

ABILITY NEWS

Winter 2024

Promoting Independent Living



Contents

- 3 **Welcome from Jeff Skipp (CEO)**
- 4 **Brian's Story**
- 5-7 **Reena's Story**
- 7 **Introducing Ability's new Director of Care & Support, Lauren Green**
- 8 **Resident Engagement Services**
- 9 **Tenant perception surveys**
- 10-11 **Reporting repairs online**
- 12-15 **Meet The Teams**



Welcome by Jeff Skipp, CEO

I hope you are all well and have enjoyed the summer, despite the mixed bag of weather we've had. It has been a busy time at Ability with a great deal going on – and we are sharing a lot of it in this edition of Ability News.

The election we had in July saw the election of a Labour government. Whilst it's still early days, the incoming leaders have promised to build more homes and give more rights and protection to tenants.

Ability welcomes these promises and believes the removal of no-fault evictions, where people can be asked to leave their homes with two months' notice without having done anything wrong, is wrong and removing this law is the right thing to do. We hope the government delivers on these promises quickly, because over time this will increase the number of homes available for people to rent and increase the rights of residents to stay in their homes.

At Ability we value the feedback we get from you, our residents. It is only by understanding from you the things we do well and where we need to improve, that we can tailor our homes and services to meet your needs.

The government have set out new rules on how often housing associations must ask their residents what they think of their homes, services such as repairs, housing and support, and how good we are at listening and acting on your concerns.

The government have set out the questions that every housing association must ask its tenants, so they can compare and make sure the services we deliver are as good as they can be. These questions are called Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

We have started our Tenant Satisfaction Measures surveys, and, in this edition, we explain what they are and why we are really keen for all of our tenants to reply, so we can use your views and experiences to improve what we do for you.

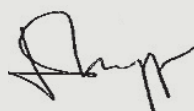
Ability is committed to involving tenants on an ongoing basis, too, to make sure your homes and the services we provide are the best they can be. In this edition, we talk about resident engagement and how we want to make sure we hear your voices and act on them in our planning and service improvement.

It will set out how you can become involved if you want, helping us to deliver the best homes and services possible.

We have recently appointed a new Director of Care and Support – Lauren Green, who has written about herself and why she was so keen to join us at Ability. We also talk to two residents from Care & Support who outline the service they received from Ability and how we supported them to successfully meet their aspirations and live independently.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Ability News.

Yours sincerely



Jeff Skipp, CEO



Brian's Story

“Finding a new flat to live in has been a huge relief, as I am very concerned about my possessions. I now know that in the future I will have home and financial security. This hopefully means I can become more sociable and continue my independent living.”

Brian was referred to our service in October 2022, having been recently diagnosed with autism. He was living alone, in a privately rented two-bed flat in Uxbridge, which he had been paying for using his inheritance from his recently deceased parents. Brian had lived with his parents for most of his life and had never worked.

Brian was having some struggles with hoarding, after bringing many of his possessions with him to his new flat. Brian's funds were diminishing quite quickly, and he had hoarding struggles particularly surrounding his beloved collection of books, which he did not want to part with. He was very anxious about running out of money and not being able to continue paying for the rent on his flat.

During lockdown, Brian's sister couldn't come and visit him, so he started to neglect his personal care, not eating regularly, and feeling unable to cope. As a result, Brian was sectioned.

He was getting himself back on his feet when he came to Ability, but needed help mainly with his hoarding, finances, enquiring about UC benefits and trying to find a flat that was more affordable for him to rent.



Brian has this to say about his support worker, Jamie.

“Jamie has been very helpful in various ways with my personal situation and I have enjoyed having very interesting conversations with Jamie on many subjects during our support sessions.

“I was anxious for the future with regards to my financial situation and the clutter of my possessions, which had become an issue. Jamie helped me to get Universal Credit. This has been more than I thought it would be, which I am very happy about.

