

# Safer homes, healthy homes



A guide to living well  
in your home



New  
homes,  
**Safer  
homes**



**Housing  
Management**



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF  
KENSINGTON  
AND CHELSEA

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# 1. Introduction

We want you to be able to get the most out of living in your home, so we've put together this guide to help you.

## It includes:

- Top safety tips from our building safety team
- Advice from our repairs team on managing your home
- Tips on avoiding damp, mould and pests (and how we'll support you)
- Opportunities to help improve your local area
- Ways you can get involved in making our services better



Whether this is your first home or you've lived in the borough for a while, we hope you'll find this guide useful.

## Contact us

If you need to talk to our team about anything, you can reach us on:

 **0800 137 111**

 **HM-CustomerServices@rbkc.gov.uk**



## 2. Repairs

Sometimes things go wrong at home, and you'll need a repair. Let our team know, and we'll be happy to help.

### Emergency repairs

If your repair is an emergency, you should call us on:

 **0800 137 111**

Our phone lines are open from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday and we have an out-of-hours service open 24/7 for emergencies.

#### A repair is classed as an emergency if:

- there is a total loss of power to your home
- there is a total loss of water supply to your home
- you have no heating and or no hot water
- you have security problems, such as being locked in or out of your home
- you need help to make safe windows and or doors after forced entries or anti-social behaviour
- you are concerned about electrics, especially if you need help due to water damage
- you have an uncontrollable leak within your home
- your bath and or sink is backing up waste

### Non-urgent repairs

For non-urgent work, you can contact us by logging into our self-service portal online by scanning the QR code with your smartphone. You can also report a repair by phone on **0800 137 111**, or by email: **hm-customerservices@rbkc.gov.uk**.



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# 3. Staying safe in your home



## 4. Electrical safety

Most of us use electricity from the moment we wake up and throughout the day. It's easy to forget how powerful and dangerous it can be. Follow our top tips for keeping safe in your home.

### Socket and extension leads

- Do not connect extension leads (daisy-chaining);
- Make sure that plugs are plugged in firmly;
- Do not use damaged equipment or damaged cables;
- Keep combustible materials away from socket points and cables;
- Do not plug more than one powerful appliance (such as a kettle or heater) into an extension lead.



### Sockets safety

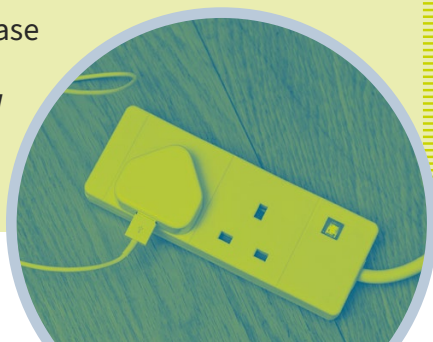
We recommend trying a socket calculator to check if you're exceeding the maximum load of your extension lead.

To access the online calculator please scan the QR code or visit:

**[www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guidance/safety-around-the-home/overloading-sockets](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/guidance/safety-around-the-home/overloading-sockets)**



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## Danger signs

**If you see any of the following danger signs, turn off the power to your extension lead immediately and unplug it.**

- Sparks or smoke coming from a plug or appliance;
- Smelling hot plastic near an appliance or socket;
- Black scorch marks around a socket or plug;
- Frayed leads;
- Coloured wires exposed;
- Melted plastic on an appliance or leads.

