THE INFORMED

Summer 2025



IN THIS ISSUE

New homes on Ashford Road

1-2

page

New developments in Hounslow

3

What's been happening at Sapphire

4-6

Dates for your diary

6

Resident engagement

9

Have your say!

10

FEATURES

A fresh start for Hanlea

3

Spinney Drive ribbon cutting

3

Changes to benefits and entitlements

7

The dangers of Cuckooing

11

Introducing Taslima

12

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



SAPPHIRE CELEBRATES THE OPENING OF 10 NEW HOMES ON ASHFORD ROAD

Sapphire hosted an open day ceremony on 20th March to mark the completion of 10 new homes to rent on Ashford Road in Hounslow. The development which includes a mix of one, two, and three-bedroom family homes, have enabled families on the Hounslow Council waiting list to move into homes of their own.

The event was attended by several new residents, at Ashford Road, Sapphire Board Members, Helix Construction, who played a vital role in helping us construct the scheme, numerous partners, and the Mayor of Hounslow Council. It was a huge success!

Sir Steve Bullock, Chair of Sapphire's Board, said "This is an important day for the new residents of these homes and for Sapphire. We are a small housing association and this partnership with Hounslow and the GLA is enabling us to grow in a way which enables us to provide much needed good quality rented homes in Hounslow and also enables us to sustain the supported housing which has been our core business for many years."

This development showcases Sapphire's commitment to sustainability and innovation. Each home is equipped with state-of-the-art air source heat pumps, offering high energy efficiency, lower running costs, reduced carbon emissions, and improved indoor air quality. These systems provide both heating and cooling and are built to last.

continued overleaf...

The new homes are energy-efficient, designed to minimize heat loss and energy consumption, relying on passive design strategies like superinsulation, airtight construction, and solar gain



www.sih.org

2

NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS IN HOUNSLOW

A FRESH START FOR HANLEA AND HER DAUGHTER

In March 2025, Hanlea and her young daughter, Nyah, moved into their new home – marking the beginning of a hopeful new journey.

Before moving into their beautiful new home, Hanlea and Nyah spent over 15 months sharing a small room in temporary accommodation, with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. This must have been an incredibly difficult and stressful period, impacting both their mental and physical well-being.

Reflecting on her experience, Hanlea said:

"I am so grateful beyond words to be given a beautiful home for myself and my daughter. After a very long road of homelessness and losing hope with such a small child, I really wouldn't wish those living circumstances upon anyone. The Sapphire housing team have given me and my daughter hope again and we are so excited for our fresh start, to create amazing memories for our future in our lovely home!"

Let's congratulate Hanlea and Nyah on their new beginning. We wish them every happiness and success in their new home and for the future.



Sapphire is proud to announce the completion of several new developments in Hounslow. Residents have now moved into new homes at Spinney Drive, Elmwood Avenue, and The Clumps – providing much-needed, high-quality housing for residents in Hounslow who are in need of homes.





New development at Elmwood Avenue

SPINNEY DRIVE RIBBON CUTTING

As part of Sapphire's continued partnership with Hounslow Council and the Greater London Authority (GLA), a further 55 homes are currently being developed across Hounslow. One of our most recent completed schemes is located at Spinney Drive in Feltham.

To celebrate this achievement, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held on 6 June 2025, marking the successful move-in of seven families into their new two-bedroom homes during March and April this year. The event was attended by local councillors, Sapphire staff, development and construction teams, and residents, all coming together to mark this special occasion.

We are especially grateful to Shannon, one of our new residents, who kindly opened her brand new home to guests for a tour during the celebration. Thank you Shannon!



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT SAPPHIRE?

You may remember us previously reporting on the **Healthy Eating on a Budget Programme** which residents at Conway House took part in last year. The Programme was run by Feast With Us and was a big success. The Programme, which gives residents the opportunity to gain a recognised qualification took place again this year, and residents of Bethany House have been taking part. They have recently completed Level 1 Food Safety, and are looking forward to progressing onto the Level 2 course soon.

Here are some of the residents who successfully completed the course. Congratulations to all!



GENERAL NEEDS RESPONSIBILITIES

Please contact your Housing and Resident Engagement Officer if you wish to discuss any housing matters on **020 7485 8889**. If they are not available, please leave a message and they will return your call.

If you want to report a repair or have a maintenance query, please contact our Head Office, and speak with a member of the **Repairs Team** on **020 7485 8889**.

