

The magazine for Rotherham Council tenants and leaseholders

SPRING 2023

HOME matters

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Housing
Annual Report

Town Centre
Living

Rotherham in
Bloom 2023



www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing

Rotherham
Metropolitan
Borough Council

HOME *matters*

Welcome to the spring 2023 edition of Home Matters



In the ever-evolving landscape of housing, where innovation and efficiency intertwine, we find ourselves at the precipice of progress. I have written in these pages before of the great pride I feel to be able to play a part in the legacy of Rotherham's social housing. And it is with that same pride that I address you in this latest edition of 'Home Matters,' a testament to the modern, efficient housing service provided by Rotherham Council.

Within the pages of this edition, we celebrate the remarkable strides we have taken to enhance living experiences in Rotherham. Our commitment to modernization and efficiency is epitomized by the annual report, a compendium of our achievements and endeavours. It unveils a housing service designed to streamline processes, deliver timely assistance, and ensure that your needs are met with the utmost care and professionalism. It unveils our unwavering commitment in developing ward housing hubs, where the seeds of empowerment are sown, and the Pathways Project, a guiding light that illuminates the path to employment and the betterment of lives.

We have embraced new technologies to improve the efficiency of our operations,

allowing us to respond swiftly to your needs. My intention as cabinet member is always to help cultivate a housing service that not only meets the demands of the present but also paves the way for a future where comfort and efficiency coexist harmoniously. This is an ongoing objective and I extend my heartfelt gratitude for your trust and support as we continue to evolve and adapt to meet the ever-changing landscape of modern social housing.

If there is one theme in 'Home Matters' it is the unwavering faith in the sanctity of home. May this edition of 'Home Matters' serve as a testament to our unwavering commitment to providing you, our valued tenants, with a housing service that reflects the very essence of modern efficiency, fueling your aspirations and reminding you of the pivotal role you play in forging the destiny of our treasured community of Rotherham.

With sincere appreciation,

Councillor Amy Brookes
Cabinet Member for Housing
Rotherham Council

INTRODUCING OUR NEW ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Earlier this year we welcomed James Clark as the Council's new Assistant Director for Housing. We caught up with James to find out how he's settling in...

As your new Assistant Director for Housing, I am responsible for our repairs and maintenance services, estate and tenancy management, homelessness services, and our ambitious plans to build 1,000 new council homes. A big undertaking, but one I'm excited to get stuck into.

I know the difference a decent, affordable home can make. The Council is committed to helping more residents get a council home and providing an excellent service to those who already do.

I've been getting to know Rotherham, visiting estates, and meeting the staff and contractors whose job it is to manage our 20,000 council tenancies. I have been impressed by their commitment and pride – and by their eagerness to learn when we get it wrong.

I've already been lucky enough to meet some of you and hear directly about how we can improve our services. This feedback is vital for us. I'd encourage everyone to get involved and have their voice heard.

I'd like to extend a thank you for the warm welcome I've received and I look forward to meeting many more of you soon!



CHANGES TO RENT AND DISTRICT HEATING RATES

Last month we wrote to you to let you know that there will be a seven per cent increase in Council tenant and shared ownerships rents, and a six per cent increase in charges for facilities such as garages and laundry facilities from April 2023.

District heating prices also increased to reflect the rise in running costs. It was intended the average District Heating bill would match the Government Energy price guarantee of £3,000, but in March the Government announced that the Energy Price Guarantee would remain at £2,500. As a result of this change and a reduction in the amount the Council will pay for gas and electricity, we are reviewing the price we charge for District Heating in 2023-24.

For the time being the price you pay will stay the same, but we will write to you in July to explain the outcome of the review and the impact it will have on your bills.

The funds from the increases in rent will be used to support our tenants as well as investing in new

homes in the borough as demand for Council houses continues to grow.

