

# **TAMIL** HOUSING **Newsletter**

July 2025

## TAMIL CELEBRATIONS

# TCHA celebrates Tamil Heritage Month

On 25 January, we were honoured to be invited to take part in Tamil Heritage Month celebrations hosted by The Federation of Tamil Organisations of Waltham Forest and Waltham Forest Tamil Sangam.

At the event, our CEO Andrew Furtek presented shields to members of the Waltham Forest community whose significant contributions to community life had won them the title of 'Pular Olie' (the Tamil words for 'rising sun').

Tamil Heritage Month holds particular importance for TCHA. Our organisation was formed in 1985 by passionate Tamil volunteers who recognised the urgent need for safe, affordable housing for the Tamil community in London.

What began as a grassroots effort has grown into a thriving organisation that, while still firmly rooted in its Tamil heritage, now proudly serves individuals and families from all backgrounds across London by providing high-quality, affordable housing and comprehensive support services.

*Top left to right, TCHA Staff: Yamini, Housing Assistant; Andrew, CEO; Kennie, Head of Property Services; Rhona, Head of Housing.*

*Bottom: Andrew lights the ceremony lamp.*



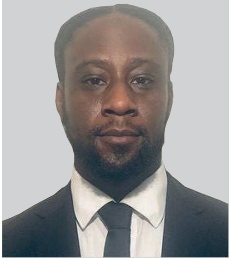
Property Services  
update **p2**

Learning from your  
complaints **p3**

Housing Services  
update **p4**

Join our Resident  
Panel **p5**

# Providing you with safe, comfortable homes



**Kennie, our new Head of Property Services, gives an update on our repairs and maintenance work.**

*"In the past few months, we've made good progress in improving the way we look after your homes."*

**Kind regards, Kennie**

## Upgrades improve your homes

### **Our home upgrades work has gone well over the past year.**

We're pleased to report that most of our planned boiler replacements are now complete, with just a few homes left to revisit. Our kitchen and bathroom upgrade programme is also progressing well.

We love hearing how upgrades are making a difference. Take Ms Khan, a TCHA resident for almost 20 years. She moved into her home when her children were still in primary school, needing a stable and safe place after life's unexpected turns. As soon as she saw her TCHA home, she knew it was the right place for her family.

Ms Khan had been looking forward to a new kitchen for a while and was placed on the upgrade list last year. Now that the work is complete, she's absolutely thrilled. She is excited that she can finally have people over and host, which she couldn't comfortably do before. She also shared how wonderful it was working with ABM, our contractors, who were friendly and kind, and gave her options to customise her new kitchen to her liking. It's stories like Ms. Khan's that truly show the impact of these improvements.



*Above: Ms Khan's new kitchen.*

### **Day-to-day repairs**

**Since March, ABM has been working as our interim repairs' contractor. They're helping us to clear backlogs and respond more quickly to new requests.**

Your feedback has been positive so far, but we know there's more to do - especially for urgent repairs. Your input helps, so please keep it coming!

### **Out-of-hours repairs**

We have listened to your feedback around out-of-hours repairs and are pleased to announce that we now have a new provider, who will start work from 30 June.

If you need their service, just call our out-of-hours number to go straight through to them.

We believe this will result in a significant improvement in our service and we look forward to hearing your feedback.

## Understanding 'No Win, No Fee' Agreements

Have you been offered a 'no win, no fee' legal agreement? If you have, or you would like to know more about them, it's important to have clear, unbiased information.

The QR code below links to a helpful guide from the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA). Scan it with the camera on your smartphone to go straight to their website.



## Awaab's Law

**You might have heard about Awaab's Law - named after Awaab Ishak, a two-year-old boy in Rochdale who tragically passed away due to severe damp and mould in his home.**

From October 2025, Awaab's Law will require all social landlords to fix serious hazards like damp and mould within strict timeframes. For urgent issues, this means acting within 24 hours. We're already strengthening our systems to meet these requirements and to improve how we keep you informed.

In the meantime, we continue to treat every damp and mould report seriously; inspecting and repairing as needed. We're also working closely with landlords whose homes we manage, to make sure no issue is overlooked.

## Future plans

We're planning long-term improvements, including:

- a new contractor to keep our lifts well-maintained
- a full property survey to guide future upgrades, and
- a long-term repairs contract for a more reliable service.