Brian's new supported living accommodation



Reena's Story

Reena at the House of Commons speaking on women and mental health issues and with her peer group.



Reena was referred to our Hillingdon mental health floating support service in October 2023 by the community mental health team. She was recently divorced and lived in a rented house with her two children, who are 11 and 7 years old.

Reena first encountered mental health services in 2017 when she was admitted to the mental health unit under the Mental Health Act, and she was diagnosed with psychosis.

Reena said that this had contributed to the breakdown of her marriage. She had struggled to return to her normal life and felt that her mental wellbeing had suffered so badly that she was “barely functioning”. Reena stated that she was “on the floor” she had lost all confidence in her abilities and was unable to face people.

Reena started working with her floating support worker Margaret Griffin in November last year. Together, they made a person-centred support plan using the mental health recovery star.

They started work on the following:

1. Reena had been served with a notice of eviction because she was behind on her rent. Margaret supported Reena when she attended court and helped her develop an offer for repayment and also apply for discretionary housing payment to cover the arrears - which was granted. The magistrate at the court said she wouldn't be evicted, so she was saved from potentially being homeless.

2. Reena reported that she was struggling to plan her day-to-day activities such as shopping, cooking and planning and organising tasks. Reena required support in liaising with her landlord around tenancy issues, updating her journal in her universal credit account, and budgeting properly. She said she had a very poor memory and concentration, so they started writing everything down in a daily diary setting small achievable daily goals.

Reena reported that when she felt very low she could not physically get herself going to the shower and that everything was a struggle, from getting dressed to determining what to buy according to what she could cook (she made ready meals for herself but freshly cooked meals for children as much as she could). She said she felt a pressure she couldn't understand and that her thoughts were racing so fast she could not keep herself focused.

Gradually Margaret and Reena developed a structure to Reena's week and worked on practical solutions to increasing motivation, self-esteem and confidence and worked on meal planning, budgeting, prioritising and dealing with her online UC journal.

3. Margaret also supported Reena to apply for PIP and got her moved from job-related to support group benefits, to help maximise her income.

REENA'S STORY CONTINUED...

Below is a testimony from Reena about her recovery journey and the work she has done to become empowered. She now gives support to other women who found themselves struggling with their mental health and didn't know where to access help and support.

Reena's Testimony

"I was dealing with mental health issues as the result of a lengthy divorce and facing eviction proceedings, which both made me very fragile and had me at a point where I just wanted to give up on everything.

Margaret, my support worker from Ability, came in like a breath of fresh air and gave me all the right guidance and support. This included explaining my rights, what is beneficial for me, and how to get back onto my feet as she recognised my need for independence.

We started handling one issue at a time, and slowly, but steadily, we have now managed to get on top of all my outstanding life concerns.

I have delegated where I can, so I am able to focus on myself and my family life. My children have been key to the progress I needed to make. I really needed to be OK for them.

Recently, I have started and got involved with online network marketing to help more people like me, and on March 24, I was invited to speak at the Houses of Parliament about mental health. I am going back there in April/May 2025 to speak about another project I am working on."

I have started a mental health support group that provides access to all areas of life that can affect us and make life difficult to enjoy.

#DiariesofReena is a social media initiative that should give mental health patients an extra avenue of support. We envision providing a team of pro-bono specialists in field of finance, health, housing, relationships and other areas that impact on our day-to-day life, and affect our mental health.

Hopefully, with my network and connections, I can help change that to some extent. I am currently looking for funding to support this venture, as we will be bringing a therapeutic part to the project, too."



Reena at the House of Commons speaking on women and mental health issues and with her peer group.

Reena's achievements since March 24 continue to grow as she continues to have more control over her life:

1. Nominated for Outstanding Influencer of the year at Asian Lifestyle Awards 2024

2. Cooked and served food for 30 homeless people in Hounslow, at the charity HOPE.

3. Enrolled in two free courses - creative crafts for wellbeing and tapping fundamentals workshop for stress and anxiety at Uxbridge College by Learn Hillingdon adult community education.

