

Thurrock Homes



Summer 2024

Community groups taking the lead

Carolynne talks about
what's happening on
the Flowers Estate

INSIDE

Looking to downsize?

Find out how you could
be paid £2,000

Fire Safety

Make sure your
home is safe

Stay mould free

Contact us for a

Free Home Safety Visit

We'll provide and fit smoke alarms, give personalised home fire safety advice and help you live safer in your home.

Call: 0300 303 0088 | **Visit:** essex-fire.gov.uk/book



Essex County
Fire & Rescue Service

Dear resident,

Thurrock's role as landlord to our tenants and leaseholders is one of the most important responsibilities we have.

Following the terrible tragedy at Grenfell Tower in London in 2017, the Government, councils and other landlords have learned many important lessons about keeping residents safe.

In Thurrock we have taken our responsibilities very seriously, and are carrying out works on some of your estates, blocks or homes to increase your safety, but also address other issues we know have a big impact on your lives, like damp and mould.

We also want you to know how you can help keep yourself, your family, and your neighbours safe, by following simple advice from the fire brigade and council.

We hope you'll find this magazine has all the information

you'll need on these important issues and also enjoy the other great content too, including an interview with local community superstar Carolyn Waghorn who has put a lot of energy into making improvements on the Flowers Estate. She is an inspiration to us all.

We've also shared some of the findings from our recent tenant survey which shows us where we are doing a good job, and where we need to make some changes to offer tenants a better service – you can find the full results on the housing pages of our website.

If you want or need to get in touch with us there are helpful contact details on the back page, including information about cost of living support.

Best wishes,
Thurrock Council



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How does it feel to live in a Thurrock home? – what you told us

Recently we asked you about your experience of being a Thurrock tenant. It's really important to us to understand what we are doing well as a landlord, and where we could improve.

We were pleased to learn that around three quarters of you are satisfied with the repairs service and the time we take to carry out repairs, and believe we treat you fairly and with respect. The majority of tenants feel that their homes are safe, and well-maintained.

However, there is clearly more work we need to do in the minority of cases where things do go wrong, as

you told us you are not satisfied with our approach to handling your complaints. We can also do more to improve the way we handle anti-social behaviour on your estates or neighbourhoods, and to show that we are listening and responding to your views.

You can read all the results of our tenant survey at thurrock.gov.uk/tenant-satisfaction





News in brief

Plans for 258 new affordable homes in Grays move forward

Plans to develop the Blackshots Estate in Grays have taken another step forward, after the council agreed to progress with a scheme that will deliver 258 brand new, energy efficient and affordable homes.

The heart of the ambitious redevelopment focuses on the demolition of the three 11-storey tower blocks – Keir Hardie House, Bevan House, and Morrison House – which have dominated the local skyline since the 1960s. These will be replaced, following resident feedback, with a mix of houses, bungalows, flats and maisonettes. In addition to the 168 homes that will be replaced, an extra 90 affordable homes will be built for local people.

For latest information on the redevelopment of Blackshots Estate, including how to get involved and where to ask questions, go to thurrock.gov.uk/blackshotsestate



Home swap



Reduce your bills, get £2,000 and help a local family find their dream home.

Is your home feeling a bit big now your kids have moved out? Are you struggling to cover your rent and rising household bills, and think a

smaller home might be more affordable? If so, we want to hear from you. Lots of families in Thurrock are looking for larger homes, and we know that some residents would find a smaller home more manageable. We can help you find a more suitable home and free up your home for a local family. As a thank you, we will give you £2,000.

Last year we helped 55 households to downsize into smaller, affordable, more suitable accommodation – get in touch and find out whether we can help you too.

Contact us today by going to thurrock.gov.uk/downsize



Scan this QR code and sign up for our e-newsletters

Housing News

Keeping our tenants and leaseholders informed



 thurrock.gov.uk

How could you help your community flourish?



We meet Carolyne Waghorn, a local hero on the Flowers Estate, and hear about the role she plays in the community...

