

# NEWS



**Solihull**  
Community Housing  
Shaping our neighbourhoods

For tenants and leaseholders of Solihull Community Housing

Summer 2019



## New look for SCH!

Welcome to your new look newsletter. This reflects our new branding and fresh modern logo. We hope you enjoy this first edition.



# Message from Fiona

**Welcome to the summer newsletter – I hope you like the new look and the new logo! It’s another busy edition which I hope you find an interesting and enjoyable read.**

Along with lots of other council landlords, this year we are celebrating the centenary of the Addison Act. One hundred years ago the Government of the day introduced this new idea to build and provide social housing.

Things may have changed a lot over the past century

but social housing remains as important today as it was back then. Our Engagement Team have lined up a number of events to celebrate the centenary of the Addison Act and we’ll have some pictures of these in the next newsletter.

I am also very pleased to announce that we have just introduced a new ‘Safer Homes’ team. This is in direct response to the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy.

The Social Housing Green Paper that was published this year led to a complete reappraisal of social housing safety standards, in particular

around high rise buildings. This new team will act as a one-stop approach to all aspects of safety which is an issue that we continue to prioritise. The team will work in accordance with guidelines from the Hackitt Review, which conducted a thorough assessment into all the circumstances surrounding the Grenfell disaster.

One of the key outcomes of the Hackitt Review was around customer engagement and our new Safer Homes team will be

working closely with tenants. Look out for more information on the Safer Homes team on our website.



**Fiona Hughes**  
Chief Executive

## Give us your views to be in with the chance of winning

**Congratulations to the latest winners of our Share Your Views prize draw.**

Mrs Whitehouse, from Chelmsley Wood, was shocked when she received the call to say she was the lucky winner. We went along with Rent Arrears Team



■ For you to be in with the chance of winning a £50 voucher give us your views at [www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk](http://www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk)



Leader, Darren, to present her with the £50 love to shop voucher. Mrs Whitehouse was overjoyed with the voucher and is looking forward to spending it!

Mr Rogers, who is also from Chelmsley Wood, recently completed an online survey to share his thoughts about our services. Much to his surprise, a few weeks later he received the call to say he was a prize draw winner!

Thank you to everyone who have taken the time to complete a Share Your Views survey. Your feedback is very valuable to us as it helps us to improve our services and shape the way we do things.

Everyone who completes one of our online Share Your Views surveys is automatically entered into our quarterly prize draws.

## Please do not abuse our staff

We are sorry to report that we have had some recent cases of customers being abusive to our staff. This is not acceptable. We will not tolerate abusive or aggressive behaviour from any of our customers. If staff do experience this kind of behaviour they will leave the situation or terminate the call immediately.



# We're working with you to improve our services

**In the first half of the year we've been working hard at our tenant engagement. This is in response to things you told us when we carried out our 'Join the Conversation' project.**

We are now starting to put things in place to improve the quality of service we provide. We know that some of our new tenants felt we needed to do more once they had moved in.

So we now have a 'New Tenants' focus which involves joint working of our Tenancy Sustainment Team and newly formed Customer Service Team to support residents in the weeks and months after they first move in.

We will visit tenants in their new homes to make sure they are happy. If there are any minor repairs outstanding at that time we will aim to complete them during that visit – or for larger works arrange a mutually convenient appointment to return.

We want new tenants to be happy in their new home and the 'New Tenants' focus will hopefully make this happen.

Another source of concern was the amount of rubbish on our estates. So in response to this we joined in the 'Great British Spring Clean' campaign.

For more than a month we had teams of staff picking up litter across our estates. As you can see from the pictures on page 5 the teams worked really hard filling sack after sack of rubbish.

We are also increasing our direct tenant engagement with a series of summer events planned around the high rises. This will be a great opportunity to hear your views. These events are part of our celebrations around the centenary of the Addison Act that first introduced council housing in 1919.

■ **Take a look at page 6 to find out when we are visiting you.**



Kevin, Jake and Adam form our new Customer Service Team



**Jan Jackson**  
Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

**Hi everyone,**

I would like to update you all on the Customer Journey Mapping exercise Scrutiny has been involved with.

Members of Scrutiny have been testing the services SCH provide. We have been monitoring what happens when an issue is reported right through to when it has been resolved. This helps us identify where services work well or need improving.