4. Entered the Miss Asia GB beauty pageant - passed two interviews and is now in the finals.

5. Started going to the gym every week with her son.

6. Planned a trip to Paris later in the year with her children

In her capacity as an 'expert by experience' Reena also participated in our interview panel to appoint a new floating support worker.



Introducing Lauren Green our new director of Care and support

I started in my role as Director of Care & Support with Ability in April 2024, and I provide senior leadership to our care and support services across Surrey, Slough, Merton and Hillingdon. I have held a variety of positions in different organisations in the social care sector over the past 17 years and am passionate about delivering the highest quality, person-centred services to those we serve.

I spent my first few weeks visiting Ability's care and support services and enjoyed meeting staff and customers along the way. I look forward to meeting more customers and staff teams in future and hearing a wide range of ideas about how we can improve our services even further.

I am keen to improve customer engagement across our care and support services and Ability more

widely, so that customers' voices are heard at every level of the organisation - a vision we share across our organisation.

It is worth highlighting a recent example of customer involvement from our Hillingdon Mental Health Floating Support Service, where one of the customers worked alongside the Team Manager, Georgie Scripps, to interview candidates for a Support Worker role within the team. We are grateful to the customer for giving up her time and for her support in the recruitment process. If any customers are interested in hearing more about taking part in recruiting staff or any other ways to get involved, please speak to the manager of your service or our Resident Engagement Lead.

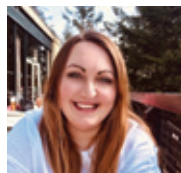
Ability's New Resident Engagement Services



At Ability, we are currently building our Resident Engagement Service and have already had several residents involved in this process. This is in its early stages, and we are really looking forward to sharing more detail soon about what this new engagement framework is going to look like and how our residents can be more involved with shaping our organisation going forward.

We have now introduced a Resident Engagement Lead position, who will drive and support the implementation and development of a range of engagement tools and techniques, which may include (but are certainly not limited to) community forums and events, workshops, surveys or community outreach activities.

Meet our Resident Engagement Lead



Hannah-Kate Lampard
Resident Engagement
Lead

Hannah-Kate has worked at Ability for more than 10 years, both within our Care & Support and Housing Services Teams. She is now dedicating her time to building our new Resident Engagement Service and is keen to build involvement from residents in more of what we do at Ability.

Tenant Perception Surveys

Ability Housing Association are committed to providing homes that are affordable, safe and secure, which tenants can be proud to call home, as well as contributing to healthy and safe neighbourhoods and communities. We look to continuously improve the ways in which we deliver services to our residents to ensure we are meeting their needs.

We want to hear from you!

We are making contact with our residents, based on the contact preferences you have given us previously, to complete the latest Tenant Satisfaction Survey, which we would be really grateful if you could fill out.

The questions asked will be used to prepare an annual report to tenants of Tenant Satisfaction Measures. This will detail how we have performed over the past 12 months, and may also be shared with the Regulator of Social Housing, which forms part of an ongoing review of providers.

By participating in this survey, you will help us identify areas where we need to improve our services, with the aim of delivering a constantly improving environment for tenants now and in the future.

We will collate the results and along with other key performance measures, will publish a report to tenants within our newsletter later this year, summarising the results and identifying areas that we intend to address and how we intend to do this.

If you would like to speak with someone more about our surveys, please do get in touch to speak to a member of our Contact Centre team today on 0808 164 7474.



We need you!

We are looking for more residents to come and be involved in one of our upcoming project groups. You do not need to have any qualifications or specific experience; you just need to be an Ability customer who is willing to get stuck in!

If you are interested in hearing more, please get in touch with Hannah-Kate, who would love to hear from you.

Email: Hannah-KateL@ability-housing.co.uk

Contact: 0808 164 7474

Did you know that repairs can now be reported online?

