

YOUR MAGAZINE

THE MAGAZINE FOR GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS

Contact *point*



GUILDFORD
BOROUGH

and



working together

Summer 2026

Keeping In Touch Days 2026

**Find out what Future
Surrey means for you,
on page 3**

**Important fire safety tips
for your home on pages
6, 7 and 8**

www.guildford.gov.uk



*Find out about our annual Keeping
In Touch Days this summer, page 9*

Contents

Future Surrey: What this means for you	3
Our housing service rated C1 by the Regulator of Social Housing	4
Update on the Repairs Service	5
Fire Safety at Home	6
Fire doors: don't prop, don't block, don't ignore	7
Smoke alarms and heat alarms	8
Keeping in Touch Days 2026	9
From Playground to Plyometrics: Surrey Sports Park and HomeStart Guildford Venture.	10
The work of the tenancy sustainment service	11
Abandoned vehicle? Here's what to check	13
Community Wellbeing	14
Standing together: our new hate crime policy	15
Bridging the Gap: How Surrey's Trauma-Informed Housing Protocol Protects Our Community	16
Welfare Benefits and Money Advisor	17
FiveDinners	18
Your Estates Management Officers	19
Spot the difference	20
Competition Corner	20

Your magazine... Summer 2026

Hello everyone,

I hope you are enjoying the better weather that we are now having.

Following all the hard work that was done with the regulators, it was fantastic news to hear that Guildford Borough Council were awarded a C1 Grade – the highest that they can get.

However, that said, GBC and the Tenants' Engagement Group are fully aware that there is still a lot to be done and improvement to be made. One area that the group are working on is that of repairs. We are working closely with the council to get repairs done quicker and more efficiently. I know many of you are frustrated with the length of time repairs are taking at present, but we are looking at ways where the process can be made quicker.

Over the next few months, we will be out and about in different areas, so please talk to us and let us know what issues you may be having.

Have a good summer.

Alan,
Chair of the Tenants'
Engagement Group



How to contact us:

If you would like to get involved, or wish to know more information on any of the articles in this edition of Contact Point please contact:

Resident Engagement Officer,
Millmead House,
Millmead,
Guildford, GU2 4BB.

☎ 01483 444769

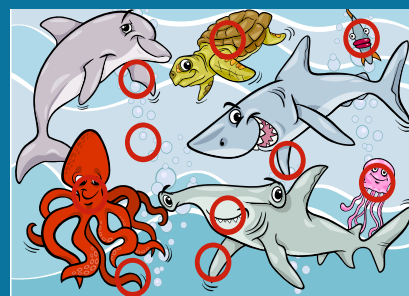
✉ tenants.group@guildford.gov.uk

If you or a member of your household would like to receive this magazine in large print, braille, audio or another language, please let us know by using the contact details above or calling 01483 505050.

Facebook @GuildfordBC Instagram @GuildfordBC X @GuildfordBC

✉ tenants.group@guildford.gov.uk
☎ **Conor on 01483 444769**

Answers to spot the difference on page 20





Future Surrey: What this means for you

Local government in Surrey is changing to make council services simpler, clearer and better value for residents. This is called Local Government Reorganisation.

From 1 April 2027, Surrey County Council and the 11 district and borough councils will be replaced by two new unitary councils – East Surrey Council and West Surrey Council.

Residents living in Guildford will be part of West Surrey Council.

Surrey County Council services will divide between East Surrey Council and West Surrey Council.

How this affects you

All housing services will continue as normal, including housing advice, tenancy management, support services, repairs, the housing register, allocations and homelessness support. You'll still be supported by the same local housing teams who know you and your community.

If you already have a repair booked, a service request logged or an ongoing case, this will continue to be managed as usual. There will be no break or disruption to the service you receive.

Over time you will notice a few small changes such as a new council name or brand, and possibly new contact numbers or ways to get in touch. We'll make sure you're kept informed as any changes happen. Importantly, this won't affect your home or the housing services you receive.

Your tenancy agreement, rent and the way you pay your rent will not change as a direct result of local government reorganisation. You'll continue to hear from us about rent in the usual way, including the annual rent review in February or March 2027. Any future changes to improve or align services would always follow the normal legal process and tenant consultation.

You have no action to take

You don't need to take any action because of the change to a new council. We'll contact you if any information is needed.

More information

For more detailed information about Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Surrey visit www.surreylgrhub.gov.uk

Our housing service rated C1 by the Regulator of Social Housing



We're really pleased to share some positive news about our housing service.

Earlier this year, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) carried out an independent inspection of our housing service. Their role is to check that councils are meeting the national standards residents should expect, looking closely at how homes are managed and how services are delivered.

