

Streets Ahead

SPRING 2026



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A message from Orla Gallagher, Chief Executive

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to give us feedback recently.

What most residents are telling us is positive. You value Housing Solutions, the colleagues who work here, and the support we provide in your communities. That matters to us. It tells us we are getting the basics right and that our teams are making a difference day to day.

We also know this is still a difficult time for many households. Living costs are high and money is tight. We are very aware of that. Our focus is on keeping services reliable, continuing to improve where we can, and keeping our costs under control.

If you are worried about money, help is available. Our Welfare and Benefits Team can offer confidential support with budgeting, benefits, or rent concerns. Please get in touch early if you need help.

As we move into spring and summer, there are a few safety reminders in this edition. If you have a balcony, please keep it clear of items that could increase fire risk. You will also find simple advice on electrical safety and using household appliances safely.

We have also included information to help you stay safe from cold callers linked to housing disrepair claims. Solicitors are not allowed to cold call. If someone approaches you unexpectedly, please speak to us first. Your safety and confidence are important to us.

We continue to invest for the future. Work has now started on three new family homes at Woodlands Park. We're also expanding our apprenticeship programme, creating opportunities for local people at the start of their careers.

This spring, we're also celebrating a special moment at The Birches, where Mrs. Rabbitt, a long standing resident, is preparing to celebrate her 100th birthday. It's a reminder that our homes are about people and communities, not just buildings.

Finally, we want to make sure we are communicating with you in the right way. This newsletter works well for many residents, but it will not suit everyone. When we ask about your communication preferences, please tell us how you would like to hear from us.

Thank you for reading. Please keep sharing your views – you are shaping how we work.

Warmest wishes,





Welcoming new residents to the community

You might remember from our Winter edition of Streets Ahead that we shared news about our January acquisition from L&Q. We're now pleased to confirm that Housing Solutions has welcomed residents from 267 homes following the transfer from L&Q Housing Trust, a national housing association.

This acquisition strengthens our presence across the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, while also expanding further into Bracknell Forest. The homes include a mix of social and affordable rent, shared ownership and leasehold properties.

Working closely with L&Q Housing Trust as their preferred partner meant the transfer took place smoothly and with minimal disruption for residents. Our teams were out in the community and met with residents to help ensure everyone felt supported during the transition.

For those joining Housing Solutions for the first time, welcome! You should have received a welcome pack with key information about your tenancy, how to contact us, and the support available. If you did not receive a welcome pack, or need another copy, you can request one by contacting us using the details below.

For our existing residents, nothing changes about your tenancy or the services you receive. This acquisition helps us grow while continuing to provide safe, good quality homes and reliable services across our communities.

We're pleased to welcome our new residents and look forward to supporting everyone in the months and years ahead.

If you need any help or have questions, please contact us on **01628 543101**, email contact@housingsolutions.co.uk, or visit www.housingsolutions.co.uk.



Build your future with us: join our apprenticeship programme

At Housing Solutions, we're passionate about supporting the next generation of skilled tradespeople. Whether you're just starting out, thinking about a career change, or looking for a place where you can grow, our apprenticeship programme offers a fantastic opportunity to learn, earn and build a long-term career.

We are currently shortlisting for three trades apprenticeships, and we will be launching a further three apprenticeship roles in the next couple of months. Because places fill quickly, the best way to make sure you don't miss out is to sign up for job alerts on our website.

Why choose a Housing Solutions apprenticeship?

Earn while you learn

All our apprentices are paid the Real Living Wage, supporting your financial wellbeing while you gain skills that will set you up for life.

Strong career development

Our apprentices work alongside experienced operatives, gaining hands-on skills and industry-recognised qualifications. Many colleagues have progressed from entry-level roles into fully qualified trades positions, supported every step of the way.

Expanding opportunities

We're growing our apprenticeship programme to six apprenticeships in 2026/27, giving even more people the chance to start their career with us.

A great place to work

Housing Solutions is proud to offer:

- » Sector-leading employee benefits
- » A supportive modern working environment
- » Long-term job security
- » A culture centred around inclusion, wellbeing and personal growth

We are a Disability Confident employer and welcome applicants from all backgrounds. Everyone brings something unique, and we're committed to helping you thrive.