Cabinet member for Housing, Councillor Amy Brookes, said: "Whilst the rises are not ideal, our housing budget is under pressure as a result of increasing costs and the impact of the government's rent cap. It is vital that the funding is available to maintain good quality homes and services for the tenants of Rotherham."

Most of our tenants will receive additional Housing Benefit or Universal Credit that will cover some or all of the rent increase, however we understand this may be a worrying time and there are people who can help and advise.

If you are struggling with your bills, managing your tenancy or you just have general money worries then please email the RMBC Tenancy Support Team at rotherhamtenancysupport@rotherham.gov.uk and dedicated officers will help you get back in control.

www.rotherham.gov.uk/money-debt-advice

HELP US CHANGE THE LIVES OF LOCAL CHILDREN

Not everyone realises but being a Council tenant does not prevent you from being a foster carer – providing a loving, safe home environment for a local child, while receiving support, training and payment from the Council in return.

Margaret has lived in her three-bedroom council house in Rotherham for 23 years and has cared for a staggering 30 children in that time!

Margaret explains: “*Fostering fills my days and gives me a sense of purpose. It's a role that I find so incredibly rewarding. It's a wonderful feeling knowing that the care I have provided to so many children has helped them to achieve things that might not have been possible.*”

“*Foster carers make a positive difference to the life of every child they care for, and so could you.*”

If you have the love in your heart and the space in your home to foster a child or young person aged 0-18 years – it doesn't matter whether you are a council tenant, a private renter or a home-owner – we would love to hear from you!



Being a foster carer would usually require you to have a spare room but that may not always be the case, especially if you are caring for very young children and babies.



www.fosteringrotherham.com
CALL US 01709 357370

TOWN CENTRE LIVING

Following the successful completion of a number of town centre homes, more residents are reaping the benefits of town centre living.

After living in the south of the borough all their married life Cath and her husband Mark moved into a two-bedroom townhouse on the Westgate Riverside development.

Cath told us: "From the beautiful high ceilings, show home style bathroom and glossy fitted kitchen, everything has been done to such a high standard.

"The move was seamless, and everyone from the contractors to council staff could not have been more helpful, so much so we now know all the contractors by name!"

"At first we didn't know if town centre living would be for us, but we couldn't be happier. It is close enough to the town centre to get everything you need but when you are at home it's very quiet, you could be anywhere! Mark has already got to work on our garden planting colourful blooms and I can't wait to sit out here on a warm evening.

Westgate Riverside is one of three town centre developments providing 171 news homes available for sale, shared ownership and council rent.

The residential project mirrors the plans to improve Forge Island which will include a cinema, food and drink outlets, a hotel, and a car park, with the new leisure facilities set within an attractive public space.

Cath added: "We're excited to see the town centre plans take shape and we're looking forward to walking into town in an evening to watch a film or enjoy a meal."

Rother Living provide a range of homes in the town centre and across the borough for Council rent as well as a number of buying options. For first time buyers struggling to get a foot on the housing ladder, shared ownership is also available.



Visit www.rotherliving.co.uk for more details

GET INVOLVED IN YOU

By getting involved in your local area you can have your say on what's

Through Tenants and Residents Associations and community groups you can make a real difference to what's important to you, but most importantly make new friends and have fun! **Here's a look at what some of our groups have been up to.**

HARTHILL

Over the last year a small gardening group has formed to maintain the communal garden at Peregrine Way Neighbourhood Centre. Through summer 2022 the group worked hard to bring the space back to life, rebuilding the raised beds and planting a wide range of new plants – and this is just the start of the group's plans!

This is just one of the groups that meet at Peregrine Way, which also hosts coffee mornings, an art club and luncheon club.



"Being involved in my local community has grown my confidence and knowledge greatly. I know more about how the council works and made new friends. I feel involved in decision making and that means a lot to me as a young person"

Ella

RAVENFIELD

The Elizabeth Parkin Tenants and Residents Association has gone from strength to strength since they were formed just over a year ago. The group came together after lockdown eased, hosting coffee mornings for local residents.

