

Ekaya
Residents'
newsletter

Summer 2024

Coming soon:

Ekaya and SW9 Housing

Residents'
Fun Day



ekaya
HOUSING
ASSOCIATION

Coming this summer:

Ekaya and SW9 Housing Residents' FUN DAY

7 September 2024 - 2pm to 5pm

at Slade Gardens, Stockwell Park Road, SW9 0DL

Free food ♦ ice cream ♦ children's play area
♦ face painting ♦ bouncy castle
♦ family activities ♦ free raffle ♦ music

Fun, free and a chance to meet and socialise with staff from Ekaya, Happy Nursery Days & our main contractors

To say you are coming, call us on 020 7091 1807 or email info@ekaya.co.uk

Come and have fun!

ekaya HOUSING ASSOCIATION
SW9 Community Housing
Happy Nursery Days

Come to our fun day

If you register in advance, you will be entered into a special early bird raffle draw!

Summer fun for all

There are lots of free and cheap things to do this summer. Here are some ideas and sources of information.

Start by going to your local authority website. For example, Lambeth keeps a rolling programme of events for each month, listed at: www.lambeth.gov.uk/events

Check out your council's Holiday Activities and Food programme for the summer. You can usually apply for your child (reception to year 11), if they qualify for benefit-related free school meals.

There are lots of parks, museums and galleries across London that offer a good day out. Find a list of things to do for free at: www.tripadvisor.co.uk

Event brite has a rolling list of events, including events for free. To search for free events for children, go to: www.eventbrite.co.uk/d/united-kingdom--london/free-children-events

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Welcome to our new residents

In November 2023, we took over the part of an estate in Brixton that was formerly owned by L&Q.

We already had residents at the estate, which is just off Shakespeare Road in Brixton. We have now added the remaining 38 flats and houses to our stock.

The handover means that we can now focus on providing good services to residents across the whole estate. For example, we have been working to sort out the lighting at estate, to make sure areas are well lit when it gets dark and at night. We have selected a



contractor to carry out these works and will keep residents updated by text and email. We appreciate your patience whilst works are carried out.

Policy updates: pets

We regularly make changes to our policies to keep them up to date. You can download our policies from our website.

We now allow residents to keep an emotional support pet – provided you get our written permission first.

We have also included details about approach to dogs that are listed under the Dangerous Dogs Act.



Please remember that you must get our permission before getting a dog of any sort.

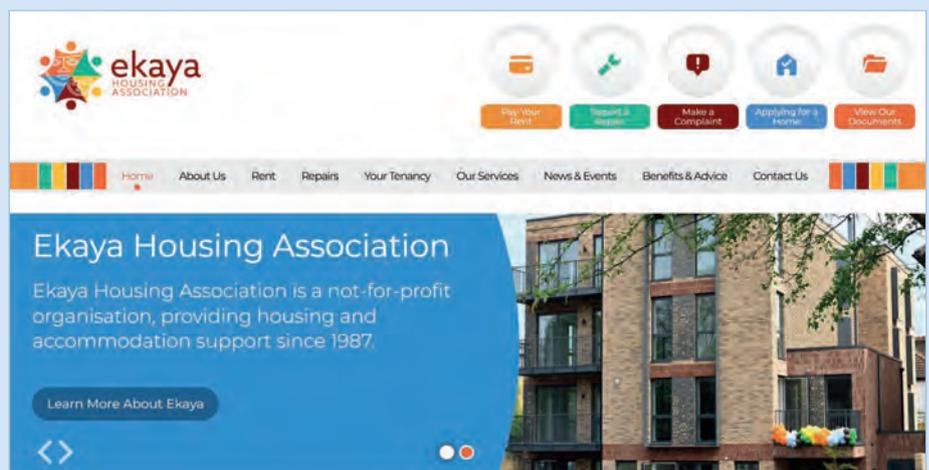
Introducing our new website

We are thrilled to announce the launch of Ekaya's brand-new website.