The result? We're delighted to say that we achieved a C1 consumer rating – the highest rating possible. Only a small number of landlords receive this top rating, and it's an important recognition of the progress made across our housing services. It also shows that your views are being listened to and used to help make services better.

So, what does a C1 rating actually mean for you? During the inspection, the Regulator focused on the things that matter most to residents, including safety, repairs, transparency and communication. A C1 rating means they are satisfied that homes are being kept safe, well maintained and that legal checks are properly managed. It also confirms that the systems we use for repairs, complaints and day to day case handling are working as they should, helping us pick up and deal with any issues promptly.

This is a significant achievement, but it doesn't mean everything is perfect. We know there is still more to do, and our improvement journey doesn't stop here. Meeting national standards is the minimum you should expect from your housing service, and we're determined to keep building on this strong foundation.

We remain fully committed to improving the quality and consistency of our services. We'll continue working with you to shape future improvements and make sure safety and quality remain at the heart of everything we do.

Your feedback and involvement have played a vital role in reaching this point. Through the Tenant Engagement Group, meetings and day to day contact, you continue to challenge us, highlight issues and influence how services are delivered. That input helps us focus on what really matters to you.

Thank you for continuing to work with us.

Together, we're building a stronger, more responsive housing service for everyone who calls Guildford home.



Regulator of Social Housing

Update on the Repairs Service

Our Housing Improvement Plan is now well underway, helping us to deliver a more effective, well-organised service that offers better value for residents.



As part of this plan, we have brought in Axis Europe to provide additional resources to increase capacity and improve the speed of our day to day repairs service.

As with any new partnership, there has been a short transition period while we put the right arrangements in place. As a result, you may have noticed that some repairs have taken longer than usual.

The improvements we are making, together with Axis Europe, will help us to complete repairs more quickly and provide a better overall service.

We are sorry for any delays you may have experienced recently, you should begin to see a noticeable improvement soon.

Thank you for your patience and understanding while these changes are being put in place. We remain committed to providing a reliable, efficient repairs service for all our residents.



GUILDFORD
BOROUGH



Fire safety at home

Lithium batteries: a growing risk on your doorstep

From mobile phones and laptops to e-bikes, e-scooters and mobility scooters, lithium batteries power more of our daily lives than ever before. But they also bring a fire risk that is rising fast and one that is particularly serious in communal residential buildings.

In 2025, there were 432 e-bike and e-scooter fires across the UK, with 37 brigades responding to incidents, including Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS). SFRS has seen a significant increase in battery-related fires in recent years, attending over 55 battery-related fires in 2024 compared to just 13 in 2021.

A notable incident, on 10 April 2026, involved a fire at a recycling business in Fairlands near Guildford, caused by a lithium-ion battery. It required six crews from SFRS to respond, with 30 firefighters on the scene at its peak. SFRS has emphasized the importance of disposing of batteries correctly to prevent such fires.

Why are lithium battery fires so dangerous?

If lithium batteries fail, they can start incredibly ferocious fires within seconds, due to the large amount of energy they store, and the flammable gases produced.

The most important rule: Never charge or store in communal areas

Never charge or store lithium batteries, e-bikes or e-scooters in corridors or on exit routes. If a fire breaks out, your escape could be blocked. Please charge vehicles such as e-scooters, e-bikes or mobility scooters in a safe place, away from exit pathways, ideally in a shed or scooter store where possible.

Safe charging habits

Never leave batteries charging when you are out or when you are asleep. Make sure your battery and charger meet UK safety standards, and if purchasing additional batteries or chargers, ensure they are compatible with your specific device. Always avoid general 'multi-plug' chargers that fit different models unless specifically approved by the battery manufacturer, as they may not provide the right power for your battery and may greatly increase the risk

of fire. Unplug your battery and charger once the battery has charged, don't leave it to over-charge.

Buy safely

Always source your e-bike or e-scooter from a reputable retailer and be wary of cheaper offerings from online marketplaces. Try to avoid buying conversion kits, but if you do, get a professional to carry out the conversion.

Know the warning signs

Regularly check your batteries for any damage or wear and tear.

- Bulging or swelling of a battery is a common sign of failure.
- While some heat during charging is normal, if a battery is very hot to the touch it may be defective and could start a fire.
- If you notice a strong, strange or hot smell coming from your battery this could be a sign of failure.
- Some failing lithium batteries have been reported to make hissing or cracking sounds.

If you notice any of these signs, stop using the battery immediately, unplug the device and remove it from your home.

If a battery catches fire

If a device starts smoking or shows any sign of fire, raise the alarm, get out, stay out, and call 999 immediately. Never attempt to put out a lithium battery fire yourself.

Disposing of old batteries

Never place lithium batteries in your regular bin or recycling bin as they can become damaged and cause a fire. Take old batteries to your local household waste recycling centre instead.