This soon evolved with the group now taking part in bingo, arts and crafts and chair exercise sessions – a fun, healthy activity which is enjoyed by everyone. So much so the group have successfully been awarded ward funding to extend the sessions on offer.

Groups are supported by Council neighbourhood officers.
To find out more about the groups in your community

R LOCAL AREA

important to you and help shape your community.

Where you live, have a say on how our money is spent on your community,
been up to recently...



"I have been a Tenant Representative now for a number of years, and it's great to be able to attend council meetings on behalf of the residents and get their thoughts and views heard".

Mary

WOODSETTS

After seeing a spike in burglaries and off-road biking in the village, Woodsetts Neighbourhood watch group decided they needed CCTV in the village.

Working closely with the Police community support officer's (PCSO'S) and the Council, the group scouted locations that cameras would be most effective to cover the hotspots.

After raising half the funds needed for the nine cameras through social events and crowd-funding, local Parish and Ward Councillors were more than happy to help with the rest of the funds needed to deter anti-social behaviour in the area.



SCHOLES

The Keppel and Scholes Heritage group formed during lockdown to help with the restoration of Keppel's Column.

The group worked with Clifton Park Museum to host the Column's open day back in September with the group leading tours of people up the 221 steps to the top of the local landmark where they held talks on the rich history of the site.

The group are now hoping to become part of the Rotherham Heritage Society, a group that showcases Rotherham's many heritage projects.

coordinators and partners, Rotherham Federation.
Visit www.rotherham.gov.uk/tenant-involvement

COUNCIL HOUSING Annual Report

April 2021 – March 2022



WELCOME TO OUR HOUSING ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

This report summarises the performance of the Council's Housing Service during the last financial year, April 2021 to March 2022.

The report highlights where service areas have performed well and, more importantly, where there is room for improvement. I'm pleased to share the report with you as part of your Home Matters magazine to ensure you all have the chance to see how well we are performing and how your rent is spent.

TENANT ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 2022/23 - PRIORITY OUTCOMES

Outcome one	Putting our customers at the heart of everything we do.
Outcome two	Delivering a range of options to give all our tenants an opportunity to get involved.
Outcome three	Supporting our tenants to get involved in their community, providing help to each other, and taking pride in their neighbourhood.
Outcome four	Enabling tenants to scrutinise and challenge our performance by providing open, transparent and accessible information.
Outcome five	Ensuring the relationship with our tenants is built upon a culture of openness, understanding and mutual respect.

Tenant satisfaction measures (TSM) are intended to make landlords' performance more visible to tenants, and help tenants hold their landlords to account. All UK landlords will publish against these measures by autumn 2024. You can see some of these represented on each page. We will be assessing our performance against these measures through a tenant perception survey in 2023.

SOME KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



Successful in external funding bids including: Rough Sleeper Initiative (established Rough Sleeper Team), Next Steps, Accommodation Programme, Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (inc. Rough Sleeper Accommodation Hub), Cold Weather Fund and Covid Funding.



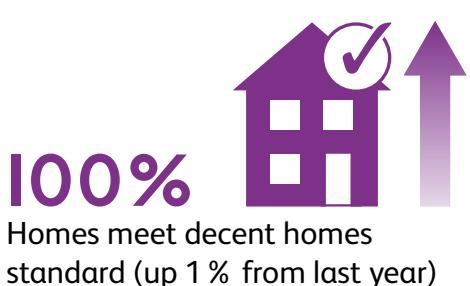
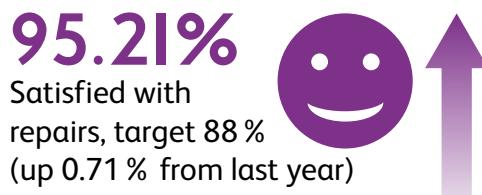
Increased accommodation provision to support homeless households by increasing temporary units from 64 to 114, set up a seven bed Rough Sleeper Accommodation Hub, 20 move on properties for rough sleepers and increased Housing First accommodation to 30 units for people with complex needs.



