

# An Núiacht “The News”

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

## Well this is a year we'll all remember



It's hard to believe that none of us had heard about the Coronavirus this time last year and that, so soon afterwards, it would be the subject of so many of our conversations as the implications affected our lives in so many ways.

Like most organisations, Innisfree had to change the way we worked in order to follow the Government guidelines to keep each other safe, with most of our staff team working from home since March. From your feedback, it seems as though we've managed to keep getting done the things you needed from us.

I would like to express thanks to all of our staff team AND our contractors for the way that they worked through the whole period. But also great thanks to you all, for your patience and understanding during a time when we all have carried our own concerns about what's been going on in the world around us.

But as well as all the things not done (St Patrick's Day parades cancelled, sporting events cancelled, some shops closed for a while) and the new normal we've adopted (using hand sanitiser, wearing masks, staying 2m apart from other people) we have also seen the best of our communities this year too – with so many people finding ways to help their neighbours, from having more phone calls and conversations to keep loneliness at bay, to sharing gifts of food and other essentials – just so people knew that



they weren't forgotten. And many of us also took the opportunity to give a round of applause on Thursdays for the amazing NHS and carers.

Then most recently, we have had the great news of the arrival of a vaccine – and wouldn't you believe it that it's a woman of 90, Margaret Keenan, from Eniskillen in Co Fermanagh (my own Mother's home County) who is the first in the world to get the vaccine. (Did you hear that the next one after her was a man called William Shakespeare? It's true!).

But although we've been pre-occupied with Covid-19 this year, the world has still kept turning. Remember that we're in the transition period after the UK left the EU on 31 January 2020, that elections and other political changes have happened, that the economy has suffered with some of our big high street stores closing – and that we had the wettest day on record in the UK on 3 October (yes, we've still got to talk about the weather!).

In spite of the impact of Covid-19, we've tried to keep moving forward at Innisfree. Though we had to delay some of our work putting in new kitchens and windows earlier

in the year, we got back to that in the summer. And then for the first time in eight years, this year we also have some new homes – two flats in Camden and, most recently, 25 new flats in Brent (see pictures inside the newsletter).

We've also found new ways to do some things during lockdown that we'll definitely keep doing in the future. For me, having the chance to “meet” some tenants on Zoom calls has been a great way to feel connected to you and I hope to get the chance to do more of that in 2021.

There's still a need for us all to be so very careful in keeping ourselves and each other safe – but hopefully, as the vaccine becomes more readily available, we can relax a bit more in time.

I'll leave you with a quote from the Poet Seamus Heaney: “If we winter this one out, we can summer anywhere.”

Wishing everyone a very peaceful and Happy Christmas and New Year.

**Nollaig Shona Duit**

Best wishes

**John Delahunty**  
Chief Executive

## Our news

# Our new development – Waterfront Heights!

Innisfree is pleased to have taken handover of 25 new homes at our new development – Waterfront Heights.

Built in partnership with Clarion Housing Group, Waterfront Heights is situated on the Grand Union Canal in Alpertown and offers a mix of one, two and three-bedroom homes for families and single people in need of housing. The scheme is car-free, and homes are fitted with air-source heat pumps and mechanical ventilation heat recovery systems to save on energy consumption.

All of our new homes will be let to nominations from Brent Council's housing list and we are very excited to be welcoming all the new tenants to their homes!



## Housing Ombudsman – new complaints handling code

**Housing**  
Ombudsman Service

In July 2020 the Housing Ombudsman, the body that reviews social housing complaints, published a new **Complaint Handling Code** setting out good practice that will allow landlords to respond to complaints effectively and fairly.

The purpose of the Code is to enable landlords to resolve complaints raised by their residents quickly and to use the learning from complaints to drive service improvements. It will also help to create a positive complaint handling culture amongst staff and residents. The Code will also act as a guide for residents setting out what they can and should expect from their landlord when they complain.

### Making a complaint

At Innisfree we aim to provide an excellent service to our residents. But we recognise that we do not always get things right first time. We welcome feedback on the services we provide and encourage residents to raise any concerns they may have about the services they have received.



If we cannot resolve an issue at the point it is raised, you can make a formal complaint to us in person, on the phone, by email, online via our website, or by post.

Telephone: **020 7625 1818**

Email: [complaints@innisfree.org.uk](mailto:complaints@innisfree.org.uk)

Website: [innisfree.org.uk](http://innisfree.org.uk)

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

**Additional Support:** If you need help to put your complaint in writing, require an interpreter to help you make a verbal complaint, or wish for a third-party to act on your behalf, we will make the necessary arrangements upon request.

If you would like to get involved in shaping any of our services, please contact our Resident Engagement Officer, Iona Wilkie, on **020 7625 1818** or email [residentengagement@innisfree.org.uk](mailto:residentengagement@innisfree.org.uk)

## Engaging with you

Innisfree have adopted the National Housing Federation's **Together with Tenants Charter**. The charter aims to "embed a culture across our sector that values the voice and experience of residents, and strengthens the relationship between residents and housing association landlords."



