

Spring 2021/Issue 36

home

How to save money on your bills

Let's talk about building safety

Help us make your repairs go smoothly

Make your
business
dreams a
reality



Win £50
in shopping
vouchers!

New year, new Home!



You said that you'd like more frequent online communications from us so we're planning to move Home online. If you'd like to stay up to date with everything going on in your community and your neighbourhood, all you need to do is let us know your current email address.

How can you do that? it's simple, either:

- Update it through My Account. No account yet? Sign up on our website
- Get in touch with our friendly Customer Contact Centre on 0800 432 0077
- Fill out the slip on the last page and send it back to us using the enclosed prepaid envelope.

And don't worry, you can opt out at anytime.

Need a hand getting online?

We can help with that too! Simply let us know and we'll give you free training to get you online safely and confidently.

Introduction

Welcome

It's the new year which means it's time for your favourite magazine Home.

Can you believe it's 2021? Last year seems to have flown by in some ways and taken longer in others. 2020 was a difficult year for many of us but here's hoping for a better 2021.

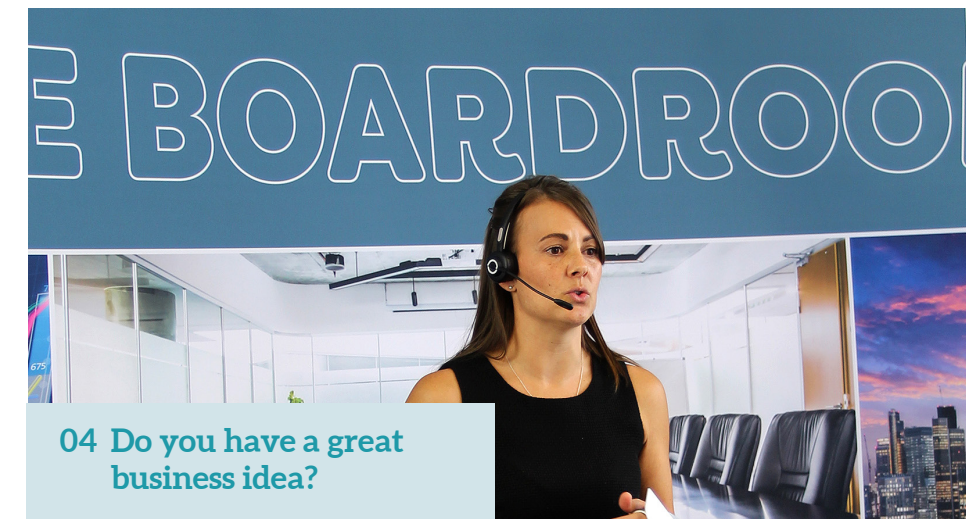
In our feature article we take a look at the Enterprise programme and how we can help you maximise a business idea you may have.

We also talk about the issue that's been on everyone's mind regarding tall buildings, fire safety and how this might affect you. There's some top tips on how you can save money on your bills too.

Don't forget to sign up to receive future editions of Home by email and enter our quiz for your chance to win a £50 shopping voucher.

Happy New Year!

Vaneesha Parekh
Editor



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Don't forget to sign up!

Enter our quiz
for your chance
to win £50!

Answer the questions in this
edition of Home for your
chance to win 1 of 3 £50
shopping vouchers.

Get your entry in before 28 February
2021 to be in the running.

Visit [a2dominion.co.uk/
competitionrules](https://a2dominion.co.uk/competitionrules) for terms
and conditions.

Submit your answers online at
a2dominion.co.uk/competition.

Congratulations to our autumn
2020 winners: Rebecca Nottingham,
Viktoria Gal and Sara Gamble.

We hope you enjoyed spending your
vouchers.



Do you have a great business idea?

Every year we help our customers take their business ideas to the next level through our Enterprise programme. It's a free 6-month programme of workshops for people looking to get their business off the ground.

So, if you're sitting on a great idea, maybe it's time to make your business dream a reality?

At the end of the programme of workshops the strongest business ideas earn the chance to reach 'The Boardroom' final. It's there that they pitch for an investment of up to £5,000 towards their business start-up costs and a year's worth of one-to-one mentoring. And it doesn't matter if you don't make the finals - everyone who completes the course becomes a member of the renowned Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs (IOEE).

As with everything in 2020, Covid-19 threw a spanner in the works this year. But that didn't stop us finding a way to go ahead, even if it meant delaying the event so we could find a safer way to make it happen.

We spoke to Donna, one of our successful finalists who pitched for a £4,000 investment in her business, Lash Amoré - an eyelash extension salon and training hub.

"I wanted to start my own training school to give the best support, mentoring and career opportunities to future professionals," says Donna.

"I have over 12 years' industry experience that I wanted to share; plus I loved the thought of being my own boss!"