Following this edition of Contact Point, we'll soon be putting up posters in your communal area about how to safely store your scooter.

Fire doors: don't prop, don't block, don't ignore

Fire doors are one of the most important, and yet most overlooked, safety features in any residential building. They are your first line of defence if a fire breaks out and understanding how they work could save your life.

What does a fire door do?

Fire doors stop fire and toxic smoke from spreading through a building. They keep the fire contained to a small area (we call these 'compartments'), allowing for evacuation, stay put and safe access for the emergency services.

In a block of flats, you will find fire and smoke doors on the stairwells, the corridors and on your flat front doors. You will also see them protecting areas where there is a higher risk of combustion (such as bin stores or electrical riser cupboards).

Your flat front door matters

If your front door opens onto a communal area, it must be a fire door and it is vital that it works properly if a fire breaks out. Guildford Borough Council is responsible for inspecting and

maintaining fire doors, but it's important that you play your part too.

The golden rule: keep it closed

A fire door is completely useless if it's wedged open or can't close fully. When fire doors are wedged open, smoke and fire can spread from one compartment to another. Wedges can also weaken the door's closing mechanism and stop it from closing properly thus making it far less effective.

How to check your fire door

You can do your part by regularly carrying out a simple 5-step check of your fire door. This is a very simple check that you can complete in just a few minutes:



FIVE STEP FIRE DOOR CHECK

WHAT TO CHECK	Certification	Gaps	Seals	Hinges	Closing properly
	Look for a label or plug on top (or occasionally on the side) of the door.	Check the gaps around the top and sides of the door are consistently less than 4mm when the door's closed. The gap under the door can be slightly larger (up to 8mm), but it does depend on the door. Ideally, you should not see light under the door.	Look for any intumescent seals around the door or frame. Check they're intact with no sign of damage.	Check all hinges are firmly fixed (three or more of them), with no missing or broken screws.	Check the door closes firmly onto the latch without sticking on the floor or the frame.

A British Woodworking Federation and BWF Fire Door Alliance Campaign

One more thing: Don't alter your fire door

Never carry out any repairs or work on your fire door. This can damage it and make it less likely to work properly in an emergency.

- Don't drill into your fire door or cut it in any way.
- Don't paint over the seals on a fire door.
- Don't replace the handles, hinges or any hardware.

If you have any concerns about your front door or a fire door in a communal area, please report it to Guildford Borough Council straight away so it can be inspected and repaired by a competent person.

Remember: a fire door only works when it's closed.



Smoke alarms and heat alarms

A working smoke or heat alarm is one of the simplest and most effective ways to protect yourself and your family from fire. It can wake you in time to escape and that warning can make all the difference.

What's the difference between smoke and heat alarms?

Heat alarms go off when a room reaches a certain temperature. They should be placed in the kitchen instead of a smoke alarm, as they won't be triggered by cooking fumes but will still alert you to a dangerous rise in temperature caused by a fire. Smoke alarms are suitable for all other rooms where a fire risk exists.

Test your alarms regularly

- Test alarms once a week (using a broom handle if needed).
- If it's chirping or fails to sound, replace the battery immediately or report a repair.
- Allow our contractors access for routine safety inspections.

Report a repair using our **contact us** form on our website.

Need extra support?

Standard smoke and heat alarms aren't suitable for everyone. If you or someone you live with has a condition that may prevent or delay escape in a fire, you may need a specialist alarm system. Please reach out to your Housing Officer for extra help, if there's any reason that might delay you noticing or escaping from a fire.

Contact us - phone number: 01483 505050 or use our self-service pages on our website.

Free help is available

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service offer free Home Fire Safety Visits. They can assess your home, give you personalised advice on the right alarm system for your needs, and fit free smoke alarms if yours aren't yet in place. To book a visit, contact Surrey Fire and Rescue Service at www.surreycc.gov.uk/community/fire-and-rescue or Call free on **0800 085 0767** and Text/SMS **07971 691898**.

Most fires at home start accidentally and the effects can be devastating. A fire detection system (that's smoke and heat alarms) provides an early warning, and time to escape, that really can save lives.

Keeping in Touch Days 2026

Our annual engagement days are back for 2026 and are already well underway. Housing teams have been out in neighbourhoods across Guildford borough, meeting tenants face-to-face, listening to concerns, and strengthening relationships within our communities.



This year's programme builds on the success of last year's Keeping in Touch Days in Bellfields, Ash and Westborough. These visits focus on getting out into local areas, making it easier for tenants to share their experiences and have open, honest conversations with their Housing Team.

The events bring together Housing Officers, senior leadership, and members of the Tenants' Engagement Group (TEG), demonstrating a shared commitment to being visible, approachable and responsive.

