

## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Dear tenants, leaseholders and friends of jLiving,

Welcome to the 2021 Pesach newsletter, we hope that you enjoy reading it and catching up with what tenants and leaseholders have been doing across the Schemes, albeit in these 'lockdown' times.

In this newsletter I had sincerely hoped that I would be able to say that we are now safely 'on the other side' of the global pandemic and while it does seem that brighter days are ahead with the introduction and roll-out of the vaccine programme and greater access to testing, we are not out of the woods yet. Therefore please continue to follow the guidelines set out by the government and the NHS and let us keep ourselves and others safe and well.

While Head Office staff continue working remotely, this does not mean that we are not busy! All of the 'behind the scenes' work that keeps the Association running is still taking place. With the ongoing lockdown restrictions our Property Team are again reassessing our work programme for 2021 in order to restart some of our larger projects. In these Covid times, in addition to ensuring that we engage the right contractor, we also have to ensure that we can carry out any works, however large or small they may be, in a safe manner for tenants, staff and of course the operatives carrying out the works. Please believe me when I say we are as keen as you are as tenants and leaseholders to get everything moving again.

While our Property Team have been obliged to concentrate on priority and emergency works throughout the lockdown periods, the team continue to complete in excess of 300 jobs per month across the Association, with an average of 204 jobs going to external contractors and around 99 jobs completed by our in house team.

Our Finance Team are working tirelessly to ensure that all of our suppliers and contractors are paid on time, no mean feat when the team processes a monthly average of 413 invoices and makes payments by cheque, Bacs and direct debit - all of which have to be

processed, checked and prepared for payment authorisation by two of our Board signatories.

Our Finance Officer ensures that all of your rent payments, an average of 422 per month, are processed and updated. While we continue to seek ways to upgrade our current IT systems, all of these transactions have to be processed manually. See article on page 6 for more details.

Our Housing Team have been working hard to ensure that we continue to offer our properties to those who are in the most need and, despite all of the restrictions, have allocated 35 properties to new tenants who have now moved safely into their new homes. Welcome!

Covid has reminded us of the importance of being able to communicate with you quickly and efficiently and we are now implementing the use of the digital monitors within the Schemes, a most generous gift from the JBG Housing Trust for which we are more than grateful. We are also in the process of developing and launching a more interactive website for current tenants and leaseholders while also providing information for our stakeholders, partners and future tenants.

Hopefully by now many of you will be making use of the Empient Tenant App which enables you to make requests and report repairs more quickly to your Housing Managers from your phone or tablet. We will also be using the app to send messages to tenant groups and Schemes without the need for letters and endless papers. The app also allows us to carry out quick surveys and to gather information safely and securely to improve services. We are delighted to be working in partnership with Optus Homes to offer this.

I and the Board remain fortunate and thankful for the ongoing commitment of our staff and the resilience, support and understanding of you, our tenants and leaseholders.

With my very best wishes. Chag Pesach Sameach

**Jane Goodman**  
Chief Executive.

## NEW TENANTS JOINED THE JIVING FAMILY IN 2020

We are delighted to say that we are very much open for business and throughout 2020 we safely moved 35 new tenants into their own flats – once the government advice allowed home moves. We have many moves already completed so far this year and more planned for the next month or so.

The safety of our tenants and leaseholders along with staff is our top priority, which means that many staff are working from home. Some of our services are restricted but we are here to help all tenants and leaseholders.

We have 14 Schemes over 12 sites and around 500 properties. For more information about our properties please explore our website or call 020 8381 4901. If you want to apply to live with us, please feel free to apply online using our application form top right of the home page.



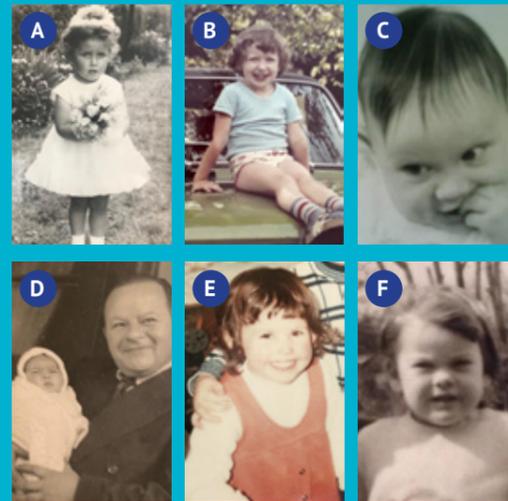
## GUESS WHO BABY FACE?