**Fire hazard**



## 5. Fuse boxes

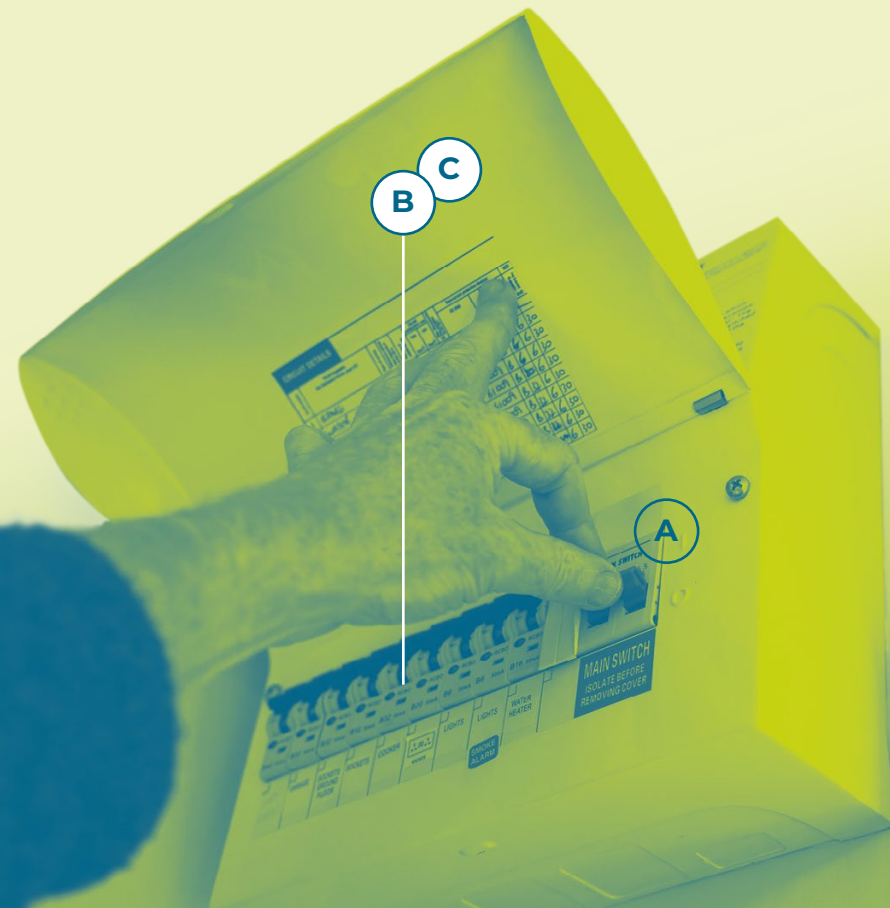
**A fuse box, also sometimes known as a consumer unit, should be easy to find and is where the electricity in your home is controlled and distributed.**

You must know where your fuse box is in case you ever need to turn the electricity off in an emergency. In most homes, the fuse box can be found in the hallway or kitchen; however, if you're not sure, you can speak to your neighbourhood service coordinator, who will be able to help in the first instance.



## Fuse box contains three things – the main switch, fuses and or circuit breakers, and residual current devices (RCDs).

- **Main switch (A)** – this allows you to turn off the electricity supply to your home. You might have more than one mains switch, for example, if your home has electric storage heaters. In this case, you may have a separate fuse box.
- **Circuit breakers (B)** – these are automatic protection devices in the fusebox that switch off a circuit if they detect a fault. When they ‘trip’, you can simply reset the switch. But make sure you correct the fault first.
- **RCDS (C)** – are switches that instantly disconnect the electricity from a circuit if there are dangerous conditions.



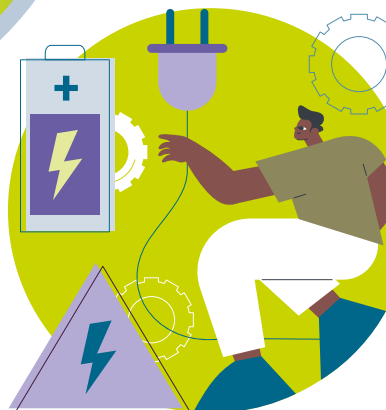




**Pay  
attention**

## 6. E-bikes and e-scooters

E-bikes and e-scooters offer a great way around the city, but they are a significant fire risk if not stored and charged correctly.