At the heart of these events is a commitment to being present in communities and rebuilding trust through direct engagement.

During the visits, staff:

- Knocked on doors and introduced themselves
- Asked simple questions to spark conversations
- Listened to concerns, feedback and ideas
- Offered advice and support on the spot

Housing staff worked in pairs, visiting residents at home and taking time to listen. This year, the approach has been more about natural and meaningful discussions, including listening to how residents would improve their neighbourhood and if they were interested in joining our resident groups to improve services.

Any issues are identified as repairs, damp, or maintenance concerns and raised as follow-up actions where needed. Residents were also signposted to support services, including the Hive centre, benefits advice, and financial help.

They are also a reminder that the Council is there to listen - not just during events, but all year round.

Upcoming dates - still time to take part

There are two remaining opportunities (at the time of publication) to meet your Housing Team this summer:

- **22 July** - The Oval, Guildford Park (GU2 7TP)
- **5 August** - The Oval, Wood Street Village (GU3 3DL)

Time: 11am to 2pm

You can find our information hub at the following locations between 11am to 2pm:

10 June	Slyfield Court, GU1 1RJ
24 June	Bushy Hill Park, GU4 7HG * 5pm to 7pm on Wednesday 24 June
8 July	The green on Coachlads Avenue GU2 8FH
22 July	The Oval, Guildford Park GU2 7TP
5 August	The Oval, Wood Street Village GU3 3DL

You will find the rest of our Housing Team at each location, knocking on doors and speaking to residents.

01483 505050
www.guildford.gov.uk

GUILD FORD BOROUGH

It's important to know, while we might not have visited your area this summer, we are committed to being more visible for tenants and taking the time to speak with you in your neighbourhood.

Top 10 players



1. Surrey Sports Park 6247020



2. Surrey Sports Park 5850540



3. Surrey Sports Park 5566860

6. Surrey Sports Park 4898490

7. Surrey Sports Park 4647010

8. Surrey Sports Park 984710

9. Surrey Sports Park 56650



From playground to plyometrics: Surrey Sports Park and HomeStart Guildford venture.

Amel, works in Guildford, she is a force of quiet revolution within Home-Start. Her focus, a laser-sharp dedication to mental health and the often-overlooked needs of minority ethnic groups, illuminates the unseen struggles within the community. In a world where mental well-being is too often sidelined and cultural differences can create isolating barriers, Amel's work is a beacon. She navigates complex situations with empathy and unwavering resolve, building bridges of understanding and providing vital support to those who need it most. Her presence is a testament to the power of individual dedication to transform lives and strengthen the very fabric of Guildford's diverse community.

Home-Start volunteers, including the invaluable Amel and her team, extend their care beyond mere childcare, transforming it into an opportunity for early childhood development. While parents engage in crucial exercise and social connection, these dedicated individuals facilitate engaging junior sports activities for children aged 0 to 4. With boundless energy and creative play, they introduce the little ones to the joy of movement, fostering coordination and social interaction. This dual approach not only provides parents with the space for self-care, but also cultivates a love for physical activity in the next generation, ensuring that both parents and children benefit from this holistic support system.

Stepping outside the familiar confines of home, exercise becomes a powerful catalyst for transformation, particularly for mothers. Demi who is

an Active Wellbeing Co-Ordinator and Carly the Active Wellbeing Manager believes the program, is designed to build strength and confidence. It progresses weekly, allowing participants to master new exercises and take them home for continued practice, fostering a powerful sense of female empowerment.

Surrey Sports Park, demonstrating its commitment to community well-being, runs 16 distinct programs targeting diverse demographics, including over 60s, perinatal support, Home-Start initiatives, pilates, and mindfulness. This comprehensive approach ensures that individuals of all ages and backgrounds have access to vital physical and mental health resources, creating a stronger, more resilient community.

It's more than just physical activity; it's a vital escape, a chance to reclaim a sense of self amidst the demands of parenthood. The rhythm of movement, the shared exertion, and the supportive camaraderie of fellow exercisers offer a potent antidote to the isolation that can often accompany motherhood. These moments, carved out for personal well-being, are not selfish indulgences, but essential investments in mental and emotional resilience. Each shared laugh, each collective breath, each milestone achieved in the Surrey Park Sports Hall strengthens not only the body, but also the spirit, empowering mothers to return home refreshed, revitalized, and better equipped to nurture both themselves and their families.

Contact Home-Start: **01483 511181** or email: **office@hsguildford.org.uk**.

The work of the tenancy sustainment service

At the heart of a stable home is the ability not just to secure a tenancy, but to sustain it. The Tenancy Sustainment Service plays a vital role in supporting residents to maintain their tenancies, preventing avoidable homelessness, and helping individuals and families build long-term stability.