Be first to know – sign up for job alerts

If you're interested in the current or upcoming apprenticeship roles, make sure you register for job alerts on our website. Once you create an account, simply click 'Save this Search as a Job Alert' to receive updates as soon as new apprenticeships go live.

Register here:

[Our Vacancy Portal](#)

You can also explore our current vacancies at:-
www.housingsolutions.co.uk/work-with-us



Managing your money in challenging times



Many households are feeling the strain of rising living costs, global uncertainty, and ongoing financial pressures. With the situation in the Middle East continuing to impact the economy worldwide, you might be understandably worried about how far your money will stretch. If you're finding it harder to keep on top of your rent, bills, or day to day costs, you're not alone – and we're here to help.

Our Welfare & Benefits Team is here for you

Housing Solutions has a dedicated Welfare & Benefits Team who offer confidential, one to one support to help you manage your money and understand what financial help you may be entitled to. They can:

- » Check your eligibility for additional benefits or financial support
- » Help you apply for Discretionary Housing Payments if you have a shortfall in your rent
- » Support you with Universal Credit updates
- » Offer guidance on budgeting and managing bills
- » Provide advice over the phone, in person at our Maidenhead office, or arrange a home visit if needed

You can contact the team on 01628 543101 or email welfare@housingsolutions.co.uk.

If you're struggling with rent

Don't wait – the earlier you reach out, the sooner we can support you. Our team can talk you through your options, help you understand your Housing Benefit or Universal Credit responsibilities, and make sure your rent is being paid correctly.

If you receive Universal Credit, remember to keep your online journal up to date with your rent costs or landlord details.

Help with energy costs and essential bills

If you're finding it hard to afford gas or electricity, there are organisations and schemes that can help. Some residents, especially those who are older or have health conditions, may be eligible for the Priority Services Register, which offers extra support from your supplier. You can also speak with the Home Heat Helpline, who can contact your energy provider on your behalf.

Don't face financial worries alone

If you're concerned about money, please get in touch. Whether you need help with rent, benefits, budgeting, or day to day costs, our team is here to support you.

Contact us:

Phone: 01628 543101

Email: contact@housingsolutions.co.uk

Website: www.housingsolutions.co.uk



Left to right

Humera Siddique – Welfare and Benefits Officer
Jack Sheppard – Welfare and Benefits Officer
Tania Bibi – Welfare Team Leader

Keeping your balcony safe this spring

As the weather gets warmer, we know many residents enjoy spending more time on their balconies and outdoor spaces. While balconies feel like an extension of your home, it's important to remember that anything stored there can affect the safety of your neighbours too.

To help keep everyone safe, please do not store flammable or combustible items on your balcony or in any ground level enclosure. These materials can increase the risk of fire and make it harder for firefighters to access your building in an emergency.

Items you must not store on your balcony

Please make sure the following are kept out of balcony areas at all times:

- » Gas bottles or oil based paint
- » Plastic or wooden furniture or plant pots
- » Electrical appliances, such as washing machines or tumble dryers
- » BBQs, fire pits or patio heaters
- » Privacy screens or fabric coverings
- » Mobility scooters, e bikes or e scooters
- » Any other flammable materials

