

# Life & Times

A special message from

*Honor*

**Right from the beginning, before we even started the design process, we knew exactly what we wanted to create – a place older people could truly call ‘home’. From the outset, its design would enable people to continue to live as independently as possible for as long as possible, and it would offer all the services and support they could ever want to maintain their quality of life.**

In May 2019, we realised our vision and celebrated the opening of Queensgate Apartments, Sidcup. Since then, we’re delighted to have welcomed so many like-minded people into our growing community, where they could savour new friendships and start a new journey with us.

However, life as we knew it changed dramatically when the lockdown rules came into force. And our concept of an assisted living community suddenly took on a whole new meaning of its own. We were able to step in to assist and support our residents and make sure that no one was isolated or lonely during this unprecedented period in our nation’s history.

Since mid-March, our community in Sidcup has been much more inward looking than usual, as we isolate together. We are blessed with our excellent chef, Spencer, who has lived with us and kept us healthy with a balanced and varied diet, supplemented by our gardening club who have taken it upon themselves to make us self-sufficient, in vegetables at least.

We’ve felt so grateful to have the friendships of our neighbours. These relationships have deepened because physical contact with our families has lessened, and we’ve had to rely on each other more. Reduced contact with the outside world has led us to take up new activities together. The choir is flourishing as we all sing from our balconies with our accordionist in the gardens below. Movie night has become ever more popular as we’ve had more time to while-away watching the classics. And with Spring the warmest on record, those exercising around the gardens found themselves in the company of others and covering greater distances than ever before.

Although we miss our families acutely, having a couple of tech-savvy younger staff living on-site, has made it easier for us to learn new forms of communication. So most of us are having fun bringing together friends and family for weekly quiz nights, virtual drinks parties and celebrating birthdays in the virtual company of others.

This has been, without doubt, a difficult time for all. Worries about not being able to go out, see friends or family, safely shop for food and of course, the loneliness. However, here within the Queensgate family, we feel privileged to have got through this together, blessed we are all healthy and happy, and ever grateful our ties to each other have become stronger.

But don’t just take my word for it. Inside this newsletter you’ll hear from our residents Therese, Beth and John as they speak of their experience of living at Queensgate Apartments and how the move is making a difference to their lives.

**Honor Barratt**  
Managing Director



Therese had been thinking about moving into a retirement community since her husband died, and when her daughter told her she was moving away to Yorkshire to follow her lifelong dream, she knew she couldn't delay any further. Here's her story of how she beat the lockdown clock and observations on life in a time of Coronavirus from her new home at Queensgate Apartments.



**Therese's Story:** "I had my name down for a flat in Sevenoaks near my son but was number 24 on a long waiting list – so thought I'll never get there.

Then a leaflet came through my door from Birchgrove, which made me want to know more, so I asked my daughter to investigate, and we visited the show suite back in November. There we met Nigel, who was incredibly kind and put my daughter (who is very good at finance) in touch with a financial advisor who reckoned I could afford to stay here until I was 100. Which I do hope not to become!" She says with laughter.

I love the quizzes – good for the mind – and the singing. One resident left her grand piano here, and her daughter gives us a singing hour once a week – out of doors now with social distancing. There's also skittles, croquet, Pétanque, and the VE celebration was so memorable for everybody.

When I think of friends in similar situations, a lot of them hang on to their houses for their offspring. Then end up, with no choice, in a nursing home with worries of staff coming in and out – whereas here, the team stayed in with us during the lockdown and we are free of this virus – a great relief.

# “Come and see for

“I confess when I first saw the building, I didn't find it inviting, but once inside everything changes...

**...it's so spacious and open, I love the gardens, so I opted for a bright two-bed apartment overlooking them and have seen the trees spring to leaf – it's wonderful.**

I am particularly pleased with the design of the kitchen and bathroom – everything is so user-friendly and such a high standard.”

The other thing I truly value is the freedom to please myself. There are no rules about what time to get up or go to bed, whether you can walk around the garden – you can live and socialise as you wish. And if you ever need help, the people here are incredible. Matt is so patient and dedicated, always helping me with the computer. We never go hungry because Spencer, our chef spoils us - he makes the most wonderful cheese scones I've ever had in my life.

I do admire Honor's commitment and Karen does the shopping for us – it's lovely to be with young people, they are so energetic and go to endless trouble to keep everybody amused.



I was very fortunate to get in just at the right time. If I'd delayed any further, I'd be stuck at home, very much on my own. I rang an old neighbour to see how she was doing. Her husband's in a care home, and she's not allowed to see him – yet she's going shopping just “to get out of the house and not go potty.” I had to give up my car because of my eyesight, but here I can walk into the high street so don't need it.