Can you match the baby photo to the member of staff? We invited some of our employees to submit a photo of themselves when they were younger for you to guess.

Here are the photos of:

- Director of Finance - Frances Horoz
- Harmony Close and Meta Worms Court Housing Manager – Gabriela Sousedikova
- Montefiore Court Housing Manager - Lisa Miller
- PA to CEO – Gilda Klein
- PA to CEO/ Lettings Coordinator – Barbara Felber
- Shine House Senior Housing Manager - Lori Gardner

But which baby photo belongs to which staff member? Current photos of these members of staff can be found on our website <https://www.jliving.org.uk/about-us/our-team> or on the property pages <https://www.jliving.org.uk/properties/properties>. Answers can be found on the back page.



## REPAIRS TO YOUR HOME



During restrictions the Repairs service will continue to run a limited service in order to protect you, our tenants and leaseholders, as well as our staff. We are able to attend emergency or high priority repairs. But due to Covid, sensible hygiene measures and staff working in isolation across the Association each job is taking a little longer to organise and carry out.

If a contractor or one of our Maintenance Technicians does need to enter your home, to ensure everyone's safety please can you open your front door and step back. Ensure that your home is well ventilated by opening all doors and windows prior to their arrival. We will ensure any areas touched by an operative are wiped down before leaving, however, we would also ask that any doors, cupboards etc. are open prior to their arrival to minimise the areas that are touched in your homes.

To keep everyone safe we are not doing non-urgent repairs, so we'd politely ask that you don't report these.

If you report a repair that can wait without causing serious problems, we will log it but it will not be done until services are back to normal.

Remember, if you need to report a repair contact your Housing Manager giving as much information and detail as possible to ensure that the right repair person is sent out and to avoid unnecessary visits, this will protect tenants, leaseholders, staff and contractors.

## FALSE FIRE ALARMS

We continue to receive a large number of emergency call outs due to false fire alarm activation. Most are caused by tenants not cleaning their hobs, ovens or toasters regularly. A typical callout cost for this is £240. Please use your extractor hoods and fans when cooking or open a nearby window, regularly clean your ovens, hobs and toasters and shut the kitchen door when cooking. Anyone found causing a false fire alarm by not attending to these matters will receive the bill.

## COMPLIANCE

We continue to progress compliance works from fire risk assessments, gas servicing, and electrical safety testing.

However, if you are medically vulnerable and are shielding and would prefer us not to attend, we would ask that you contact your Housing Manager to ask them to mention this to the Repairs Department to ensure we reschedule any proposed appointments with you. We will contact you when we need access.

## REMEMBERING VALERIE AT MJH

A beautiful rose bush has been planted in the garden of Maitland Joseph House in memory of former tenant Valerie Howarth.

Housing Manager Cynthia and a number of tenants who were friends of Valerie were invited to a memorial held locally at the end of last year.

The memorial, which was organised by her daughter and family, raised money for The Hospice of St Francis, where Valerie spent her final weeks before passing away.

Cynthia said: "We planted a rose bush in memory of Valerie as she loved roses and there is a small section of the Scheme garden where Valerie could regularly be found tending to the flowers; she also tended to the indoor plants around the Scheme as well as helping friends with their gardens too."

## COOKERY CORNER

### Moist Apple Passover Cake

Most Passover desserts are very dry but this cake is incredibly moist.

