

**karbon**  
homes

# At home with karbon

April 2023

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## Special thanks to all our contributors:

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# Hello and welcome to your latest edition of At Home with Karbon.

Spring can be such an uplifting time of the year, with the lighter nights making an appearance and the promise of summer in the air. This positive theme runs throughout this edition, with lots of ideas and information on life-enhancing opportunities.

Over the pages you'll find out about chances to change your career and fulfil your potential (page 12), build your mental health resilience (page 16), and spring clean your home without the price tag (page 20).

There's important information too to help you make the most of your Karbon services and to highlight our commitments to you to keep you safe in your home.

Here at Karbon, we believe it's important for us to hold our hands up and apologise when we haven't delivered the level of service we aspire to. We've been receiving more customer calls than usual and response times on phone lines have been longer than we'd like.

We're working hard to put in place new arrangements so we can get to your call quicker. We've recruited additional advisors to handle calls and we're busy improving our systems to give you the ability to do more yourself where you want to.

In the meantime, please remember, you can use your MyKarbon online customer account anytime to report and manage repairs, or make payments and check your balance. Details of how to use the account are on the back page.

Now, why not pop the kettle on and settle down to enjoy your magazine?

**Ian Johnson**, Executive Director of Customer Services

**Thank you to everyone** who took the time to provide feedback on At Home With Karbon in our magazine survey. We're busy reviewing your responses and we'll share these with you in the next edition, along with plans for future issues. Congratulations to survey respondent Abi Gilbert who was the lucky winner of £100 of high street vouchers.

## Love Food! – Debbie’s Perfect Panzanella

Debbie Fixter and her team at Sprouts Community Food Charity enjoy nothing more than turning unloved leftovers into delicious dishes! So, we challenged her to create something special for springtime.

### **Hello Debbie! Tell us a bit about yourself please**

I love cooking, and I’m passionate about the health benefits that good food can bring. I helped to set up Sprouts in Stockton to share that with others. I enjoy the process of cooking and collaborating with friends and colleagues trying new ideas and sharing recipes.

### **What is Sprouts all about?**

We use cooking to bring communities together. We’re dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of our communities and we have loads of fun in the process! We run a range of projects including a café, community garden, bakery and community shops which we run in North Thornaby and Parkfield, Stockton. We’re also especially proud of our children’s cooking workshops. These are designed to give young people the opportunity to try new things, taste new food and learn essential life skills for the future.

### **What have you chosen to cook with us and why?**

Today we’re making panzanella, a popular Italian bread salad that’s simple, healthy and affordable to make yet very, very tasty. Not only is it a good way to use up bread that’s past its bouncy best but it’s also a great ending to tomatoes that are getting old and are past ripeness.

At Sprouts, we don’t like recipes that have lots of expensive ingredients and take a long time to cook. We like to be able to use things in the cupboard and leftovers in the fridge. So, this is one of our all-time favourites and it’s perfect for spring and summer.

To find out more about Sprouts or to make a donation visit **[www.littlesprouts.org.uk](http://www.littlesprouts.org.uk)**

Karbon has helped to fund the work of Sprouts. Let us know if we can help support a community project you run. Drop us an email on **[mycommunity@karbonhomes.co.uk](mailto:mycommunity@karbonhomes.co.uk)** or visit **[www.karbonhomes.co.uk/community-funding](http://www.karbonhomes.co.uk/community-funding)**

# A taste of Tuscany

A tomatoey, garlicky bread salad – can you get any more Italian

## Ingredients

2 large baguettes (or any old bread)

1 large cucumber

A handful of cherry tomatoes

1 red onion

1 clove of garlic

2 tablespoons of olive oil

1 teaspoon of honey

Crunch of black pepper

## How it's done

Cut the bread into 1-inch cubes

Toss it in a large bowl with the olive oil

Heat a frying pan over a medium-high heat

Add the bread mixture to the pan

Toast until golden and crisp - this will take about 10 minutes

Drain and set aside to cool

Chop up the cucumber, tomatoes, onion and garlic

Pop in with the toasted bread

Add the honey and black pepper to the mix

Enjoy!