Here are some examples of issues we monitored:

- In December, a Scrutiny member reported having no heating and hot water to the Contact Centre. The advisor informed them the repair would be completed within 24 hours as it was an emergency. Within a couple of hours a contractor had fixed the problem. Scrutiny were impressed with the great service because everything was explained clearly and completed quickly.
- A tenant reported a blocked bin chute in a high rise and the cleaning contractors were sent out to clear it. Unfortunately the contractors were unable to unblock the chute and it had to be passed on to the Maintenance Team who had to remove the canopy to unblock it. The blockage was caused by a lodged sandwich toaster. This caused inconvenience to the residents and also costs SCH for calling out both the cleaners and the operatives. This highlighted that we need to remind residents living in high rises how to use the chutes appropriately.
- A broken handle on a high rise fire door was reported to the Contact Centre and fixed within 24 hours. Scrutiny were pleased with how quickly it was repaired but found that waiting times for the Contact Centre were long. With My SCH Account coming soon it will be very handy for tenants like you and I to report non-emergency repairs quickly and skip the Contact Centre queues.

■ **If you have any comments for us please get in touch. We are always happy to have your input. Email us at [newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk](mailto:newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk) or call us on 0121 717 1515.**





**We are proud to be supporting the national campaign, Fire Kills. The campaign aims to raise awareness of fire risks around the home and to encourage everyone to test their smoke alarms regularly.**

Follow these simple steps to help keep you and your loved ones safe:

- 1** Install smoke alarms on every level of your home and make sure you can hear them throughout your home
- 2** Test your smoke alarms monthly
- 3** Offer to test the smoke alarms of older family members, friends or neighbours who may need help
- 4** Plan and practise how you would escape in a fire and have a plan B
- 5** Most accidental fires start in the kitchen so never leave cooking unattended and always take care
- 6** Don't overload plug sockets and adapters – watch out for loose wiring, scorch marks, hot plugs and sockets
- 7** Keep heaters clear from curtains and furniture – never use them to dry clothes
- 8** Stub cigarettes out properly and dispose of them carefully

■ For more fire safety information please visit [www.firekills.campaign.gov.uk](http://www.firekills.campaign.gov.uk)



**IT ONLY TAKES ONE ACCIDENT TO START A FIRE.**

**ARE YOU SURE YOUR SMOKE ALARMS ARE WORKING?**

**TEST YOURS NOW.**





We were delighted when residents joined in the Spring Clean



# A spot of Spring cleaning

**We recently enjoyed taking part in the Great British Spring Clean run by Keep Britain Tidy. The national campaign which ran throughout March and April, encourages everyone to take part in a litter pick and clean the local area.**

Our Engagement Team organised a series of litter picks across the borough. We cleaned up spots suggested by local residents that needed a bit of extra care.

In total we completed 10 litter picks and 65 willing volunteers took part. We had a number of staff volunteers and it was

also great to work alongside local residents. During the campaign we collected more than 150 bags of rubbish – our random finds included an axe, a purse and even a dead pigeon.

We would like to say a big thank you to all our litter heroes!





# Pop by and see us!

**Our Engagement Team, Jill and Mandy, are hosting a series of pop up events at our high rises over the Summer.**

The pop up events will give you the chance to come and talk to us about safety in your home, enjoy some refreshments and collect some freebies. We'll also have games for children!

We hope to see you over the Summer.

**Tues 30 July,  
1pm - 3pm**

Avoncroft, Fircroft,  
Keble and Kingsgate  
Winchester Drive,  
Chelmsley Wood,  
B37 5QH

**Thurs 1 Aug,  
1pm - 3pm**

Bedford, Birkbeck  
and Newnham  
Windward Way green  
space, Smith's Wood,  
B36 0PG

**Weds 7 Aug,  
1pm - 3pm**

Richmond, Trevelyan  
and Darwin  
Marlene Croft,  
Chelmsley Wood,  
B37 7JS

**Tues 13 Aug,  
1pm - 3pm**

Catesby, Demontfort,  
Digby, Kingshurst and  
Wingfield  
Stonebridge Crescent,  
Kingshurst, B37 6JP

**Thurs 15 Aug,  
1pm - 3pm**

Balliol, Linacre, Merton,  
Greyfriars and Oriel  
Crabtree Hall car park,  
Crabtree Drive,  
Chelmsley Wood,  
B37 5BX