#### Ingredients

- 2 tbsp vegetable margarine, at room temperature
- 3 eggs, separated
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- ¼ cup orange juice
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup matzo meal
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¾ white sugar
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 4 granny smith apples, peeled, cored and quartered

#### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease an 8-inch square baking dish with margarine.
2. Beat egg whites in a metal, glass, or ceramic bowl with an electric mixer until stiff peaks form. Lift your beater or whisk straight up: the egg whites should form a sharp peak that holds its shape. Set aside.
3. Place the egg yolks, oil, and orange juice into a mixing bowl; beat with an electric mixer until creamy and thick, about 5 minutes. Stir in 1 cup of sugar, mixing well, then lightly stir in the matzo meal and salt. Use a rubber spatula or wire whisk to fold about ⅓ of the beaten egg whites into the matzo meal mixture. Gently run the spatula through the centre of the mixture, then around the sides of the bowl, repeating until fully incorporated. Add the remaining egg whites, folding until just incorporated.
4. Mix together ¾ cup of sugar with cinnamon in a bowl. Spread half the batter into the prepared baking pan; distribute the apple quarters evenly over the batter. Sprinkle the apple pieces with about ½ cup of the sugar-cinnamon mixture, spread the remaining batter over the apples; sprinkle the remaining sugar-cinnamon mixture over the top of the cake.
5. Bake in the preheated oven until the cake is golden brown, about 45 minutes. Cut into squares while still warm. Enjoy!



## GARDENING

We continue to plan ahead for the coming spring and colourful seasonal planting will be appearing in a garden near you very soon!



## OFFICES STILL CLOSED TO PUBLIC WHILE COVID-19 THREAT LINGERS

Staff who normally work in our offices are still working at home due to the ongoing risk of catching Covid-19, only visiting sites to do important health and safety checks.

All our phone and computer systems have been adapted so you can still get in touch with us, by phone or email.

#### CALL HANDLING

If your call is picked up by one of our staff who cannot help with your query, they will make sure the colleague best able to help calls you back.

#### SUPPORT IF WANTED

We are also continuing our support for those of you who want it, either organising it ourselves or directing you to the best match locally for your needs.

## CLEANING

Since the start of the pandemic we have asked our cleaners to increase their hours to allow for more intensive cleaning and additional cleaning such as that of high contact areas; as well as introducing regular deep cleans at each Scheme - at least once a week. If we receive reports of suspected cases of Covid-19 within a Scheme we also request additional cleaning is carried out as a preventative measure. We do ask, however, that ALL tenants continue to regularly use sanitiser when in communal areas BEFORE touching surfaces such as lift buttons or laundry room controls and wearing a mask at all times to protect themselves and others. Anyone identified as not doing so will be contacted by the Manager in charge in order to prevent reoccurrence. We are in this together!



Stephanie keeps high contact areas at Harmony Close sparkling

## BEHIND IN YOUR RENT?

We can help! jLiving will always work with tenants that are having genuine financial difficulties and are struggling to pay rent or are now in arrears. Welfare Officer Biljana provides money, welfare and debt advice so please contact her for support.

We'll see how we can support you to pay your rent and any arrears and will agree a way you can clear the debt by paying a realistic amount within a reasonable period of time.

Please don't ignore the problem, get in touch with us straight away. Biljana would much rather talk to you about the problem than let things get worse. If you do ignore this debt you could risk losing your home. Paying your rent is a priority debt and it can have an impact on your credit rating for example.

"I am aware that some of our tenants are behind with their rent payments and that Covid-19 has had an impact. However, I must point out the necessity of paying your rent on time and clearing rent arrears," explained Biljana.

"Regular rent payments, paid on time allow jLiving to look after our properties such as ensuring our Maintenance Department or contractors can attend major repairs and where needed upgrade the standard of our properties."

She added: "As jLiving's Welfare Officer I am available every day of the week, Monday to Friday, if you would like to discuss your difficulties in meeting rent payments. This information is kept strictly confidential."

To contact Biljana for a confidential chat you can call her on her office number 0208 731 0919 or email her at [bvidojevic@jliving.org.uk](mailto:bvidojevic@jliving.org.uk)



## ACTS OF KINDNESS AROUND THE ASSOCIATION

Acts of kindness are always greatly appreciated but currently they are more welcome than ever, so if you receive one - why not pass it on? Around the Association tenants, leaseholders and staff have been very kind. In Golders Green, Meta Worms tenant Mrs Bryer has been taking a Zoom class from Jewish Care called Knit, Stitch & Chatter which has kept her busy and in touch with others in lockdown. She has been knitting a lovely blanket which she will be donating to charity.