Got a recipe you'd love to share? Just drop us a line at **communications@karbonhomes.co.uk** to feature on these pages!

## **A true gentleman**

When we asked you to tell us who makes a difference in your Karbon community one name was repeated time and again. Tom Sterling! We go behind the scenes to meet the man himself.

### **Hi Tom, tell us a little about yourself.**

I've had an interesting and varied career and I ran my own design business for 30 years before retiring seven years ago. My business used to consume 100% of my time – though I was never a natural entrepreneur because I wasn't really interested in making money! But once I retired, I could throw myself into what really mattered to me – my church, Great Lumley Methodist Church. Christianity always played a big part in my life and this is the best work I've done in my life.

### **What kind of things do you get up to?**

My church is very community-minded and we're always looking for ways to react to what people need. Right now, that is food, warmth and friendship. We run a food bank and provide food hampers. We offer a community table and fridge, we run a lunch club and a drop-in session where people can come for a cuppa and a chat and some emotional support if they'd like it.

### **How did the projects get started?**

They weren't my bright ideas – I've just helped to make them happen. For example, during lockdown I was asked if I could help to find a way to reach vulnerable people with hot food. That sparked a project that ended up recruiting 60 volunteers and delivering 9,000 meals!

Then the manager of the local Co-op asked if I could find a way to make use of unsold food to save it going to landfill. That inspired our weekly community table and fridge. We collect food from local retailers, pop photos on Facebook and people turn up from miles around to take it. There's a real sense of excitement before we open the doors. Within 10 minutes the food has gone! It's brilliant! People have got to know each other so have a good catch up while they're there.

### **Can you give us a highlight from your experience?**

The real highlight is to have found people and made friends with others who want to do good in the world. There are at least 20 people involved in this whole enterprise – helping with deliveries, hampers and shopping week in and week out. As a Christian, I believe in the importance of loving thy neighbour and this is that love in action.

## **What have you learned along the way?**

People worry that all of this will wear me out and wonder why I'm not just putting my feet up in my retirement. But it's not stressful or tiring. It's quite the opposite. It's energising. We are all in this together and it's good to be reminded of that. The vast majority of people I meet are genuine and everyone is deserving of kindness. I make no judgements about people's circumstances – nobody is unworthy.

## **How do you feel about the Community Star Award you received?**

Humbled and a bit embarrassed! I'm pleased that what I'm doing is making a difference and I'd like to thank those people who put my name forward. But there's a whole team of people behind this – it's not The Tom Show! Really, I want people to see past me and to see goodness we all have inside.

For more information on the projects Tom runs, visit Great Lumley Methodist Church on Facebook.

## **Inspired by Tom's story?**

It's national Volunteer Week 1-7 June. If Tom's story has inspired you to help make a difference in your community, why not find out how to get involved? Visit [www.volunteersweek.org](http://www.volunteersweek.org) for information.

## **Thank you, Tom!**

Tom received a whopping nine nominations in our 12 Deeds of Christmas campaign, from those who appreciate the work he does to feed the bellies and souls of the community. Tom was presented with a Community Star Award and a thank you to the value of £100.

Here are just a few of the tributes paid.

"He would be embarrassed to receive this award, but he 100% deserves recognition for his dedication to the community." - Sara Rogers

"He is a true gentleman who helps everyone he can." - Kate Elliott

"This man is a miracle worker in Great Lumley without even knowing he does it." - Amanda Robinson

"He has fed the village and helped many for many, many years and it's time he had something nice." - Paul Graver

Check out all of our Community Stars winners on our website [www.karbonhomes.co.uk](http://www.karbonhomes.co.uk)

## **You're not alone**

Are you or someone you love coping with cancer? Did you know you can access a range of free therapies to help you feel better? We find out more.

Cancer affects many of us, with 30% of us all either receiving a diagnosis in our lifetime or supporting a friend or family member who has. But we want to make sure no Karbon customer feels like they are alone in the experience.

That's why we've funded the important work of charity Coping with Cancer who are experts at supporting anyone affected by cancer to reduce the long-term effects on their mental and emotional health.

### **Meet Counsellor Helen**

Helen Swann is one of Coping with Cancer's team of trained counsellors. She knows people can sometimes be a bit nervous about trying counselling for the first time so tells us exactly what you can expect.