To pay your rent by phone, or to make a debit card payment, please contact Head Office on **020 7485 8889**. Alternatively, you can make an online payment via Sapphire Independent Housing Website:

https://www.sih.org/residents-section/pay-rent-now

You can also pay by bank transfer or set up a standing order. Our Bank details are as follows:

Account number: 40102616

Sort Code: 82 61 33

Please use your name or tenancy number as reference.

Conway House activities

Residents at Conway House were treated to free haircuts from Barber Q, generously funded by the Andy Sarsby Foundation. The event was a great success, with residents enjoying and appreciating the experience and wonderful new fresh new looks. Thanks to the positive feedback and turnout, the Andy Sarsby Foundation is continuing its partnership with Conway House on other initiatives.

To top off the day, residents came together for a delightful barbecue, making the most of the beautiful weather and enjoying a great meal in good company.





Bethany House Celebrates International Women's Day

The theme this year for International Women's Day was "Accelerate Action". It emphasizes the urgency of taking decisive steps to achieve gender equality and address the significant barriers women face worldwide.

Bethany House residents enjoyed celebrating the day by taking part in t-shirt printing with Quentin Blake, and cooking a feast of jerk chicken with rice and peas.

We would like to say a big thank you to Beauty Bank, who kindly donated body care products to residents.



Easter cheer at Hepburn Court



This Easter, the babies and toddlers at Hepburn Court were treated to some lovely Easter goodies, thanks to the kindness of two wonderful residents – Natasha

and Rochelle, from Brookside, South Mimms.

Natasha and Rochelle have been volunteering with Essex and Herts Air Ambulance for nearly 10 years. They believe every child deserves an Easter egg or bunny, and for the last three years have been collecting and distributing Easter treats. This year, they gifted every child in Potters Bar an Easter egg and collected toys for Noah's Ark Children's Hospice.

Here at Hepburn Court, they kindly donated four cuddly Easter bunnies for the babies and toddlers, and ten Easter eggs for the older children. Thank you Natasha and Rochelle for your generosity and hard work – you're making a real difference!

Islington People's Theatre at Bethany House

In March, Islington People's Theatre worked with victims of domestic violence from Bethany House and the community to create a drama on surviving domestic abuse. They generously donated £500 to Bethany House for the use of the hall during the project.

Sapphire would like to say thank you to Islington People's Theatre for their generous support. To learn more about their work, visit: islingtonpeoplestheatre.co.uk

A big thank you to The Felix Project

Sapphire would like to extend a sincere thank you to The Felix Project who have generously provided 100 ready-cooked meals for our residents every Friday. These meals can be frozen and stored for up to a month, ensuring ongoing support and flexibility.

To learn more about their amazing work, visit: https://thefelixproject.org/about/our-story

Hepburn Court coffee morning

Residents enjoyed getting together for a coffee morning on the 10th April, and look forward to doing it again!

New Year treats for Townsend House

Residents were treated to some goodies on News Years Day to celebrate the new year.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Conway House

- Healthy Eating on a Budget starts July/ August – several residents already signed up.
- Art Therapy is back by popular demand for 12 weeks.
- Get Hooked on Fishing July/August. Please contact your housing officer for registration or more information.

General Needs Residents Meetings

Sapphire is organising General Needs Meetings so that residents can raise any concerns, suggestions and ideas they may have about where they live. Meetings are an opportunity for residents to get to know their neighbours and be introduced to staff who are directly involved with the area in which they live.

So far in March, April and August, meetings have taken place in Caulfield Court, Highgate Road and Hackett House.

Please can Residents living in the following sites look out for their formal invite to meetings:

St Eugene Court – Monday the 18th August 2025, 1pm – 2.30pm.

Tara Lodge – August (date to be arranged)*

Park Place - September (date to be arranged)*

Dunne Mews/Forde House – October (date to be arranged)*

*Please speak to your housing officer for more information.

UPDATED CHANGES TO BENEFITS AND YOUR ENTITLEMENTS

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Labour recently proposed changes to Universal Credit and Personal Independence Entitlements, aiming to tighten eligibility rules. Under the plan, applicants would need to score at least four points in one daily living activity to qualify for the daily living component. Those scoring three or fewer points in each activity would lose eligibility, even if they had ongoing needs. This change would have affected both new and existing claimants from November 2026. However, due to strong opposition and political pressure, Labour dropped the proposal to get the wider welfare bill passed.

Changes to Universal Credit

From April 2026, people with a disability or long-term health condition who have a limited capacity to work will see changes to their Universal Credit top-up. For new claimants, the health-related top-up will be reduced from £97 to £50 per week.

At the same time, the **basic rate of Universal Credit** will begin to increase, rising from around £92 a week in 2026 to approximately £106 a week by 2030.