When Carolyne Waghorn first went along to a local community coffee morning in Ockendon, little did she know that it would be the start of an exciting journey with her neighbours and the council to improve her local area.

She said: "The group was originally a Facebook group but they used to hold monthly meetings. They also held a coffee morning in the community hall every other Friday, which is something we still do."



It's no good moaning about problems, you need to get stuck in and help with solutions

"I was walking by the hall one Friday and saw them all sitting outside and thought 'this could be something for me' so I went in. By the time I had left, the then Chairman had offered me a position on the committee!"

Carolyne is now Secretary of the Flowers Community Group, which re-launched last November.

The Flowers Community Group works as a bridge between the local community and the council, working together to improve the place where they live, ensuring the community has access to services and creating positive change.

In the last year their achievements include planting an orchard and creating a community vegetable patch in the Mollands Lane Sensory Garden; helping to re-establish blood tests in South Ockendon; holding Well-Being Wednesdays at the community hall; and repainting garage doors across the Flowers community.

Carolyne said: "We get up to all sorts – what we achieved in the last year is quite something. We are a small group of people but by working together we get a lot done."

Carolyne has some wise words of advice for other residents thinking of getting involved in their community – "My advice to anyone thinking of doing something similar in their local area is to form a group, set out a constitution, and that will enable you to work with the council. First and foremost we are a group and what we do is done as a group. Beyond that it is two-way traffic, the council helps us and we help the council, and that is how it should be."

Carolyne would encourage more people to take a lead in their communities by playing a role in making the improvements they want to see. "It is so important that people take ownership of the place that they live, really important," said Carolyne. "It's no good moaning about problems, you need to get stuck in and help with solutions."

"This is not a nanny state, and I am sure people would complain if it was a nanny state, so don't expect a nanny to come along and clear things up for you. Do something yourself."

"That is my personal attitude and I know that is how a lot of people feel. We have people that litter-pick around their area, and much more besides."

"This is a group activity and I would encourage more people to get involved. Give us a chance and we will work for you. It is in our DNA I think, especially the council officers and the resident engagement team we work with who are so supportive. It is a good thing, we are working with them to make things happen for this community."

If you would like to form a community group in your area, just like Carolyne and the Flowers Community Group, then email our Resident Engagement Team at residentengagement@thurrock.gov.uk



Wipe out condensation, damp and mould

Through the delivery of our investment programmes and positive resident engagement, the council is improving homes and informing residents to prevent and manage damp, condensation and mould.



Condensation

Condensation is often mistaken for damp, but they are very different. Condensation is produced by normal everyday activities like cooking, bathing or showering.

All air contains water vapour and when it meets a cold surface it becomes liquid – producing condensation. Unless it can escape through an open window, air vent or extractor fan, it will stay in your home until it finds a cold spot where it can condense.

Signs to look out for:

- windows are misted up
- pools of water on your windowsills after a cold night
- mould appearing in corners, cupboards and behind furniture



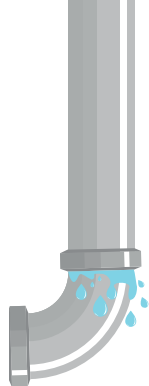
How to avoid condensation

- ✓ Improve air flow by leaving trickle vents open and windows partly open (if safe)
- ✓ Cover cooking pots and pans and do not leave kettles boiling on the hob
- ✓ Keep rooms at a low background heat in cold weather
- ✓ Wipe condensation on windows daily with a dry cloth
- ✓ Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use, even if they have an extractor fan
- ✓ Position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls or slightly away from external walls
- ✓ Dry clothes outside or in a well-ventilated area – do not dry wet clothes on a radiator



Damp

Damp is caused by a defect in the structure of your home, such as leaking pipes and sinks or tiles missing from roofs.



Rising damp is caused by water rising from the ground, usually visible as a tide mark up to 1,000mm (40in).