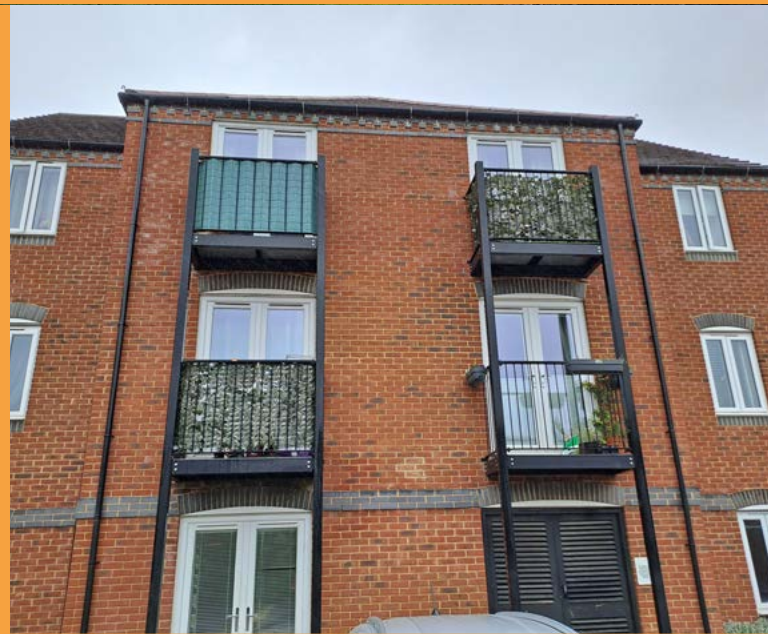
Need help getting rid of an item?

If you have items that need removing, we can help.

For a small fee, our team can safely dispose of them for you — just give us a call on **01628 543101**.

What happens if items aren't removed?

If unsafe items are left on balconies after we've advised their removal, we may need to take enforcement action and recharge associated costs. We always prefer to work with residents first, so please contact us if you're unsure about what's allowed.





Beware of cold callers offering legal compensation

We've recently seen an increase in solicitors and claims management companies approaching people about making housing disrepair claims. Some may knock on doors, call unexpectedly, or send online messages offering "quick compensation".

But it's important to know: solicitors are not allowed to cold call.

The [Solicitors Regulation Authority \(SRA\)](#) bans legal firms from contacting people in person, by phone, text or online to drum up business. Anyone doing this is acting against professional conduct rules.

Why does this happen?

Disrepair claims can be profitable and some firms use pushy or misleading tactics to encourage residents to sign up. Nationally, housing associations are reporting more of these unsolicited approaches.

How to stay safe

It's important to be aware that "no win, no fee" does not always mean risk-free. In some cases, if you withdraw from a claim part way through, you could still be asked to pay legal costs or fees for work already carried out. Always take time to check the details before agreeing to anything.

Never share personal information with someone you haven't verified.

Check first – if you're unsure whether an approach is genuine, get in touch with us

If you know the name of the firm involved, you can also report them directly to:

[Solicitors Regulation Authority \(SRA\)](#)

[Legal Ombudsman](#)

Contact us first

If you have any concerns about repairs or the condition of your home, please report them to us directly. We have existing clear processes in place and will work with you to put things right as quickly as possible.

For free and impartial advice, you can also speak to:

[Citizens Advice](#)

[Housing Ombudsman](#)

A quick reminder

If someone knocks on your door, calls, or messages you offering legal help out of the blue, think twice. Take a moment, stay cautious, and contact Housing Solutions first.

We're here to help keep you safe, informed, and supported.

Staying safe this spring: electrical safety in your home

As we head into spring, it's a good opportunity to check that household appliances are being used safely. When you live close to neighbours, even small issues with electrical items can have wider impacts – so sharing these reminders helps protect everyone.

Using your tumble dryer safely

Tumble dryers generate a lot of heat, so taking a few simple precautions can significantly reduce the risk of a fire.

Dos

- » **Use a proper 13 amp socket.** Tumble dryers must be plugged directly into their own socket. Avoid using extension leads and check for any scorching or damage on plugs and cables.
- » **Ensure good ventilation.** Keep the vent pipe straight and free from blockages to allow air to circulate.
- » **Clean the filter after every use.** Lint and fluff can build up quickly and are a common cause of overheating.
- » **Let the full cycle finish.** This includes the cool down stage, which helps reduce internal heat.
- » **Act quickly on warning signs.** If you notice a burning smell or clothes feel unusually hot, switch the appliance off and arrange for a qualified engineer to inspect it.

Don'ts

- » **Do not leave appliances running while asleep or out of the home.**
- » **Do not overload the drum.** Overfilling means air cannot circulate properly.
- » **Do not place tumble dryers in cupboards or external buildings without permission from Housing Solutions.**

These points reflect leading guidance from national safety bodies and help reduce the chance of overheating or electrical faults.

