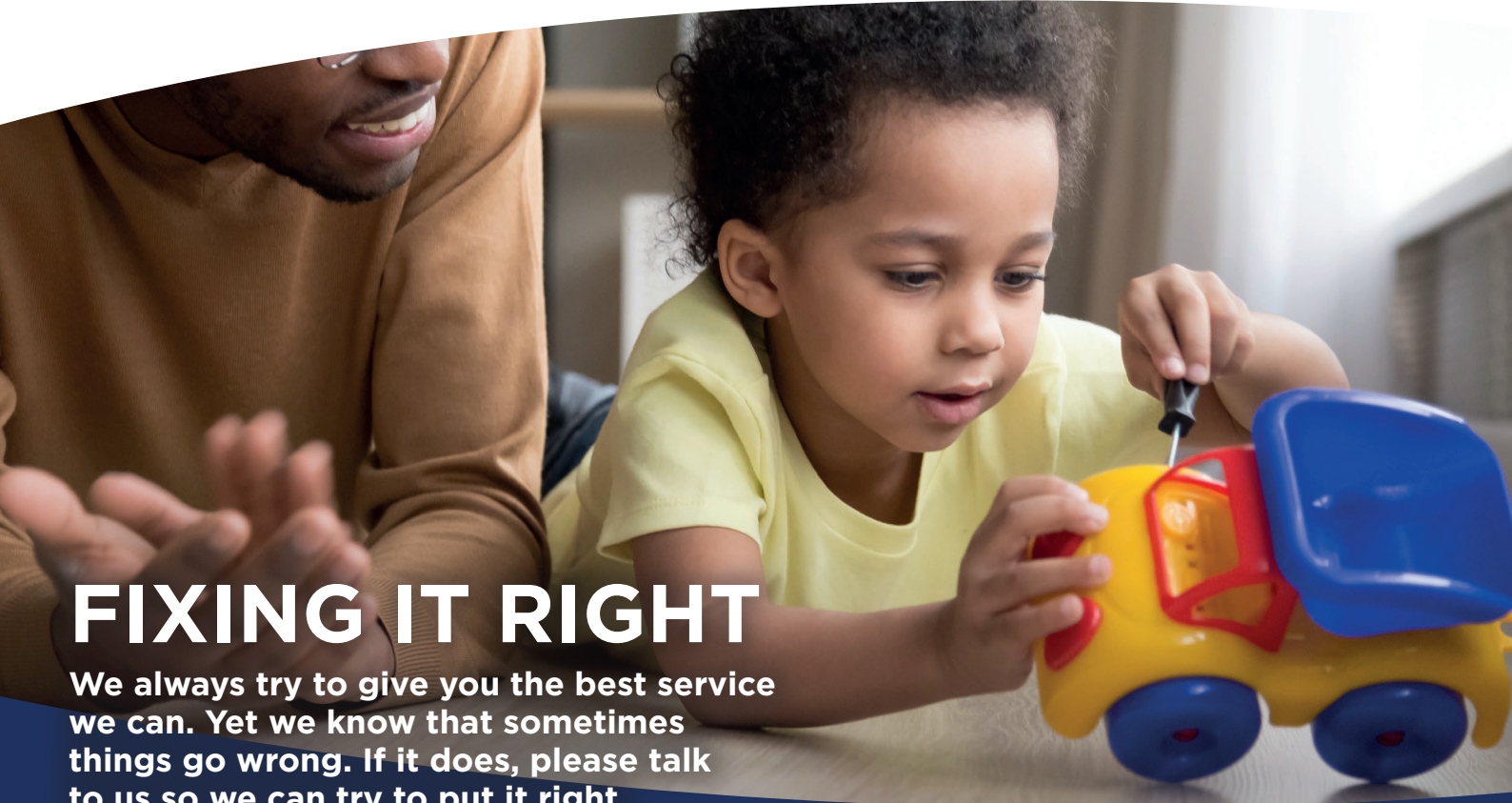


UNDER ONE ROOF



FIXING IT RIGHT

We always try to give you the best service we can. Yet we know that sometimes things go wrong. If it does, please talk to us so we can try to put it right.

Some people worry about making a fuss by complaining. But talking to us is the best way to sort out a problem and make sure any mistake doesn't happen again.

It is important to us that we listen to what you tell us. That way we can improve the experience for all our residents.

If you are dissatisfied about something, you can let us know by phone, email or by whatever way is convenient for you. It could be about the standard of a service or the actions, or lack of actions, by us, our staff or people acting on our behalf such as repair contractors.

A complaint will differ to making a first time request for a service or information. When asking for this, please allow the expected time for us to respond. Sometimes it's not possible to fulfil requests exactly as asked for and we'll explain why.

