

THE INFORMED

Summer 2024



Sapphire
Independent
Housing

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SUMMER IS FINALLY ON IT'S WAY, AND RESIDENTS AND STAFF AT BETHANY HOUSE WENT TO KEW GARDENS AS PART OF THEIR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN A GARDENING PROJECT. A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL!

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If you'd like to be featured in the next issue, please write to us at theinformed@sih.org

Welcome to the summer issue of The Informed. This issue is packed full of interesting information, useful advice, and stories from our residents.

There are updates on what's been happening so far this year, and how residents celebrated events such as Eid, International Women's Day and Mental Health Awareness Week. There's practical advice on how to deal with debt, transitioning to Universal Credit, and help with the Cost of Living struggle. Sapphire has exciting developments to share on progress with new homes in Hounslow, and updates on Tenant Satisfaction Measures. We also have an interview with Victoria West Akiboye, our new Housing Operations Manager at Bethany House.

Last but not least, there's info on what's happening now at Sapphire and how to get involved, and our regular feature 'You said, we did' on what you have asked, and what we've done in response.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT SAPPHIRE?

Townsend House residents received a selection of gifts to celebrate the festive period, bringing joy and goodwill to the Christmas holidays.



In May, Hepburn Court residents and their children held a coffee morning to get to know and have general discussions with each other.



In April, residents at Bethany House participated in Eid celebrations, making jewellery and enjoying a traditional meal to break the fast, following the sighting of the moon. According to the Islamic calendar, Eid al-Fitr occurs on the first day of Shawwal, when Eid prayers are performed, and fasting is forbidden.

Eid al-Fitr, the earlier of the two official holidays in Islam, is celebrated by Muslims worldwide to mark the end of the month-long dawn-to-sunset fasting of Ramadan.



Sapphire has been actively working with Stretch Charity (stretch-charity.org), who have been visiting Bethany House to share and create stories with the residents.

The residents expressed their artistic thoughts by creating posters, which showcase their reflections and ideas.



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

In May, Townsend House had a small gathering for Mental Health Awareness Week.

Staff organised the event and provided leaflets about mental health services to all residents. They discussed the information which is available on MH services, and Bose, our Supported Housing Officer) led discussions on different aspects of MH and where people would go to for support.

Residents also watched a short film about Mental Health Awareness Week, which they discussed afterwards. Residents enjoyed the event and stayed together after to celebrate with some hot snacks. Other residents who were unable to attend the event joined in later to sit and chat and take part in the discussions.



INTRODUCING TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES

You may recall from our last newsletter in early 2024, Sapphire provided a key metric summary of our satisfaction survey for 2023.

These measures, known as Tenant Satisfaction Measures, are designed to provide greater transparency about landlord performance, ensuring landlords are open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect. This allows tenants to access services, raise complaints, influence decision-making, and hold their landlords accountable. All landlords with over 1,000 homes are required to report on their performance and publish their results annually, with the first set of results due by June 2024.

There are 22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures that must be reported, divided into two categories:

- **12 customer perception measures:** These reflect your satisfaction with the services we provide, for example, how well we've managed repairs or resolved complaints.
- **10 performance measures:** These are based on performance information, for example, how many homes meet the Decent Homes standard and how many cases of anti-social behaviours have been reported to us.

The measures focus on five key themes:

- Keeping properties in good repair;
- Maintaining building safety;
- Respectful and helpful engagement;
- Effective handling of complaints;
- Responsible neighbourhood management

To find out more about the TSMs on the government [website*](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/transparency-influence-and-accountability-including-tenant-satisfaction-measures)



*<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/transparency-influence-and-accountability-including-tenant-satisfaction-measures>

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

March 8th is globally recognised as International Women's Day, and a day to celebrate Women's achievements. At Bethany House, residents marked the day with a pampering session,

having a manicure and nails varnished. They also painted individual canvases to decorate and place in their rooms.



HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS AT SAPPHIRE

Plans to develop general needs properties in Hounslow 2024/2025

Sapphire has been working closely with the London Borough of Hounslow in an exciting project to develop new 1, 2, and 3-bedroom homes on former garage court sites in the Borough. We have agreed terms to purchase a long lease on 19 development sites in Hounslow, all of which have now received planning consent.

Our programme includes the development of 103 new homes, and we are working closely with the Greater London Authority, who are providing funding for the project.