Electrical safety around the home

With more of us using multiple chargers and devices, it's important to stay aware of how power is used at home.

- » **Avoid “daisy chaining” extension leads.** Linking one extension into another can overload the socket.
- » **Use appropriately rated adaptors.** Always check that the adaptor can handle the combined power of anything plugged into it.



- » **Use genuine, good quality chargers.** Low cost, unregulated imports – especially for e bikes, e scooters, and phones – are known to cause fires.
- » **Do not charge devices overnight.** Lithium ion batteries can fail without warning and ignite quickly.
- » **Check cables regularly.** Replace anything that feels hot or shows signs of wear.

Electrical Safety First provides extensive national guidance on issues such as chargers, adaptors, and counterfeit electrical products.

Registering appliances and checking recall alerts

One of the easiest ways to keep your home safe is to make sure your appliances are registered with the manufacturer. This allows them to contact you directly if your model is affected by a safety recall.

You can:

- » **Register new or existing appliances** on the Register My Appliance website: www.registermyappliance.org.uk
- » **Check for product recalls or safety notices** on the Electrical Safety First website: www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk

If a product has been recalled due to a potential fire risk, manufacturers will usually repair or replace it free of charge.

Smoke alarms: a simple but essential reminder

Every home should have:

- » A working smoke alarm in the hallway, and
- » An additional smoke alarm on the landing if your home has more than one floor.

Please test your alarm weekly. If it isn't working, or if you need a repair or replacement, contact us and we will arrange this for you.

Working together to keep our homes safe

We know residents take pride in looking after their homes and supporting their neighbours. By staying aware of everyday risks and keeping appliances well maintained, you're helping make our communities safer for everyone. If you have any questions or concerns about electrical safety or appliance use, please contact us at **01628 543101**, email customerservice@housingsolutions.co.uk, or visit www.housingsolutions.co.uk.

A very special birthday at The Birches



Our sheltered scheme in Earley, Reading “The Birches” is known to be a warm and welcoming place to call home, with a strong sense of community and plenty of opportunities for residents to enjoy everyday life together. This year one of our residents is celebrating a truly remarkable milestone! Mrs. Margaret Rabbitt has been a treasured part of The Birches since 2018. From the moment she joined The Birches’ community, she’s been known for her kindness, bright smile and genuine warmth – always at the heart of the scheme’s social life.

Mrs Rabbitt keeps herself busy in all sorts of ways at The Birches. Between knitting beautiful pieces

and meeting friends for coffee and lunch, Mrs Rabbitt volunteers at the Reception desk twice a week, welcoming visitors and helping to keep everyone safe.

Now, as she looks forward to her 100th birthday, Margaret is excited to share her historic 100-year-old christening gown with other residents – a fitting symbol of a life full of memories, love, and connection. Mrs. Rabbitt continues to make The Birches feel like home for everyone around her, and she is deeply cherished by all who know her, and we wish her every happiness as she celebrates this very special milestone!

Delivering new homes for local families

We know that the demand for affordable homes is higher than ever. At Housing Solutions, our Development Strategy focuses on making the best possible use of our land and opportunities to deliver homes that meet local needs, strengthen neighbourhoods and support sustainable communities.

At Woodlands Park in Maidenhead, we’re proud to be taking another step forward with plans to deliver three new family homes on underused garage sites at Phipps Close, Woodlands Park. The development will include three, four and five bedroom homes, providing much needed larger family accommodation and supporting the delivery of family housing in the Borough.

We’ve got planning permission, and our contractor, Collier Contracts, has started work on-site. Construction is expected to be completed in early 2027.

One of the new homes will be designed to be adaptable, helping us meet additional needs in the community.

All of the homes will be built to a high environmental standard, supporting our commitment to sustainability. They will be energy efficient and future focused, with features including air source heat pumps, solar panels, high levels of insulation and electric vehicle charging points.

By redeveloping garage sites, we’re able to unlock land that can offer greater benefit to



local communities, transforming it into high quality, modern homes that will be part of the neighbourhood for generations to come.

This scheme is a great example of how our Development Strategy is helping us to deliver the right homes, in the right places, in a way that benefits both residents and the wider community.