**The risk comes from their lithium batteries, which can start fires if they are damaged, modified or incorrectly used.**

- Do not charge batteries, e-bikes and e-scooters on exit routes in your home. If a fire breaks out, you won't be able to leave safely. Store them in a shed or garage where possible.
- Never leave your battery to charge when you are out or while you're asleep.
- Make sure your battery and charger meet UK safety standards.
- Use the correct charger for your battery, and make sure to buy from a reputable seller.
- Reduce the risk of overheating – batteries can get warm during use. Allow them to cool down before recharging.
- Unplug your charger once the battery is fully charged.
- Fit smoke alarms in the area where you charge your batteries.

## 7. Gas safety



We want you and your families to know how to manage the gas supply in your home. This includes using appliances correctly and knowing what to do if you think you have a gas leak.

- **Know the emergency procedure** – make sure you know what to do in the event of an emergency, and if you smell gas or suspect immediate danger, contact the National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999**.
- **Use appliances only for their intended purpose** – don't be tempted to use them for something they weren't meant for (e.g. using a gas cooker to heat a room).
- **Check gas appliances for warning signs** – e.g. lazy yellow flames instead of crisp blue ones, black marks or stains on or around the appliance and too much condensation in the room.

### If you think you have a gas leak:

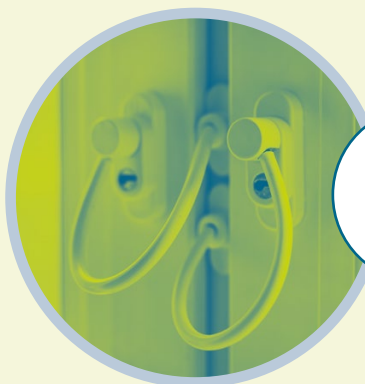
- 1. Get fresh air** – open all doors and windows.
- 2. Turn off gas** – turn off the gas supply at the meter if safe to do so (unless it's in a basement or cellar).
- 3. Avoid ignition** – do not smoke, do not light matches, do not use electrical switches or appliances.
- 4. Evacuate** – evacuate the building immediately and stay outside at a safe distance.
- 5. If you feel ill** – there may be a potential carbon monoxide exposure, and you need to seek medical attention immediately.
- 6. Don't return** – do not re-enter the premises unless it has been deemed safe by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

## 8. Window safety

It's very important to stay safe around windows, especially if you live in a high-rise building or have small children.

**Every home above the first floor should have window restrictors to make sure the windows open a safe amount.**

- Do not allow children to open windows or show them how to use a window restrictor.
- Make sure any furniture that children can climb on is away from the windows.
- Keep windows closed and locked when not needed or when children are not being supervised.



**Must  
have**

If you don't have window restrictors or think yours might be broken, please contact us on 0800 137 111 as soon as possible.



# 9. Heating, damp, mould and condensation





## 10. Heating your home

To efficiently heat your home, focus on reducing heat loss through insulating your home and using your heating system correctly.

### Minimising heat loss

- Use draught excluders to seal gaps around windows and doors.
- Reduce heat loss through windows with thermal blinds or curtains.
- Contain heat within rooms by keeping internal doors closed.

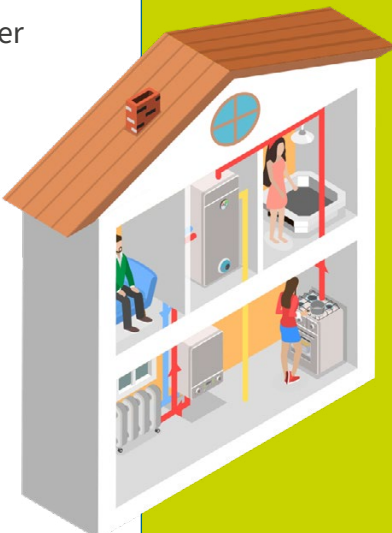
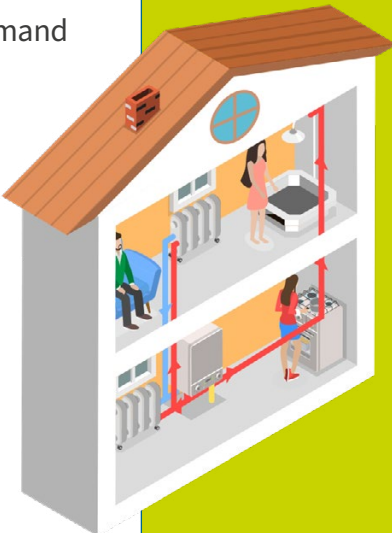
### Your heating system