"Even now, when there is so much more understanding around the importance of mental health, there can still be a hesitation to reach out for counselling. People sometimes imagine it's only for those who are seriously ill but it's not. Everyone can benefit and people are often very surprised by the difference it can make. In the first session I'll find out what you'd like to get out of the experience – what you want to be different in your life. Then I'll work with you to help make that happen and give you some strategies to help you to relax and cope. It's a bit like unravelling a ball of wool – all of the feelings can feel knotted up and together we unwind them and see where they lead.

Some people want to offload about their experience of cancer. Often, they've been bottling things up because they don't want to feel like they are burdening family and friends with what they're going through and their fears.

It can be very helpful to have someone trustworthy to talk to outside of your normal circle. It's very different to talking to friends. I describe it as sitting alongside you, rather than opposite you. I don't have an opinion on what you say, you won't feel judged and I won't be giving advice or telling you how to feel or act.

Counselling creates a uniquely confidential space where you can work through your feelings. There are no distractions, no outside influences, just dedicated time to let thoughts go. It can be surprising what comes out when we talk things through in the right conditions and the results can be quite powerful. After 50 minutes you can leave all that weight with me and get on with the rest of your life.



The most common thing I hear from clients is: 'You're the only one I can talk to about this.' They find relief that I'm not trying to fix them and they don't have to think about what they're saying to save the feelings of others. With me they can take the mask off and tell it like it really is. That can be such a relief. They feel understood. They no longer feel alone.

When you're going through this it can feel like it's taking over your life. But with some help you can remember you are more than just a cancer patient and your life is so much bigger. And if you're a relative or friend, it's important to remember your feelings are valid too. You might feel helpless, you might be putting your own feelings and worries aside to appear strong. But if your mind is functioning well then, you'll be a better support to your loved one."

### **What support is offered?**

The project provides a range of therapies including counselling, acupuncture, reflexology, massage and Indian head massage.

### **What are the benefits?**

There's the opportunity to talk through feelings and anxieties and make plans to live your life the way you want to. The idea is to allow you time and space to focus on yourself and your priorities, away from hospital and home. By complementing the work of NHS treatment plans, your mental wellbeing as well as your physical health is taken care of.

### **Who is it for?**

Support is available to any Karbon customer who has been affected by cancer, including friends, family and carers of those who've had a diagnosis.

### **Where does therapy take place?**

Coping with Cancer's health hub is based at Cramlington. It has easy parking directly outside and is well served by local transport. Some counselling services are also offered online or by telephone.

### **How do I get in touch?**

Contact Coping with Cancer directly by visiting [www.copingwithcancer.org.uk](http://www.copingwithcancer.org.uk), by calling **0191 250 2026** or by emailing [info@copingwithcancer.org.uk](mailto:info@copingwithcancer.org.uk)

## Don't suffer in silence

Nobody should have to put up with constant disturbances from neighbours.

### **Noise App, How it helps:**

#### **a quick and easy way to record and report noisy neighbours**

The app, which is free to download from the App Store for iPhone users, or the Play Store for android users, allows you to record, rate and report noise disturbance. The app recordings can help us quickly establish if there is a problem and that the disturbance isn't just the noise of everyday living. For more information visit **www.karbonhomes.co.uk/anti-social-behaviour** or for help downloading or using the app give us a call on **0808 164 0111**.

### **iWitness, How it helps: gets you a witness to a problem you're experiencing so we can take action**

Our out-of-hours iWitness service provides an accredited, independent team of officers who gather evidence of anti-social behaviour discreetly and efficiently. They provide credible witness statements accepted by the courts, meaning we can build a better case without the need for you to give evidence yourself. On call when our offices are closed, the professional witnesses can be on site within approximately 30 minutes. Equipped with cameras and recording equipment, they will observe what is happening – before producing a detailed report for Karbon. Just call our number and if it's out of hours advisers will offer you iWitness services for incidents happening at the time of the call. In an emergency always call the police on **999**, or **101** for less serious incidents. Report crime anonymously to Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**.