Additionally, under the new rules, people under the age of 22 will no longer be eligible for the health element. However, they can still claim Universal Credit and any other benefits or components they qualify for.

Changes to Disability Benefits

The upcoming Universal Credit bill introduces three major changes to disability benefits:

1. Increase in Standard Allowance

The standard allowance for Universal Credit will rise above inflation each year until 2029/2030. By then, single claimants aged 25 or over will receive £725 more per year than in 2026.

2. Changes to the Health Element

From April 2026, the health element (available to those in the Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity group, or LCWRA) will be cut in half and frozen for new claimants.

- New claimants will receive around £217 per month, with no yearly increases.
- Existing claimants won't be affected unless they stop and restart their claim after April 2026, in which case the lower rate would apply.
- However, new claimants with lifelong or severe conditions (under the Severe Conditions Criteria) will receive a higher rate of around £423 per month, which will rise with inflation.

3. ESA Rates Frozen

The rates for Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), including disability premiums, will not increase with inflation.

- ESA is a means-tested benefit for people who are unable to work due to disability or illness.
- New Style ESA, which is not means-tested, will remain unchanged.

These changes are intended to rebalance disability support but may reduce future income for some new claimants, especially those without severe or long-term conditions.

"Right to Try" Guarantee

A new "Right to Try" policy is being introduced to encourage claimants to try working without fear of losing their benefits. If a person on Universal Credit, PIP, or New Style ESA tries a job, they will not be automatically reassessed or have their benefits reviewed. This guarantee is still being finalised but is intended to give claimants more flexibility and security when exploring work opportunities.

KEVIN'S JOURNEY: FROM CONWAY HOUSE TO COMMUNITY IMPACT

You may remember Kevin, a Conway House resident, who was featured in our Summer 2023 newsletter. At the time, he shared his ambition of launching a business support service designed to provide a comprehensive safety net for young people at risk.

We are proud to share that Kevin's business, which is called Khadys Dream, is now a thriving Community Interest Company (CIC), dedicated to deterring young people from

committing crimes through in-depth workshops and educating them about the consequences of criminal behaviour.

Keven recently joined us at our latest Staff Conference, where we celebrated his success.

Find out more about Khadys Dream: www.khadysdream.com

Check out their latest newsletter for updates on their work.



HOW ARE WE DOING?



SAPPHIRE'S RESIDENT SATISFACTION LEVELS

1st December 2024 – 31st May 2025



SATISFACTION 20 surveys were received during the period, which ranged from supported housing, before you leave, general needs (accommodation) and feedback forms, where all residents either expressed very satisfied, satisfied, or ok with our service. As a result, there was 80% overall satisfaction with residents being very satisfied or satisfied with Sapphire services.

COMPLAINTS



There were 16 complaints during this period, and all were responded to on time.

REPAIRS

As usual, repairs were dealt with promptly at Sapphire:



Emergency 100% 47 repairs Urgent 96% 68 repairs Routine 89% 272 repairs

Residents will receive a bi-annual resident satisfaction survey that starts on the 23rd June, and will be delivered by an external organisation, Acuity. Please look out for this as Sapphire wants your honest feedback, so that we can improve our service to you. If you have any questions, please contact your housing officer for more information.



Residents continue to ask us to improve our service, and these are just a few examples of the steps we're taking to enhance their environment.

Bethany House

You said: Residents asked for Benefit workshops. We did: Since April we have been running monthly Benefit workshops facilitated by

Islington Maximisation team.

You said: Residents requested we organise a trip to Kew Garden.

We did: Bethany house residents went Kew garden in May.

St Eugene Court

You said: Residents requested compost to enhance their attractive communal garden. We did: Sapphire provided compost as requested.

Townsend House

You said: The water pressure is low in all rooms We did: Reviewed the situation, and now all rooms have adequate water pressure.

You said: Residents asked whether they could have longer visiting hours.

We did: Visiting hours have been extended by one hour.

Dunne Mews

You said: Residents asked for plant pots and compost for planting flowers.

We did: Provided pots and compost so residents can enhance the communal areas.

Conway House

You said: Residents asked for a new table tennis table and table football table. We did: Sapphire provided both!

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 1pm-3pm.

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

Sapphire promotes resident engagement, to ensure residents have a greater say and influence over what we do and how we do it.

We encourage all residents to get involved in our quarterly **Resident Engagement Focus Group Meetings**. These meetings provide an opportunity for discussion, feedback, and collaboration. If you're interested in taking part, or would like more information, please contact your housing officer or email us at info@sih.org.