# Learning from your complaints

**Your complaints give us vital information that we use to learn about and improve our services.**

Over the past year, we received 17 complaints. These were mainly about repairs and maintenance, followed by housing services and then our overall service delivery. Here's how we are using these complaints so far.

### Delays and incomplete repairs

We're tendering for a new repairs and maintenance contract, to get better performance from our contractors. In future, this will allow us to keep a close eye on their performance and it will give us ways to feed back to them directly - which our previous contracts didn't include.

### Poor communication

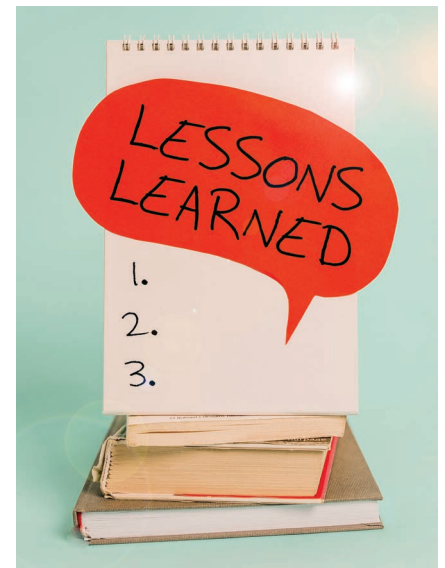
We are refocusing on your experience of our services and how we can best keep you informed. We may not always get things right, but we will try our hardest to make sure we keep you up to date as we process your queries.

### Chasing repairs for the homes we manage

We need to do more for residents who live in the properties we manage, but which are owned by larger landlords. Once we report your repairs to your landlord, it has been difficult to track them. We are now working on a way to do this, on your behalf.

### Handling complaints

To improve our handling of complaints, we are making sure all our staff understand our



*"The changes we are making will become more and more evident as the year goes on. You can expect to see an increase in repairs quality and speed, and an overall improvement in the service you get from our Housing and Property Teams."*

**The TCHA team**

process. All stage one complaints will go straight to Rhona, as Head of Housing, or Kennie, as Head of Property Services. They will speak with you to fully understand your complaint and try to resolve it. All stage two complaints will go to our Chief Executive.

### Board oversight

We've appointed a Board Member who is specifically responsible for complaints, to provide an extra layer of accountability and transparency.



# We're listening, learning and improving



Rhona, our new Head of Housing, offers an update on our housing services work.

*"I do hope I get to speak to more of you through our resident engagement work and the other exciting things happening at TCHA."*

**Warmly, Rhona**

## Let's talk money: rent arrears

**We understand that managing rent can be tough, especially with the rising cost of living.**

We want to support all our residents, particularly those who are struggling with arrears.

Residents currently owe us over £450,000 in unpaid rent. This huge amount directly impacts on our ability to invest in your homes and communities. It's stopping us from delivering the upgrades we would

love to provide - including more new kitchens and bathrooms.

Our team are actively reaching out to residents in arrears. We want to help you get your rent account back on track and ensure your tenancy remains secure. This might include investigating Discretionary Housing Payments from your



council, or putting you in touch with other local services.

We can only help if you talk to us. Please don't hesitate to get in touch - we're here to support you.

## Supporting you in your neighbourhoods

**We foster good relationships between neighbours and within the wider community, to make sure that our properties and estates are safe and welcoming places for our residents.**



Over the next 18 months, we aim to visit all of our properties. We want to check in with you, to understand how we can support you better to live in your home.

We might not have the answer to every problem, but we are strongly committed to working with you to find ways to assist.

We will soon open our Scholarship Fund for 2025 (see back page). We

love hearing stories about how this fund has made a difference to your lives. It's really enjoyable to read the applications too.

I'm excited to be launching our new resident engagement project, which we will kick start by launching a strong Resident Scrutiny Panel (see page 5).

We really appreciate getting feedback from our residents and seeing how we can use it to make the most of the resources we have available.

We will work with our resident body to make sure we're effective in the way we work.

# Join our Resident Panel

At TCHA, we're all about providing the best homes and services. To truly achieve this, we need your input. That's why we're inviting you to join our Resident Scrutiny Panel, to help shape our decisions.

## What is the Resident Scrutiny Panel?

The panel is a group of residents who keep TCHA accountable. It's your chance to dive into our policies, plans and decisions, to ask tough questions and give us direct feedback on how we're doing.