If there is still a problem, we have a straightforward complaints process to resolve it. We'll acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days of receiving it and get straight on with investigating what's happened. We'll let you know the outcome within 10 working days.

If you remain unhappy, you can ask for it to be reviewed at a second stage by a senior manager. They will reply to you within 20 working days. If on rare occasions we need more time to reply, we'll tell you.

Most problems are easily sorted out in this way. Each month we speak to tenants with a recent complaint to check they are satisfied with the solution. We only close the matter when they are.

Good practice

If you remain dissatisfied with us, you can ask the Housing Ombudsman to investigate. This national service has powers to resolve disputes and publish performance reports. Call **0300 111 3000** or visit **<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk>**

Along with other good landlords, we follow the Ombudsman's new code of practice for complaint handling. This was introduced after the government asked tenants nationwide for their views, including talking to Nehemiah residents at a meeting we hosted in Aston.

AXIS FOR REPAIRS

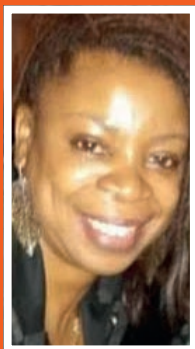
We are pleased to introduce Axis as our new repairs and maintenance contractor. From 7 April, Axis replaces our previous contractor Novus to carry out all your repairs.

Reporting repairs remains easy and the phone number is the same: **0800 849 1400** from a landline or **03030 30 1000** from a mobile. Please keep a note of your repair number in case of any queries.

We do not expect any disruption while the service is handed over. Reported repairs are being carried out as usual so there is no need to re-report a request unless you have concerns.

The only change you should notice is an improved service. Axis is a family-run contractor specialising in property repairs for social housing. It has a commitment to providing a high quality service from its local staff, and to contribute to community causes.

We listened closely to your needs to help us make our choice in appointing a new contractor. This included having tenants involved in the selection process, like Miriam from Handsworth (pictured).



“It was interesting to examine and score the tenders and to see the care that goes into making the right choice,” says Miriam. “As a Nehemiah resident for 24 years, I know how important the repairs service is to us. I’ll be watching closely to see that the service and quality of workmanship is what we expect for our homes.”

A few specialist contractors continue to work for us, such as Renuvo for gas repairs and servicing.



PET CARE

Keeping a pet has benefits for health and wellbeing: reducing loneliness, giving routine and lifting mood.

And that’s just in normal times! In lockdown, well-behaved pets have proved a lifesaver for many.

To support responsible pet ownership, we’ve updated our policy on pets with the help of a fantastic group of tenants who joined us online to discuss it.

You do not need to ask our permission to keep a pet. But you do need to follow the rules in place to stop irresponsible pet owners from causing suffering to animals and a nuisance to neighbours.

For example, you must follow our guidelines on the number and type of pet you can keep depending on the size of your home.

Breeding of pets for sale is not allowed, and you must keep your pet under control and clear up after it. If your pet causes damage to your home, you are responsible for the repair costs.

To protect babies from any risk, cats or dogs are not allowed to be kept in our supported family schemes.

Please ask us if you’d like more information.

SAY HI TO JAY

If you live in one of our retirement or young family schemes you may have already met our new senior supported housing officer, Jugjit Bhai.

Jay, as he likes to be known, grew up in Wolverhampton. He was always impressed by the way “local communities came together as one, to support one another.”

This has certainly happened during the past year. Our supported housing schemes have been a safe haven for residents, with our scheme managers on hand to give support and advice. They’ve also used their links with local community groups to gain extra support for residents in need, for example with meals or telephone befriending services.

Building on these support networks is something Jay and his team are keen to do as restrictions are gradually lifted. “We’re all looking forward to more sociable times ahead,” he says. “Face-to-face, honest conversations with residents will help shape our plans to keep our schemes as great places to live.”

Jay has a wealth of experience in supporting people. He started out in banking as a money advisor before working as a training and employment coach in prisons and for Learn Direct. As a team leader for a large housing association, he worked at supported housing schemes including those for young people and people of all ages affected by homelessness or mental health issues.



TAKE THE JAB

More than half of all adults in the Midlands have now received their first dose of the coronavirus vaccine. They include many of our residents and staff, including housing service manager Pamela Farquharson and our chief executive Llewellyn Graham.

But some people in our communities remain hesitant to take up the offer of a jab. It's believed this is partly due to misinformation and myths on social media.

The stark fact is that people from black and minority ethnic communities are more likely to die from the virus. Sadly, Llewellyn knows this only too well.

Speaking as a practicing minister of religion as well as our chief executive, he says: "It is devastating how many people we have lost to the virus. I have conducted more funerals in the last year than I have ever done."