After months of preparation, we now have a new website that is more user-friendly, informative and visually appealing.

This is phase 1 of our website project. Phase 2 will continue our work to develop the residents' portal where customers will be able to download some documents, access their rent statement and log some repairs.

We invite you to explore the new website and discover all the features it has to offer.



Please visit the website by clicking on this link: www.ekaya.co.uk

Switching off the water in your home

If there is a leak in your home, it's vital you know how to shut off the water supply.

To stop the flow of water and reduce any damage, you will need to turn off the stopcock.

A stopcock is a valve for turning the cold water system in your home off and on. You will usually find it under the kitchen sink, but it may be near the boiler, under the stairs, in the bathroom or in the airing cupboard.

To turn your water supply off, turn the handle of the stopcock in a clockwise direction. To test if you have successfully done this, try turning on a tap.

If your stopcock is not working, please contact the repairs team.



New team members



Harry: Property Surveyor

Ekaya has a new Property Surveyor, Harry Webster, who joined us in April 2024.

Harry has plenty of experience in building surveying and has worked in the housing sector for many years.

He is responsible for inspecting properties before and after our contractors carry out work. So, he may sometimes need to visit your home or scheme.

Pre-inspecting complicated repairs means we can accurately diagnose the problem and specify the work needed. Post-inspection, after the work is completed, allows us to make sure it meets a good standard and gives us good value for money.

Harry is also responsible for refurbishment works to our empty properties.



Chiara: Customer Service Administrator

Chiara Poloniato is now a permanent member of Ekaya's staff team.

She writes: "My name is Chiara Poloniato and I am thrilled to be part of Ekaya's frontline team covering both maintenance and housing management.

"I have been working at Ekaya since December 2022, initially as an interim staff member, but now I have been appointed as a permanent staff member covering the Customer Service Administrator role. In most instances, I am the voice at the other end of the phone, when you call to report a repair.

"My passion is to ensure your experience is a smooth and satisfying one most of the time. Whether I am helping to resolve a technical issue or answering your queries, my goal is to provide you with a top-notch service which reflects how much I am passionate about the service and to also show how much we care about delivering a caring customer-focused service.

"I look forward to answering your call when you next need to contact Ekaya."

Stockwell Park Community centre

Why not check out the friendly community centre that is close to our south London base?

Stockwell Park Community Centre is at 21 Aytoun Place in Stockwell, SW9. It has a community café, with drop-in support and internet access.

You can take part in fitness classes, cookery courses and

skills development training. There are also plenty of activities for children and young people.

The centre runs a foodbank from 3pm on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

Call 020 7924 9899, email info@thetrust.org.uk, or go to facebook.com/Stockwell-SPE to find out more.

Getting the support you need

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can be very obvious and violent – where someone is assaulted, threatened, humiliated, intimidated, harmed, punished or frightened.

However, it can also include controlling behaviour – making someone dependent, isolating them, taking their money or resources, or dictating what they can or cannot do.

If your partner or someone else in your household is abusing you in any way, we will do all we can to get you the help you need.

If you think another of our residents is suffering in this way, please let us know. You can trust us to treat

this information sensitively and in confidence. For more details, download our policy at: www.ekaya.co.uk/policies

Specialist help

In an emergency, dial 999 for the police. For a non-emergency, call the police on 101.

National Domestic Violence Helpline (*Refuge/Women's Aid*)
Phone 0808 2000 247 (24 hours)
www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

Gaia Centre (in Lambeth)
020 7733 8724
lambethvawg@refuge.org.uk

Signposting to food banks

If you are struggling to put food on the table, there are foodbanks in all our areas. You may need to contact us first, so that we can refer you.