**Tues 20 Aug,  
1pm - 3pm**

Bangor and Keele  
Forth Drive,  
Chelmsley Wood,  
B37 6PJ

**Thurs 22 Aug,  
1pm - 3pm**

Dillington,  
Cheshunt and  
Downing  
Moorend Avenue,  
Chelmsley Wood,  
B37 5TD

**Weds 28 Aug,  
1pm - 3pm**

Wadham, Mansfield,  
Selwyn and Somerville  
Waterson Croft,  
Chelmsley Wood,  
B37 6TT

**Tues 3 Sept,  
1pm - 3pm**

Westham and  
Wedgewood  
Forth Drive, Chelmsley  
Wood, B37 6PX

■ Please pop along and say hi. Did you know our Engagement Team have Twitter? Follow them @EngagementSCH

## WHAT'S ON! **SUMMER**

### CARS AREA TOGETHER FUN DAY

**Saturday 29 June, 12-4pm**

Bosworth Wood Playing Field,  
Auckland Drive, Smiths Wood, B36 9JR  
(entrance off Lotus Walk and Auckland Drive)

### SHIRLEY CARNIVAL

**Saturday 13 July, 12-4pm**

Stalls and family fun at Shirley Park  
B90 3AL

### SAXON COURT OPEN DAY

**Wednesday 17 July, 2pm-6pm**

Saxon Court, Marlene Croft,  
Chelmsley Wood, B37 7JJ

### MIDSUMMER CRAFT FAIR

**Friday 26 to Saturday 27 July,  
9am-5.30pm**

High Street and Mill Lane, Solihull

■ Look out on our social media for more information.

# Different but equal



**Each year we publish an Equality and Diversity report that shows how we promote equality and diversity and practice fairness in everything we do.**

**Below is a summary of the report which includes examples of how we achieve this.**

## Sensory and physical needs

Many of our customers have sensory and physical needs. To meet these needs we provide a range of services and facilities, these include:

- Staff allowing extra time for people with mobility issues to get to the door when visiting them.
- Providing adaptations to homes such as handrails and walk-in showers.
- Offering information in a larger print or Braille.
- Translating information into other languages.

## Domestic abuse

We have worked with the Police to stop physical attacks and mental torture on Ms A and taken legal action against her abusive partner.

## Cuckooing

This is a crime where drug dealers take over someone's home and use it as a base for drug dealing. We worked with Mr D a young tenant who was befriended by a drug dealer and moved into Mr D's home with his partner. We worked with Mr D who had become homeless as a result and evicted the drug dealers.

## Preventing homelessness

Last year we worked with 40 households and helped them move into good quality private rented housing. We also worked with 626 tenants to offer money and debt advice to prevent them from being evicted because of rent arrears.

■ The full report is available on our website  
[www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk](http://www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk)

If you have any suggestions about how we can improve the fairness and inclusions of our services, please let us know by emailing [newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk](mailto:newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk)



# These handy gadgets will keep your loved ones safe

Our Wellbeing Team offers a range of useful gadgets to help around the home. These gadgets are designed to help maintain independence and keep loved ones safe.

Door Exit Contacts are used by many people across Solihull. The device is fitted to exit doors of a property which alert responders when the door is opened. This can be particularly useful for those with dementia and are at risk of wandering and leaving their home unexpectedly.

This handy gadget recently helped a Solihull family when their loved one was diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

As the condition got worse, the family found that their loved one began wandering in the night.

The family reached out to the Wellbeing Team for support and they were recommended Door Exit Contacts. The family are delighted with the gadget because they can continue to

care for their loved one with peace of mind, knowing they will be informed if any exit doors are opened.

This device can be installed by our Wellbeing Team and leased from us from as little as £4.27 per week. It can be easily managed by a timer or key switch.



■ For more information about Door Exit Contacts get in touch with our Wellbeing Team on [wellbeing@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk](mailto:wellbeing@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk)



**Solihome**

A free tenant matching service for private landlords

**Benefits of using Solihome:**

- No fees
- One months rent in advance
- Deposit Bond equivalent up to five weeks rent
- Up to £150 contribution towards Landlords insurance
- In tenancy support and advice for landlords
- Affordability checks completed with tenants
- A wide range of support to help tenants manage and maintain their tenancy
- Free Inventory Service
- Single point of contact



To find out more about the scheme contact Paul Winwood on 0121 779 8876 or email [paulwinwood@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk](mailto:paulwinwood@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk)



## Sign up to Direct Debit today!

Direct Debit is the easiest way to pay your rent, but are you wondering why you should take out a Direct Debit?