Supported 1058 homeless households and of these 1105 households provided with temporary accommodation

HOME STANDARD

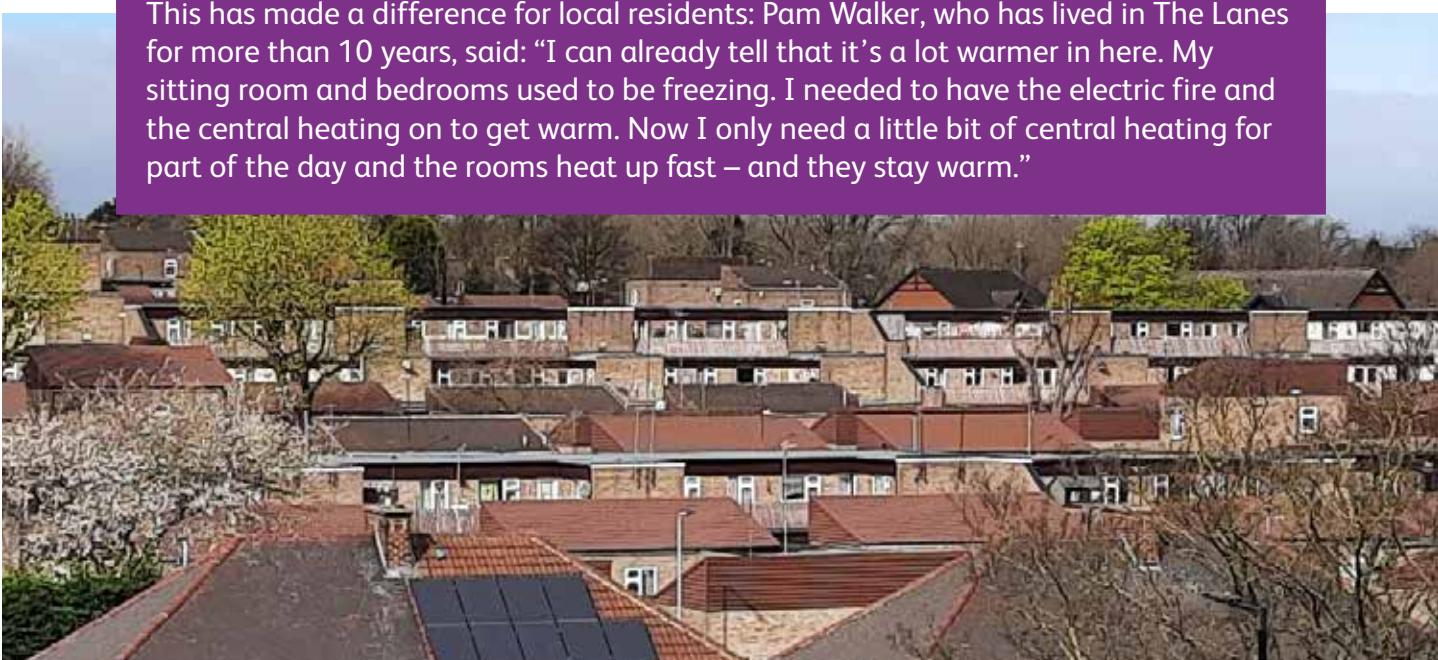
TSM : Homes are safe



CASE STUDY

In 2021, The Lanes project, improved the energy efficiency of 217 low-income households in East Dene. It is estimated that these improvements cut the amount of energy needed to heat their homes by an average of **£323 per year**. The improvements are expected to eliminate approximately 1.5 tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually.

This has made a difference for local residents: Pam Walker, who has lived in The Lanes for more than 10 years, said: “I can already tell that it’s a lot warmer in here. My sitting room and bedrooms used to be freezing. I needed to have the electric fire and the central heating on to get warm. Now I only need a little bit of central heating for part of the day and the rooms heat up fast – and they stay warm.”



