year, starting on 1 April 2021. If you have lost your job or are on a low income you may be able to apply for a Council Tax reduction.

If you would like to find out more or you're worried about your ability to pay council tax make sure you contact your Local Authority Council Tax Department.

It is also worth checking out whether your property is in the correct band and that you are paying the right amount. You can do that here: www.gov.uk/council-tax-bands



Tenant Engagement



Would you like to be an Estate Champion?

Have you been spending more time at home during lockdown and noticed that the cleaning and grounds maintenance in communal areas of your block or scheme could be improved?

In our monthly resident satisfaction surveys, a number of our residents have expressed that they would like to play a greater role in ensuring the cleaning and grounds maintenance in communal areas of their block or scheme is delivered to a high standard.

Innisfree is now looking for tenants who will act as Champions for their estate; working collaboratively with us to report any cleaning and maintenance centred concerns back to their Housing Officer, to ensure your scheme or block remains in the best condition possible.



We will be holding a 'virtual' online information session which will provide further details regarding this opportunity. If you would like to hear more about the role and how you can get involved, please contact your Resident Engagement Officer on **020 7692 1247** or by emailing residentengagement@innisfree.org.uk.



Asset Management Strategy

Innisfree want to make sure our tenants are involved in influencing service delivery and decision making on the things that are important to you.

Our Asset Management Strategy aims to ensure that we provide the best quality homes to our residents, within our available resources. It helps us to ensure we spend our resources in the most effective way, in line with the needs and aspirations of our residents and wider organisation.

Therefore, we would like to thank our residents who have already voiced their feedback in shaping this strategy. If you would like to share your feedback you can find our Asset Management Strategy on our website here:

www.innisfree.org.uk/news-events/2021/02/asset-management-strategy-resident-consultation/



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To voice your feedback, please follow this link: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/TV833P6 or scan the QR code below with your smartphone or tablet device.

Alternatively, if you would like a paper copy of the strategy, or require any assistance in completing the survey, please contact your Resident Engagement Officer on **020 7692 1247** or by email: residentengagement@innisfree.org.uk

The Quality of Your Home Survey Prize Draw Winner

Thank you to all residents who completed our survey on the Quality of Your Home, your feedback is really appreciated. Your comments have been passed onto the relevant team members, who will proceed with your feedback accordingly. We are pleased to announce the winner of our survey prize draw and recipient of a **£100 One4all voucher** was one of our residents at Carlton Vale in Kilburn.



“Really pleased with the quality of the home, especially since they upgraded the kitchen in 2019/20.”



If you have any feedback or queries you would like to voice, please complete our survey by following this link: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Q5RHXMV or scan the QR code with your smartphone or tablet device.

Alternatively, if you would like to complete the survey via telephone or letter, please contact your Resident Engagement Officer call **020 7692 1247** or email: residentengagement@innisfree.org.uk

Mental health and self-care for young people

every mind matters

It's fair to say 2020 was not exactly easy, and many of us are feeling uncertain or anxious about the future. But there's loads of things we can all do to look after our mental wellbeing, and taking any time you can for self-care is massively important, especially now.

Knowing what steps we can take to support our mental wellbeing can help us feel better, sleep better and have better relationships with the people around us – and that goes not just for today but for the future too.

To help out, here are some great videos on the Every Mind Matters website which you can watch: www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/youth-mental-health/.

There are all sorts of tips on exercise, sleep and how to take care of yourself. You will also find links to help for groups of people who may be finding things particularly tough, or have additional needs, and support with some of the issues you may be facing.



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Keeping Cybersafe

While the benefits of using technology are huge, security has to be an understandable concern. Today's cyber crime is highly sophisticated, highly industrial and professional.

As we have become more of a digital world, particularly during the pandemic, the risks of cyber attacks also dramatically increase.

It's important to be mindful of how we handle our devices, software and online accounts, how potentially sensitive information is shared digitally, and what responsible steps and precautions we should take to prevent online attacks or security breaches where possible.

Some of the most common types of so-called cyber attacks we should all be aware of include hacks, phishing and viruses.

So here are our tips for staying safe:

- ✔ always use antivirus software;
- ✔ never trust unfamiliar email addresses or links – hover over the link to see where it goes, if it doesn't look right, don't click it;
- ✔ secure your web browsers – set the security options to high and regularly clear your browser's cache;
- ✔ regularly change your passwords, use two-factor authentication where you can;
- ✔ check site security levels before trusting – make sure there is an https padlock before you share your data and beware of clone websites;
- ✔ regularly update your software;
- ✔ beware of using public wifi networks when sharing data or for financial transactions;
- ✔ use common sense – be alert to unusual behaviours, especially COVID scams.

What to do if your identity has been stolen from cyber activity

If you've been a victim of identity theft, it can feel like an overwhelming process to get your financial life back on track. However, you mustn't delay sorting the problem out.

- report the unusual activity to your bank(s) immediately and cancel any affected cards;
- contact Action Fraud to report the crime;
- if you're worried you've been the victim of a different kind of identity fraud – even if it's not linked to your finances – report it to the organisation it's linked with;
- get a copy of your credit report and carefully go through it for any anomalies or suspicious activity;
- contact the police.



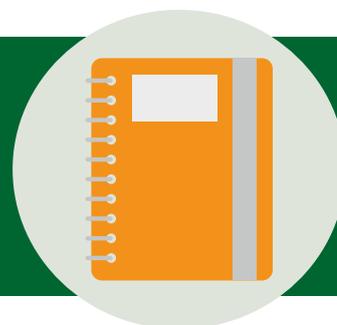


Would you like an allotment?

If you want to join our keen allotment growers in Sudbury, please let us know on **020 7625 1818** or email us info@innisfree.org.uk. We have a couple available at the moment!

Update your details

If your contact details have changed recently, please contact us as soon as possible to let us know. Drop us a line to: housing@innisfree.org.uk or call us on **020 7625 1818**.



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Who to contact

When contacting us, please dial **020 7625 1818** and select one of the following options:

- to report a fault with your heating or hot water system press 1
- for all other repair and maintenance enquiries press 2
- to discuss your rent account or make a rent payment press 3
- for all other tenancy matters and general enquiries press 4

www.innisfree.org.uk

Innisfree Housing Association,
190 Iverson Road, London NW6 2HL

Tel: **020 7625 1818**

Email: housing@innisfree.org.uk