### **How to report anti-social behaviour**

In person to a member of Karbon Homes

By telephone on **0808 164 0111**

By email to **info@karbonhomes.co.uk**

Via your local Community Safety Team Via a tenants/residents' association, community group or community representative.

# Going Walkabout

Did you know we have a dedicated team of Housing Officers who regularly visit your neighbourhood as part of our Estate Walkabouts?

We caught up with Housing Officer Aimee Lammonby to find out more.

## **Q. What are the Estate Walkabouts and why do you do them?**

A. The idea is to give customers and our housing officers a chance to work together to identify and discuss any issues in their neighbourhood. They play an important role in ensuring estates are managed effectively and to the highest possible standard, to build stronger communities. Estate Walkabouts are a great opportunity to hear our customers' voice. To hear what's important to you in terms of your estate and community.

## **Q. What do they involve?**

A. Our customers and housing officers walk around the estate together and identify any environmental issues, areas of anti-social behaviour and areas of improvement.

Other organisations are invited to take part too including council members, the local authority, local charities, and community groups. It's great to have them there because we can immediately consider ways to work together effectively to address any issues we spot.

## **Q. What can customers get from the Walkabouts?**

A. It's a great opportunity to personally meet your housing officer and point out any areas of concern. It can also provide an opportunity to get more involved in the local community and decision making.

We review any areas of concern you might raise following the meet-up. If you've asked a question or made a suggestion you'll be informed and receive feedback on what we can do and what we can't do along with the reasons why and any timescales for things that can't be done immediately.

## **Q. How do I get involved?**

A. Your housing officer usually sets a time and place and everyone is invited to take part. If someone is unable to attend the walk, because of medical needs for example, then a customer care visit at their home can be arranged to discuss any questions they may have.

Our Housing Management Team hold regular Estate Walkabouts in all of our communities four times a year. Look out for a letter from your housing officer to find out when your next Estate Walkabout will be taking place.

## Let us help you reach your potential

Did you make a new year's resolution that you still haven't got around to? Maybe you want to try to find your dream job, figure out your finances or learn to drive.

If so, then our Foundations for Life Team have some great courses that could help you achieve your goals. Our team explains...

### The Write Turn

The Write Turn can help you build confidence with reading, writing, maths and digital skills. Plus, we can cover the fee for a provisional driving license and driving theory test so you can put those skills to practical use.

"Sessions have been extremely enjoyable and working in such a relaxed environment has allowed people to flourish. So far everybody who has attended has passed both parts which include the hazard perception element."

- Foundations Tutor, Sean

### Money Works

Our Money Works course gives you practical tips to make your money work for you. We'll help you to build your own budget, manage debt, save money and more. "The feedback is always positive. People get a lot out of it, with participants often saying how it's both laid-back but with lots of information that they can put to practical use."

- Money Matters Caseworker, Joan

### Digital Skills

Your dedicated Digital Coach will work with you on a one-to-one or basis or in a small group to support you to in improving your confidence of using devices and online services. They'll also help with things like online job seeking.

"I have a customer who has been working with me for four years. We have taken our time and progressed at a pace suitable for him. He is now digitally self-sufficient and can successfully job search, use emails and update his Universal Credit journal. It's given him a huge confidence boost."

- Digital Coach, Hayley

### Employment Support

Our team of Employment Advisors are here to work with you to create an action plan, and support you on your career journey. Plus, we can offer some fantastic employment opportunities including New Start, apprenticeships, work placements and more.

“No matter what your career aspirations are, our friendly and approachable team will guide you through the process, wade through uncertainty and celebrate your successes!”

- Employment Advisor, Kate

Whatever it is that you set out to achieve, our experienced advisors are here to help.

To start your journey, contact our Foundations for Life team now at

**foundations@karbonhomes.co.uk** or call **0191 223 8750**.

## **Ask the apprentice**

Marc Cooper is about to qualify as an electrician after completing a four-year apprenticeship at Karbon.

### **What did you do before your apprenticeship?**

Experience. I was working for a maintenance company when I saw the advert. I'd always wanted to be an electrician so I knew it was a good opportunity to make that happen. I knew I had a better chance of getting it because it was only open to people living in a Karbon home.