- Get to know your heating system. Most will have a timer so you can set it to come on to meet your needs. For example, you can set it to come on half an hour before you get up in the morning rather than heating all night.
- Use a room thermostat to control the temperature in your home. Ideally, this should be between 18°C and 21°C, but some people may need it higher.
- It's better to leave your heating on for longer periods at a lower temperature, than to have short bursts of heating at a higher temperature.
- Don't leave electric hot water immersion heaters on for longer than you need, as this wastes energy and money.



**Seal  
windows**

## Parts of a heating system

<b>Boilers</b>	System boiler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hot water cylinder</li><li>• Storage tanks</li><li>• Good option if water pressure is low</li></ul>	
	Combi boiler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hot water on demand</li><li>• No storage tank</li><li>• No hot water cylinder</li></ul>	

<b>Controls</b>	Valves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A thermostatic radiator valve is a self regulating radiator valve which is fitted to radiators connected to a heating system</li> <li>• These can be adjusted by rotating the head to the temperature as shown on the dial</li> </ul>	
	Timers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used on combi boilers</li> <li>• Controls the heating only</li> </ul>	
	Programmable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used on system boilers and zoned heating</li> <li>• Controls heating and hot water</li> </ul>	
	Thermostat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Controls room temperature</li> <li>• Can either be hard wired or battery operated</li> </ul>	

There are many different types of heating systems, and we understand it can be confusing to identify which system you have. Photos of the various systems can be seen below, which should help you identify which system you have.



**Gas central heating**



**Electric wall heater**



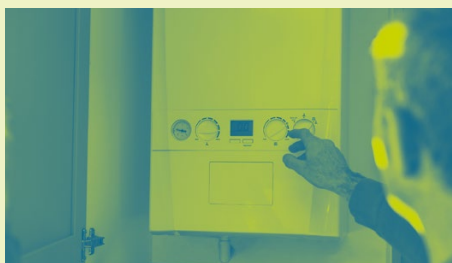
**Electric, portable fan heater**



**Storage heater**



**Outdoor heat pump**



**Domestic boiler**



## 11. Damp and mould

**Damp and mould can be worrying, and in some cases, dangerous in the home. We want to work together with residents to banish damp and mould.**

If you notice the signs of damp, mould or have persistent condensation, please call us on **0800 137 111** so our surveyors can check it out and see what we can do to help solve it. They may also advise on things you can do at home to help prevent condensation and stop the damp or mould from coming back.

### **What are damp, mould and condensation, and what causes them?**



**Damp** – this is when excess moisture finds its way into the walls or fittings in your home, and the air is not dry enough for the damp to dry out. If damp is left untreated, it can cause structural issues.



**Mould** – black mould is a fungus that grows and spreads in damp conditions if it is left untreated. Mould can cause health conditions or make existing conditions worse. It's important to take early action if you find it.



**Condensation** – condensation happens when moisture trapped in the air hits a cold surface and turns back into water droplets. This water can stay on surfaces or find its way into the walls or fittings and cause damp and mould. Dealing with condensation is the first step in preventing damp and mould.

## 12. How to prevent condensation

The main ways to prevent condensation from developing in your home are through heating and ventilation. We've put together a few top tips that may help:

### Day to day tips

- **Cooking** – use lids on saucepans and don't leave kettles boiling. Open windows or use extractor fans.
- **Bathing** – run cold water before adding hot water when filling a bath – this reduces steam by 90%. Keep bathroom doors closed and windows open.
- **Drying clothes** – dry clothes outside when and where possible. If drying indoors, use an ailer rather than radiators. The bathroom is usually best if it has a fan or a slightly open window. Avoid drying clothes in bedrooms, as moisture can build up overnight.
- **Tumble dryers** – ensure vented dryers are properly vented outside. If using a condensing dryer, open a window.
- **Heaters** – avoid paraffin and portable gas heaters, as they produce excess moisture and pose safety risks.