TENANCY STANDARD

TSM: The Landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect

**TSM: Homes are let in a fair, transparent and efficient way.
The landlord should take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants**

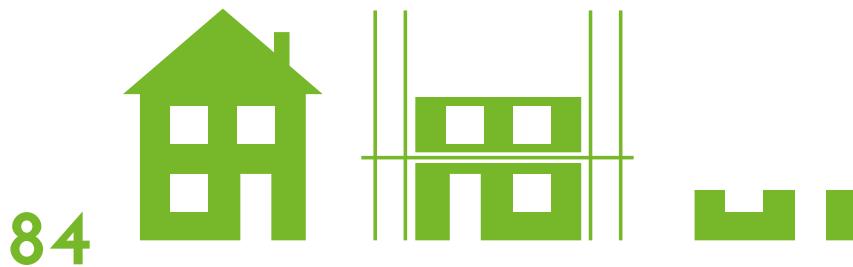
KEY ACHIEVEMENT :

The Advocacy and Appeals Team achieved Advice Quality Standard Accreditation



20,141

Total number of homes
(down 120 from last year)



49.59
Average Days to relet (down 7.64 days from last year)

CASE STUDY

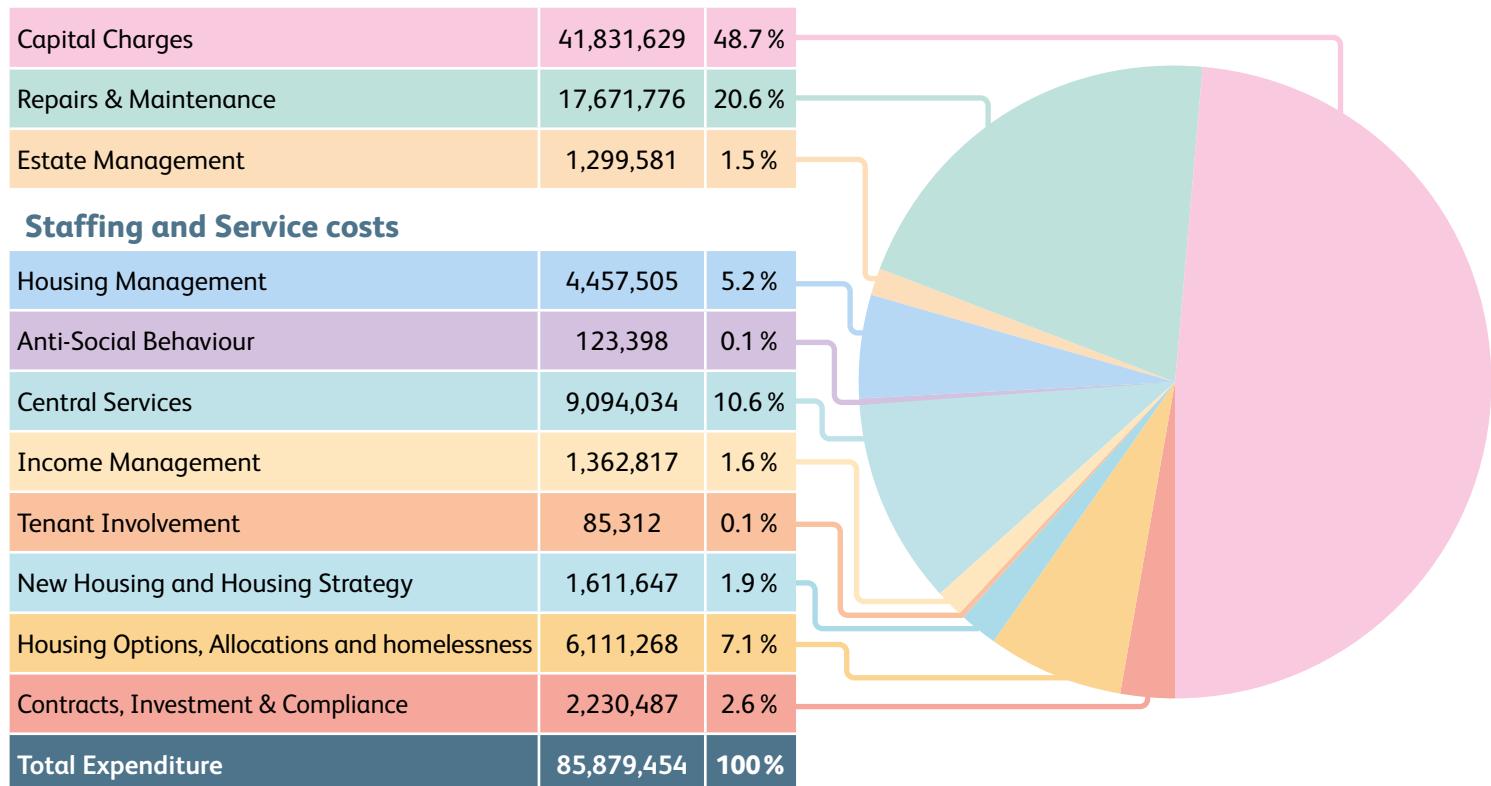
We have designed development specifically to support people with learning disabilities and autism. Rotherham Council Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Cllr David Roche said: "The new houses at Conway Crescent will bring the Council's respite service right up to date with brand new facilities equipped to serve a wider range of people's needs.