Bromley Foodbank operates from six centres in the borough. Go to: bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk

In Croydon, search for your nearest foodbank at: croydon.simplyconnect.uk

Greenwich Foodbank operates from 10 sites. For details go to: greenwich.foodbank.org.uk

To find foodbanks **in Lambeth**, go to: www.lambethlarder.org/emergency-food

For information about foodbanks **in Merton**, go to: www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/money-advice/cost-of-living/food-banks

Southwark Foodbank operates at three sites. Go to: southwark.foodbank.org.uk

Wandsworth Foodbank runs sessions in six sites. Go to: wandsworth.foodbank.org.uk



Domestic abuse: support for children and young people

The BAMBU project in Wandsworth is providing support, including play therapy and one-to-one counselling, for children and young people aged 16-24 who have experience of domestic abuse in their family.

The service is provided by RISE, which is a counselling and psychotherapy service, together with the Richmond Fellowship.



Call or text 07784 496750, or email bambu@risemutual.org to find out more. We can also arrange a referral if you contact Ekaya.



Estate champions and walkabouts

Be our local eyes and ears

If you have views on how the cleaning and grounds maintenance at your block or scheme could be improved – why not join us?

Become an estate champion Residents have said they are keen to play a greater role – so we are now looking for people to act as champions for their estate. Champions will report concerns about their estate directly to their Housing Officer.

Take part in an estate walkabout You are always welcome to join your Housing Officer on their monthly visit to your block. Residents who have taken part say they found them very useful.

To get involved at your estate, phone your Housing Officer on 020 7091 1800, or email us at info@ekaya.co.uk

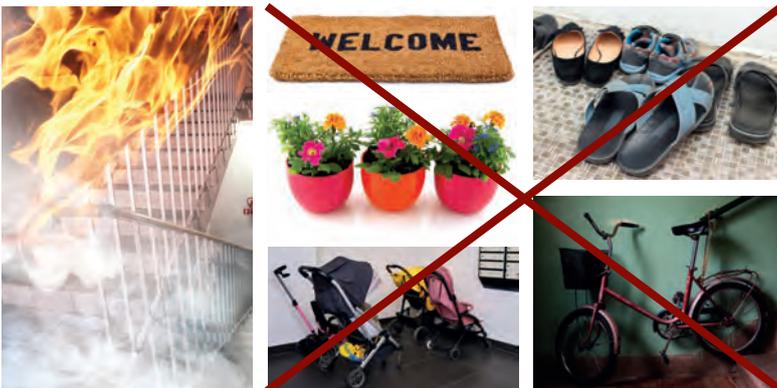
Keep communal areas clear: move it or lose it!

We need your help keeping landings, stairways, cupboards and other communal areas clear and free of your personal belongings.

Items left in communal areas can be trip hazards, obstruct escape routes or be set alight, in the unlikely event of a fire. This includes items hanging from doors or on walls, clothes driers, bikes, buggies or plants.

As your landlord, we have to have a zero-tolerance policy towards personal items in communal areas, to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. This is reflected in our tenancy and licence agreements.

Our Housing Officers can immediately remove high-risk items. They will leave a tort notice to tell you that items have been removed and give you a specific time period to claim them back before we throw them away.