Building our programme

We are currently in the process of building 64 new homes with our contractor partners Helix

Construct, Ark Build, Emine Construction, and Chartwell Vision. We anticipate the new homes will be completed and handovers will begin from September 2024. All 64 homes should be completed by January 2025. The remaining 39 units are also under construction and are expected to be completed by mid-2025.

Shared Ownership Development in Kentish Town NW5

Sapphire has also recently completed another shared ownership purchase, and acquired an affordable unit in a large development in Kentish Town Road. We are pleased to report that a Sapphire resident has already moved in.

Congratulations on moving into your new home!

STOCK CONDITION SURVEYS WILL SOON BE TAKING PLACE FOR ALL GENERAL NEEDS HOUSING AT SAPPHIRE



What is a Stock Condition survey?

A Stock Condition survey is an important assessment of the condition of the main elements in your home, including the roof, windows, external doors, kitchen, and bathroom. It also helps to make sure that properties are safe and free from any serious hazards.

The assessment will be undertaken by a surveyor who will visit your home and will need to look inside and out, take photographs, and complete a number of checks.

The surveyor will need to look in all the rooms and have access to your loft, the boiler and meter cupboards.

Surveys normally take about 40 minutes.

How will residents be contacted?

We will contact you by letter in advance, you may also be contacted by phone to arrange an appointment that is convenient for you.

It is really important that we are able to access your home so if you do need to rearrange your appointment, let us know as soon as possible.

The surveyor will carry identification and we would ask that you check this when they arrive.

If we call and you are not in, we will leave a card or letter with a phone number so you can arrange another visit.

For more information or have any queries, please contact your housing officer or our repairs team on **020 7485 8889**.

GENERAL NEEDS DROP IN

Head Office – Drop in on the first Tuesday of each month from 10am-12pm.

St Eugene Court – Drop in on the first Wednesday of each month from 2pm-4pm.

INTRODUCING VICTORIA



Sapphire would like to introduce Victoria West Akiboye, our new Housing Operations Manager at Bethany House. Victoria started working with us in December 2023, and is enjoying settling into her role. We asked Victoria a few questions so residents can get to know her better.

Question: *What is your favourite thing about your career?*

Answer: I like helping people to achieve their outcomes, become more independent and regain their life. It's great for people to achieve what they want to. I also love managing staff and helping the team reach their full potential.

Question: *What inspired you to pursue the career you have today?*

Answer: My father lived with muscular sclerosis and faced barriers. He couldn't get up steps for example. We had a really bad experience with Social Services. I wanted to support people to be able to have equal access and equality.

Question: *If you could give yourself past advice, what would it be?*

Answer: To take more time, try to involve the team in decision-making rather than just doing this yourself.

Question: *Do you like to cook, and if so, what's your favourite go to meal?*

Answer: I love to cook. My go to meal would be a roast chicken with rice, and I am really good at making pies.

Question: *If you could live anywhere, where would it be?*

Answer: South America. I love the food, the culture and the music!

Question: *What do you enjoy watching on TV?*

Answer: I love any reality TV such as Married at First Sight Australia. We deal with serious issues at work, it's nice to just watch something light-hearted.

Question: *What was the last book you read?*

Answer: The Thursday Murder Club by Richard Osman which was really good. I have now started reading The Eighth Detective by Alex Pavesi.

Question: *What are your top tips?*

Answer: To see positive outcomes rather than negative. Focus on what you have achieved. Sometimes we forget this and focus on the negatives.



YOU SAID WE DID

Residents are continuing to ask us to improve our service and these are just a few examples of the actions we take to enhance their environment.

St Eugene Court

You said: Residents asked for a fan in the communal games room, as it is particularly hot in the summer months.



We did: Provide a standing pedestal fan.

Hepburn Court

You said: Could staff provide laundry baskets so

residents could remove laundry left in the machine and put to one side?

We did: Provide two laundry baskets and inform residents via email.



Highgate Road

You said: Residents asked for their main entrance doors to be replaced/repaired including locks of their choice to enhance safety and security.

We did: Sapphire is in the process of replacing/repairing entrance doors including locks of their choice to enhance safety and security.

Bethany House

You said: Residents requested more cameras to be installed in areas that CCTV did not cover.

We did: Bethany House added extra cameras in early 2024 and improved the overall quality of CCTV footage in and around the scheme.

A RESIDENTS STORY FROM BETHANY HOUSE



In 2015, BM fled Ethiopia with her husband due to religious persecution. She was instructed that males and females had to travel separately, and this resulted in her separation from her husband.