Those present at the last meeting agreed that the purpose of the new Policy is clear and easy to understand. However, there is a need to establish a shared understanding of what the terms 'influence', 'transparency', and 'accountability' mean to Sapphire residents so there are no misunderstandings. These definitions will be included in an appendix to the Policy.

You may be aware that Sapphire has introduced the new **Tenant Satisfaction Measures**. These measures are designed to improve transparency around landlord performance, ensuring that landlords are open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect. The measures give

tenants the opportunity to access services more easily, raise complaints, and actively influence decision-making.

Our first two Resident Engagement workshops brought together interested residents, staff and Board members to consider how Sapphire can give residents a greater voice and say in what we do and how we do it.

The feedback we received has shaped our new Resident Engagement and Involvement Strategy, which was reviewed with residents at the recent Resident Engagement Focus group on 26 June.

We will be looking at the suitability of the new Strategy and whether it covers everything discussed in the previous workshops.

Once reviewed by residents at the focus group, we will share with all residents and staff for comments. We will also present to Sapphire's Board for approval and adoption, along with the new Policy that we considered at the last workshop in February.

We are excited about the future of resident engagement at Sapphire and look forward to shaping our services together.

MARKS EXPERIENCE OF RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES



"I have been a resident for 26 years at 56 Highgate Road and in the last year I have increasingly taken part in the resident and focus group meetings to address residents and my own concerns and provide feedback

for what I see as the impressive expansion of Sapphire. The accessibility of senior staff and regular, frank and open discussions between them and residents has resulted in some really significant improvements to my own block.

I appreciate being fully involved in the process and meeting other residents. Having some knowledge of the social housing sector, I know from speaking to neighbours that resident concerns are sometimes driven by a feeling of a perceived lack of transparency. I think that these meetings and the outcomes are for the most part rarely afforded in the wider housing picture nationwide, and should be embraced.

The Process Mapping and the newly introduced resident focus group workshops have been an exercise in genuine resident participation, influence and empowerment in policy and developing action plans, agreeing definitions and what we feel should be priorities as well as a template for getting residents involved in the most accessible ways possible, taking in to account everyone's outside commitments and responsibilities. I have really enjoyed making connections with other tenants and staff, including those on the 'frontline' of service provision."

HAVE YOUR SAY



Join Our SIH Housing Scrutiny Panel Help Improve Services



What Is It?

A group of residents who meet to:

- · Share views
- Help improve housing and support services
 Make sure tenant voices are heard

Why Join?

- Have a say on decisions about your home
 Make things better for everyone
 - · Learn new skills and build confidence
 - · Meet other residents
 - · Travel costs covered

Who Can Join?

Anyone living in supported or general needs housing.

No experience needed - just be willing to listen, share, and
work together.

What Will I Do?

- Review housing services (like repairs, support, and communication)
 - · Talk to other tenants and share feedback
 - · Help choose new staff and contractors
 - Suggest ways to improve services
 - · Join meetings every few months

Want to Join?

Please speak to a member of staff for more details
Deadline: 05.08.2025

Together, we can make housing better!

THE DANGERS OF CUCKOOING

What is Cuckooing?

Cuckooing is the practice of taking over the home of a vulnerable person, without their consent, and using it for illegal activities, such as sex work or drug dealing.

Cuckooing is deemed as a form of exploitation as it functions by means of control. This control can be financial, physical or psychological. Not only can cuckooed residents be victims of crime, but their neighbours can also be affected by antisocial behaviour and localised criminal activity.

Who is targeted for Cuckooing?

Vulnerable people, such as elderly people, people with disabilities, people with mental health illnesses, those socially isolated, those financially vulnerable, sex workers, those addicted to substances and undocumented migrants are more likely to be targeted. However, Cuckooing can happen to anyone.

Cuckooing at Sapphire

Sapphire has recently experienced Cuckooing in one of its General Needs blocks. We are actively working with professional agencies, including the police, safer neighbourhood's teams and other organisations to eradicate this. We have been forced to place a closure order on the resident's home, which means no one other than the resident can access their home.

Cuckooing has caused a great deal concern for the other Sapphire residents who live in the blocks and have encountered anti-social behaviour as a result. Working with partner organisations, has already led to a reduction in such incidents.

How to spot the signs of Cuckooing

- Significant number of people entering and leaving the property throughout the day
- Increase in numbers of bikes or cars parked outside the property
- Cars arriving for short periods of time
- Anti-social behaviour, including increased noise and littering
- Damage to the property
- Resident seeming anxious, isolated or on edge
- Indication of physical assault

How does Cuckooing start?