"Our carers are there for their loved ones 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This new respite service will give more opportunities for carers to have a much-needed short break, in order to carry on their very important caring roles."

MAKING SENSE OF THE MONEY

Rotherham Council owns and manages over 20,000 council homes. In 2022/23 the income was £85,879,454

Below is an overview of how your rent was spent during the year.



FOR EVERY £1 OF RENT YOU PAY

11p is spent on central services such as management, administration and business support



2p is spent on developing new housing



15p is spent on managing estates and tenancies including letting houses and collecting rent

49p is paid out on capital repairs, new Council housing, and interest on borrowing and depreciation charges

23p is spent on repairing the houses and getting them in a lettable condition

FOCUS ON INCOME

Most of the income comes from rent but tenants and leaseholders are also charged for services and facilities that the Council provides.



House rents	£78,289,265
Garages and ground rent	£697,023
Furnished packages	£4,374,722
District heating	£532,750
Communal facility charges	£385,827
Right to Buy receipts	£270,400
Leaseholder contributions to services	£230,713
Aids and adaptations	£178,964
Miscellaneous income (incl. strategic)	£845,992
Total income	£85,805,656
Transferred from reserves	£73,798
Total funds used	£85,879,454

NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY STANDARD

TSM: The landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained

TSM: The landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods

TSM: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Successfully implemented 25 Ward Housing Hubs across the borough since April 2021, engaging with tenants through a number of options.
- The ESF Pathways Project has supported over 500 residents on their journey to secure employment or training. Funding to extend the project has been secured to December 2023.
- Achieved 100 % of ASB cases resolved. Officers have also been equipped with the tools and powers to serve Community Protection Warnings and Notices to tackle ASB and environmental issues

CASE STUDY

The RotherFed Friendship Calls project was shortlisted for the “Excellence in Community Action Award” at the annual Tpas Awards which took place in October 2021.

Rotherfed CEO, Phil Hayes, would like to say a big thank you to all the amazing volunteers that have given so much of their time up to help isolated people in our communities through some really difficult situations and a huge thank you to all our (Rotherfed) staff team that have been involved in and created an incredible service through their passion, resilience and hard work.