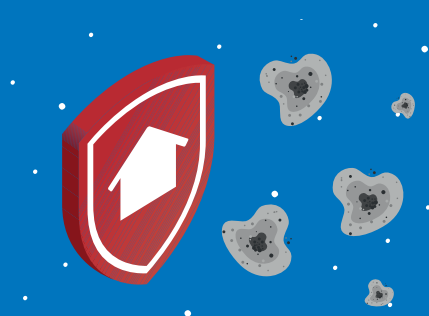
Penetrating damp affects external-facing walls and ceilings and is usually caused by an external defect such as leaking gutters, roofs, etc.

This is usually accompanied by a 'damp patch' which looks and feels damp.

Any sign of dampness within your home must be reported immediately to the council's responsive repairs services for a full assessment to be undertaken.



Take action against mould



- ✓ Remove mould growth by wiping down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash, which carries a Health & Safety Executive 'approval number'. Follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely
- ✓ Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets
- ✗ Do not brush or vacuum mould as this can increase the risk of respiratory problems
- ✓ After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould recurring



The only lasting way of avoiding severe mould is to eliminate condensation and dampness

- report any sign of dampness or excessive mould to the repairs service without delay
- engage with the council to seek support in managing signs of mould within your home
- manage your heating to keep all rooms and walls warm
- reduce air moisture wherever possible
- ventilate your home as much as possible throughout the year
- clean away any signs of mould as soon as it appears

Visit our website for more help and advice or to report a repair at thurrock.gov.uk/damp-and-mould or call: 0800 074 0169



FIRE SAFETY ADVICE

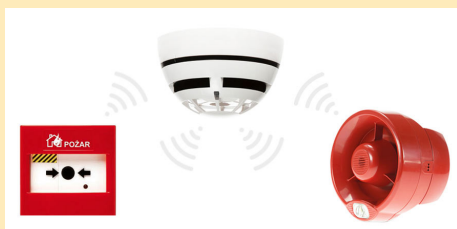
The best way to stay safe from fire is to understand the common risks and how to reduce them in your home.



TOP TIPS

These are the top 10 fire safety tips from Essex County Fire and Rescue Service:

- 1 Make sure you have smoke alarms on every floor of your home
- 2 Smoke alarms save lives, but only if they are working. Please test smoke alarms monthly
- 3 Take extra care in the kitchen and never leave cooking unattended
- 4 Take extra care when cooking with hot oil. It's safest to avoid using chip pans, or any pans filled with hot oil, altogether
- 5 Don't overload electric sockets – most can only take a maximum of 13 amps
- 6 Keep matches and lighters away from children
- 7 Keep clothes well away from heaters and open fires
- 8 Put out cigarettes properly and dispose of them carefully
- 9 Don't charge devices like mobile phones, tablets or e-cigarettes overnight, or longer than the recommended charging time
- 10 Plan an escape route and make sure everyone in the house knows how to get out in the event of a fire



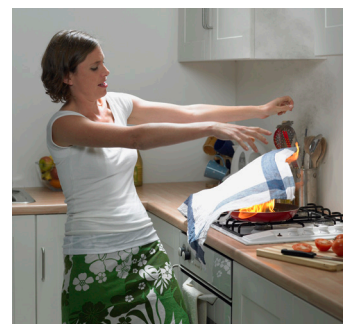
KITCHEN FIRE SAFETY

More fires start in the kitchen than any other room in the home. Over half the house fires in the UK start with somebody cooking so it is vital to make sure you know how to stay safe in the kitchen. These are the best ways to reduce risk:

- Never leave cooking unattended. If you have to leave the kitchen take pans off the heat while you are out of the room
- Never leave children alone in the kitchen with food cooking on the hob and keep saucepan handles, matches and lighters out of their reach at all times
- Take care to keep loose clothes and tea towels away from the cooker and hob
- Make sure all cooking appliances are switched off when you've finished cooking
- Never try to cook if you've enjoyed a night out drinking. It is far safer to get a takeaway on the way home than attempt to cook under the influence of alcohol