Tenants and staff at Montefiore Court in Margate have surpassed themselves with their acts of kindness. Tenant Mr John McConnell has kindly donated a number of old laptops and tablets to a local school for disadvantaged families to use while at home.

Meanwhile, Housing Manager Lisa and her 19 year old daughter have been helping a friend who has a shop, by delivering groceries. Lisa said: "We have been supporting mostly elderly and isolating people as well as tenants at Montefiore Court."

And finally, a carefully planned, socially distanced, extremely safe, virtual quiz and raffle was organised in December by Housing Manager Lisa. The raffle along with a virtual jumble held earlier in the year raised over £200, which was given to the Cavell Nurses charity. In Hemel Hempstead Housing Manager Cynthia has been helping two tenants who are both 92 by offering to print

puzzles for them to keep them busy during lockdown - and they loved them.

"Since the pandemic Ruby who had been attending and loved the local day centre was feeling isolated; so I printed some puzzles for her as she doesn't have access to an iPad or computer," said Cynthia.

"I also gave them to Ivor, who usually goes out to the local library and reads a lot but couldn't during lockdown," she added.

We have been seriously impressed by the goodwill and kindness towards friends and neighbours shown by so many of you. Even little gestures can make a big difference.



Mr John McConnell seen here with all the equipment he has donated to a local school.

## WELFARE AT JIVING



Checking up on your welfare, jLiving's Welfare Officer Biljana.

Our Welfare Officer Biljana Vidojevic talks about her work during lockdown. "My priority as Welfare Officer during the pandemic has been to ensure that applications for Housing Benefit have been submitted on time and therefore tenant's rent is paid.

Most of jLiving tenants are on Housing Benefit and with my assistance Housing Benefit applications are usually submitted within two working days of the tenant moving in, ensuring that people don't get into debt.

In the past twelve months all evidence to support Housing Benefit Claims for our tenants has been emailed to the relevant Local Authorities on time. This is a very important and helpful service as the majority of our tenants have no access to computers or smart gadgets, making applying for Housing Benefit very stressful and difficult, especially with the lockdown rules in place.

JTS (Jewish Temporary Shelter) grants are available, in certain circumstances, to provide basic white goods and other essentials prior to new tenants moving in.

This is something I can apply for on their behalf enabling tenants an easy move into their desired accommodation. Due to the very challenging times that we have faced since the first lockdown in March last year I have obtained several JTS grants for our tenants who were in financial hardship.

jLiving is particularly grateful to JTS for the generous donations that tenants receive when in need."

## NEW STAFF MEMBERS



2021 has brought a new Plumber to the Association. Mitchell Taylor-Brooks started at the end of January joining the Property Department as part of the Maintenance Technicians Team.

Meanwhile back in November 2020 Angela James joined jLiving as Director of Housing Operations, we warmly welcome them both to the staff team and hope you will too as they settle into their roles.

Angela has written about her first few months in her new role with jLiving and her plans for the future.

"Shortly after I joined the Association we all moved from Tier 3 to Tier 4 and then into full lockdown! So my first few months have not been how I envisaged them at all. I really love to get out and about to meet everyone in person, but sadly I have been unable to do this. Before Christmas I met all my team - many virtually; and drove around the majority of our Schemes to familiarise myself with them. It was great to be part of the virtual quiz in December and to get to see some of you in a fun setting, and I was impressed by your general knowledge. I am really looking forward to actually meeting you, our tenants and leaseholders, at coffee mornings once they are up and running again.



I have enjoyed getting to know some of you by telephone, listening to your feedback on how we can improve services. I take this very seriously and look forward to hearing from you, over the coming months, on how you think we can do this.