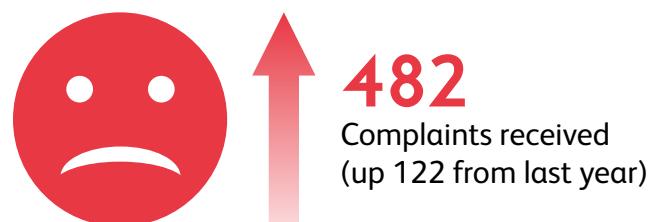
TENANT INVOLVEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

TSM: The landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them

TSM: The landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them

KEY ACHIEVEMENT

In 2022, the Council was successful in being ‘Exemplar Accredited’ by Tpas, the national tenant engagement organisation. Tpas are England’s leading Tenant Engagement experts. They promote, support and champion tenant involvement and empowerment in social housing across England. The Accreditation process has supported us in placing tenants and residents at the heart of everything we do, and we take every opportunity to involve them in decision-making. We are the only third housing provider in the country to achieve this.



YOU SAID, WE DID



allows tenants to book repairs at a time that suits them.

You Said: You'd like to be able to request a repair online instead of making a phone call.

We did: Develop a customer portal that



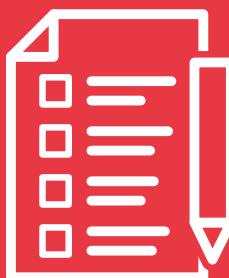
You Said: Set up a group to discuss tenant satisfaction.

We did: This group meets monthly, including a tenant representative.



You Said: Offer more ways for customers to provide feedback after repairs.

We did: As well as our text service, 10 customers are being phoned for feedback by Equans and Mears every month.



You Said: You want the information online to be easy to find and understand.

We did: Put an action plan in place that ensures regular internal and independent assessment of the Council's website.

COMBATTING CONDENSATION AND MOULD

Condensation is common in homes that are poorly heated and ventilated. Whilst condensation itself is harmless, it can lead to mould growth which is unsightly and may affect your health. The key to avoiding condensation is to produce less moisture.

REDUCING MOISTURE

There are things that you can do to reduce moisture in your home:

- When cooking, cover pans with lids, keep the kitchen door closed and make sure a window is open or the extractor fan is on.
- If you have to dry clothes indoors, put them in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open.
- When bathing, run cold water into the bath before the hot water to minimise steam.
- Allow plenty of fresh air into your home to avoid the indoor air becoming stale and humid.

MOULD CLEANING

Regular cleaning away of mould is vital to ensure it does not become unmanageable. To remove mould, wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal cleaner.

If you think you have damp and mould, book an appointment with our technical officers who can help, advise and take action to combat damp and mould in your home on 01709 336009.

STAND BY YOUR FLOWER BEDS



Our annual garden competition is back, rewarding Rotherham residents who are making a real difference within their neighbourhoods.

This year we are searching for Rotherham's:

- Best garden
- Best pots, planters and hanging baskets
- Best wildlife or sustainable garden
- Best young gardener

Each winner will receive £100 worth of garden centre vouchers and runners-up will receive £50 vouchers.

To enter the competition simply upload three photos of your garden along with a few words about what your garden means to you at www.rotherham.gov.uk/garden-competition