### **What does your job involve?**

I do electrical installations, repairs, maintenance and safety testing. It's quite varied because I get to work in new builds as well as preparing empty homes for people to move into. I go to college a day a week where I learn the theory and then I put it into practice on the job.

### **How have you found the experience?**

It's been a good experience and Karbon is a good place to work. I feel supported and never rushed or under pressure. I'd definitely encourage others to use the apprenticeship route to do something new.

## You we said did!

Welcome to a new regular feature in your magazine, dedicated to helping you to feel safe in your home. Feedback from our Customer Scrutiny Bank suggested we create a new space in these pages for fire and building safety information.

Lewis Rimington Customer Engagement Specialist

## Condensation: how we can help

Laura Barnett is part of Karbon's team of surveyors who help customers every day to reduce condensation in their homes. She tells us how they can help you too.

An important part of my job, especially in winter, is helping customers with problems caused by condensation. Our team provides advice to customers on how to reduce condensation in their homes and how to treat it. In fact, we've just produced a new leaflet with the help of Karbon customers that's full of tips to keep condensation at bay and this will be really handy to have when the colder months come around again.

But sometimes, customers need some expert support to get to the bottom of the issue and so I'll go out to their home to investigate. Once I've diagnosed what's causing the issue, I'll provide advice and support to get it under control and organise any necessary repairs to be made. Sometimes we need a mixture of things to solve the problem.

It's crucial that Karbon is providing our customers with the means to ventilate and heat their homes efficiently, so I check that is the case in every home. Because of my work, I'm super conscious about condensation at home! I always follow my own advice and I often share it with family and friends because condensation is something we all want to avoid.

If you're worried about condensation, check out the advice on the new leaflet, which is available from housing officers and can be downloaded from **[www.karbonhomes.co.uk](http://www.karbonhomes.co.uk)** – just search 'condensation'.

### How to avoid: overloading electrical sockets

- Although your extension lead might have space to plug in four appliances, it isn't always safe to do so. By overloading the lead, you can run the risk of causing it to overheat, which could in turn cause a fire.
- Check the rating of the extension lead before plugging appliances into it. The rating should be marked on the back or side.
- Never overload by plugging in appliances that together exceed the maximum rating stated for the lead. To check if you're exceeding the maximum load, use the overload calculator found at [www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk](http://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk) This website by the UK's leading electrical safety charity is packed with other helpful tips too.

## **Look out for new leaflets**

If you live in our multi-story flats, sheltered accommodation and Extra Care homes, you will have recently received a leaflet about fire safety. Please, take the time to have a read and keep it safe!

- It reminds you what the evacuation strategy is for your building, how to report a fire and how to contact the Fire Service in the event of a fire breaking out. It also highlights other safety instructions and advice such as testing your smoke detectors.
- If you have fire doors, you will also have received an additional leaflet which outlines the importance of giving us access to carry out the necessary safety checks to these fire doors and how to report any faults or damages.

The leaflets have been produced with involvement from Karbon customers and approved by the Fire Service. You can request another copy from our website **[www.karbonhomes.co.uk](http://www.karbonhomes.co.uk)** – just search ‘fire safety’.

## **Get involved!**

If you're worried about condensation, check out the advice on the new leaflet, which is available from housing officers and can be downloaded from **[www.karbonhomes.co.uk](http://www.karbonhomes.co.uk)** – just search ‘condensation’.

Do you have a particular safety question or topic you'd like us to focus on? Let us know by emailing [communications@karbonhomes.co.uk](mailto:communications@karbonhomes.co.uk) Would you like to get involved with the work of the Customer Scrutiny Bank? We're always keen to welcome new members to the friendly group which examines and inspects Karbon's services.

To find out more, call Sandy Swinhoe on **07849 847955** or email **[connectwithkarbon@karbonhomes.co.uk](mailto:connectwithkarbon@karbonhomes.co.uk)**

# Resilience – Your built in super power

When it comes to mental health, you are more resilient than you realise. That is the passionate belief of Steve Heath who turned his life around after years of anxiety, depression and substance misuse. He shares the lessons he's learned.

Good mental health means the ability to cope with the normal ups and downs of life. We are all born resilient.