Well, here are a few reasons:

- **It saves you time**  
Finding the time to stay on top of bills can sometimes be a challenge. If you set up a Direct Debit for your rent everything happens automatically and efficiently.
- **It takes away the hassle of late payments**  
With Direct Debit late payments don't need to be an issue – you pay on time, every time.
- **It's secure and protected by the Direct Debit Guarantee**

It is an extremely safe way to pay and all payments are covered by the Direct Debit Guarantee. This gives you complete cover for

payments made in error or taken fraudulently, making Direct Debit a safe payment method.

■ If you would like to set up a Direct Debit, or would like more information please call us on 0121 717 1515.







Teams came together to celebrate the completion of Phase One

# Astley Walk gardens enjoy a makeover!

**Astley Walk in Shirley is looking its best for the summer following a fantastic recent makeover. The dividing strip of land that runs through the centre of Astley Walk had become overgrown.**

Now, with the help of members of Solihull's Community Gardening Services, the whole area has been tidied up, with new turf and trees planted.

The work took place with the help of teams from Solihull Council and Solihull Community Housing.



Before



After

We were delighted to play our part in helping to make this project such a success.

A small celebration was held to mark the start of the new cleaner and greener look, with the final phase of the

project set for completion in the summer.



## Our ASB service is open to all

For many years now we have managed the Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) service on behalf of Solihull Council. Our ASB service is open to our tenants and leaseholders and also to those in the private sector including homeowners and those who rent privately.

Our ASB service is managed by our Neighbourhood Services Team and reports are investigated by a Neighbourhood Officer.

Our Officers are trained in many areas including providing witness support to the victims or witnesses of ASB, mediation, how to investigate statutory noise and how to use the technical noise monitoring equipment.

Our Officers also have excellent relationships with partner agencies and work closely with them in order to investigate and resolve cases.

■ To report ASB please call our ASB hotline 0121 717 1500, text 07781 474 722, or visit a Solihull Connect office





# Step onto the property ladder with DIYSO

We are offering you the opportunity to take your first step onto the property ladder with our Do-It-Yourself Shared Ownership scheme (DIYSO)!

DIYSO is a six-month pilot part-buy, part-rent scheme designed to help tenants get on the housing ladder.

It is very similar to other shared ownership schemes except for one key element.

Under most shared ownership schemes the buyers usually choose a home provided by us or a housing association. However, with DIYSO, buyers can choose a home on the open market, giving you far more choice of a property to buy!

DIYSO allows you to buy a share in a home of your choice and pay an affordable rent on the part you don't own.

■ For more information on DIYSO and to see if you are eligible to apply, visit our website



Members of the Trinity Close Residents' Group

## Residents tuck in at new community café!

**There's no place the residents of Trinity Close Residents' Group would rather be on a Thursday afternoon than the Hobs Moat Community café.**

This is a wonderful project – known as the Real Junk Food Project – where anyone can pop along for a snack or cooked meal and some great company on a pay-what-you-can basis.

Staffed entirely by an enthusiastic team of volunteers, tuna pasta bake was on the menu the day we dropped in.

Vegetarians and vegans are catered for and the menu is set to expand soon when a brand new kitchen is opened.

All the food used is donated by local superstores, sometimes simply because the packaging is out of date.



Kitchen Staff at the Community Café

The food is still healthy and tasty and many people in the area now make it their regular place to go on a Thursday from 12-2pm.

The café, adjacent to St Mary's Church, is at the heart of the community with local police

holding surgeries there while the team of volunteers have also arranged free first aid training and gardening courses for those who would like them.





# Get in with 'The Crowd' for a healthier lifestyle!

If you want to get a bit fitter and share ideas for your community then Active Communities could help you achieve your goal.

This new scheme aims to tackle physical inactivity across parts of Solihull and Birmingham until May 2021.

The pilot project is being supported by Sport England.

Nick Garnett, Senior Public Health Manager for Leisure and Physical Activity, is leading the work in Solihull. He said: "Active Communities supports Solihull Council's priority to create the conditions for communities to thrive. We're looking at how we can use sport and physical activity to bring people and communities together."