If your pan catches fire:

- Never throw water over it
- Don't take any risks – turn off the heat if it's safe to
- Don't tackle the fire yourself. Get out, close the kitchen door and dial 999



Cooking with electrical appliances

- ⚠ Keep appliances and leads away from water
- ⚠ Make sure toasters are clean and away from curtains and kitchen roll
- ⚠ Keep microwaves, ovens, hobs and grills clean and in good working order. A build-up of fat and grease can ignite a fire
- ⚠ Don't plug air fryers into extension leads and don't overfill them
- ⚠ Place slow cookers on flat, heat-proof, stable surfaces
- ⚠ Be careful when buying secondhand – get the appliance checked over if you can
- ⚠ Don't ignore your electric or fuse tripping. Tripping electric is a warning sign – work out what caused it to trip and get it checked out

ELECTRICAL FIRE SAFETY

Make sure your appliances are safe, used correctly and sockets are not overloaded.

How to avoid electrical fires:

- Never overload plug sockets
- Make sure your appliances have the British or European safety mark when you buy them
- Always use the right fuse to prevent appliances from overheating
- Keep an eye out for signs of dangerous or loose wires such as scorch marks, hot plugs and blown fuses or tripped circuit breakers
- Check and replace old and worn cables or leads, especially those hidden behind or under furniture
- Unplug electrical blankets before you get into bed. Make sure to check electric blankets regularly for signs of wear and tear
- Only use one adaptor per socket. Don't plug one adaptor into another. Ideally try to keep to one plug per socket
- Try to secure any portable heaters against the wall so they don't topple and make sure they are well away from curtains and other furniture. Never use portable heaters to dry clothes
- Make sure you always use a qualified tradesperson to carry out electrical works

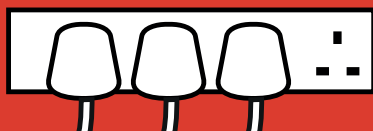
Never overload plug sockets.

Remember no more than 13 amps to a socket.

Know the limit!

$$5 + 5 + 3 = 13$$

AMP AMP AMP AMP



Appliances use different amounts of power – a television may use three amps and a vacuum cleaner five. If you are using an adaptor be careful not to overload it.

Charger Safety

- ⚠ Don't leave items on charge or plugged in overnight or whilst you are out of the house
- ⚠ Never leave chargers plugged in and turned on when they are not in use
- ⚠ Avoid leaving items on charge for long periods of time
- ⚠ Only use the charger supplied by the manufacturer
- ⚠ Look out for the CE mark that indicates chargers comply with European Safety standard



CANDLES

Candles are not an unusual sight in homes, they can be used to add a warm glow and pleasant aroma but it is important to remember that naked flames create risk and candles should be treated with care.

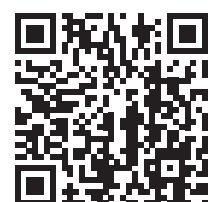
These tips will help everyone enjoy candles safely:

- Consider swapping wax candles for LED candles, they are much safer and give the same warm glow
- Make sure candles are secured in a proper holder and are away from flammable materials, such as curtains
- Never leave children alone with lit candles
- Put candles out when you leave the room and make sure they're put out completely at night
- Keep the wax pool clear of wick trimmings, matches and debris
- Keep the wick short by trimming it. Long or crooked wicks can cause uneven burning, dripping or flaring
- Don't move candles once they are lit
- Follow the manufacturer's recommendations on burn time and proper use
- Do not burn several candles close together as this might cause flaring (mainly with tealights)



CARRY OUT AN ONLINE SAFETY CHECK

essex-fire.gov.uk/online



MAKE SURE YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE

When fire strikes every second counts, so knowing how you plan to get your family safely out of your home could mean the difference between a close shave and tragedy.

That is why it is important to make sure your escape route is as simple as possible. Make a plan, practice it with your family and friends and make sure you keep your escape route clear.