My priorities for the next few months are managing housing services during lockdown and looking at how we can support you all during these challenging times. We want to review how we listen to feedback from surveys and telephone calls so we can let you know what improvements we are able to put in place. We have launched a new complaints policy and procedure which I am responsible for, which will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Whether staff are at your Scheme all the time or only part-time, they still want to support you so please contact them if you have any concerns that we can help you with. As communal lounges and spaces remain closed at the moment we really want to see what we can do to help you access virtual services online. This can be a lonely and isolating time and we are genuinely here to help - I have been really impressed by the team and their commitment to do this.

Thank you for the warm welcome, and I look forward to seeing you all soon."

## BEHIND THE SCENES FROM DIRECTOR OF FINANCE *FRANCES HOROZ*



Speaking on behalf of the Finance Department I can say that the last year has been extremely challenging.

The Finance Team have had to put in place a number of workarounds in order to keep tenants rent accounts up-to-date, pay suppliers and contractors on time

so that they continue to provide vital services to our tenants and also pay the staff. These workarounds have created additional work which resulted in things taking longer to achieve; however the assistance of the senior management team in their new roles as “post women” delivering and collecting paperwork for our team has been a great help.

Our first challenge was to get staff set up working remotely, which with the help of our IT support company was quite quick and relatively painless. Our second challenge was to agree a staff rota for remote/on site working, this proved to be more difficult in part due to the constantly changing government guidelines. The rota needed to take into account not only the order of the tasks each Finance Team member is responsible for and deadlines to be met, their safety in travelling to and from the office as well as the office being made Covid safe. For example there would be no point in scheduling the person whose job was mainly to process invoices

to come in on a Monday if the person authorising the invoices was not due in until the Wednesday.

One of the challenges I hadn’t anticipated was the new procedures banks put in place as a result of the huge increase in the number of ‘scammers’ who saw the pandemic as an opportunity to con people. The Association’s banks have been through a rigorous procedure of checking/updating mandates with a lot of additional information and new form filling being requested, none of which banks will accept being dealt with by digital signing, completing on line or the scanning of documents and all at a time when you are supposed to be social distancing or are in lockdown. Thankfully I think we are now almost there!

The Finance Department has always worked closely together as a team and during the pandemic has continued to do so, everyone has gone over and above what is required of them in their roles, working longer hours without being asked - and still continuing to do so, being creative in coming up with ways on how they can continue to provide a good service in these challenging times and coming into the office even though they may have had to travel on public transport.

I am happy to report that we are winning the battle to keep records up-to-date and provide meaningful financial information to tenants, the management team, sub-committees and the Board alike; and would like to say a big thank you to the Finance Team for all their efforts in maintaining as much as possible a sense of normality and “business as usual”.

## DISPENSING HEALTHY HABITS

The health and safety of all our tenants, leaseholders, staff and visitors is at the heart of what we do. So, when the pandemic hit last year and we were all told to wash our hands or use hand gel regularly, our Maintenance Team installed 65 sanitiser gel dispensers across the Association and we have used approximately 120 litres of gel.

Due to Covid-19 and these new guidelines there was a sudden increase in demand for sanitising gel and huge shortages of gel refill packs last year, so 20 of the new dispensers were replacements for previous dispensers that we couldn’t obtain re-fill sachets for. In response we decided to change the dispenser units to refillable, more environmentally friendly and sustainable models.

Director of Property Donna-Marie Durham explained: “The additional 45 dispensers were installed in high touch point locations such as at entry points for lifts and doors, laundry rooms, and other locations agreed suitable with Housing Managers.”

Remember even if you have had your vaccine wear a mask, wash your hands and keep socially distanced from others.



## KEEPING BUSY IN LOCKDOWN

We asked jLiving staff if they have taken up any new hobbies, learnt a new skill or revisited old pastimes during lockdown while staying home when not working.

PA to jLiving CEO, Gilda Klein has really embraced lockdown and in the extra time she has from not going out, has learnt a new skill or two and re-started a new hobby.

Gilda said: “Not socialising, or going to the theatre, cinema or shopping meant I had some spare time on my hands, so I decided to learn Spanish using a great app called Duolingo - and it is free! I have also started doing meditation online and making some jewellery and have made a couple of gorgeous necklaces which I can’t wait to wear!