**Top  
tips**

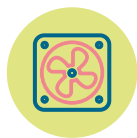


## Things you can check



### **Are your radiators working properly?**

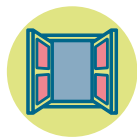
If they're colder at the top than the bottom, they may need to be bled to make sure you're getting the most from them.



**Extractor fans in the kitchen and bathroom help move damp air out of the home.** They should suck strongly enough to hold a sheet of toilet paper in place.



**Heating your home constantly** throughout the day to around 18°C can help prevent mould from forming.



**Open two windows on opposite sides of the home** for around 10 minutes in the morning. This will create air flow and replace damp air with clean, fresh air.

## What to do if you spot the signs

- If you notice condensation has formed on any surfaces in your home, wipe it up so it doesn't have the chance to get into the walls.
- If you notice any black mould, wipe it down with a mould and mildew cleaning product and call us.
- Use moisture absorbers on window cills (e.g. disposable traps with absorbent crystals or DIY alternatives like a bowl of rock salt or cat litter in a sock).

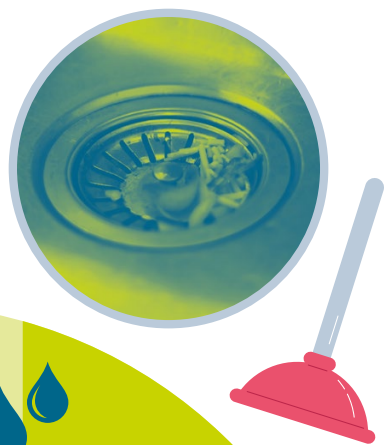
Following these steps will help keep your home dry, comfortable, and mould-free. If issues persist, contact us for further assistance.

## 13. Healthy drains

**Disposing of fats and oils down the sink is an easy option, but this can cause blockages that can affect your home, or your neighbours' homes.**

Cooking fat and oils will turn solid and build up in your pipes. This causes blockages, creating issues for everyone in the immediate area as it causes dirty water to back up into sinks or baths.

It's easy to avoid – simply collect oil and fat in a container like a jam jar or yoghurt pot, leave it to cool, and once it's set, scoop it out and pop it straight in the bin.



### **Follow more of our top tips to avoid blockages:**

- Scrape or wipe plates, pans and utensils before washing (put the solid waste into the rubbish bin).
- Do not put cooking oil, fat or grease down the sink.
- Use strainers in sink plug holes and put any collected food debris in the rubbish bin.
- Do not sweep solids into floor drains – put rubbish and food waste in rubbish bins.
- Consider fitting a grease trap and make sure that it is regularly maintained.
- Do not dispose of oils, fats and grease at Civic Amenity sites (the tip).

## 14. Pests

### Preventing pests

To control pests at home, focus on prevention by maintaining a clean and tidy environment, addressing clutter, and sealing entry points. Regular inspection and proper food storage are also crucial. If an infestation occurs, consider using traps, vacuuming, and contacting pest control services for professional assistance.

**To prevent any pest issues, follow our checklist below.**

- Regularly clean your home, especially food preparation areas, to remove food debris and grime, which attract pests like cockroaches, rats, and mice.
- Reduce clutter to create less space for pests to hide and breed.
- Store food properly in airtight containers to prevent it attracting insects and rodents.
- Inspect your home for cracks, gaps, and openings in walls, floors, and around pipes, and seal them to prevent pests from entering.
- Regularly inspect your home for signs of pests like droppings, nests, or damage, which can indicate an infestation.
- Use a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter to remove small pests like fleas and carpet beetles from carpets and dispose of the dust bag or canister contents promptly.