## Together with tenants



Innisfree is passionate about providing an excellent service that meets the needs of all our residents. We recognise that the recently published **Together with Tenants Charter** provides us with an opportunity to review our policies, procedures and practices, and ensure we deliver on this goal.

These are the commitments outlined in the Together with Tenants Charter, we will be working on them during 2021 and we will be asking you for your feedback on these issues:

- the relationship between Innisfree and our residents based on openness, honesty and transparency.
- how we communicate with you about the things that matter to you in a clear, accessible and timely way
- opportunities to share your views and influence our work and decisions, including how we are accountable to you
- the quality of your home
- what happens when things go wrong

To help us embed the Together with Tenants Charter across our services we will:

- launch our new Innisfree website, to ensure clear information is easily accessible to residents
- develop a tenant consultation programme, where we will seek residents' feedback on housing management issues and policies [such as the asset management strategy overleaf]
- carry out an all residents survey on the 'Quality of Your Home'
- ensure that resident feedback is heard at Board level and we will develop opportunities for Board members to engage with residents to scrutinise the services we provide

Innisfree is committed to embedding the Together with Tenants Charter across our services. Further information about the Together with Tenants Plan can be accessed at: [housing.org.uk/tenants](https://housing.org.uk/tenants)

## Flu vaccination: help keep everyone safe this autumn

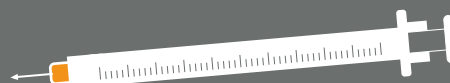
As the weather turns colder, it's more important than ever to get the flu vaccine to help you and your family stay well.

The flu vaccination is safe and effective. While it won't protect you from coronavirus, flu itself can be serious, and having coronavirus and flu at the same time could make you seriously ill – particularly if you have underlying health conditions.

From Tuesday 1 December, **anyone aged 50 or over** will also be eligible for a free flu vaccine.

This is in addition to children, pregnant women and those who are clinically vulnerable.

You can get the flu vaccine from your GP or participating pharmacies or book online at [londonflu.co.uk](https://londonflu.co.uk).





## Consultation

# Asset Management Strategy resident consultation

At Innisfree we want to have a greater understanding of our residents' expectations about the quality of your home. We aim to ensure our tenants are involved in influencing service delivery and decision making on the things that are important to you. We have recently reviewed our Asset Management Strategy and we would like to hear your feedback.

Our Asset Management Strategy sets out our plans for looking after and improving our existing homes and for providing new ones. Our short-term focus is on what we are going to do over the next five years.

The strategy outlines how we intend to deliver best performance of our assets through investment, retention, disposal or conversion of use. It outlines how we will

maintain our homes appropriately whilst achieving better value for money, meeting resident expectations, ensuring compliance with our statutory and regulatory obligations and delivering a more environmentally sustainable asset base in the process.

The Asset Management Strategy also sets out how the essential legal and regulatory requirements expected of us are planned to be met, as well as identifying how a range of other objectives can be met, including energy efficiency and sustainability.

To read our Asset Management Strategy in full, please visit our website [innisfree.org.uk](https://innisfree.org.uk) or if you would like a paper copy or wish to provide feedback, please email our housing team at [housing@innisfree.org.uk](mailto:housing@innisfree.org.uk) or call **020 7625 1818**.



## Health and Safety

### Our electrical testing programme

Electricity is part of our lives. We use it from the moment we wake up and throughout the day. As a result, we sometimes forget how powerful and dangerous it can be. So, as a landlord, Innisfree has a responsibility to carry out a periodic safety check on the electrical installations in your home to ensure that they are in a satisfactory condition and are safe for continued use.

We will notify you when your home is due for an electrical safety check, and our contractors will then contact you to arrange for an appointment, it is essential that you provide access to your home for our contractor to undertake the inspection.

A periodic inspection will:

- reveal if any of the electrical circuits or equipment are overloaded
- find any potential electric shock risks and fire hazards
- identify any defective electrical work
- highlight any lack of earthing or bonding

Tests are also carried out on wiring and fixed electrical equipment to check that they are safe. A schedule of circuits in the property is also provided. Any defects or remedial works identified will be rectified as part of the inspection and testing process, and a certificate of compliance will be issued to ourselves.



## Safety Matters

### Staying safe this Christmas

With winter upon us and Christmas just around the corner, it's important to us that you have a safe, warm, and comfortable home so that you and your family can enjoy the festive season safely and – it wouldn't be Christmas without lights!

So here are some steps you can take yourself to ensure electrical appliances are safe:

- visually check leads and wires on appliances for any damage
- switch off electrical appliances when they are not being used
- do not overload plug sockets as these can overheat and cause fires
- keep leads and wires for appliances away from any heat sources
- when using extension leads, make sure these are completely unwound when using to prevent overheating
- check plug sockets and other accessories to ensure there are no signs of damage
- be vigilant of plug in festive lights, especially when used on a tree. Some low quality or older style lights can get very hot and can cause fires to start

We hope you all have a wonderful and safe Christmas and holiday season!