For more information about this development, please contact dev@housingsolutions.co.uk.

Before you go! If you’re passionate about shaping greener homes, stronger communities and the long term future of where you live, there are lots of ways to get involved. We want to hear from residents across all tenures – including leaseholders and shared owners – who want a stronger voice in the issues that matter to them. This includes environmental sustainability, greener homes and energy efficiency, as well as wider matters that affect how homes are managed and improved over time. Your experience as a leaseholder or shared owner brings a valuable perspective and can help influence real, practical change. Find out how you can get involved at: www.housingsolutions.co.uk/work-with-us/resident-engagement

Your SIT panel needs YOU!



We're always keen to welcome new SIT members. If you want to help improve the services that affect residents, join us!

The SIT panel represents the interests of residents on the management, maintenance and improvement of their homes, buildings and communities.



The panel is a way for us to talk directly to Housing Solutions and have a real influence on how services are shaped and delivered.

**Could your voice
make a difference?**

To find out more:

call **01628 543 101** or email residentengagement@housingsolutions.co.uk

Make a positive difference where you live



Have your say: join our new Emerging Voices Panel

Are you aged 18-30 and living in a Housing Solutions home? We want to hear from you! We're committed to improving communication with all our residents, including our young people. Our Emerging Voices Panel is your chance to shape our services and our community – your voice matters. The panel will meet every two months to look at Housing Solutions services specifically from a

younger person's perspective – whether it be our online services, policies or communication.

Be a part of this exciting new initiative – scan the QR code below to register or go to our website at www.housingsolutions.co.uk and search 'Panels'.



Introducing our new Home Ownership Hub

Whether you're a shared owner or a leaseholder, we know that understanding your home, your rights, and your responsibilities can sometimes feel overwhelming. That's why we've created our brand-new Home Ownership Hub on our website – your one-stop shop for clear, practical information about every stage of your homeownership journey.

Our Home Ownership Team supports you from the moment you move in to the day you may decide to sell, and our new

online Hub brings everything together in one simple, easy to navigate space. It's designed to help you feel confident, informed, and fully equipped to make the most of your home.

Inside the Hub, you'll find guidance on:

- » **Your lease** – what it covers and what it means for you
- » **Service charges** – how they work and what they pay for
- » **Repairs and alterations** – what we're responsible for, what you can do, and how to request permission
- » **Staircasing and remortgaging** – step by step support to help you plan your next move

- » **Selling your home** – what to expect when you're ready for a change
- » **A Home Ownership Glossary** – explaining legal and technical terms in plain English

These pages have been shaped by the questions we hear most often, and we'll continue to develop them over time. You can visit the Hub directly using this link:

www.housingsolutions.co.uk/homes/shared-ownership-information/

Or simply go to our main website and search '**Home ownership information**'.

We'd love to hear your thoughts as we continue improving this resource. If there's anything you'd like to see added – or if you have suggestions on making the Hub even more helpful – please get in touch with our Home Ownership Team at homeownership@housingsolutions.co.uk.

Before you go...

Tenants can get discounts with over 100 brands with a new free discount app

Search Housing Perks on your app store and enter your tenancy reference



Have you signed up for **Housing Perks**? This is a great way of saving money when you shop from a wide range of retailers like Currys, Argos, TK Maxx and loads more!

Just download the **Housing Perks** app from your app store and register using your tenancy reference number, which you can find on your web portal account or tenancy documents.

JEWSON

Have you heard about your **Jewson discount**?

Housing Solutions residents can get 15% off at Jewson's Maidenhead branch, Reform Road, SL6 8BY. Bring proof of address, a rent or service charge letter, and quote **RESD035** to claim your discount.



We collect and recycle most large items you might no longer need.

Mattresses. £15
Other large items* £5
(e.g. washing machine)

*We do not collect fridges or freezers-please contact your local council.

To arrange collection please call 01628 543101



We love to hear when we get things right. Please let us know when you have had a positive experience of our services or a particularly good member of staff.

You can get in touch via our Contact Centre by emailing contact@housingsolutions.co.uk or calling **01628 543101**.



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