Free, professional help

"I'd started Lash Amoré 6 months earlier so it was still early days, and here was an email saying I could get free, professional help to develop my

business and have the chance to pitch for up to £5,000 investment - I couldn't say no!"

After signing up, Donna attended the twice-monthly Saturday workshops at our Ealing office between September 2019 and March 2020, developing a revised business plan under the guidance of our expert trainers.

"Although my business had already started, I hadn't realised how much planning I still needed to do to make it a success in the future," Donna explained. "The programme really opened my eyes to every little detail that I had to consider."

A spanner in the works

Donna made it to the semi-final stage in January 2020 and successfully qualified for the boardroom final which was scheduled for late March. But then the Covid-19 pandemic put the immediate future of the programme in doubt.

"I was so happy to make it to the boardroom final and give myself the opportunity to pitch for an investment and then suddenly, everything stopped!" Donna explained.

"At the time, myself and the other finalists didn't know how or even if we would get the chance to present our businesses, it was heartbreaking."

"It was incredible how well the final was adapted to the pandemic by the A2Dominion team," said Donna.

"By September, using zoom to communicate was the new normal and the revised format gave us all an extra communication skill that we didn't know we needed when the programme started."

A dream come true

Donna's online pitch at September's boardroom final was flawless, with the judging panel praising not only her business plan but also the unique beauty products she had created to support her teaching.

"I was naturally quite nervous before I went on to pitch but it could not have turned out any better," said Donna.

"To achieve a £4,000 investment was a dream outcome that made the long, anxious wait for the final worth it in the end."

"It's really exciting to see where Lash Amoré is heading and I'm determined to make it succeed despite these difficult times for small businesses," said Donna. "I want to make my two daughters proud and show them that women are strong and capable, and that the world is their oyster if they strive for success."

What about you?

So, does Donna have any advice for A2Dominion customers thinking about taking part in the next Enterprise programme?

"Absolutely do it! I've had the best journey ever and the support from everyone involved in the programme has been epic! I can't thank the team involved enough and can honestly say that without their expertise, I don't know where my business would be today."

Since successfully appearing in the final, Donna has continued to develop Lash Amoré and will be opening a new salon and training hub in West Drayton in early 2021.

The Enterprise programme in numbers...

9

Beginning in 2012, the Enterprise programme is now in its **ninth** year running.

30

30 new businesses have started including a mobile cinema and a natural hair care range.

120

More than **120 customers** have attended workshops and gone on to complete a full business plan.

£120k

Over **£120,000** has been awarded to support business start-ups over the past 9 years.

300

Over **300 customers** have registered for the programme in the last 3 years alone!

A new approach

As the country began adapting to both living and working during the pandemic, our Employment and Training team started to think outside the box.

We worked tirelessly to rearrange the final of the Enterprise programme to September, using zoom as a way for Donna and her fellow finalists to safely pitch to the judging panel.

If you're an A2Dominion customer with a business idea, then we have a dedicated team to help take your business to the next level. Simply get in touch with communities@a2dominion.co.uk. Good luck!

How to save money on your bills



If you've been spending more time than usual at home lately, you might have noticed that your bills have gone up a little - or even a lot. Fortunately, there are simple ways you can reduce the amount of energy you use, to save your money and the planet while you're at it.



Did you know?

We could save

£215m

on our collective energy bills every year, if every home in the UK took 1 minute off their showers.

Switch to LED lights

Energy-saving light bulbs are an easy way to cut your energy bills. They come in a range of sizes and fittings. Even if you have brand new, less energy-efficient bulbs, you're better off replacing them now to save on the amount of energy you use.

Pay by Direct Debit

If you can, pay your bills by Direct Debit. Utility companies usually offer incentives for payments made by this method.

Time for a change?

If you've been with the same energy suppliers for a while, it's worth having a look at other options. There could be a better rate that will save you money.

Be 'Smart'

If your property has its own utility meter, then you may be able to upgrade to a 'smart' meter. Smart meters allow you to keep an eye on how much energy you're using and provide the information you need to budget. Contact your utility company to see if you can upgrade.

Air dry your clothes

Relying on your tumble dryer means using more energy than you may need to. If you have the time and space, air drying will save energy, money and avoid accidentally shrinking your clothes! If your boiler is in a cupboard, try installing a clothes rack to dry your clothes using the heat it releases.

Keep an eye on your boiler

Keeping your boiler happy, healthy and working efficiently will keep you warm and save you money. Have it serviced each year, check that the pressure is above 1, and make sure the flame is blue.

Let us know if you're struggling

If you're finding it hard to pay your bills or rent, please get in touch with us. You might be surprised how many options are available to you, even if you don't qualify for benefits such as Universal Credit. It's easier than ever to get in touch with us now, with our new, online financial support form at <http://bit.ly/TSOreferral>.

