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Boiler failure leaves Harben Road estate tenants without heat or hot water



Published: 09 February 2012
 by PAVAN AMARA

BOILERS failed on a council housing estate, leaving tenants without heating and hot water during snowfalls and sub-zero temperatures.

One elderly woman spent days sitting in a bank branch to keep warm rather than return home. But the message that came back to irate residents from the Town Hall was: thank you for your patience.

All four boilers on the Harben Road estate in Swiss Cottage broke down last Tuesday, with the first of those being fixed only yesterday (Wednesday). There were claims that faults were due to lack of maintenance.

Resident Liz Thackaray, 78, said: "The other day I went to Lloyds TSB and sat there nearly all day. I got there in the morning and stayed till closing time. It was the only thing I could think of.

"I can't afford to use fan heaters to warm my home – I'm a pensioner. I was so cold I didn't even want to move to the kitchen to make a cup of tea."

Salma Begum, 31, said she spent hours washing clothes by hand. She has three daughters aged 11, six and one.



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"With my baby, I can't put her clothes in the cold water of the washing machine," said Ms Begum. "I need warm water to wash her clothes properly. So I am having to boil water and wash everything in the sink."

To shower, she and her family travelled to her mother's flat in King's Cross.

"It's horrible," she said. "I usually keep my children so clean, and now they're walking around without showers for days."

Elaine Wilkins, 40, said that residents received letters from Camden Council about the boiler breakdown, but there was confusion as to when it would be fixed.

"Most days I am forced out into McDonald's and walking around Sainsbury's," she said. "It's warmer outside than it is inside. We won't even be properly compensated for all the money we've spent on electric heating. I'm afraid of receiving my electric bill."

Conservative councillor Don Williams said: "The residents don't have heating or hot water. It's down to mechanical engineering problems that stretch back 40 years.

"All four boilers on the estate are down, and they're trying to fix them one at a time, which doesn't work. They need to be maintained yearly, but the problem is the cost. Camden Council need to look very carefully at this. They need to put forward a maintenance programme.

"I am going to be putting pressure on the housing department. This sort of work should have been done in the summer before it got cold.

"It should be maintained and checked every summer, and we need emergency back-up."

A council spokeswoman said: "We apologise for the heating problems at the Harben estate, which were due to faulty boilers. We have offered temporary heaters to all residents, and engineers have been working through the night to rectify the problem.

"We're confident the boilers will very soon be fully functional and thank residents for their continued patience."

A warm home again ... after two months

A FAMILY was left without heating for two months, writes Pavan Amara.

Sonia Teixeira's broken radiators were suddenly fixed when the New Journal contacted the Town Hall to ask about delays to repairs.

Over two months Ms Teixeira and her family were visited by repair men at their flat in Weedington Road, Gospel Oak, but were told the parts were on order.

She said: "Then, magically, the day after you [the New Journal] emailed them two lovely repair men turned up and spent the best part of a day fixing the entire problem."

After two months without heating, Ms Teixeira, 31, has flu, her three-year-old son has a chest infection and her elderly mother has a leg infection.

A council spokeswoman said: "The service has fallen short of the high standards we expect from our contractor.

We are putting measures in place to make sure it does not happen again."

Pictured above: Sonia Teixeira spent weeks without heating

Tags: Camden New Journal Website Local News

Comments

Submitted by Anonymous on Sat, 2012-02-11 20:00.

Harben rd estate

The council havent really help with this problem it's ok to offer electric heaters but who should foot the electric bill for them as they eat electric, when we spoke to the council they didn't seem to care about the expense and they didn't seem to wanna help as these flats only have two radiators in each and every flat 1,2,3 bedrooms and they are cold all the time with no plan to up grade the antique systems

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Submitted by Anonymous on Fri, 2012-02-10 22:26.

Boilers broken on harben estate

I live on the harben estate and the hot water and heating stopped on the 27th

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