## Why is your input so important?

Your insights are priceless. As we develop new policies or take big decisions, we want to hear directly from the people who live in our homes. The Scrutiny Panel is a formal way for residents to:

- challenge our performance and service delivery
- influence future policies to meet your needs
- provide a resident's perspective on proposed changes, and
- help us to improve and celebrate our successes

By getting involved, you'll be directly contributing to better services, stronger communities, and a more responsive TCHA. It's a real chance to make a difference and keep residents at the heart of everything we do.

## Want to make a difference?

We're looking for residents who are keen to share their views, assess information and work together to improve TCHA for everyone. No experience needed – just willingness to get involved and a passion for making your community better.

To find out more, please email [hello@tamilhousing.org.uk](mailto:hello@tamilhousing.org.uk) or call our office on 020 8493 7160. We will be pleased to hear from you.



## A word from Michael Verrier

TCHA Board Member

**"As social housing residents** we are increasingly living in a different world where landlords are expected to meaningfully engage with their residents to drive improvements in every aspect of the services they deliver to us.

**"Our voice** is an important one and this is recognised and backed up through legislation with the new 'Charter for Social Housing Tenants' and the 'Regulatory Standards for Landlords'.

**"However,** as residents, we must take the opportunities afforded us by this legislation to get involved and make a difference.



**"Without your voice** things just remain the same and this, I can assure you, is not what your Board or your staff members want. They wholeheartedly recognise how vital resident input is.

**"As a Board Member** of TCHA, and as a social housing resident, I urge residents to get involved and help TCHA drive the changes that are needed to improve our service."

## SUPPORTING RESIDENTS

# Scholarship Fund opens soon

**Our 2025 Scholarship Fund will open for applications between 1 August and 30 September.**

We plan to make awards from the fund throughout October and November 2025.

If you'd like to apply, email [service@tamilhousing.org.uk](mailto:service@tamilhousing.org.uk) with the subject line: 'Scholarship Fund'. Our team will then send you the application pack.

We look forward to receiving your applications and seeing where your education takes you!



## Damp, mould & condensation

**Damp and condensation can cause black mould to grow in your home. We take all cases very seriously and are here to help.**

If you report damp or mould to us, we will always visit to carry out an inspection, organise any follow up works and give you advice.

We will check whether your damp problem could be caused by a fault with the building that needs to be repaired - such as a leaky roof, pipe, guttering or plumbing.

If the problem is caused by too much condensation, we can also advise on steps to reduce the problem. Condensation is the moisture that forms when warm, damp air touches a cold surface and it can make a difference if you:

- **Make less moisture** - for example, by avoiding drying washing indoors, covering boiling pans and keeping kitchen and bathroom doors shut when cooking or showering
- **Remove condensation** from windows and sills, and the moisture left on tiling and shower screens
- **Use a dehumidifier** to take excess damp out of the air
- **Keep rooms well aired** by using the fans in your kitchen and bathroom, opening your windows, curtains and blinds each day, and leaving trickle vents open
- **Keep furniture away** from walls and try not to overfill cupboards and wardrobes
- **Heat your home** to at least 15 degrees during the daytime.
- **Treat spots of mould** using a mould cleaner and following the instructions, and use anti-fungal paint in your bathroom



For more help and advice, or a copy of our leaflet on tackling this problem, do call or email us.

## Contact us

Tamil Community Housing Association Ltd

Tel: 020 8493 7160

**Opening hours:** Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm (phone lines are closed on Wednesdays from 9am-1pm).

**Email:** [service@tamilhousing.org.uk](mailto:service@tamilhousing.org.uk)

**Heating, hot water or boiler fault:** (For homes owned by TCHA only) Call Sureserve Compliance South (formerly known as K&T Heating Services) on 020 8269 4500, and select option 1, then option 1, for heating and hot water services.

### Out-of-hours emergency repairs

Orca now handles the out-of-hours emergency repairs service for homes owned by TCHA.

Call 020 8493 7160 to use this service for genuine emergencies.



## Join the TCHA Board!

**Are you a TCHA resident looking to make an impact? We're seeking a Resident Board Member to help shape the organisations future.**

This is your chance to represent social housing residents and contribute your ideas directly. No board experience is needed - just your passion and perspective.

Interested? Please send an email to: [hello@tamilhousing.org.uk](mailto:hello@tamilhousing.org.uk), with the subject line 'EOI for Resident Board Member' to learn more.