Here are some simple steps for you to follow.

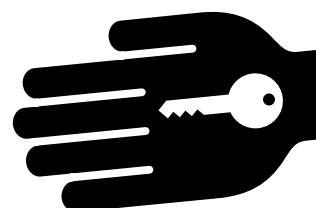
- Plan a safe escape
- Plan an escape route and make sure everyone knows how to get out
- Make sure exits are kept clear

- The best route is the normal way in and out of your home
- Plan a second route in case the first one is blocked
- Take a few minutes to practise your escape plan
- Review your plan if the layout of your home changes
- Keep door and window keys where everyone can find them



If fire strikes in your home you need to get out, stay out and call the fire service out:

- ⚠ Keep calm and act quickly to get everyone out as soon as possible
- ⚠ Don't waste time investigating what's happened or trying to rescue pets or valuables
- ⚠ If there is smoke, keep low where the air is clearer
- ⚠ Before you open a door check if it's warm. If it is don't open it – there's a fire on the other side
- ⚠ Call 999 as soon as you are clear of the building. 999 calls are free



CARBON MONOXIDE

Carbon monoxide poisoning is often called the silent killer as, without a carbon monoxide detector, it's difficult to detect the poisonous gas.

We recommend having a working carbon monoxide detector if you have a gas boiler, gas appliances, an open fire or a log burner in your home.

You can buy a carbon monoxide detector from most DIY stores and major supermarkets.



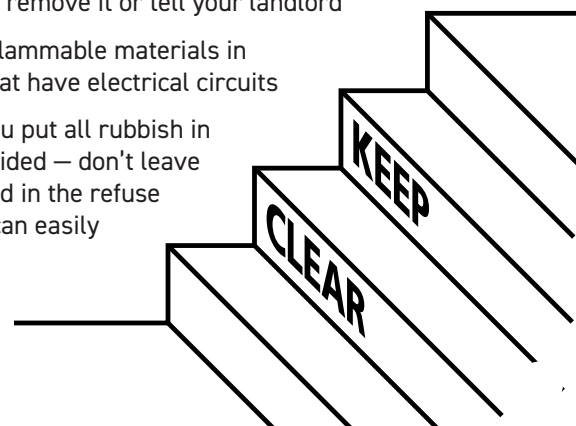
FIRE SAFETY ADVICE IN BLOCKS OF FLATS INCLUDING SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION

The best way to keep flats safe from the risk of fire is to take precautions to stop any fire from breaking out in the first place by following this advice.

There are a few things you can do to help:

- 1 Never store prams, bicycles or mobility scooters in communal areas. Thurrock Council operates a sterile communal area policy, including drying and bin rooms
- 2 Never obstruct the communal areas, which often form the fire escape route for the block
- 3 Never prop open fire doors in communal areas
- 4 Never clutter the stairs, corridors and landings with personal items or things that can set fire easily

- 5 If you see anything in the communal areas that doesn't belong there, remove it or tell your landlord
- 6 Never store flammable materials in cupboards that have electrical circuits
- 7 Make sure you put all rubbish in the bins provided – don't leave it lying around in the refuse area as this can easily be set on fire



FIRE SAFETY ADVICE IN BLOCKS OF FLATS

INCLUDING SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION

In the event of a fire in blocks of flats, Thurrock Council operates a **'Stay Put'** policy, which means you should not evacuate unless the fire is inside your flat or you are affected by heat or smoke. Please ensure that you and your family are aware of the **'Stay Put'** policy. If you have any questions please contact your Estate Officer or Sheltered Housing Manager as soon as possible.

Fire Action Notices are displayed in the entrances to the blocks. Please make sure you have read and understood them.