As toddlers, we fall over and get back up and as adults we use this in-built power to deal with whatever life throws at us. But for some of us, that resilience gets knocked out of us. The good news is that it can be re-built.

I now run Mental Health in Business, a company dedicated to helping improve wellbeing. We recently trained the Supported Housing team at Karbon Homes to become Mental Health Allies, so they can help anyone experiencing mental health issues or emotional distress.

## Steve's story

I've always been around mental health issues. My mum was not well when I was growing up. She was eventually diagnosed with what was called manic depression back in the 80s – now called bi-polar.

My parents separated when I was 12 but by then I'd gravitated to things that helped me to escape. Substances and alcohol made me feel better – at least in the short term. My own issues with depression and anxiety began to build in my teens. Panic attacks started and at 19 I began to fall apart.

Despite my struggles, I started my own business in the music industry and built it up to be quite successful. To the outside world I seemed calm and in control but internally there was a lot going on. I got very good at acting and hiding my pain.

The way I coped was to hide away. My world got so small that my family became very worried. They reached out to me but I didn't want to be a burden to them.

## The turning point

Finally, I decided I had to change things. I'd talked to my GP in the past and had had some success with medication but it needed a greater effort from me. I made a pact with myself to try absolutely everything. To keep an open mind and push past my anxiety.

The turning point was a course of CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy), which really challenged me to start thinking differently. I distanced myself from friends who led me to behaviours I needed to avoid. I forced myself to leave the house and meet new, like-minded people. I booked myself onto a personal development course and came away with tools and insights to understand myself more.



I felt so inspired by the changes I'd made that I decided to train as a life coach. I sold my music business to do that fulltime and in 2018 I met my partner, Claire. Together we set up our own company to share our life experiences to help others facing similar struggles. It's been a long journey but life is now so fulfilling.

## **Steve's tips to strengthen your mental resilience**

### **Don't hide away**

It's easy to disappear into your own head to try to figure out a solution to your turmoil. I realised that more thinking time led me to a negative spiral of 'what ifs', which then led to low mood and depression.

### **Switch the focus**

I find this especially helpful before I go to sleep, when my thoughts are whirring. I make an effort to redirect my mind to thinking of three things that happened that day that I enjoyed. It can be very soothing, hopeful and reassuring.

### **Move around**

If your mood is very low, your nervous system's response is fight, flight or freeze. If the freeze response is at play you almost cannot move. But I found I could break the cycle of distress by getting

### **And breathe...**

There's a clear link between emotions and breathing. By controlling our breathing, we can control how we feel.

4-7-8

This simple breathing exercise is great for relaxation. See what feels best – in and out through the nose or in through the nose and out through the mouth.

- Breathe in for 4 seconds
- Hold your breath for 7 seconds
- Breathe out slowly for 8 seconds
- Repeat for 1-2 minutes
- Try 3 rounds to begin with (with 10-15 seconds pause between each)

### **Karbon Comment**

Our Foundations for Life team offer a course on Building Emotional Resilience, giving you the tools to tackle difficult situations in everyday life and reduce stress. If you, or someone you know could benefit from this course, please contact our Foundations for Life team at **foundations@karbonhomes.co.uk** or by calling **0191 223 8750**.

Find out more about our Foundations for Life courses over on page 12.

# Feeling the benefits of upgrades

We're investing in energy saving upgrades to improve the performance of our existing homes. Customer Colin Barnes of Ouston tells us what's involved and how he's already feeling the benefits.

## About me and my home

I've lived in my Karbon bungalow for 10 years and I absolutely love it. Everyone knows me around here and I like to have a bit chat with my neighbours. My home must be about 70 years old – I can remember these houses when I was a kid. As it's getting old, it really needed modernising so it could be warmer and stronger.

## The improvements

My home has had a total overhaul! It's incredible really. The work has included more insulation as well as improvements to the roof. The work is almost finished – just the rendering to be done on top of the insulation and then the house will have had a complete makeover.

## The experience

There were bits and pieces of mess along the way, but that's to be expected when it's such a big job. Regen, the team handling the works were excellent. They kept me informed of what was going on and helped me with anything I couldn't manage myself. It's well worth a little bit of inconvenience for years of future benefits.