He goes on to say: "By taking the vaccine you are protecting yourself and others. Everyone has the right to ask questions and get answers from trusted sources. For example, there is nothing



in our faith that stops us from taking the vaccine. I personally commend it as our way to a safer future."

Hear more from Llewellyn in this webinar with other faith leaders and NHS experts:

<https://tinyurl.com/aj7a7zsh>

Or watch people in our communities speak out in this short #TakeTheVaccine TV clip:

<https://tinyurl.com/43pw8uvz>

KICKSTART SCHEME

We've always tried to help young people into jobs. So we are excited to be part of a new national Kickstart Housing Partnership, led by Clarion Housing, to help young people.

Kickstart provides six-month, paid jobs – giving the chance to gain valuable work experience, as well as training and support to boost skills.

We are offering housing trainee positions to four 16-24 year-olds claiming Universal Credit. You have to apply through Jobcentre Plus, so talk to your work coach for details or about other Kickstart placements.

IT'S ABOUT US

Census Day was Sunday 21 March, but it's not too late to take part.

You must complete the census by law or you could be fined. But there are other great reasons why we should respond to this unique survey that happens every 10 years.

It gives a snapshot of us as a population. This helps decide how local services are planned and funded. For example, a council used census data to decide on housing improvements and a charity was able to help people from ethnic minority groups learn more about dementia.

For details and support, visit <https://census.gov.uk/>

NOISES OFF

Have you taken up the drums? Got a lockdown puppy? Like doing star jumps at 6am?

In normal times your neighbours may not have been home to notice. But now there's no escape from the noise!

What's important is being considerate and not continually disturbing other people. It helps too to be tolerant of reasonable noise, such as children playing.



Many issues can be sorted out easily by talking politely to your neighbour. They may not be aware of the impact the noise is having and a friendly conversation can often help.

If the noise persists, get in touch. We recommend keeping a log, including times and whether anyone else was affected. This gives us the information we need to investigate and help you silence any unacceptable din.

POCKET ADVICE

If you are struggling to pay your rent, it's important that you talk to us so we can find ways to help you.

Worried about debt or managing your money? No matter where you live, we can arrange for free and impartial money advice from Birmingham Settlement.

Just like we did for Nehemiah resident Zoe (not her real name), who felt a huge sense of relief when she asked her housing officer for help.

Zoe is a single mum to three teenagers in full-time education. She gets some housing benefit towards her rent but was struggling to pay her contribution. She was stressed about her rent arrears and unsure what to do.

We put her in touch with Birmingham Settlement's money advisor who helped Zoe to maximise her income.

She had been missing out on her full Child Benefit entitlements. Claiming it meant getting an extra £27.90 a week, plus a lump sum for the missed period. Plus, she was supported to successfully claim a Discretionary Housing Payment of over £1,000 from her local council.

Zoe was also helped with budgeting and cutting back on non-essential spending. She found discounts too on her energy and water bills.

Happily, Zoe is back on track with her finances and no longer has the worry of losing her home.



LITTER BUGS



Dumping rubbish makes an area look untidy. It's also a crime.

When rubbish is fly-tipped on our land – including pathways and around communal bins – we have to pay for its removal. If you are caught dumping it, we will charge you for this cost. We may also take action to prosecute you.

If the culprit is unknown and problems continue, service charges may go up to pay for regular clear ups.

There is no need to dump rubbish. You can take it to a council-run Household Waste Recycling Centre (tip) to dispose of it for free – but check if you need to book ahead first.

For a home pick up, you can arrange for your local council to collect bulky items from outside your home for a small charge. If you live in Wolverhampton and receive full Council Tax benefit you can arrange two free bulky waste collections a year.

If your communal bin is overflowing, report it to your local council. Let us know if problems continue.

HELPLINE

In many languages, Boloh means speak. If you need support during this difficult time, or just a listening ear, try the Boloh helpline for children and their families.

Run by the children's charity Barnardo's, the helpline is in response to the unequal impact of the pandemic on black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

It offers advice as well as counselling in different languages. Whatever you or your child might be worried about – from family loss to school anxiety – the helpline is there to soothe and support.

Call **0800 1512605** or chat online at <https://helpline.barnardos.org.uk/>

Boloh

The Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic family Covid-19 Helpline

Have you or your family been affected by the pandemic and need someone to talk to?

You can contact one of our specialist support advisors for free between Monday and Friday 10am – 8pm, Saturday and Sunday 10am – 3pm on

0800 1512 605

Or talk to us on our webchat by visiting helpline.barnardos.org.uk and click on the icon on the bottom right

Believe in children
Barnardo's