What would you say to someone hesitant to move?  
**“Come and see for yourself. Just because there are choices, doesn't mean there is a wrong one. You just need to find what's right for you.”**



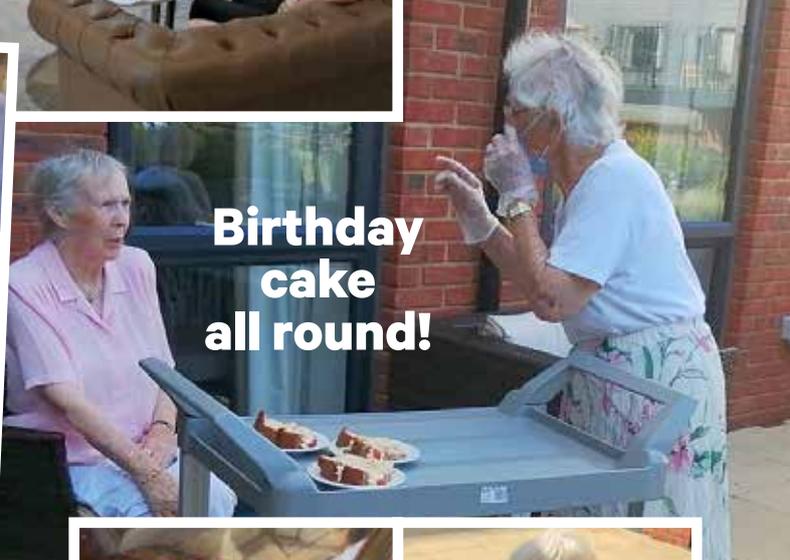
Picking radishes!



A quiz or two...



'Zapping' deliveries!



Birthday cake all round!

# yourself"



Afternoon Pimms...

& armchair art!



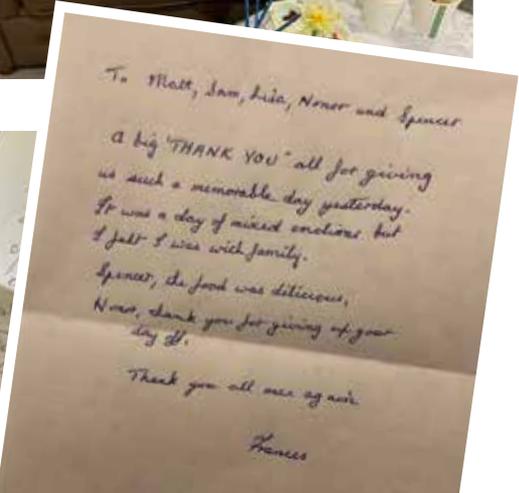
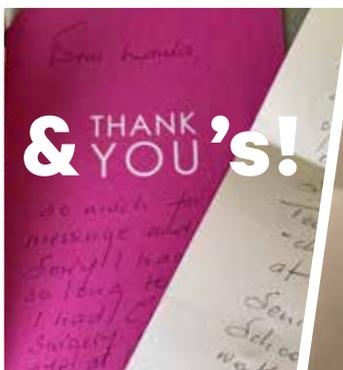
Knocking down pins...



getting dressed up.



Movie nights...