## The results

The difference it makes to the warmth of the house was immediate and really noticeable. My sister really feels the cold and even she is lovely and warm now! I just pop the heating on for 20 minutes at a time because the house stays warm for so long. A few people have stopped to ask me about the results because they want to do the same to their own homes.

## The lowdown

Craig Lonsdale, Asset and Sustainability Manager at Karbon, answers our questions on the scheme.

### Q What are the upgrades all about?

A. We're really excited to be able to carry out these efficiency improvements thanks to funding released from the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

The works are designed to upgrade homes to reduce energy demand, by reducing the amount of heat lost from our properties.

## **Q What kind of improvements are you planning?**

A. Works may include:

- Loft insulation - increasing the thickness of current insulation if necessary.
- Underfloor insulation - if a ground floor is suspended, then we can also look to install underfloor insulation.
- External wall insulation - this is a layer of insulation attached to the wall and finished with a render.
- Solar panels - we will install solar panels on the roof, producing electricity which can be used for free. You can also be paid for any electricity you don't use.
- Air source heat pumps - these systems work by absorbing heat from the outside air, boosting it to a higher temperature and transferring it to the heating system when needed.
- Infrared panels - these heating panels offer a low cost and low maintenance option. They work by emitting heat as infrared radiation which heats objects and people in its path in a radiant way. This is different to more traditional convective heat transfer which relies on heating the air in the room.

## **Q What are the benefits to having the work done?**

A. There are big benefits for you and the environment:

- Reduced energy demand and lower energy bills
- Reduced carbon footprint meaning your home is more environmentally friendly
- A warmer and more comfortable home

## **Q Will my home receive an upgrade?**

A. We're currently planning to make these upgrades to any of our homes that have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) below C. These certificates indicate the energy efficiency of a building and the improvements help to upgrade any homes that are underperforming.

If your home is due to receive an upgrade, we'll be in touch to give you more information about when this will take place and to arrange a survey of your home. In the meantime, if you would like to find out more about energy saving measures and our commitment to creating a sustainable environment, visit [www.karbonhomes.co.uk/net-zero-at-karbon](http://www.karbonhomes.co.uk/net-zero-at-karbon)

## **Here for you**

If you're struggling to heat your home or manage your bills, we are here to help. For free, independent support on benefits and money advice, please call the Money Matters Team on **0808 164 0111** or email [moneymatters@karbonhomes.co.uk](mailto:moneymatters@karbonhomes.co.uk)

## Your £4 spring clean

Does the thought of a sparkling home sound appealing, but the idea of spring cleaning from top to bottom seem expensive and a little overwhelming? Your At Home guide is here to help!

Chances are you already have some powerful, natural cleaning remedies in your kitchen cupboard that are kind to the planet and your purse. But even if you do need to invest in a few things, our whole spring clean shopping list will set you back less than a fiver.

So, whether you have five minutes to freshen things up one item or room at a time or a whole weekend to blitz the lot, you'll be armed with everything you need to shine.

### Handy hacks for a home that's ready for summer

#### Spray windows, dust blinds and vacuum curtains

Wait for an overcast day to clean your windows. This avoids streaks caused by the sunshine drying the cleaner onto warm windows before you get a chance to wipe it off. Use a microfiber cloth and a simple glass cleaner poured into a spray bottle to get a nice fine mist.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of cold water
- 1/2 cup of white vinegar
- Optional 10 drops of essential oil to add a nice scent

#### Freshen up carpets

Banish pet odours by simply sprinkling baking soda on your carpet. Leave it for a few hours then vacuum up using a vacuum with a clean bag.

#### Steam clean the microwave

Tackle pesky stains once and for all! Fill a large microwave-safe bowl with a cup of water and a chopped-up lemon, lime or orange or a few tablespoons of white vinegar and pop it inside. Turn the microwave on high until the solution boils and the window is steamy. Let it cool for a few minutes before opening the door and cleaning inside.

#### Deep clean the fridge

Declutter any empty bottles and jars and wash out ready for recycling. Pop out removable shelving and storage drawers and wash in warm, soapy water. Wipe down the fridge walls before reloading. Stubborn smell that won't shift? Try placing a shallow bowl of baking soda on one of the shelves. It's natural deodorising powers will neutralise smells like magic.