Scheme inspection dates

Scheme	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
<i>Housing Officer: Nye</i>				
Butchi Emecheta Court	25 Sept	17 Oct	20 Nov	11 Dec
Buckleigh Road		24 Oct		
Daisy Lampkin Court	25 Sept	17 Oct	20 Nov	11 Dec
Derek Walcott Close	12 Sept	10 Oct	11 Nov	5 Dec
Deeley Road		24 Oct		
Gipsy Hill	12 Sept	10 Oct	11 Nov	5 Dec
Heyford Avenue		24 Oct		
Josephine Avenue		24 Oct		
Knollys Road	12 Sept	10 Oct	11 Nov	5 Dec
Leigham Court Road	25 Sept	17 Oct	20 Nov	11 Dec
Louise Bennet Close	12 Sept	10 Oct	11 Nov	5 Dec
Mary Dine Court		24 Oct		
North Street		24 Oct		
Rosa Parkes	25 Sept	17 Oct	20 Nov	11 Dec
Sandmere Road		24 Oct		
Smedley Street	12 Sept	10 Oct	11 Nov	5 Dec
Somers Road		24 Oct		
Streatham Place	25 Sept	17 Oct	20 Nov	11 Dec
Sudbourne Road		24 Oct		
Tasman Road	25 Sept	17 Oct	20 Nov	11 Dec
Tulse Hill	25 Sept	17 Oct	20 Nov	11 Dec
<i>Housing Officer: Patricia</i>				
Axis House	11 Sept	9 Oct	14 Nov	4 Dec
Beeton Way	26 Sept	23 Oct	21 Nov	17 Dec
College Road	11 Sept	9 Oct	14 Nov	4 Dec
Foxbourne	26 Sept	23 Oct	21 Nov	17 Dec
Greenwich House	11 Sept	9 Oct	14 Nov	4 Dec
Howard Road	26 Sept	23 Oct	14 Nov	4 Dec
Lou Hamer House	11 Sept	9 Oct	14 Nov	4 Dec
Overcliff Close	11 Sept	9 Oct	14 Nov	4 Dec
Paxton House	11 Sept	9 Oct	14 Nov	4 Dec
Pembury Road	26 Sept	23 Oct	21 Nov	17 Dec
Sanderstead Road	26 Sept	23 Oct	21 Nov	17 Dec
Sandford Road	11 Sept	9 Oct	14 Nov	4 Dec
Schumann Court	26 Sept	23 Oct	21 Nov	17 Dec
Smith Court	26 Sept	23 Oct	21 Nov	17 Dec
Southview Close	26 Sept	23 Oct	21 Nov	17 Dec

Your moving options

Home swaps

If you are one of our assured or secure tenants, one way for you to move to another social housing home is to use your right to swap homes with the tenant of any social housing landlord in the country.

You can find a swap partner by signing up to a national online scheme called HomeSwapper (www.homeswapper.co.uk), which allows you to search for a mutual exchange anywhere in the country. This service is free for our tenants, because we are a member.

Once you find a suitable swap, you will need to visit each other's homes and make sure you understand your swap partner's tenancy agreement. This is because when you swap homes, you are also swapping tenancies.



When you are ready to take the next step, you must involve both landlords. Don't plan your move until we have both said 'yes' in writing.

We have the right to refuse permission if, for example, you or your swap partner owe rent or have broken your tenancy agreement and been taken to court. We can also say no if your home is the wrong size for your swap partner.

Internal transfers

If you have an assured tenancy and a strong need to move, you can apply for an internal transfer. Our points system is based on the urgency of your need to move and the length of time you have been waiting.

Please be aware that we have to offer most of our empty homes – that is, 50% of one bedroom homes and 75% of larger homes – to our local authority partners. We also have nomination agreements with other agencies. This means that even with an extremely strong need to move, you may face a very long wait.

Choice-based lettings

You should put yourself on your council's housing register. You will get the chance to bid for properties, but bear in mind that there is a points system. People in the most need get priority and there can be very long waits.



Homes for older people

If you are aged 55 or over (or at least one partner in a couple is this age), you can also register for the Mayor of London's Seaside & Country Homes scheme for a move outside London. Go online to: www.london.gov.uk/seaside to find out more.

Supported housing move-on

At the end of your agreed time at one of our supported housing schemes, you can apply to your local authority for permanent housing.



Property Services update

Improving your homes

Following the completion of the stock condition survey, we have put together a five-year plan for component renewals such as windows, kitchens and bathrooms. Our plan also covers the regular redecorations we carry out to the outside and shared areas of our buildings.

If your home will be in the works programme in the first year, we will write to you.

Foxbourne Road

We have already begun essential building works at our block in Foxbourne Road in Balham, where



we have five flats. We have put up scaffolding and ordered new windows, which are currently being manufactured.

The overall project will totally transform the block, by significantly improving the level of insulation.

Damp, mould and condensation

If you're experiencing problems with mould in your home, we will work with you to solve them.