What we do

The Tenancy Sustainment Service provides tailored, practical support to tenants who may be struggling to manage their tenancy. Our work is proactive, person-centred, and focused on early intervention.

We support tenants with a wide range of challenges, including:

- Mental health and wellbeing concerns
- Hoarding and property condition issues
- Neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour
- Grants for white goods

Our aim is simple: to help tenants stay in their homes and thrive within their communities.

How we work

Each tenant's situation is unique, so our approach is flexible and tailored. We work closely with residents to create realistic action plans, building trust and encouraging independence.

Partnership working is also a key element of our success. We collaborate with:

- Housing officers
- Social services
- Healthcare professionals
- Voluntary and community organisations

By bringing services together, we ensure tenants receive the right support at the right time.

The impact of early intervention

Early support can make a significant difference. By identifying issues before they escalate, we can:

- Prevent eviction and homelessness
- Reduce rent arrears
- Improve property conditions
- Strengthen tenant wellbeing and confidence

This not only benefits individual households but also contributes to stronger, more resilient communities.

Continued on page 12.





Looking ahead

The Tenancy Sustainment Service continues to play a crucial role in preventing homelessness and supporting tenants to lead independent, stable lives.

By investing in early intervention and personalised support, we not only sustain tenancies, we help people rebuild confidence, resilience, and a sense of belonging.

This was a recent tenant experience that utilised the Tenancy Sustainment Service:

Situation:

The tenant was residing in a property that had become severely cluttered due to the accumulation of rubbish and household waste. The level of hoarding had led to significant health and safety risks, including restricted access, potential fire hazards, and poor sanitation. The condition of the property had deteriorated to the point that it was no longer safe or suitable for occupation without intervention.

Intervention:

- Referral made to Care & Repair team, who carried out an initial assessment of the property's condition alongside the Tenancy Sustainment Officer.
- The team successfully secured £5,000 in funding to support the clearance of the property.
- Full property clearance was completed, with all hazardous and excess waste safely removed.
- Following clearance, the property was assessed for damages and repair needs to inform the next phase of work.

Outcomes:

- The property has been cleared of accumulated waste, restoring safe access and eliminating immediate health and safety risks.
- Environmental and fire hazards have been removed, creating a safer living environment for the tenant.
- A clear understanding of the property's condition has been established through post clearance inspection.
- The tenant has been supported through a sensitive and structured process, reducing distress and promoting engagement with ongoing support.

Impact:

- The intervention has prevented potential enforcement or eviction action, helping the tenant to maintain their tenancy.
- Improved living conditions have had a positive effect on the tenant's physical and emotional wellbeing.
- The collaboration with Care & Repair has demonstrated effective partnership working and efficient use of targeted funding.
- The case highlights the value of early intervention and coordinated support in managing complex hoarding cases and sustaining tenancies.

We will continue to support the tenant in a caring and practical way, while making sure the home is repaired and remains safe and manageable. We will keep in regular contact, work alongside partner agencies, and carry out follow-up visits to check progress. The case will stay open as this next phase continues, helping to provide steady, long-term support and promote lasting wellbeing.

If you, or someone you know is struggling to manage a tenancy, please get in touch your Estate Management Officer (found on page 19 of this magazine).



Abandoned vehicle? Here's what to check

We consider several issues to decide whether or not the vehicle can be classed as abandoned and it is likely that at least some of the following will apply:

- has no registered keeper on the DVLA's database and/ or is untaxed,
- without MOT,
- or subject of a Statutory Off Road Notice
- has been stationary for a significant amount of time
- is burnt out
- is significantly damaged, run down, hazardous or unroadworthy, for example, has flat tyres, missing wheels and or broken windows or other hazards
- number plates are missing

How to report an abandoned vehicle

- if the vehicle is on a public highway, is untaxed, with no other issues - www.gov.uk/report-untaxed-vehicle
- if the vehicle is on a public highway and is registered as being subject of a Statutory Off Road Notice (SORN), with no other issues - www.gov.uk/report-untaxed-vehicle

- if the is vehicle on the public highway, with a number of listed issues or vehicle on open land - includes GBC Housing land and private land or private roads, that are accessible and open to the public - www.guildford.gov.uk/article/19829/Report-an-abandoned-vehicle
- vehicle is blocking a public road or footpath - report to the police on 101
- vehicle is on fire or being vandalised - report to the police on 999

If you get any suspected abandoned vehicles, the easiest way to report it is on the online portal www.guildford.gov.uk/article/19829/Report-an-abandoned-vehicle, or by calling us on: **01483 505050**.

The online portal is a form that ensures we get all the relevant information needed to locate the vehicle including; details of the reporter, vehicle's make, model, colour and registration number. You will also be able to add a photo of the vehicle if you have one.