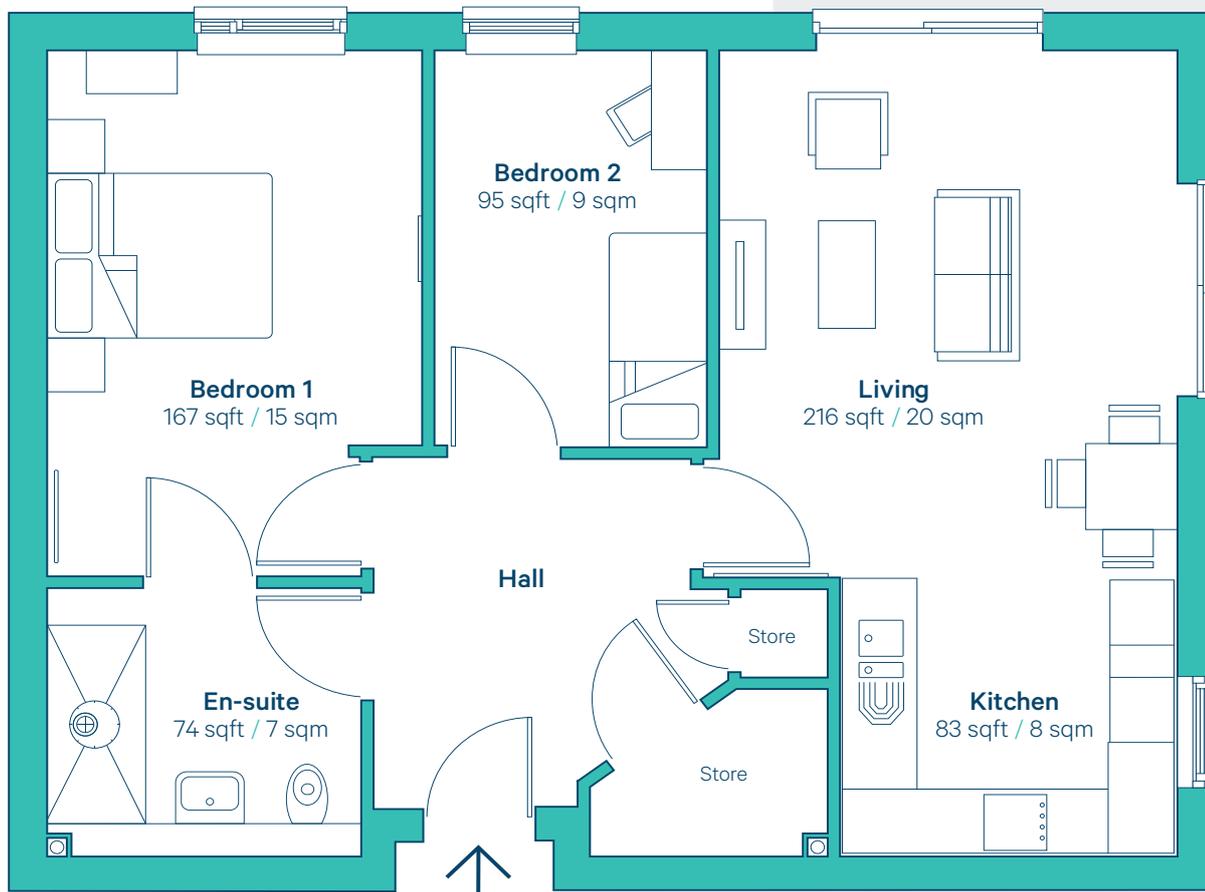
# A community of support on your doorstep

At Birchgrove, we design our communities to meet your needs in later life. You have the freedom to live as you please in a quality self-contained apartment – without all the burdens of homeownership. Apartments and communal areas are future designed to anticipate changing needs as we age and central to that is our ethos of supporting you to remain active and lead life independently.

Our Birchgrove team are here to support you seven days a week with shopping, help with technology or anything else you need. And there's plenty to keep you occupied. You can socialise and relax with neighbours in the garden or join in with the weekly programme of events and activities – as and when you choose, of course. And there's a host of facilities including club-room, library, brasserie, hair salon, wellness suite – where you can share time and uplifting stories with others, and support each other. What's more, everyone is welcome, including your pets and favourite possessions – it's all part of what makes it stimulating and different here.

**So if you are thinking of planning your next move, it would make sense to at least come and say hello and take a look.**

## Example two-bedroom layout:



Pets welcome

DISCOVER  
A  
DIFFERENT  
WAY

Library  
& Club Room



Lounge



Typical apartment interiors  
**Queensgate Apartments**



Dining



Kitchen  
with waist height appliances



En-suites  
with walk-in showers



Bedrooms

# Stepping up and raising spirits... Big & Small!

**Beth's story:** Dealing with an urgent change in your Mum's circumstances is emotionally challenging at the best of times but tougher if you live in Dublin and can't physically be there yourself because of lockdown travel restrictions.

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**“Everything changed when Mum had a bit of a nasty fall and had to go into hospital. And changed again, when hospital was deemed not to be the best place for her, as being elderly and unsteady on her feet as a result of the fall she was more vulnerable. So, Mum was discharged to a care home.”**

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Yet the emotional roller-coaster didn't stop there. “Mum is super independent and hated not being able to cook for herself – it's one of those simple pleasures she gets so much joy from. She was also unhappy about her bedroom door having to stay unlocked – especially as the woman next door kept wandering in during the night, which left her feeling uneasy and insecure.”

My sister Pippa spotted the signage for Queensgate Apartments in Kent when driving on her weekly visit to see mum. Within 48 hours, Mum had moved into a one-bed apartment.

