

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

This is the latest set of FAQs as of Friday 15th November. It includes updates provided at meetings this week, which took place on Wednesday 13th November 2019 for Richmond House residents.

Fire safety measures

What's the latest on the new fire alarm system being installed?

We are working with The Hamptons' original developer St James to install new communal fire alarm systems across the entire estate. The design and specification of these systems have been agreed with London Fire Brigade (LFB). They will include heat and smoke detectors within flats and common areas which will be linked to new central fire alarm panels in the common stairwells of blocks. These panels will then be linked to the local Estate Management Office in Maple Lodge. This work will be signed off by LFB and will enable the Waking Watch to be phased out.

We began our programme of installation work on Monday, 21st October and this has continued since then. We have written to households where access will be required, and our appointed contractor, Allied Protection Limited (APL), will directly contact residents in advance to make the necessary arrangements.

The programme of work was due to be completed by early January 2020, but we have been able to bring that forward to December.

What other reassurance can you provide to residents in neighbouring blocks not affected directly by the fire, who are concerned about their safety in the event of a fire?

While the cause of the fire is being investigated, we continue taking action to ensure that all our residents living in neighbouring blocks and buildings feel as safe as possible in their homes. As a safety precaution, and in coordination with fire safety experts, a 24-hour Waking Watch has been in place at the properties we manage. On the advice of LFB, we have also changed the evacuation policy for the blocks from a 'Stay Put' policy to 'Simultaneous Evacuation', which means that all parts of a building are evacuated in the event of a fire.

If residents have specific concerns about fire safety in their homes, we ask that they contact their local housing officer directly or call MTVH on 0300 456 2929 between 8.30 and 5.30, Monday to Friday.

For those seeking additional support and advice, the London Fire Brigade offers a free home fire safety visit service to help people understand and reduce the risks of fire in their homes. If you wish to arrange a visit, you can call 0800 028 4428, email smokealarms@london-fire.gov.uk or book online via <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/safety/the-home/book-a-home-fire-safety-visit/>

The London Fire Brigade will communicate to us any issues arising from these visits, which we will address.

Intrusive surveys

What's the latest on the intrusive surveys being carried out?

The independent surveyors appointed by our solicitors have now completed the intrusive survey work on the properties we own at the Hamptons. All property types have been surveyed to give a full picture of all MTVH homes on The Hamptons.

How will the results of the surveys be communicated?

Now the inspection programme is complete the experts will produce reports. These reports have been commissioned by our solicitors and will be prepared for use in any future legal proceedings should they be deemed necessary. For that reason, the full reports cannot be disclosed. However, our intention is to share with residents a comprehensive summary of the experts' findings at the end of November along with the process steps and timescales for any remedial work. We will ensure residents have the opportunity to meet with us as part of this.

Will London Fire Brigade be looking at the results of the surveys?

MTVH and St James are working closely with LFB to ensure that the outcomes of intrusive surveys across the wider estate are reviewed and accepted by the fire service. LFB's fire engineering team have carried out their own surveys at The Hamptons and they will independently assess what remedial works, if any, are required. They will compare them to the outcomes of MTVH and St James' surveys to ensure that their expectations are fully met.

What was the scope of the surveys?

The surveys allow us to fully consider the fabric of the building and the underlying construction details. They enable us to understand if there are any issues that can't be seen from a basic visual inspection. The outcome of these surveys will identify and prioritise any work that may need to be carried out.

Once outcomes are shared with residents, how disruptive could remediation work be?

Any remedial works that need to be carried out as a result of the surveys will be undertaken straight away. However, we will assess how it can be done with as little disruption to residents as possible. In many cases, such work can be carried out while residents remain in their homes. If it was necessary for residents to temporarily move out of properties, all necessary arrangements would be made and support provided – however, we hope that will not be required.

Richmond House

What's the latest on Richmond House?

Richmond House residents continue to make progress moving on to suitable longer-term accommodation, with the majority of households now in longer-term accommodation. Our housing team continues to support all residents in making this move and settling in.