### Six simple steps to reducing condensation

Condensation is a common problem in winter, however most cases are easily fixed. Simple daily tasks may be producing more moisture than you realise, for example, having a bath or shower produces 2 pints and drying clothes can produce 9 pints. In an average day you can produce 21 pints of moisture.

Here are six simple steps to reducing and controlling the condensation in your home:

- heat your home to maintain a steady temperature, we recommend a minimum of 15°, this can also work out cheaper
- ventilate your flat especially after a shower or cooking and keep trickle vents open and make sure your air bricks are clear of debris
- keep internal doors closed when you have your windows open, this will stop the damp air circulating
- wipe down windows with a cloth regularly to remove condensation
- keep lids on saucepans when you are cooking and use your cooker hood or extractor fan if you have one
- avoid drying wet clothes on a radiator, use a dryer in a well-ventilated home

If you have tried all the steps above to manage the condensation and mould in your home and are still experiencing problems after 4 weeks, then there may be a more serious issue. Typical causes of this include leaking pipes or waste pipes, leaking roofs, blocked gutters, leaking window frames or rising damp.

If this happens in your home, please report it to us. We can then tackle the issue and make sure your home is not damaged.





## Money Matters

### Track and trace payment if you have to self-isolate



If you have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or you have tested positive for Covid-19 you may qualify for a one-off £500 grant. It comes with conditions, like having a low income and being unable to work at home. Contact your local authority to find out more.

### Struggling to pay your rent or now in arrears?

If you are in arrears or struggling to pay your rent, please get in touch with Sean on **020 7625 1818**. He can offer advice on welfare support and may be able to help in other ways.

**Please don't ignore the problem as it will likely get worse.**



## Green Doctors – helping you with your energy bills

Green Doctors has been helping residents stay well and warm at home for over 15 years and save money on household bills. If you are on a low income or on benefits, disabled or have long term health conditions, pregnant or with children under 10, Green Doctors can help!

These are some of the ways they can support you when you sign up for a free phone consultation or home visit:

- help you to switch your energy tariff to a better deal
- advise you on how to reduce energy use in your home
- support you to access the Warm Homes Discount or Priority Services Register
- help you with applications for energy or water debt relief
- refer you for the installation of larger measures if needed
- deliver small efficiency measures, such as LED lightbulbs

Find out more here [london.greendoctors.org.uk](https://london.greendoctors.org.uk) or give them a ring on **0300 365 3005**. They can also provide advice via video call with a British Sign Language interpreter and have language interpreters available for non-English speakers.





## Stay connected as the weather turns cooler

If you or someone you know is over 65, North London Cares can help you stay warm, active, healthy and connected as the weather turns colder. From October 2020 to March 2021 they're offering Camden and Islington residents the following support:

- connecting you to organisations who will help keep your home warm and safe, provide benefits and housing advice, and keep your bills low
- helping you to access health services and advice on where to get a flu jab
- connecting you with organisations to help with practical tasks like shopping and prescription pick-ups
- arranging small grants and warm items if you're in difficult circumstances
- introducing you to a younger local resident for regular phone calls, visits, conversation and friendship
- introducing you to friendly local groups and activities for fun and friendship. The North London Cares Social Clubs currently hold get-togethers online and over the phone, and in person when safe to do so
- providing advice and information on support available for those needing to self-isolate, NHS Test and Trace and other issues related to coronavirus.



To get support or for further information please call North London Cares on **020 7118 3838**



*Innisfree*



## Holiday Season Opening Hours and Emergency Repair Service

Thurs	24th December	Christmas Eve	Closed from 4pm
Fri	25th December	Christmas Day	Closed
Sat	26th December	Boxing Day	Closed
Sun	27th December		Closed
Mon	28th December		Closed
Tues	29th December		Closed
Weds	30th December		Closed
Thurs	31st December		Closed
Fri	1st January	New Year's Day	Closed
Sat	2nd January		Closed
Sun	3rd January		Closed
Mon	4th January	Office Open	9.00 am – 5.00pm



Whilst the office is closed emergency repairs will be dealt with by our out-of-hours repairs service.

Please call **020 7625 1818** and select **option 1**. Please note, non-urgent repairs will be dealt with when the office re-opens.

To find out which repairs qualify as an emergency please see our webpage [innisfree.org.uk/tenant-services/repairs/](http://innisfree.org.uk/tenant-services/repairs/)



## Like us on Facebook

[www.facebook.com/InnisfreeHousingAssociation/](http://www.facebook.com/InnisfreeHousingAssociation/)



Have you liked our Facebook page yet? Keep up-to-date with activities and opportunities offered through Innisfree. You can also use the page to send an email to a member of our team.



..... *Innisfree* .....

## 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](http://www.innisfree.org.uk)

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

Tel: **020 7625 1818**

Email: [housing@innisfree.org.uk](mailto:housing@innisfree.org.uk)