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**I'm still pinching myself... The staff listened, understood our predicament and really got behind us to make this happen – even giving Mum a live tour on the mobile phone!”**

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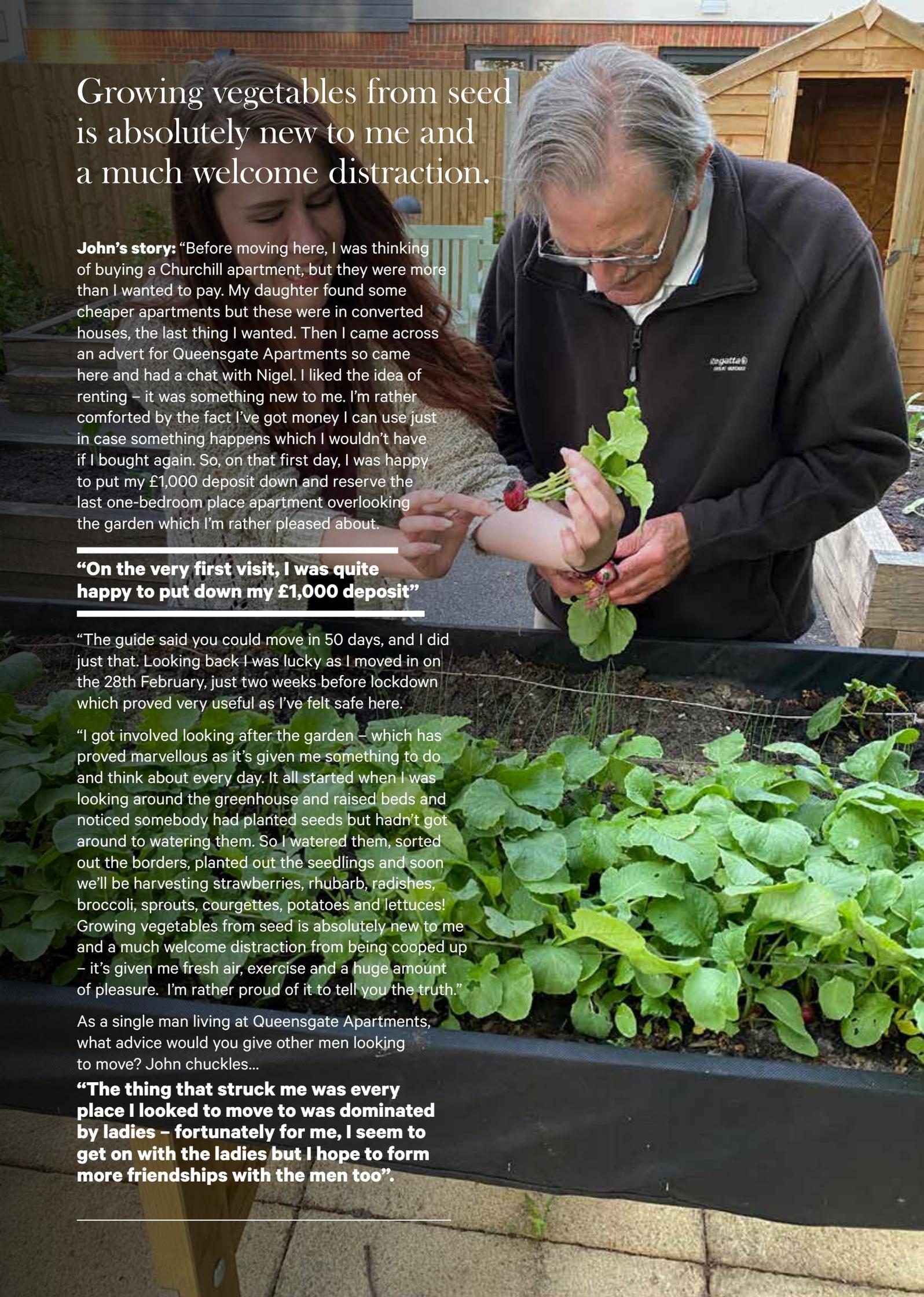
Since moving in, Beth makes herself one meal a day but knows the chef's on hand if she doesn't feel like cooking. “She's keen to spend time outside in the garden and loves music so is happy trundling around with classic FM on her iPad (which the team help her sort out).”

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**“It's a weight lifted. Because Mum's happier, I am happier”**

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If I flew back to the UK to see Mum, I might have to isolate for 14 days first – so this suits us all better. I know she's already settled as Mum has now brought her two tortoises – Big and Small – to live with her at Queensgate Apartments.”