## Dealing with a pest problem

If you think you have a pest problem in your home, you can access our free pest control service.

### We offer free pest control treatments for the following pests:

- Rats and mice inside your building
- Bed bugs
- Cockroaches
- Pharaoh ants (in some circumstances) – Pharaoh ants are small, invasive ants. They are a common household pest and can be challenging to control due to their ability to create multiple colonies.

## Contact us

If you require this pest control service, please contact customer services on:

 **0800 137 111**

 **HM-CustomerServices@rbkc.gov.uk**



**Free  
service**



# 15. Living well in your neighbourhood



## 16. Living well – the basics

There are some small things everyone can do to help make their neighbourhood a little better:

- **Say hello to your caretaker!**

All our neighbourhoods have an estate care team that works hard to keep things looking nice. Our caretakers are a friendly bunch, so please say hello or stop them for a chat. They're also able to help or guide you on things like booking a communal repair.

- **Say hello to your neighbours!**

A kind word or greeting can really brighten someone's day.

- **Take advantage** – we offer funding for residents to choose how to improve their local neighbourhood. We also have gardening clubs for green-fingered folk, heritage days out for people curious about the borough, and a range of ways to get involved and help us improve our services. Read on for more information on each of these.

- **Call us if you need help!** We can't list all our services here, and the Council provides opportunities, activities and support to meet a range of needs. Please call us on **0800 137 111**.





## 17. A bit of housekeeping...

To help keep the neighbourhood pleasant for everyone, please...

- **Keep the communal areas of the building smoke-free** – smoking in the building is a fire risk and unpleasant for other residents.
- **Use the right size bin bags** – if your building has a rubbish chute, make sure you don't block it! Always use bags of an appropriate size.
- **Be mindful of noise** – everyone's lifestyle is different, and we're not saying you have to be silent in your homes, but noise can travel between homes, so a bit of consideration can go a long way.
- **If you have a dog, please remember to scoop the poop!**
- **Enjoy the wildlife in the local parks** – but please don't feed birds or animals on the estate, the leftover food can attract pests.
- **Get rid of your rubbish properly** – fly tipping and littering make shared spaces an eye-sore, and are expensive for teams to clear, which just comes back to residents in service charges!

## 18. Leaseholders' rights and responsibilities

**As your landlord, we are responsible for maintaining the outside of your building, the structure, all communal areas, and any communal heating system.**

If you need repairs to any of the above, please call us on **0800 137 111** or email: **[hm-customerservices@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:hm-customerservices@rbkc.gov.uk)**

As a leaseholder, you are responsible for maintaining the inside of your home. This means carrying out repairs to your fixtures and fittings, which include:

Kitchen units	Boiler	Bathroom fittings	Plumbing and electrical wiring
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## 19. Help shut the door on tenancy fraud

There's a housing crisis at the moment as demand for social housing is far higher than the number of homes available. Many people who need a home will spend years on the housing register.



**Stay vigilant**

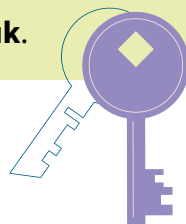
Housing fraud stops people accessing the homes they need while lining the pockets of the fraudster – we're determined to stamp it out.

We need your help to identify homes that are not being used properly, so we can act. **If you notice suspicious activity at a home, please let us know.**

### Things to look out for

- Lots of different people coming and going from a home – this may mean the home is being used as an Airbnb.
- Different families moving in and out of a property every few months – this could mean it's being illegally privately rented out.

If you spot any of these signs, please let our team know by emailing [Investigations@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:Investigations@rbkc.gov.uk).



## 20. Funding to improve your area

### Estate improvement budget

Did you know that each year we allocate £67 per home to a budget residents can use to improve their local area?

The money for each home is added together to create each estate's (or street property's) budget. This can be used to fund improvements to communal areas.

If the budget isn't spent in a year, it's held over to the next year, so the pot continues to grow.