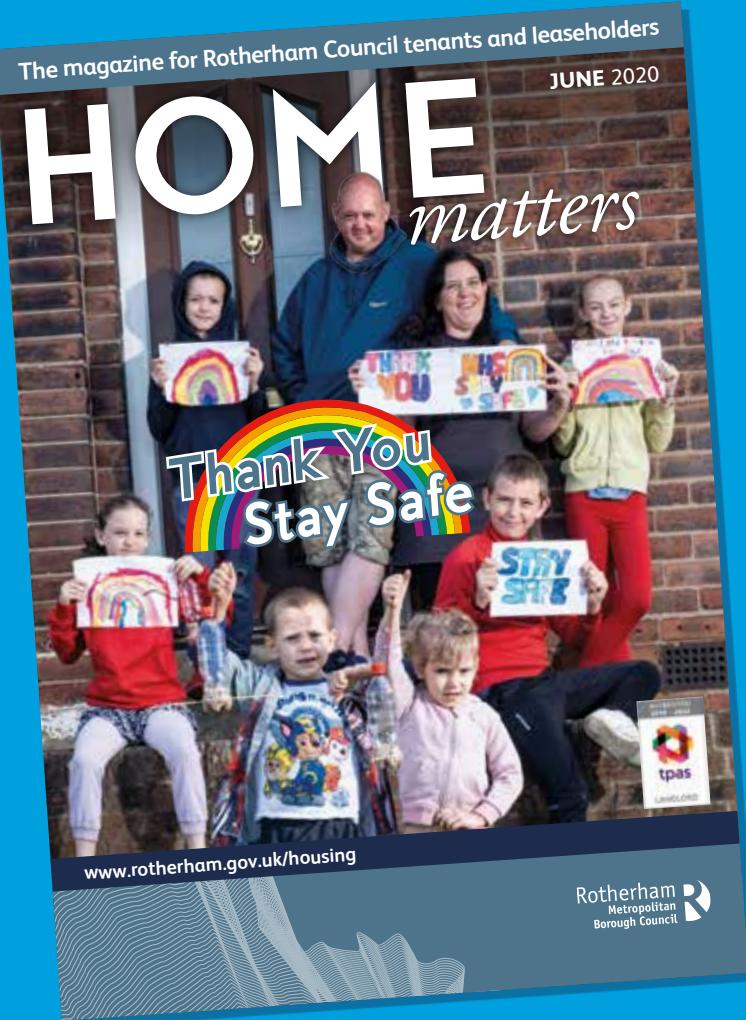
Closing date for entries has been extended to Sunday 30 July 2023

IT'S YOUR HOME MATTERS

We love producing Home Matters magazine, and we hope you love reading it just as much. It's one of the main ways that we share the latest news and information from the Council, our partners and contractors.

But we don't want it to be all about us! This is your magazine, and we want to use it to celebrate your achievements and the contribution that you and other tenants and residents make to your communities. We also want to ensure that the information we share is both useful and relevant to you, our readers.

We are looking for ways in which we can expand our editorial team to include more voices from our readers to help shape future issues, and to ensure that we keep tenants, leaseholders and residents at the heart of everything that we do.



We are also looking at ways that we can improve how you can access Home Matters content digitally – on the Council website, by email and through social media – in addition to our printed magazine.



If you would like to find out more about how you can get involved we would love to hear from you. Please visit our website at www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing

REPORTING REPAIRS

The quickest and easiest way to report repairs is via our online service. Setting up your account is simple, you just need your rent reference number.

The service allows you to report repairs, and other housing related tasks, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. So why not save yourself time and do it online!

To get started visit www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing



DO YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT ABOUT A COUNCIL SERVICE?

If you have a complaint there are a number of ways you can get in touch to tell us.



COMPLETE A WEB FORM

www.rotherham.gov.uk/complaints



EMAIL

complaints@rotherham.gov.uk



TEXT

07860 021 447



CALL

01709 382121



POST

The Complaints Manager
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
(FREEPOST RTCT-XKLS-ZHAZ)
Riverside House
Main Street
Rotherham
S60 1AE

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint the team will advise you on how to escalate your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

If the matter relates to your landlord you can seek the advice of the Housing Ombudsman at any time on **0300 111 3000**.

Further information can be found at www.rotherham.gov.uk/complaints



WE WOULD ALSO LOVE TO HEAR ABOUT THE THINGS YOU THINK WE HAVE DONE WELL

If you think we have done well then please tell us so that other colleagues or services can follow the example. Any compliments we do receive will be recorded and passed onto the relevant member of staff and the appropriate manager.

You can make a compliment by emailing compliments@rotherham.gov.uk

CONNECT TO OUR SERVICES

ONLINE

All of our services are available 24/7 online www.rotherham.gov.uk

For housing information visit www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing

TELEPHONE

For housing enquiries and repairs call **01709 336009**