The safety of those accessing the Richmond House site is always our first concern. Following the latest assessments of the building, the expert advice we've received is that the site and building are unsafe and cannot be entered.

Although the building is unsafe for the time being, we have made provisions for the first stage of demolition work to facilitate access, which should enable retrieval specialists and insurers to enter and salvage possessions onsite – where it is safe and possible to do so.

To secure the wider site, we have built a perimeter hoarding fence around Richmond House, provided external lighting, installed additional CCTV cameras and put 24-hour security in place (separate to the Waking Watch provision across the wider development). Work continues to ensure that the activity on the site is causing as minimal impact on neighbours as possible.

We have given an estimate of at least 18 months for the rebuilding of Richmond house and have begun the process of looking at questions such as who will complete the rebuild. We will consult on the specifications of the new build with residents.

Crayton House

What's the latest on Crayton House?

The majority of Crayton House residents have now returned to their homes with the support of our housing team. Working with the London Fire Brigade, we've carried out a range of work at Crayton House in advance of the residents returning to their homes:

- A new communal fire alarm system has been installed at the block
- We've replaced entrance doors to flats
- We've completed electrical inspections at each property and ensured that gas safety inspections are fully up to date for every home at Crayton House
- Fire risk assessments have been completed at the building
- The Waking Watch remains in place, alongside additional security at the Richmond House site

We continue to work with residents who don't want to return on alternative options.

Police and fire investigations

What is the latest on the London Fire Brigade's investigation into the fire?

The London Fire Brigade's investigation into the Richmond House fire remains in progress. As soon as it is published, we will closely examine the report. In the meantime, we will continue to support the authorities in their investigations.

What is the latest on the police investigation into the fire?

The police investigation is currently ongoing, and they are examining all lines of enquiry.

Ongoing communication

What support is being provided to the residents who are directly affected by the fire?

Richmond House and Crayton House residents are being supported by the MTVH housing team through designated caseworkers. Additionally, there is a dedicated phone number (0203 846 0123), which residents can call from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Residents can also send email enquiries to Richmond.house@mtvh.co.uk or Crayton.house@mtvh.co.uk.

The London Borough of Sutton is also in the process of appointing an independent resident advisor to provide additional support to residents of Richmond House. The advisor will be jointly funded by the London Borough of Sutton and MTVH.

What are the opening times of the Residents Support Centre?

Our Resident Support Centre has moved from Maple Lodge to the cabins at the top of the hill near Richmond House. We will continue to maintain a consistent presence onsite at The Hamptons. Our telephone contact details, and office hours will remain the same: 10am-5pm, Monday to Friday.

Beyond visiting or calling our temporary office directly, how do residents speak to someone at Metropolitan Thames Valley?

For more general enquiries residents can contact us on 0300 456 2929 between 8.30 and 5.30 Monday to Friday or email the dedicated team inbox thehamptons.residents@mtvh.co.uk. Our switchboard also has a number for out of hours emergencies.

Emotional and mental health support

If residents are feeling overwhelmed, stressed or anxious, and would like access to mental health support from the NHS, we encourage them to speak to a member of the MTVH team for a priority referral to Sutton Uplift – a health and wellbeing service available to borough residents. They can also contact the service directly on 0800 032 1411 or find out more about what support is available at www.suttonuplift.co.uk. Following priority referrals made by the MTVH team, Sutton Uplift will aim to arrange an assessment within a week.

If residents are worried about the effect of the fire on their children, we encourage them to speak to their school in the first instance for support. Every school has an appointed 'SENDCo' member of staff, who can talk to parents about any additional support available and can call on the expertise of the Educational Psychology Service if needed. Any residents who need support in approaching their child's school can ask a member of the MTVH team for help.

We'd like to extend our thanks to the Red Cross for their support so far. As a voluntary emergency response service, the Red Cross has informed us that they will no longer be able to attend resident meetings at The Hamptons.