# Growing vegetables from seed is absolutely new to me and a much welcome distraction.

**John's story:** "Before moving here, I was thinking of buying a Churchill apartment, but they were more than I wanted to pay. My daughter found some cheaper apartments but these were in converted houses, the last thing I wanted. Then I came across an advert for Queensgate Apartments so came here and had a chat with Nigel. I liked the idea of renting – it was something new to me. I'm rather comforted by the fact I've got money I can use just in case something happens which I wouldn't have if I bought again. So, on that first day, I was happy to put my £1,000 deposit down and reserve the last one-bedroom place apartment overlooking the garden which I'm rather pleased about."

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**"On the very first visit, I was quite happy to put down my £1,000 deposit"**

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"The guide said you could move in 50 days, and I did just that. Looking back I was lucky as I moved in on the 28th February, just two weeks before lockdown which proved very useful as I've felt safe here."

"I got involved looking after the garden – which has proved marvellous as it's given me something to do and think about every day. It all started when I was looking around the greenhouse and raised beds and noticed somebody had planted seeds but hadn't got around to watering them. So I watered them, sorted out the borders, planted out the seedlings and soon we'll be harvesting strawberries, rhubarb, radishes, broccoli, sprouts, courgettes, potatoes and lettuces! Growing vegetables from seed is absolutely new to me and a much welcome distraction from being cooped up – it's given me fresh air, exercise and a huge amount of pleasure. I'm rather proud of it to tell you the truth."

As a single man living at Queensgate Apartments, what advice would you give other men looking to move? John chuckles...

**"The thing that struck me was every place I looked to move to was dominated by ladies – fortunately for me, I seem to get on with the ladies but I hope to form more friendships with the men too".**

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# A final thought from

*Nigel*  
**Nigel Gale**  
Sales Manager  
Queensgate Apartments



**These are challenging times, and everyone is understandably anxious about the risk of infection from COVID-19. I'd like to take this opportunity to both reassure you and explain more about the steps we've put in place to protect the health of everyone living, working or visiting Birchgrove. These will help us remain Covid-free.**

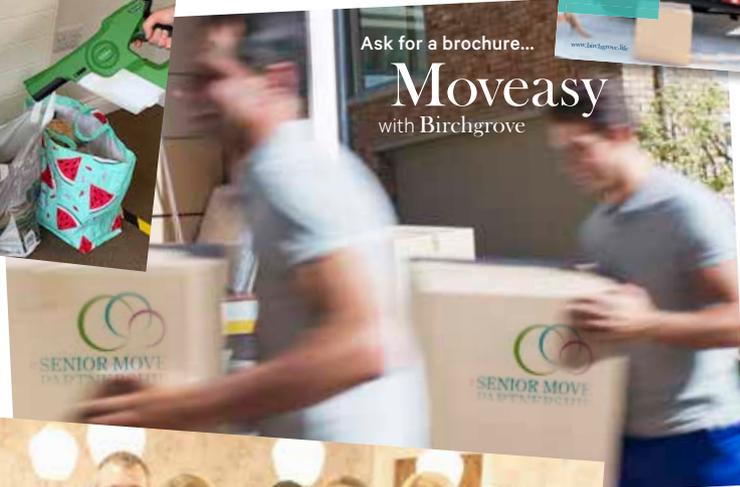
All our sales advisors have completed online Coronavirus Awareness and Protection training. They are up to speed on all the latest prevention guidance, and measures are in place to minimise the risk of infection. All visitors will be provided with a face mask, hand sanitiser and gloves and a briefing to explain our safe working procedures. These go well above Government guidelines and are fortified from our own extensive experience.

**We are open**, so you can take a carefully supervised tour to get a taste of our beautiful apartments and life here. **Booking is a must**, as tours are planned to give us time to perform disinfection procedures in between.

**At Birchgrove you don't just become a resident you become part of our family. Why not call us and explore an alternative way to live designed to put your mind at ease.**

To help you through the daunting process of moving, we've partnered with hand-selected businesses to ensure your needs come first and hassle is minimised. **We call this service Moveasy**, and step by step it helps you with everything from access to independent financial advice, sorting through your belongings through to moving in on the big day and getting you settled in. All our partners adhere to the same safe working procedures and follow the same strict practices to keep you safe while supporting you on your move.

Once you move in, there will be a period of isolation – but you will be able to carry on with your life as normal, exactly as you do now. The difference will be us; the team here who will ensure you are safe, your needs looked after, and you are never isolated and alone.



Could this be the next chapter of your life?  
**Pick up the conversation with us.**  
We're here and we'd really like to help.

**020 3929 5599**

[www.birchgrove.life](http://www.birchgrove.life)