BM arrived safely to Glasgow where she began to rebuild her life. In 2019, BM met a male friend who became verbally and psychologically abusive, and she became isolated from her network. BM fled Glasgow to live with a friend in London, but the friend evicted BM due to COVID-19, and unfortunately BM ended up sleeping rough for several weeks. Fortunately, Crisis, a national charity for homeless people found BM living on the streets and worked with her, providing support throughout her situation. After several weeks they found her a place to stay at Bethany House.

This was a new start for BM, and at Bethany House she received support from her keyworker, Georgina, who helped her get into a safer and better place. As BM could not speak English, it was arranged that she attend ESOL classes at college to learn. Despite the classes having to stop due to COVID-19, she resumed classes again in 2023, which is helping to improve her English.

BM found the staff and residents at Bethany House to be nice, supportive and helpful.

Since being at Bethany House, she has really started to gain confidence, feels safe and happy with the staff who have really helped her. She says the other residents at the scheme are also really nice.

With her grown confidence, her ETE Coordinator, Fahima arranged for her to work at a three-month paid training course where she secured a place as a Barista in a coffee shop. She is currently receiving £13.50 per hour, and would love to be taken on in the role permanently.

Her employers said she has been doing brilliantly, is eager, willing to go above and beyond and is always smiling.

BM has also volunteered in a charity shop who says her work was excellent. This kept her motivated and helped BM get the trainee role she is doing now.

Fahima, her ETE Coordinator, noted that during her time living at Bethany House, there has been a massive change in BM's confidence, and she has come on in leaps and bounds.

BM's hopes and plans for her future are to eventually move out of Bethany House and find a permanent home of her own, find a permanent job where she can pay her own rent and not rely on any form of benefits.

She wants to continue with her English ESOL classes and gain further skills, and qualifications, so she can add to her CV. Inspired by one of her friends who is doing well, with a new home and job, BM is aspiring to do the same.

Best wishes to BM on your journey forward.

CSE ASSESSMENT UPDATE

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



Sapphire is pleased to announce that we passed the interim audit in December 2023.

We would like to say thank you to all residents and staff that took part. If you would like to

be involved, we are asking for mystery shopper volunteers to take part in reviewing our services.

Sapphire is also asking for residents to help with being involved or writing any articles for future newsletters. If you are interested, please speak with your keyworker or housing officer.

ARE YOU STRUGGLING WITH THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS?

If you are struggling with debt, don't suffer in silence. Below are just a few of the debt advice organisations that you can contact for free help, advice and support. They include:

National Debt line

www.nationaldebtline.org

Call free: 0808 808 4000

**NATIONAL
DEBTLINE**

Citizens Advice

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/
debt-and-money/help-with-debt](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/help-with-debt)

Debt helpline: 0800 240 4420

**citizens
advice**

Step Change Debt Charity

www.stepchange.org

Free advice helpline: 0800 138 1111

StepChange
Debt Charity

Turn2Us

www.turn2us.org.uk

Freephone:

0808 802 2000

**turn
2US**

If you're struggling with council tax arrears, visit your local council for advice. You may be entitled to a discount given your circumstances.

If you need a loan, don't be tempted to approach a loan shark or get a payday loan. Instead, consider credit unions or other ethical loan providers, such as London Capital Credit Union Limited, visit <https://credit-union.coop>, email info@credit-union.coop, or call 020 7561 1786

If you owe a loan shark money, or if you are being threatened, get help by contacting: stoploansharks.co.uk

TRANSITIONING TO UNIVERSAL CREDIT

As Universal Credit is gradually replacing several existing benefits, it is important to stay informed and prepared. If you currently receive any of the following benefits, please be aware that you can no longer make new claims for them:

- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit

Instead, you will need to transition to Universal Credit, which combines these benefits into a single monthly payment.

Be alert for a letter from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) titled '**Universal Credit Migration Notice**'. This letter authorises you to begin your transition to Universal Credit and includes essential information for a smooth process. You do not need to take any steps until you receive this letter, but upon receipt, immediate action is required. You will have 12 weeks from the date of the letter to submit your claim. Failing to meet this deadline may result in the loss of your benefits.

If you need assistance to apply for Universal Credit or have not received your first Universal Credit despite claiming, Citizens Advice has a dedicated helpline to assist you: **0800 144 8444**. Lines are open Monday-Friday, 8am-6pm.

Alternatively visit their website on:

[https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/
contact-us/contact-us/help-to-claim/](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/help-to-claim/)

You can also ask your keyworker or housing officer who will be happy to assist.