Report a repair

We have further developed our repairs reporting service so that you can now report a repair online.

By clicking the 'Report a Repair' icon on our website, this sends your request straight through to our contact team so that you do not need to phone in if you would prefer not to.

The online form will ask you some questions about your repair and there will also be an option for you to upload pictures with your request.

You will also be able to click on a link that will give you information about whether you or Ability are responsible for the repair.



This is what the repairs icon looks like on our website homepage.

Heres a reminder on who does what

We will:

- Keep the structure and outside of your home in good repair;
- Maintain your heating, plumbing, electricity and gas fittings;
- Decorate the outside of your home; and
- Maintain any security systems.

We expect you to:

- Repair anything that gets damaged (or pay us to do it);
- Decorate the inside of your home (unless your tenancy agreement says otherwise);
- Replace blown fuses and reset trip switches;
- Replace plugs, chains, toilet seats, batteries for smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, light bulbs, fluorescent tubes, starters and pull cords;
- Sort out minor blockages in sinks, baths, basins, showers or toilets;
- Set your own heating controls and bleed radiators;
- Maintain washing lines or individual rotary dryers;
- Fit extra locks or safety catches, replace lost keys and change locks;
- Replace broken windows;
- Maintain your own garden;
- Take care of your own belongings, including any appliances you lease;
- Repair anything you've installed yourself; and
- Sort out your own draughtproofing, aerials, satellite dishes, phone wiring and sockets.

Remember, you are responsible for any damage to your personal belongings, including carpets and decorations. We recommend taking out contents insurance. Your housing officer can give you advice about this.



Programmed works

We run a programme of planned works for more complex or expensive repairs. If you need a repair doing that falls into this category, we will explain this when you report it. We will tell you when the next round of planned works is due.

Gas checks and services

We are legally responsible for getting annual gas checks and services carried out at all Ability homes with a gas supply – whether we own or lease the property.

We use qualified Gas Safe engineers to carry out these checks. Please make sure you give them access to your home, so that we can make sure your heating is still working efficiently and your home is safe.

Customer Handbook Repairs Manual

You will also have access to view our latest Customer Handbook Repairs Manual online which outlines our repairs service in much more detail.

For more information, have a look at our website at www.ability-housing.co.uk

MEET THE TEAMS...



Our Contact Centre can be contacted on the below details:

Tel: 0808 164 7474

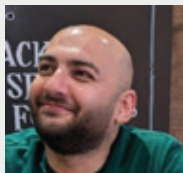
Email: Contact@ability-housing.co.uk

Or online from our website: www.ability-housing.co.uk/contact us

The Contact Centre team

The Contact Centre team are friendly and will be the first people to take your calls or online queries. They are the team that will handle and process your repair requests and make arrangements with our approved contractors to ensure they get done.

The Contact Centre always aim to resolve your query within your first call or contact. However, for times where you may wish to speak to someone about your tenancy or your support for example, the Contact Centre team will connect you to someone from one of our specialist departments to help you.



Barry Masood
Customer Service
Team Leader



Katie Hay
Customer Service
Advisor



Nabil Hussain
Customer Service
Advisor

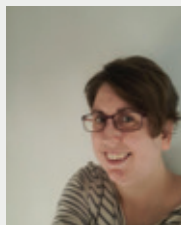
The Housing Team

Our Housing Team provide an essential role to Ability Housing Association and within the team, are many years of knowledge, skills and experience to support our residents to maintain and enjoy their tenancies with us.

The Housing team provide an intensive housing management service to support our residents in their homes and are dedicated in helping you to build and live, a fulfilling life in your home and community.



Nick Coverdale
Housing Services
Manager

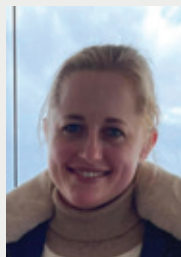


Kari Ireson
Housing & Support Officer
Bournemouth, Poole, New Milton and
Southampton.