## **De-gunk your oven**

Baking soda, salt and water are all you need to shift months – or even years – of oven grime. Try this recipe from baking soda makers, Arm & Hammer. It makes enough to deep clean an oven floor, triple if you're also doing the back, sides and ceiling:

- 450g of baking soda
- 1 tablespoon of salt
- 2 tablespoons of water

Mix together in a bowl to make a thick, sandy paste. Remove the racks. Using a spatula, cover the entire metal and glass surfaces with the paste. Shut the door and leave overnight in the cold oven. The paste will harden by morning. Once hardened, use the rubber spatula and warm, wet paper towels to loosen it up and wipe up soda and dirt to reveal your oven original stain-free surface beneath.

## **Scrub that spattered hob and extractor fan**

Soda crystals are great for removing grease from hobs, extractors and other kitchen surfaces. In fact, they remove all kinds of stains including blood, ink and grass, and they'll rescue burnt pans, tea-stained cups and mildew from shower curtains. Be careful to follow the pack instructions and wear rubber gloves when using.

## **Get stainless steel sparkling again**

For super shiny appliances, mix this simple solution:

- 1 teaspoon of washing up liquid
  - 1 litre of hot tap water
- Using a microfiber cloth, rub the solution onto marks in small sections, going with the grain. Rinse with hot, clean water and dry with a clean cloth.

## **Keep drains smelling fresh**

Try this simple hack to freshen drains (not unclog them) and keep them free-flowing:

- 1/2 cup of baking soda
  - 1/2 cup of table salt
  - 1 cup of heated white vinegar
- Mix together the baking soda and salt and pour it down the drain followed by the vinegar. Let it foam and bubble for no more than 15 minutes then flush with hot water for at least 30 seconds.

## Shopping list

28p Lemon (Morrisons)  
59p Baking soda/bicarbonate of soda (Tesco)  
40p Distilled white vinegar (Sainsbury's)  
£1.50 Soda crystals (Wilko's)  
65p Salt (Morrisons)  
55p Washing up liquid (Tesco)  
£3.97 \* Total \*Prices correct at the time of going to print.

Optional extra!

£2.50 Essential oil (Wilko's) Lemon gives a fresh, clean scent, but you can choose your favourite.

# Ways to get and stay in touch

## MyKarbon

**[www.karbonhomes.co.uk/mykarbon](http://www.karbonhomes.co.uk/mykarbon)**

Use to book and track repairs, check and pay your rent balance and update contact details. It's quick, easy and can be used anytime.

New! You can now see the status of any outstanding repairs and servicing in your account. Just log in to take a look at the new tracking feature. It shows appointments booked and updates on your logged repairs, as well a button to request a new repair.

## Phone

**0808 164 0111**

8am – 6pm weekdays

We're here for repairs, rent payments and general enquiries.

You can check your rent balance and make a payment anytime, without even speaking to an advisor. Just select the payment option and provide your tenancy number to use our automated service.

## Easter holiday hours

Out of hours service available:

6pm – 8am weekdays plus weekends and bank holidays.

Automated rent payments, urgent repairs and other emergencies such as reports of antisocial behaviour.

## Email

**[info@karbonhomes.co.uk](mailto:info@karbonhomes.co.uk)**

Email is perfect for cancelling appointments or for less urgent enquiries.

## Facebook

@karbonhomes

## Post

Write to us at:

Karbon Homes, Number Five Gosforth Park Avenue Gosforth Business Park  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE12 8EG

## Visit us

To see which of our offices are open to customers for drop-ins and which are appointment only visit

[www.karbonhomes.co.uk/contact-us](http://www.karbonhomes.co.uk/contact-us)

We'll be running our out of hours service from 6pm Thursday 6 April to 8am Tuesday 11 April 2023.

Our out of hours service can help you with emergency repairs, reports of antisocial behaviour and rent payments. Just call us on our usual number **0808 164 0111**. MyKarbon is available 24/7 365 days a year.

Our Supported Housing service will remain available during the holidays.



**@karbonhomes**