Migration notices will be sent from these dates onwards:

- April 2024 – Income Support; tax credits with Housing Benefit.
- June 2024 – Housing Benefit only.
- July 2024 – income-related ESA with Child Tax Credit.
- July 2024 – pension age tax credit claimants (including mixed age couples).
- September 2024 – income-based JSA & other income-related ESA claimants.

All migration notices will be sent by December 2025.

GEORGIA'S STORY

While living in Manchester, Georgia's relationship broke down, and she had to move out of her home with her four children. She went to stay with her family, but as they were overcrowded, she tried to find private rented accommodation. However, this was not possible due to her being unemployed and on benefits.

She found her a temporary 2 bed flat Luton, but it was a long distance from her children's school and took away her support network, which Georgia says was the hardest part of her journey.

She stayed for three weeks, but as it was not practical, the council found her a three-bed house close to her family. This was a three-month contract, with the condition that she then find accommodation of her own. Despite trying her utmost, Georgia was turned down by 81 private landlords! This was extremely upsetting and stressful for her.

After another tough battle with the council, they offered her a three-bed temporary flat in Peterborough. This was even further away from her children's school, and she continued to need the support of her family network.

In September 2023, Sapphire offered Georgia a room at a hostel close to her family. At first, she felt disheartened, having preconceived ideas about what it would be like. Her family persuaded her to make contact and she visited and met with the Supported Housing Officer, Leyla where Georgia immediately felt safe, relaxed, and knew that she would be ok.

Her move to the hostel came a week before her children went back to School in September and they settled in just before term started. It was a new start for her family. It now takes Georgia 15 minutes on the school run, which is a much better journey than if she was staying in Luton or Peterborough.

Georgia says she gets along with all the other residents at the scheme, and that they usually come to her for advice. She says she's like a mother hen!

Georgia is now waiting for her permanent and forever home and is continuing to bid for a three-bed home. This is proving difficult, and sometimes disheartening as none have been available since January 2024. She often sees other residents move out to permanent or other accommodation, who moved into the hostel after she arrived, but understands that everyone's journey is different. She admits that it can be hard to see other people leave before her family.

Georgia says it affects her children as they do not understand why they are living in a hostel. It's difficult for them.

Georgia is really grateful to be living at the hostel. She says that the hostel

works with organisations who help the residents, and charities offer support, such as the young reform generation being kind enough to send residents and children gifts. Another charity also gave a £150 gift voucher to each resident which helped residents buy gifts for their families at Christmas 2023. Residents were incredibly thankful for this.

Georgia recently moved to a larger family room at the hostel, and it helps enormously to have an individual kitchen and now access to her own bathroom. She shares the other facilities such as laundry, family room and garden area.

Georgia is actively involved in social media and shares her experience about being a single mum to four children whilst living in a hostel. She shares the ups, downs with honesty on how it affects her family as a whole and is always complementary about the scheme.

Georgia is often asked about what it is like living in a hostel and people seek advice from her. She would like to go into a field where she can help support people and even advocate on their behalf, particularly as she been in the same situation and knows how difficult it is for herself and children because she shares the same experiences.

Georgia's hopes for the future are that she and her children settle into a permanent safe place of their own, that she gets back into work and can help others who are in a similar position to herself.

Georgia has never complained and is forever grateful about living at the hostel. She says Leyla and Sapphire Independent Housing are very supportive and never judge her.

We would like to thank Georgia for sharing her story.



ACTIVITIES TAKING PART AT SAPPHIRE SCHEMES

Please take advantage of the activities currently taking place at Conway and Bethany House!



Breakfast Club continues to be a hit with Conway House residents and is very well attended. Breakfast is being purchased, prepared and served by a resident who completed the Healthy Eating on a Budget program last year. It takes place every Monday in the TRC at 10.45am – 11.45am.



JOIN THE HEALTHY EATING ON A BUDGET PROGRAMME

The Healthy Eating on a Budget programme will be starting again for residents, as it was very well attended last year. The volunteering opportunities that enabled residents to be more actively involved achieved Level 2 in Food Hygiene and Catering.

The entire programme will include Levels 1-3. they will be delivered in 5 x 4-hour sessions over four weeks. A single session of Survey Evaluation Pre-training will also take place.

Delivery will be by FEAST's Healthy Eating on a Budget Coordinator Sandra, alongside two residents who completed the course last year.