Have your say in what we do



As a member of our Customer Service Committee you can shape how we deliver our services to you.

It's an exciting opportunity to make a real difference to our customers and their communities.

More information:

Deadline: 28 February 2021 at 5pm

Application and info pack: a2dominion.co.uk/newsroom

Queries: governance@a2dominion.co.uk


a2dominion

Let's talk about building safety

Building safety has been brought to everyone's attention following the tragic Grenfell fire in 2017. After the fire, there was a public enquiry which discovered the reason the fire spread so quickly was partly due to the unsuitable cladding and insulation used on the outside of the building.

A key recommendation from the enquiry was that all buildings over 18 metres high (about 6 stories) needed to be inspected to check if the cladding and insulation is safe. The government later issued a revised notice saying that all multi-occupied residential buildings under 18 metres in height needed to be inspected as well.

A national problem

These recommendations had major implications across the UK as they potentially affected millions of residents and tens of thousands of buildings. Landlords had to identify any buildings that may be affected, then carry out the necessary inspections.

This has led to a huge demand on the small number of qualified fire safety experts who are needed to carry out the inspections. The problem was made even more complicated by changing government legislation and the decision to extend the inspection programme to buildings under 18 metres.

Then things got more complicated

This already challenging situation became even more difficult in late 2019 when mortgage companies stopped lending to people who live in affected buildings, unless they had proof their building was not affected by the cladding issues.

The proof the lenders want is an External Wall System Form (EWS1) which can only be completed by a qualified fire safety expert. This is having serious repercussions for residents across the country who wish to sell or remortgage their home - it's difficult to do this without an EWS1 and equally challenging to get one.

Key facts and figures

- 13,500** Over **13,500** buildings over 18 metres affected in the UK.
- 500** More than **500** A2Dominion buildings including 4-5 storey buildings need inspecting.
- 153** **153** inspections have been completed by us to date.
- £1.6b** **£1.6 billion** Building Safety Fund is available.
- 12,000** Over **12,000** A2Dominion homes and customers have been affected.
- 20** **20 staff** have been recruited to our dedicated Building Safety team.
- 5** **5 years minimum** is the estimated time to complete this project.

What have we done about it?

Due to the far-reaching and serious consequences of these issues for our residents, this project is our top priority. So far we have:

- **Set up a dedicated Building Safety team** and we will recruit more staff to help manage the scale of the problem including project managers, building safety managers and resident liaison officers
- **Carried out full inspections** of nearly all our tall buildings, identified which ones are at a higher risk and implemented interim fire safety measures such as waking watches, which we have paid for
- **Explored different fire safety funding options** through discussions with contractors, applications for the government's Building Safety Fund and looking at new homes warranty and insurance providers' guarantees
- **Lobbied the government** to release extra funding, provide clarity around building safety guidance and offer ways to unstick the lending market.

What this means for us

We have around 550 properties that we manage that need to be inspected, which is a huge amount of work. We know there are frustrations around how long this process is taking, and we share those with you. There are several reasons for the progress being slower than we'd like:

1. It's difficult to find experts who are qualified and available to carry out the work and it takes time for them to write their reports
2. Looking into funding options also takes time and can lead to re-inspections of buildings and lengthy legal discussions with developers
3. Changes to government legislation have caused confusion
4. A large number of properties have been affected therefore the building inspection process takes time.

Who will pay the bill?

There is unfortunately no clear answer to this. We need to explore the

different funding options available to us for each and every building. This can be a very lengthy process, there are no guarantees, and government legislation is changing all the time.

Funding options include:

Building Safety Fund - a pot of money put aside by the government. This only applies to buildings over 18 metres and has strict guidelines and a tight deadline of when the work needs to start by.

The contractor - following investigations, if we find any defects with the original cladding and insulation we will approach the developer to cover the costs. This can take many months to pursue and may end in litigation which can take even longer.

Insurance - new builds are usually covered by new homes warranty for up to 10 years after they are built. A claim can be made against the builder if we find any issues that do not meet the new homes warranty requirements.

We understand this is a key area of

Timeline

- 2017**
 - Grenfell public enquiry begins
 - Ban on Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) which was used to clad Grenfell Tower
- 2018**
 - A2Dominion starts inspections on tall buildings
 - Government issues a formal notice requiring landlords to inspect buildings over 18 metres
- 2019**
 - A2Dominion sets up a dedicated Building Safety team
 - Mortgage lenders begin asking for compliance information before releasing lending
 - External Wall System Form (EWS1) introduced
- 2020**
 - Government requirement for landlord investigations expanded to buildings under 18 metres

What's next?

We are prioritising our tallest buildings first. Once these are complete we will move onto further phases of the project which will include buildings below 18 metres. We estimate that the project will take a minimum of 5 years to complete. We recognise this is a long time, but we want to be clear and honest with you about what to expect.