 Cuckooing often happens in stages, with the victim being befriended, charmed or manipulated into allowing the perpetrator into their



home. Once the perpetrator has gained access, they start to exert control though force, coercion, deception or other forms of manipulation.

- A common tactic is through exchange where the perpetrator may offer drugs or money to gain access to the property, but this offering becomes a form of debt bondage, with the victim forced to repay.
- Another Cuckooing tactic is the "boyfriend method" (sometimes known as the "romeo method" or "loverboy method") where the perpetrator offers friendship or a relationship with the victim, then becomes more forceful physically or emotionally.
- The perpetrator then keeps control over the victim through financial, physical or psychological force.

Why is it called Cuckooing?

This practice became known as Cuckooing because the way in which the gangs take over other people's homes has been compared to the way cuckoos take over other birds' nests to lay their eggs. This is a form of parasitic behaviour.

What are the risks of Cuckooing?

People who are victims of Cuckooing can be at risk of modern slavery, developing mental illness, decreased wellbeing, risk of involvement in criminal activities and risk of losing tenancy of their property. It is very important to report any suspicions of Cuckooing in your community.

How to report Cuckooing

In the UK, Cuckooing can be reported to the police or local council. If you don't want to speak to the police directly, you can call **Crimestoppers** anonymously on **0800 555 111** or the **Modern Slavery Helpline** (24/7) on **08000 121 700**.

If you need more information about Cuckooing or suspect whether this is taking place, you can also contact your housing officer for advice.

SAPPHIRE WELCOMES OUR NEW APPRENTICE, TASLIMA



Sapphire has been in the process of recruiting two apprentices, who are gaining valuable experience by working across different areas of the organisation. We're pleased to introduce Taslima, our Business Administration Apprentice, who joined us in June 2024. Here's her story so far:

My journey with Sapphire began in June 2024 when I joined as a Business Administration Apprentice. Before starting here, I hadn't had the smoothest experience at previous organisations, which made me a little apprehensive at first. But those nerves quickly faded—Sapphire welcomed me with warmth and made me feel like part of the team from day one.

From the outset, I've felt supported and encouraged to grow. Immersing myself in the housing sector has been incredibly rewarding, especially because I've always wanted a role where I can make a positive difference in the community. Contributing to housing initiatives has allowed me to see the real-world impact of our work—and that gives me purpose every day.

I've recently stepped into a new chapter as an HR and Central Services Administrator—a transition that truly reflects my passion for people. Supporting others has always been at the heart of what I do, and this role allows me to make a meaningful impact behind the scenes. Thanks to Sapphire, I've uncovered new strengths and seen first-hand how fulfilling it is to be part of something greater than yourself. I'm looking forward to continuing this journey of growth, development, and purpose in a workplace that champions both progress and compassion.

IAN'S ARTWORK

"I began painting whilst serving a prison sentence. I began sketching with pencil and as my confidence grew, I began using colour pencil.

I progressed on to painting where the teacher would show me basic techniques to use and how to blend colours to enhance a piece of work. I quickly found that I enjoy painting portraits and produced 4 great pieces of art the final piece is my Bob Marley ONE LOVE piece of work.

The funny thing is when people see my work, they believe that I have been painting for many years but in reality, I have been able to unlock an inner ability within that has helped me to create my art. I am not unique in any way, but I know that the gift I have been given is a blessing

and I hope to share this gift with others as it is a tremendous support for your mental health and well-being. I intend to continue producing works of art and selling some of my pieces at art exhibitions and on social media."

Let's wish lan the very best of luck in achieving his ambitions and a successful future career!





CONTACT US

The Informed is a bi-annual publication.

Our next issue will be out in Winter 2025. 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.

Share your photos and comments on



Instagram

sapphire.independent.housing



Follow us on Twitter @sih_uk



and Facebook www.facebook.com/sih15.org

#improvinglives #valuingpeople

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











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 number on **020 7372 6633**.

GENERAL ENQUIRES

Head office

1 Holmes Road, Kentish Town, London, NW5 3AA Tel: 020 7485 8889 Email: info@sih.org 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

Ashford Road

TW13, 4QR

Carville Crescent

TW8, 9RD

The Clumps, TW15 1AT

Dragoon Court

TW14,6UJ

Elmwood Avenue

TW13, 7QB

Elton Court, TW14, 0BG

Fir Road, TW13, 6UJ

Layton Court

TW8, 0QW

Pallas Court

TW13, 6UJ

Sperling Court

TW13, 0JF

Spinney Drive

TW14, 8PN

The Dell, TW14, 0JF