If there are any Conway House residents who are interested in the project, and would like to be involved, please contact your Keyworker or Linda Jones (ETE C-coordinator) for further information.



HOW ARE WE DOING?

SAPPHIRE'S RESIDENT SATISFACTION LEVELS

1st January 2024 – 31st May 2024



SATISFACTION 21 surveys were received during the period which ranged from gas inspections, supported housing, before you leave, general needs (accommodation) and feedback forms, where 19 residents either expressed very satisfied or satisfied with our service. Two residents expressed that they were ok with the services we provided. As a result, there was **94%** overall satisfaction with Sapphire services.



COMPLAINTS AND REPAIRS



11 complaints were received during this period, and 7 (**64%**) of complaints were resolved on time.

Repairs information to follow in the next newsletter.

JOURNEY MAPS

Over the past couple of years, we have consulted with residents about our policies and procedures, and we appreciate your suggestions and recommendations. In response, we will continue working with residents to implement these recommendations and put them into practice.

Watch this space in future newsletters as we will initially be concentrating on the Repairs Journey Map, with more to follow. If any residents are interested in getting involved, please contact your keyworker or Housing Officer.

FIRE DOOR PROGRAMME



Since the Grenfell tragedy, building regulations have changed, making fire safety a top priority. As part of our ongoing fire door program, we will be contacting residents to schedule necessary remedial and replacement works.

We would like to thank you for your continued support and cooperation.



GENERAL NEEDS RESIDENT ACTIVITIES

Over the coming months, we will be organizing more meetings and activities for general needs residents. So far, a meeting for Hackett House residents has been arranged for June, and a resident has expressed interest in starting a gardening project at Dunne Mews.

In June, we hosted a coffee morning for residents of Highgate Road/College Yard, providing an opportunity for residents to get to know each other and the staff involved directly with their sites. Discussions were held about the local pub, the area, and ongoing football events. Residents were introduced to Roy Rodney (Head of Repairs and Compliance), Janice Esten (Housing Operations Manager), and Nina Williams (Housing and

Resident Engagement Officer). The event proved very popular, with 50% of residents attending.

Thank you to everyone who attended and made the event a success. If you are interested in suggesting, setting up, or organizing activities for general needs residents, please contact your housing officer for more information.

Sapphire has been holding regular pilot meetings with residents at a Highgate Road block, and due to their success, we will be opening these meetings to all residents of Highgate Road and College Yard. Keep an eye out for your invitation, as these meetings will provide an opportunity for you to have a voice and influence what happens in your community.

CONTACT US

The Informed is a bi-annual publication.

Our next issue will be out in Winter 2024. Please send any comments, questions and story ideas to:

TheInformed@sih.org

For a PDF version or any previous issues of *The Informed* please visit the Residents' section of our website www.sih.org and click on publications.

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If you would like this publication in large print please contact
Nina Williams
on 020 7485 8889



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE | Gold

PLEASE NOTE

Head Office is open Mondays to Thursdays
10.30am until 5pm.

If you would like to make an appointment with
a particular officer, please call **020 7485 8889**.

If you have an emergency repair after 5pm or
before 9am, or on bank holidays, please call the
out of hours number on
020 7372 6633.

GENERAL ENQUIRES

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www.sih.org

SUPPORTED SCHEMES

Bethany House

13 Lloyd Square,
London, WC1X 9AR
Tel: 020 7837 3420

Conway House

18-22 Quex Road,
Kilburn, NW6 4PL
Tel: 020 7372 6633

Hepburn Court

Brookside,
Gowar Field,
South Mimms,
Hertfordshire,
EN6 3QE
Tel: 01707 662 667

Townsend House

135 Aycliffe Road,
Borehamwood,
Hertfordshire,
WD6 4HA
Tel: 020 8207 1562

GENERAL NEEDS SCHEMES

Caulfield Court

Baynes Street,
London, NW1 0TZ

College Yard

9 College Yard,
London, NW5 1NX

Dunne Mews

57 Leighton Road,
London, NW5 2QH

Forde House

129 Queens Crescent,
London, NW5 4HE

Hackett House

12 Kingsgate Road,
Kilburn, NW6 4TB
Tel: 020 7692 7285

Highgate Road

54/56 Highgate Road,
London, NW5 1NU

Park Place

1 Espalier Gardens,
London, NW6 2DQ

St Eugene Court

82 Salusbury Road,
London, NW6 6PA

Tara Lodge

Mutrix Road,
London, NW6 4BF