How we'll keep you up to date

We have a dedicated section on our website about building safety, including frequently asked questions if you want to find out more information. Simply go to a2dominion.co.uk and search for building safety.

We're listening

If you have any questions about building safety, please contact us at buildingprojects@a2dominion.co.uk.

Help us make your repairs go smoothly



Quiz question
What do you do if someone in your household has Covid-19 symptoms?
Find out how to enter on page 3.

When something is broken in your home, you want to get it fixed as soon as possible, on the first visit, and properly - right?

Well the good news is if we work together this is far more likely to happen. Here we talk about what you can expect from us when it comes to repairs, and how you can help us get the problem sorted as seamlessly as possible.

How to request a repair

The easiest and fastest way to request a repair is online using My Account. If you don't have an account, you can set one up in just a few minutes at a2dominion.co.uk/myaccount. You can also get in touch with our friendly Customer Contact Centre on **0800 432 0077**, submit an online form or use live chat on our website.



What we will do

Before we arrive, we'll be in touch to make sure no one in your home has Covid-19 symptoms, is self-isolating or in quarantine - so we can reschedule your repair if necessary.

Our staff will always wear a face covering while working in your home. They may or may not be able to wear gloves depending on the type of job they are doing.

We'll complete the repair at our first visit if possible and clean up after ourselves once we're finished.

Before we leave, we'll explain the repair to you, as well as any next steps if there is more to do.

What you can do

When you request a repair, let us know if someone in your house is quarantining, self-isolating or displaying Covid-19 symptoms via My Account, phone, live chat, or our dedicated webform.

If you, or any other member of your household, displays symptoms between raising your repair and the appointment, please get in touch to rearrange it.

You should only allow our staff in uniform with ID to enter your home. Our staff will wear a uniform and clearly visible identification. You can always give us a buzz to confirm they've been sent by us.

Clear the area where the repair will take place so we can easily access it. Then maintain a safe 2-metre distance, preferably leaving the room the contractor is working in, and create a clear pathway out of your home for our contractors and their tools.

Make sure you wear a mask. Our staff will not enter your home unless you are wearing a mask.

If in doubt, please ask. If there's something our staff member is or isn't doing that you're not comfortable with, please talk to them so they know how to help. This might mean asking them to use a dust sheet, or wear PPE if they've forgotten.

We're always here in your time of need

While a lot has changed since this time last year, our customers being our highest priority hasn't. Many people have struggled with loneliness, providing food for their families and much more. We want you to know we're aware of how tough it has been and tell you about some of the ways we can help you - especially if your life circumstances mean you need a little extra support.

So far so good

Your safety and wellbeing are the most important thing to us, so we've put together a team to make sure we can prioritise them.

We've done loads of food deliveries, made hundreds of calls to check up on our customers, and provided tablets and training to help those of you who don't have access to technology stay connected with your friends and family.

It's been a change in the way we do things and a learning curve for everyone, but we've enjoyed the challenge!

Lisa's story

Lisa lives in one of our supported housing properties in Pilgrim Court, Surrey. Just like many of us during this tough year, she was forced to isolate. "In November I was very ill and had to isolate for the full 14 days after talking to my GP and using the NHS Test and Trace application.

This was a very tough time as I was alone and very unwell, isolating without my 4-year old, who was with

her father from the onset of my symptoms."

Lisa's support worker talked to her every day on the phone to keep her company and check on her physical and mental wellbeing. She also visited the supermarket to purchase food and medication for Lisa and arranged food parcels from Lisa's local church.

"As I have no family within close distance this help was pivotal to my wellbeing and my support worker went above and beyond her duty of care. I was and still remain very grateful for her help."

Do you need support?

If you or someone you know living in one of our homes needs extra support, we can help in a variety of ways. A regular phone call to see how you are, food and medical arrangements and deliveries, financial advice and support, help finding work and so on.

Simply get in touch with staff on site if you live in supported housing or call us on 0800 432 0077. Everyone needs a hand from time to time and that's what we're here for. We look forward to hearing from you.



Contact us

Phone

0800 432 0077
(Monday to Friday,
8:30am to 5:30pm)

Online

a2dominion.co.uk/contact-us

Twitter

@A2DominionHelp

Write

A2Dominion
113 Uxbridge Road
Ealing, London, W5 5TL

Manage your home the easy way. Visit our website and sign into My Account to:

Check your statements

Pay bills online

Request a repair

View repairs history

Tell us about an issue

Update your details

Register today for instant access:

my.a2dominion.co.uk



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(By giving us your email address you consent to receiving emails from us. Don't worry, you can opt out anytime)

Name:

Telephone
number:

Address:

Postcode:

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