“I’ve been making jewellery for years on and off as a hobby. I hadn’t done it for a while but started again during lockdown. I like to think that when I look back over this period that I used some of the time to do some useful projects and not just binge watching Netflix!!”



A gem of a necklace designed and created by Gilda in lockdown.



Meanwhile, Shine House Senior Housing Manager Lori Gardner took up crocheting again during lockdown. She said: “I hadn’t done any crocheting for years, and took it up again at the end of March last year. I started making blankets which I sent to a couple of friends as a surprise to cheer them up; they were delighted.

Lori added: “My new year’s resolution was to quit smoking, so I have stopped since the 31 December, I felt that this was important particularly following the government health advice to fight Covid-19. I wanted to make sure that if I get it, I am better able to fight it.”

Lori’s been hooked on crochet during lockdown.

## TENANTS OFFERED COOKED KOSHER MEAL

All tenants at Ellis Franklin Court have been offered free, delicious cooked hot kosher meals every fortnight, organised by a team at St Johns Wood Synagogue who are running a programme called Giving Together, which is the brainchild of, and overseen by, Rabbi Golker.

Geraldine Richman was one of ten tenants at the Scheme who received this lovely generous gesture from the programme which started in January.

She said: “Rabbi Golker and the SJW team delivered some beautiful hot food to some of the residents at Ellis Franklin Court; a great example of loving service.”

She added: “The stunning meal included soup followed by a meal of meat, rice and mixed vegetables; all cooked to perfection. It was such a warm and lovely gift to come home to. I would like to thank the Giving Together team as well as jLiving’s Housing Manager Tochi for her wonderful care at Ellis Franklin Court.”

This social action project started after Rabbi Golker successfully obtained a generous grant covering the cost

of meals provided to Westminster residents in need of the service.

The hot meals are aimed at the older, vulnerable members of the local community; they are prepared by caterers and delivered by volunteers from the synagogue.

Rabbi Golker said: “We are so grateful to Westminster City Council for their funding which enables us to offer hot meals to the isolated and vulnerable in our neighbourhood. We hope to offer these meals fortnightly for the next few months.

“We thought this would help not just members of our own synagogue but the wider community, both Jewish and non-Jewish,” he added.



Giving Together Volunteers getting ready to deliver hot meals around Westminster.

## BIRTHDAY IN LOCKDOWN

Mr Vanbrook has lived at Montefiore Court since we opened it and celebrated his 94th birthday in August. This picture was taken before Covid restrictions applied and shows Mr Vanbrook with Housing Manager Lisa.



A beautiful view of Gordon Court gardens captured in January by tenant Mrs Duke from her flat at the Edgware Scheme. Mrs Duke also celebrated her 80th birthday last December.

## GUESS WHO BABY FACE?

How did you get on?

- A Barbara Felber – PA to CEO / Lettings Coordinator
- B Gabriela Sousedikova – Housing Manager Harmony Close
- C and Meta Worms Court
- D Lori Gardner – Senior Housing Manager Shine House
- E Gilda Klein – PA to CEO
- F Lisa Miller – Housing Manager Montefiore Court
- F Frances Horoz - Director of Finance

Answers to the identity of the photos on page 2.

## FESTIVAL OPENING HOURS

All the staff at jLiving wish all our tenants and their families a very happy Pesach and Easter.

### PESACH OPENING TIMES

Closed from 2pm Friday 26 and Monday 29 March.

Reopening at 9am on Tuesday 30 March 2021.

Festival begins at 7.14pm on Saturday 27 March; Second day begins at 8.16pm on Sunday 28 March. Seventh Day Pesach begins at 7.21pm on Friday 2 April and eighth day begins at 8.25pm on Saturday 3 April.

### EASTER OPENING TIMES

Closed Friday 2 April and Monday 5 April  
Re-opening on Tuesday 6 April 2021 at 9am

### SUMMER WORKING HOURS

From Friday 9 April, Head Office staff will be working until 5.30pm on Fridays.

Summer Head Office hours are 9am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday.



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*jLiving - Leading the Jewish community in providing affordable, secure, welcoming accommodation, including associated services for those aspiring to live independently.*