Your Community Wellbeing Team!



The Community Wellbeing Team supports people across Guildford with practical help and emotional care

The team are here to help if you need support with:

Loneliness
Physical Health
Volunteering
Emotional Wellbeing
Cost of living
Housing
Employment



Scan me to
contact us!



The Hive, Park Barn
Drive, Guildford, GU2
8EN

Standing together: our new hate crime policy

Everyone deserves to feel safe and respected in their own home and neighbourhood. Home is more than just a building; it is a place of sanctuary and a “noble seed” for growth within our community. To protect this, Guildford Borough Council and Waverley Borough Council have introduced a new Hate Crime Policy to ensure no resident lives in fear of prejudice or hostility.

TEG’s role: putting residents first

This policy was brought before the Tenants’ Engagement Group (TEG) for review to ensure it works for real people on our estates. During our discussions, we pushed for precision and accountability. We asked the tough questions about how reports are handled and insisted on a “resident-first” approach to ensure that when you speak up, you are heard and supported.

What is a hate crime?

A hate crime is any criminal offence perceived by the victim, or anyone else, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice toward someone’s identity. This includes prejudice based on:

- Race or ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Transgender identity

Even if an incident isn’t a crime, it can be a “Hate Incident”. This includes things like mocking accents, online abuse, offensive letters, or deliberately isolating someone in a social setting.

Why reporting matters

Sometimes, we might feel like an incident is “too small” to report, but the Council encourages everyone to speak up. Reporting helps the Community Safety team identify patterns of

behaviour before they escalate. For example, in January 2026, there was already one hate-related ASB case opened, showing that these issues are being tracked and taken seriously.

The Council’s promise to you

The Council has adopted a zero-tolerance approach. This means:

- **Urgent Action:** Serious hate-related incidents are responded to within one working day.
- **Victim Support:** The Council will listen and signpost you to specialist agencies like Stop Hate UK or Victim Support.
- **Enforcement:** If a perpetrator is a Council tenant, they are breaching their agreement. The Council can use enforcement powers, including tenancy warnings or injunctions, to protect you.

How to get help

If you experience or witness a hate incident, you are not alone:

1. **Emergencies:** Always call 999. For non-emergencies, call the Police on 101.
2. **Contact the Council:** Report directly to your Neighbourhood Housing Officer found on page 19 of Contact Point
3. **Stay anonymous:** Call the Stop Hate UK helpline at 0800 138 1625 or Crimestoppers at 0800 555 111.

Bridging the gap: how Surrey's trauma-informed housing protocol protects our community

By Janet Bell, Tenants' Engagement Group

Housing is often seen as bricks, mortar, and tenancy agreements but for many residents, it is inseparable from mental health and survival. For people recovering from trauma, a stable home is not just practical; it is a medical and psychological necessity.

Recently, the council sponsored my attendance at a vital training session regarding the Surrey Mental Health and Housing Protocol. My objective as a tenant representative was to look past the dense legal jargon and discover exactly how these guidelines protect everyday residents right here in Guildford. What I found is a groundbreaking safety net that every tenant should know about, heavily backed by our local authority's newest strategic commitments.

The systemic breakdown: a case scenario

Consider a highly vulnerable case: a pregnant woman fleeing domestic abuse, with a history of childhood trauma. She is supported by a multi-agency "Child in Need" network involving health services, social care, and housing.

In a rigid system, serious failures can occur:

- **Lack of engagement:** Housing representatives miss key safeguarding meetings, reinforcing feelings of neglect.
- **Coercive offers:** Properties are presented as "take it or leave it," stripping away choice and dignity.
- **Unsafe placements:** Housing may be offered in environments that pose safeguarding risks, such as proximity to severe substance misuse.

Such approaches do not just fail, they can re-traumatise individuals.

What the protocol changes

The Surrey Mental Health and Housing Protocol introduces a psychologically informed, person-centred approach. Key protections include:

1. No more empty chairs (the lead professional & outreach mandate)

A designated Lead Professional coordinates support. Under the Care Act 2014 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, agencies

must cooperate, non-attendance at critical meetings is no longer acceptable.

Locally, schemes like Bridge the Gap provide trauma-informed key workers who support residents with housing, healthcare, and tenancy sustainment.

2. central (the end of coercive ultimatums)

Residents cannot be forced into unsafe choices. Policy requires services to centre the individual's needs, preferences, and rights.

Guildford also commits to recording support needs sensitively, so individuals do not have to repeatedly share traumatic experiences.

3. Environment matters (safeguarding over automation)

Housing suitability must include the surrounding environment. Placing vulnerable residents in unsafe settings breaches safeguarding duties under the Care Act. Safety always takes priority over standard allocation processes.