Your problem could be caused by a fault with the building that needs to be repaired, or (more commonly) by too much condensation.

Our special leaflet sets how you and we can solve these problems. Call the office for more details.



A sustainable future with Ekaya

As a landlord, we are committed to making our properties sustainable.

To contribute to sustainability, we have to lower our impact on the environment, bring positive benefits to our residents and provide good value for money.



Later this year, we will begin work on a new asset management strategy to make sure that we prioritise sustainability when we are arranging to buy properties, building materials and components.

We are already renewing old gas boilers in your homes with 'A'-rated new boilers. These boilers are more energy efficient, which improves the energy efficiency of our properties and saves you money on your gas bills.

Fire safety

We prioritise fire safety at our hostels and estates, and we always aim to meet all fire regulations. We ask that you play your part too.

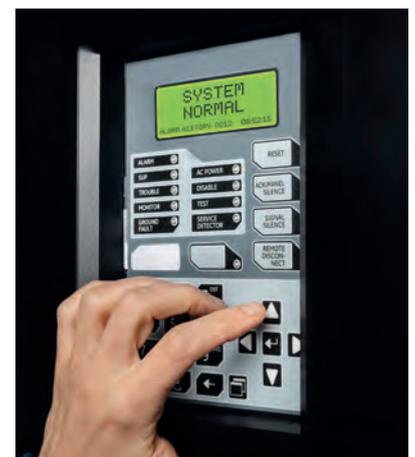
We arrange for regular fire risk assessments and we act on what they tell us.

In our blocks and hostels, we provide fire alarm systems that are regularly checked. We fit fire doors and provide signage and fire escape plans. Some of our newer properties are fitted with automatic opening vent systems, which remove smoke in the event of a fire. We also install smoke or heat detectors in individual homes.

Please make sure you regularly replace any alarm batteries and never disable them. Tell us if you note any damage to an alarm or fire door.

Remember: we do not allow you to leave any personal belongings, or to smoke, in communal areas. You must also not use barbecues on balconies.

For further advice, call Ekaya's repairs team.



Happy Nursery Days



In March, the nursery received some very good news – when we heard that it had won £5,000 from the Tesco Stronger Starts grant programme.

The nursery received a golden grant award, after getting in-store votes from local Tesco shoppers.

Nursery Manager Alma Boci and her team are using the funds to upgrade the playground, with new plants and outdoor equipment, including for children with special needs. Willing parents helped with gardening.

Also in March, the children celebrated World Book Day, made special surprises for Mother's Day and enjoyed an Easter bonnet event, together with an Easter egg hunt.

In June, the nursery hosted Dads for Father's Day.

In July, 10 of the children, who are



moving up to reception, took part in a graduation event.

A bright future

In September, the nursery will celebrate its 20th anniversary of

*Above: New equipment in the garden.
Below: New planting.*

providing good quality childcare to Brixton parents.

We recently signed a new 25-year lease agreement on our premises in Valens House in Tulse Hill, securing the nursery's future for years to come.



Happy Nursery Days

Happy Nursery Days will provide a secure, caring and stimulating environment where children are treated as individuals and feel respected, valued and confident.

- For ages between 3 months and 5 years
- High Quality Care
- Home Cooked Meals
- Huge Outdoor Play Area
- Open from 7.20am to 6pm



020 8674 7804 info@happynurserydays.org.uk
www.happynurserydays.org.uk

Learning from complaints

We aim to provide all our residents with a good quality service and to get things right first time. We review your complaints each year.

It's always disappointing when we receive complaints from our residents about the services we provide. However, they do help us to ensure that we don't make the same mistakes in future.

What is a complaint?

We try to put things right as soon as you tell us about them. For example, if you call us about your boiler not working, or you ask us to deliver our service to you a bit differently because you are disabled (we call this 'making reasonable adjustments'), we aim to sort things out quickly as a service request. A service request is not the same thing as a complaint.