Some common items that residents choose to spend the budget on include:

Digital noticeboards

Outdoor bike stores

Communal gardening projects

### Share your ideas

If you have an idea to improve your estate, contact us on:

 **0800 137 111**

 **[Environmentalservices@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:Environmentalservices@rbkc.gov.uk)**

or simply scan the QR code above via your phone to share your idea, and our team will be in touch.




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## 21. Community chest

**Our community chest funding supports small-scale events, classes or activities that directly benefit our tenants or leaseholders.**

It is a one-off grant payment of up to £500 from the Resident Engagement and Partnerships Team, who will consider any application we receive.

You can apply for any amount between £50 and £500, either as an individual or on behalf of a group such as a residents' association or voluntary sector organisation. You may have to show how at least 50 per cent of the people who benefit will be Council housing residents.

Contact  **HM-ResidentEngagement@rbkc.gov.uk**  
to find out more about how to apply.




**Apply  
today**



## 22. Gardening clubs

**Our estate care team runs gardening clubs across the borough for green-fingered residents to improve their skills and their local areas.**

The club offers tips on how to create beautiful gardens in small spaces, such as private balconies or window boxes, as well as larger projects, such as making improvements to communal gardens or green spaces.

If you've always wanted to know more about gardening, or if you live somewhere without access to your garden, the club could be right up your street. Contact  **HM-EnvironmentalServices@rbkc.gov.uk** to find out more.


### Did you know...

If your estate or block has a communal garden, we can provide a free plaque with information about the plants and wildlife in the area.

The plaques help connect people with their local environment and share all that's positive about where they live.

It also helps everyone learn about the importance of preserving life and nature around them.



If you are interested in having a plaque to showcase your green space, contact  **HM-Environmentalservices@rbkc.gov.uk**.

## 23. Get involved

**Our resident engagement team offers a wide range of activities for residents:**



**Get  
involved**

### **Heritage walks**

If you're interested in finding out more about the borough, why not join our team on a guided walk around one of its major attractions. From the Albert Hall to the Chelsea Physic Gardens, we've got something for everyone.

### **Join or start a residents' association**

You're stronger together – residents' associations are a key part of the way the Council interacts with residents. They are a great way to make sure the issues that are important to you and your neighbours are addressed.

### **Training**

If you want to help hold your landlord to account, we hold a range of training days to help you. Our team offers sessions on mystery shopping, to focus on understanding housing management, or how the Council works, to name just a few.

For more information on any of the above, contact us at:

 **HM-ResidentEngagement@rbkc.gov.uk**



## Your notes

# Translations

Information from this document can be made available in alternative formats and in different languages. If you require further assistance please use the contact details below.

## Arabic

يمكن توفير المعلومات التي وردت في هذا المستند بصيغ بديلة ولغات أخرى. إذا كنت في حاجة إلى مزيد من المساعدة، الرجاء استخدام بيانات الاتصال الواردة أدناه.

## Farsi

اطلاعات حاوی در این مدارک به صورتهای دیگر و به زبانهای مختلف در دسترس می باشد. در صورت نیاز به کمک بیشتر لطفاً از جزئیات تماس ذکر شده در ذیل استفاده کنید.

## French

Les informations présentées dans ce document peuvent vous être fournies dans d'autres formats et d'autres langues. Si vous avez besoin d'une aide complémentaire, veuillez utiliser les coordonnées ci-dessous.

## Portuguese

A informação presente neste documento pode ser disponibilizada em formatos alternativos e em línguas diferentes. Se desejar mais assistência, use por favor os contactos fornecidos abaixo.

## Somali

Macluumaadka dokumentigan waxaa lagu heli karaa qaabab kale iyo luuqado kala duwan. Haddii aad u baahan tahay caawinaad intaas dhaafsiisan fadlan isticmaal xiriirka faahfaahinta hoose.

## Spanish

La información en este documento puede facilitarse en formatos alternativos y en diferentes idiomas. Si necesita más ayuda por favor utilice la siguiente información de contacto.

**For more details please contact us on**



**HM-CustomerServices@rbkc.gov.uk**



**0800 137 111**