4. A clear escalation pathway

A structured three-level escalation process ensures concerns are addressed quickly:

- **Level 1:** Urgent multi-agency discussion within 24 hours
- **Level 2:** Senior management intervention
- **Level 3:** Formal housing review within 21 days

Looking ahead: a safe space to heal

As Surrey moves toward a new unitary authority, this protocol provides a critical safeguard to ensure no resident is overlooked during change. It reflects a growing recognition that housing stability and mental wellbeing are inseparable.

If you or someone you know is facing unsafe housing or feels unheard, support is available. Contact your GP, Neighbourhood Housing Officer, or the Surrey 24/7 Crisis Helpline (0800 915 4644).

The Tenant's Engagement Group remains committed to ensuring these protections are not just policies, but lived realities in our community.

Welfare Benefits and Money Advisor

Our Welfare Benefit and Money Officer offers free, confidential support in-person or over the phone to council residents, helping you maximise your income and manage financial challenges.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties, we can support you by helping to:

- Find out exactly which benefits you are entitled to and check you receive the correct amount.
- Complete new benefit claims and offer practical advice on budgeting.
- Challenge or appeal a benefit decision you think is incorrect.
- Identify and apply for available financial grants or signpost you to specialist services.

If you need support, please call us on **01483 505050** to make a referral. We aim to respond to all enquiries within 3 working days.

Recent tenant experience

A recent tenant experience that received support from the Welfare Benefits and Money Advisor:

Referral received: Nov 24 from Tenancy Sustainment Service

Reason for referral: Help to look in to and apply for Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Circumstances: Single man who lives alone.

Support provided: The Welfare Benefit and Money Officer met with the resident to assess income and any additional benefits. The resident had multiple health needs and was previously refused PIP. The advisor explained the PIP process and descriptors used and how these are scored. They completed an updated assessment and decided to proceed with claim.

The resident and officer met again to commence the PIP claim. The resident was supported to make telephone call to the PIP helpline and request the appropriate forms.

Once the forms were received the resident and officer completed the PIP form. This did take some time due to the resident's mental health, but we were able to support him through the questions as thoroughly as we could. Afterwards, the officer liaised with external support from the Autism Society to provide supporting evidence for the PIP claim. The form and evidence was sent to PIP on his behalf and a copy of the completed application was provided for his own record.

The resident was kept in contact throughout the wait time and his assessment. The PIP application was successful and he was awarded the standard rate of daily living for 3 years.

Joint working support:

We worked with an external organisation to get supporting evidence for the residents claim and kept other staff members (estates and tenancy sustainment) updated with progress as they also supported them.

Outcomes:

Standard rate of daily living, PIP awarded at £73.90 per week for 3 years.

We asked the resident to complete a satisfaction survey, and here is a comment from the survey:

'Handled all paperwork from start to finish and calls that were required, this removed stress as otherwise I would not have made the claim.'

We work on a referral basis from external partners and when our teams come into contact where there is a concern for the resident's welfare. Speak to your Estates Management Officer (found on page 19) for more information.

Get **FREE** meal plans

**FREE FOR ALL
GUILDFORD
RESIDENTS!**

**USUALLY £86 PER YEAR - NOW
FREE - YOU'LL NEVER BE CHARGED!**

**Fed up of deciding what to
cook every night?**

**Want to save money on
food shopping?**

Want to eat healthier?

Then this is for you!

Get a new personalised meal
plan & shopping list every week
designed just for you - for **FREE**



**GUILDFORD
BOROUGH**

*Five*Dinners

Scan the QR code or visit the link below to get
instant access to your personalised meal plan!

FiveDinners.com/MyCommunity

Your Estates Management Officers

Estates Management Services have a team of staff that manage different areas of the borough. You can find your relevant officer below with their associated email.

If you are not sure who your Estate Officer is, please contact the shared inbox:
estatemangement@guildford.gov.uk

Laura Lawler

 **Laura.lawler@guildford.gov.uk**  **01483 444089**

Areas covered: Town Centre, Stoughton, Chilworth



Rebecca Mountford

 **Rebecca.Mountford@guildford.gov.uk**  **01483 444232**

Areas covered: Ripley, Albury, Artington, Effingham, Send, Burpham, Merrow, Peaslake, Horsley, Gomshall



Katie Lynch

 **Katie.Lynch@guildford.gov.uk**  **01483 444589**

Areas covered: Ash Vale, Tongham, Compton, Puttenham, Hurtmore, Normandy, Shalford, Seale, Ash, Bramley, Pirbright, Shere, Wood Street Village