If there is a fire in your flat			
Follow your escape plan. Get everyone out, and stay out	Call 999 – NEVER assume that someone else has done so	Close all doors behind you as you leave	Use the nearest stairs or fire exit. Do not use the lift

If trapped in your flat by fire		
Call 999 – NEVER assume that someone else has done so	Tell the fire service your flat and floor number	Get everyone to the safest room – furthest from smoke and heat

If there is a fire, but not in your flat			
Close all of your doors and windows	Call 999 – NEVER assume that someone else has done so	Stay put, unless advised by the fire service	If the fire service needs to evacuate, they will knock door-to-door

Keep your building safe

Do not leave mobility scooters, rubbish, bikes, pushchairs, large plants, shoes or other belongings in the communal areas. Any items left in communal areas which breach Fire Safety Regulations will be removed without notice because they could prevent someone from escaping if there is a fire.

Fire doors on flats

Flat doors that open onto communal hallways or landings must, by law, be fire resistant. That means that when they are closed they will keep smoke out and can resist fire for at least 30 minutes. We fit all of our flats with fire doors which have self-closing mechanisms on them, so there is no need for you to remember to close them behind you.

You should make sure that your fire door is kept closed and that the self-closing mechanism has not been tampered with.

We will inspect all fire doors in buildings over five storeys tall at least once a year.

If your door is damaged in any way then do not hesitate to report it to us by calling 0800 074 0169. You can also email your building safety manager at buildingsafetymgr@thurrock.gov.uk

Communal doors

The communal doors within your block or building are also fire doors. These too should be kept closed at all times unless they have a magnetic hold open device fitted, as these doors are linked to the fire detection systems and have been designed to close automatically.

More information about fire doors can be found online at:
www.essex-fire.gov.uk/fire-safety-legislation

E-BIKES AND E-SCOOTERS

We recommend that no one keeps e-scooters or e-bikes in their home.

There are fire safety concerns linked to the charging and storage of the lithium-iron batteries which power them.

When an e-scooter/bike is involved in a fire, it can release large volumes of smoke, get very hot, and sometimes have a violent reaction leading to a rapidly developing fire.

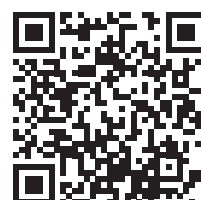
Please remember that e-scooters are illegal to use on roads or in public places, doing so could lead to you being issued with an on-the-spot fine and points on your driving licence.



REQUEST A HOME FIRE SAFETY VISIT FROM ESSEX COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Phone: 0300 303 0088
(9.30am - 4pm, or leave a message out of hours)

essex-fire.gov.uk/book



MAKING A COMPLAINT

If you are dissatisfied with the level of service you have received from Thurrock Council, or any contractor working on our behalf, please let us know.

Firstly you can report repairs or raise issues you are having in your home by calling **0800 074 0169** or emailing **repairs@thurrock.gov.uk**

If you are unhappy with the way issues you have raised have been dealt with, you can make a formal complaint. More information about how to do this can be found on our website at: **thurrock.gov.uk/complaints**

Complaints about housing services, where the council is the landlord, will be managed by the Housing Ombudsman. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman investigates complaints about allocations, homelessness and private sector housing.

The Ombudsman Services may be able to assist you with your complaint by allowing you the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman's dispute support advisors. Information can be found on their websites at:

Housing Ombudsman: **housing-ombudsman.org.uk**

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman: **lgo.org.uk**

NEED HELP WITH THE COST OF LIVING?

More information about the help available can be found on our website at: **thurrock.gov.uk/costofliving**

KEY CONTACTS

To report a repair or for information about an existing repair –
call **0800 074 0169**, email **repairs@thurrock.gov.uk**
or go to **thurrock.gov.uk/repairs**

To report a fire safety concern or for general information about fire safety –
HousingTechnicalServ@thurrock.gov.uk

To report a building, or fire safety concern, in a high-rise building –
buildingsafetymgr@thurrock.gov.uk

If you are concerned that someone is creating a fire risk near your home –
01375 652 652 or **housing@thurrock.gov.uk**

For Careline & caretaker queries –
01375 372 468