Ema Jones
Housing & Support Officer

Mitcham, Morden, Croydon,
Wimbledon, Raynes Park, Sutton,
Carshalton and Wallington.



Gemma Granville
Housing & Support Officer

Bexhill-on-Sea, Hastings,
Havant, Worthing, Waterlooville,
Littlehampton and St Leonards.



Nathalie Jones
Housing & Support Officer

Ashford, Basingstoke, Woking, Bordon,
Bracknell, Dorking, Farnham, Liss,
Sandhurst, Shepperton and Staines.

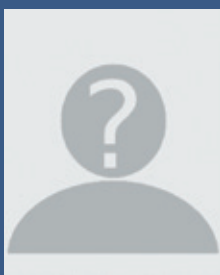


Morolake Kindiji
Housing & Support Officer

St Albans, Slough, Chigwell, Abingdon,
Waltham Abbey, Aylesbury, Hayes and
Banbury.



Vacant Position



New recruit coming soon
Housing & Support Officer

Swindon, Reading, Thatcham and Newbury

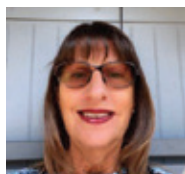
The Property Team

Our Property Team are another vital part of Ability, who oversee our contractors and larger repairs projects. The Property Team have a great deal of experience dealing with complex property management issues.

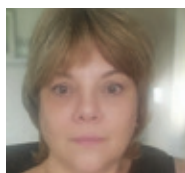
The Property team manage the handling of our planned maintenance works and have some exciting projects in this area at the moment. Keep an eye out for the next edition, where we aim to show you results of the planned works that are due to take place across the summer.



Neil Schofield
Head of Property
and Asset



Maggie Biddlecombe
Property Services
Officer



Mandy Bailey
Property Services
Officer



Nana Yaa Asare-Aidoo
Property Compliance
Co-ordinator





COMMITMENTS

VALUES

We engage actively for feedback

We listen actively to our customers, colleagues and partners to help improve what we do and how we do it.

We value differences

We respect and value the individuality of each person.

We focus on ability not disability

We focus on what each person CAN-DO.

We demonstrate integrity

Our culture is one of openness, honesty and personal accountability.



BEHAVIOURS

Seek first to understand

I will listen actively to ensure I have the best possible understanding.

Think: CAN-DO

I will focus on what is possible and think about what I CAN-DO.

Give a positive response

I will work with you to agree a positive outcome, without excuse or blame.

Personal ownership

I will take full responsibility for making sure the agreed outcomes are achieved in good time.

Board Members

(as at 30th September 2023)

- Sally Reay (Chair)
- Dominic Wallace
- Rinat Abdrasilov
- Kimberley Ellis
- Jai Dosanjh
- Dritan Uka
- Mandy Dunstan
- Tim Jennings
- Vimal Gaglani
- Lynsey Bradshaw

Executive Directors

- Jeff Skipp, CEO
- Marcus Andrews, Director of Finance
- Lauren Green, Director of Care and Support
- Lucy Sivasundram, Director of Operations (Housing)

Auditors, solicitors & bankers

- Auditors: Beever and Struthers
- Solicitors: Devonshires
- Bankers: Barclays Bank PLC

Registrations

- Company number: 01261380
- Charity number: 271547
- Registered with The Regulator for Social Housing for England & Wales, Number LH2174

Report production team

- Hannah-Kate Lampard, Ability team
- Copy Editor: Dominic Weaver, Twelve
- Design: www.vdmagency.co.uk

Company registered office

Ability Housing Association,
The Coach House,
Gresham Road, Staines,
Middlesex, TW18 2AE

How to get in touch with us:

- ☎ : (0808) 164 7474
- ✉ : info@ability-housing.co.uk
- 📘 : AbilityHA

- 👤 : AbilityHA
- 📧 : ability_housing_association
- 🌐 : ability-housing-association