Lucy Griffin

 **Lucy.Griffin@guildford.gov.uk**  **01483 444287**

Areas covered: Bellfields, Slyfield



Dionne Wilde

 **Dionne.wilde@guildford.gov.uk**  **01483 444688**

Areas covered: Park Barn, Guildford Park, Worplesdon



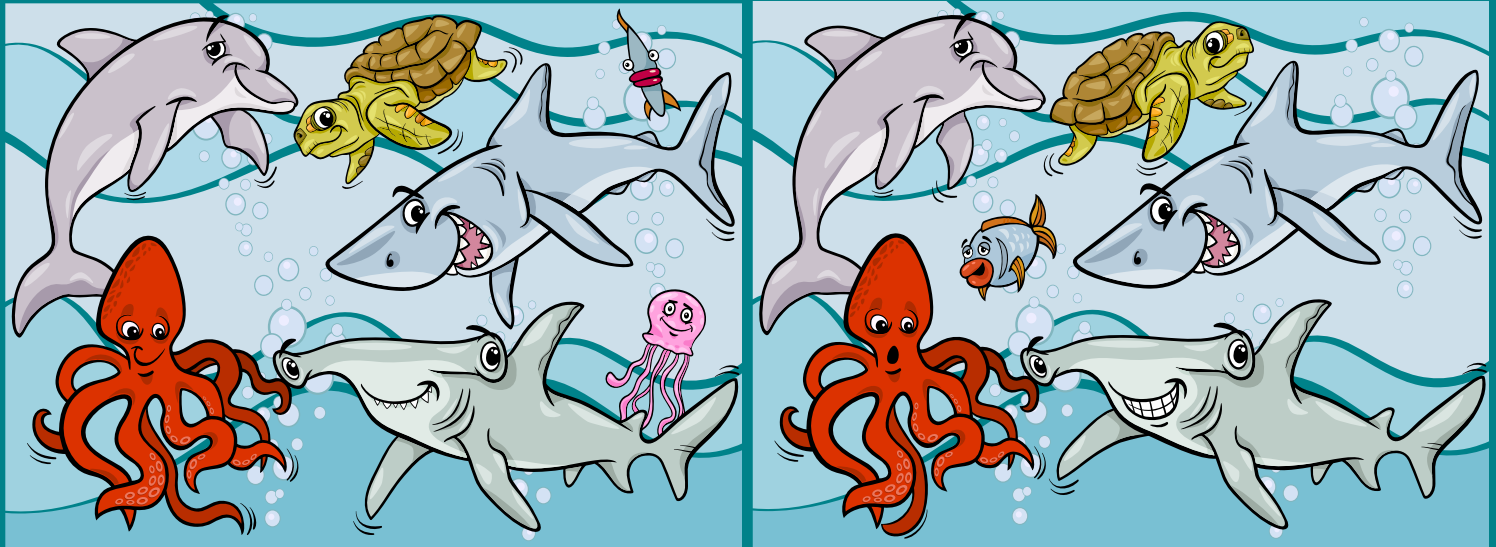
Minela Subasic

 **Minela.Subasic@guildford.gov.uk**  **01483 444291**

Areas covered: Westborough, Clandon



Can you spot 10 differences



Answers on page 2.

Competition Corner

Complete the wordsearch or send in a photo you have taken in Guildford for a chance to win a £25 voucher

A M S V U V F V R A V G C P L W M
J R J E C L I D G P N K L O Y E G
F A E A I S F M R I O Y C T T L M
D L C L V R N D E O O L E F A F F
E A I H Z X E B Z M T F I D E A Q
K E V K Q X L T E L A O X C Q R S
S K R L F L Q T T S H H K K Y E G
R O E J E T R V E A Y R J L O T F
C M S W X I Z R L P B R M S Y W O
H S S J C C I B J C T O P K A H E
Q U R S Y F I S F H Q Z S W R S Z
S S I E Z P X A J Z O S C L K W C
P R A P Y S P B P X U F S E N C O
R R P C O M M U N I T I E S J M M
Y C E V T G R E M M U S C E E K H
M L R F G U W Q F W V H V E Y O M
E I C L I X C Y S V P X K X B H O

Repairs Service
Fire Safety
Communities
Policy
Welfare

Plyometrics
Summer
Batteries
Smoke Alarm
Wellbeing

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Send your completed wordsearch or picture along with your name, address and a telephone number to:

Tenants' Engagement Group, C/O Resident Engagement Officer, Millmead, Guildford, GU2 4BB or photograph your completed wordsearch and email to tenants.group@guildford.gov.uk

Closing date is **Friday 2 October 2026**. Congratulations to the previous winner of the spring 2026 wordsearch, who was J Hill

Resident Engagement Officer, Millmead House, Millmead, Guildford, GU2 4BB.

Tel: 01483 444769 | **Email:** tenants.group@guildford.gov.uk | **Web:** www.guildford.gov.uk

@GuildfordBC

@GuildfordBC

@GuildfordBC