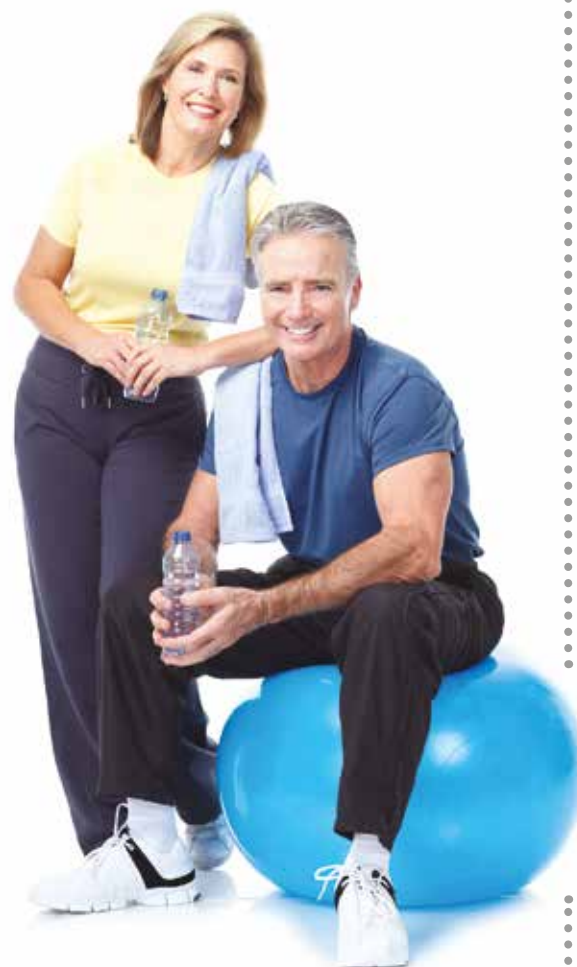
The pilot scheme will work with communities around Chelmsley Wood, Smith's Wood, Kingshurst and Fordbridge.

The Crowd is an online platform that will help keep residents informed of activities in their area, while also making it easier for people to connect with each other.

To get involved all you need to do is sign up. You will then be kept up to date with activities in your area and receive news on local sport, activities and events.

"Hundreds of people across Birmingham have already joined The Crowd," said Nick. "Now we're encouraging people living in the Solihull pilot areas to get involved."

■ To register for The Crowd visit [bit.ly/2Blbo35](https://bit.ly/2Blbo35)



## Are you entitled to new central heating?

Affordable Warmth Solutions have created the £150million 'Warm Homes Fund' to help some of the four million UK households living in 'fuel poverty'.

If you depend on a storage heater or coal fire to heat your home then you could be eligible for a new environmentally friendly heating system free of charge.

One satisfied customer Keith, said: "Previously I just had a gas fire in the lounge and was dependent on storage heaters for the rest of the house. My new heating is so much better and I would recommend it to anyone eligible for the scheme. It's absolutely marvellous!"

The scheme is open to home owners and council tenants. Act on Energy and Dodd Group work together to provide new central heating to those families who meet the criteria free of charge.

We are writing to families who we think may be entitled to have this work done. If you hear from us please respond as this is a wonderful opportunity to have modern central heating free of charge.

■ To see if you qualify please email [advice@actonenergy.org.uk](mailto:advice@actonenergy.org.uk) or call Freephone 0800 988 2881.

## Thriving community at Saxon Court

We are pleased to announce that Saxon Court is officially full and all residents are settling in well.

A range of fun filled activities keep residents busy as they engage with neighbours over regular bingo sessions and takeaway evenings.

Residents have recently celebrated the official launch of their very own hair salon and hosted a special fun day celebration for St. George's Day.

Many residents kindly volunteered to support the day to make sure it was great success. They invited friends and family along to enjoy music and a barbecue in the sun!



There's a real community buzz at Saxon Court





# Star Photo Competition

**Thank you to everyone who entered and sent us pictures that capture Solihull at its very best.**

Congratulations to our winner, Mr Jackson from Smith's Wood on the lovely picture on the right of a ford in Catherine de Barnes. Your £25 voucher is in the post!

If you would like your picture in the next issue of the newsletter please enter. We're after some great images that show what a wonderful place Solihull is to live.

The photos can be taken with a camera or phone and can be taken anywhere in Solihull. Only one picture per person is allowed. Only SCH tenants and leaseholders can enter.

**WIN**  
**A £25 GIFT**  
**VOUCHER**



■ Please email your photos to  
[info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk](mailto:info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk)  
The closing date is Friday 2 August 2019.

## To get in touch

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