We will treat what you are telling us as a complaint, and take it through our complaints process, if:

- this is something you have told us about before, which is still causing you problems
- the issue is significantly affecting you, or
- you aren't happy with the way we dealt with your service request.

Complaints from October 2023 to March 2024

We received 19 complaints between October and December 2023 (Quarter 3), and 11 between January and March 2024 (Quarter 4).

The complaints included 18 about repairs, eight about housing management, one related to supported housing, and three others.

We dealt with most of the complaints within our target times and in a handful of the 'late' cases the tenant was happy to wait a bit longer.

Among the lessons we learned, we are now working to do a better job of:

- inspecting schemes
- following up problems with contractors
- recording and monitoring repair jobs

- communicating with residents
- handling complaints.

We have taken on consultants to assist us with handling our Stage 1 complaints and our staff have undertaken complaints training with the Housing Ombudsman.

We will report on our year of complaints work in the annual report, later in the year.



How to make a complaint

You can make a complaint:

- by email to info@ekaya.co.uk
- in a letter to head office
- by phone, or
- in person.

We aim to find a solution to your problem as quickly as we can. But if we don't get this right at first try, you can go on to use our formal complaints process.

Stage 1 – acknowledgement

At Stage 1, the manager of the service you are complaining about will acknowledge your complaint within five working days. They will investigate and send a written response within a further 10 working days. If the investigation will take longer, we will let you know why.

Stage 2 – final stage

If you are still dissatisfied, you can ask to take your complaint to the final stage.

Our manager will give our final response and we will monitor our progress on any promises.

Housing Ombudsman

If you aren't happy with our final response, you have 12 months to make an appeal to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

You can do this:

- online at: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- by email to: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
- by phoning: 0300 111 3000, or
- by writing to: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ.

Tenant satisfaction survey

In the autumn, we carried out a resident satisfaction survey, which included the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures introduced by our regulator.

Thank you to the 249 of you who gave us your feedback. Three lucky residents won vouchers for taking part, in our prize draw.

Our TSM survey results show that there are areas where we must do better.

We are now looking closely at what you've said and we are putting together a plan of action to make sure improvements are made.

We will share more details about the surveys and our plans to improve during 2024-25.

We will give you plenty more opportunities to tell us what you think about our services over the next year. Our next full survey will take place at the end of 2025.



Get involved in our work

Customer Panel

Ekaya has a Customer Panel, with a tenant chair and tenants from each of the boroughs we work in. The Panel meets with senior staff quarterly, to review how we are delivering services and to recommend improvements.

To find out more about how you can get involved, email us at info@ekaya.co.uk

a key role at Ekaya, by becoming a Resident Board Member.

Whatever your age or background, you are welcome to apply.

You don't need board experience to apply. But we will ask you to demonstrate you have the right skills for the role – or be willing to develop them with our support.

Email recruitment@ekaya.co.uk if you would like more information.

Board member

We're looking for someone to play

To apply, send your CV and a cover letter of no more than two sides to recruitment@ekaya.co.uk

Spotlight on noise complaints

If you are suffering from excess noise, here are some of the ways we may work with you.

- We will ask you to keep a diary, so we can check that the noise is anti-social behaviour rather than normal household noise.
- We will encourage you to use the Noise App (www.thenoiseapp.com), to record the noise and make videos on your phone.
- We can visit the noisy property to check things like whether the residents have the right sort of floor coverings. We can ask them to use rugs over laminates and to install noise-reducing mats under their washing machine.
- We can invite both sides to attend mediation.

To report excess noise, call us on 020 70911800 or email info@ekaya.co.uk to message your housing officer.



Call for help:

999

Emergency

111

*Health
non-emergencies*

101

*Police
non-emergencies*

112

*Emergencies from a
mobile anywhere in
the world*



Ekaya Housing Association

145 Stockwell Road, Brixton, London SW9 9TN

Email: info@ekaya.co.uk Phone: 020 7091 1800

Web: www.ekaya.co.uk

Office hours: Monday to Friday, 9am to 5.30pm