

For tenants and leaseholders of Solihull Community Housing

Summer 2021



## Message from Fiona

It's great to be able to write to you at a time when the dark cloud of Covid-19 is finally starting to be lifted from our lives. I am well aware what an incredibly difficult time many of our customers have had in living through the pandemic.

While we still have to be sensible and continue to follow the latest Government guidelines, it is clear that the vaccination programme has been successful in reducing the number of people affected by the coronavirus.

As a housing organisation, we are also now gradually returning to more normal ways of working. The services that we had to suspend at times over the past year are now operating as they should. And while we still have many staff working from home, the services we deliver to you should be operating as we would expect.

We did of course prioritise our vulnerable customers during the pandemic and in doing so it was inevitable that some of our other services suffered. But I'm sure you understand our reasons for doing this, and I thank you for your patience and support.

I'm pleased to say that Covid-19 has not impacted too heavily on the start of our sprinkler installation programme that is now being rolled out across our 37 high rises. We are very proud of this highly important project. The investment involved reasserts our commitment to the safety and wellbeing of our high rise customers. The pilot programme which was necessary at the very beginning of this work went very well, and so the installation has now begun at Woodbrooke House and Redwood House. We've had some very nice feedback from satisfied customers who were pleased with how smoothly the work went and are now feeling safer in their homes.

Away from the high rises, our new development of sustainable bungalows at Faulkner Road in Solihull has been shortlisted for a major housing award. We are very proud of this and you can read all about it inside this newsletter.



Fiona Hughes
Chief Executive

Finally, I am pleased to announce that our Delivery Plan 2021-22 is now available for you to view on our website, along with our Strategic Vision. These two documents set out our plans and commitments for the future.

Stay safe, Fiona

## We've made it easier for you to get in touch



Over the last 12 months we have experienced a huge increase in email enquiries.

More people are now choosing email as their preferred method of contact. As a result, the number of emails we have received over the past 12 months has increased by 80%.

We want to make contacting us easier and quicker for you so we have made a few small changes.

#### We have:

- Updated the information on our website so you don't always need to call or email us to find out information
- Refreshed the Contact Us page on the website to point you to the relevant web pages where possible
- Created simple forms for you to complete when the information you need cannot be found on the website. The form will collect the information we need to help you with your enquiry
- Removed the info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk email address as a way of sending direct emails to us

By making these small changes, it means that we can provide you with excellent customer service, not only over the phone but digitally too!

Take a look at our new contact us page by visiting www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/contact-us



## What can you expect from the services we deliver?

Don't forget, our new Service Standards are now live on our website.

You will be able to read our current commitments to tenants and leaseholders.

Our Service Standards also outline:

- what you can expect from us in our key service areas
- how we will act
- how we will work to support our customers

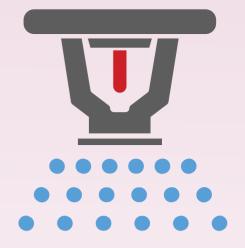
Customers have been involved in this process from start to finish, working closely with staff to create and design the Service Standards based on customer feedback so they are all clear and relevant.

■ You can find our Service Standards at www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk



# Sprinkler installation project is underway





We are pleased to say that work has started on the installation of sprinklers in our high rise buildings. We began at Woodbrooke House in April and are currently working at Redwood House in Kingshurst.



This is great news as this major investment in our high rises aims to make all our customers feel safer in their homes.

Our pilot programme went very well and many customers kindly worked with us on this. A big thank you to everyone for your support and enthusiasm for the project. We've had some wonderful feedback!

One customer said: "The team were all extremely accommodating, polite, friendly and professional. There wasn't any mess and I cannot believe how smoothly and quickly the work was completed."

It is mandatory to have the work carried out as having a block with sprinklers installed in every single flat makes the whole block as safe as possible in the event of a fire.

We are also looking for customers keen to work with us as Building Safety Advocates (BSAs). This is a great new way in which you can voice your opinions about the safety of your building.

You can find out more about what becoming a BSA involves on our website and on page 10 of this newsletter.

Please remove any of your personal belongings from the communal area

We have recently introduced a zero tolerance policy to any personal possessions left in high rise communal areas.

This is to help keep our customers safe at all times. The decision has been made with a view towards customer safety in the event of a fire.

Some residents have previously kept mobility scooters, plants, small tables and chairs outside their doors. But we are no longer able to allow this and estate assistants have been instructed to remove any personal possessions.

We have in recent weeks been speaking with lots of residents, explaining the reasons behind this decision. We are aware that this decision has upset a small

number of residents and we are very sorry about this.

It is not one we have made lightly, but it has been taken following talks with Solihull Council and West Midlands Fire Service.

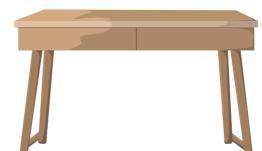
You may recall we unfortunately had a serious fire in a flat at Redwood House last year. All the emergency authorities involved recommended a zero tolerance approach to belongings left in communal areas.

We have been speaking with customers to explain all the reasons behind this decision. We have started a sprinkler installation programme across all our high rises and we feel that this along with the zero tolerance approach will help

keep all our customers safe in the years ahead.

We are also looking for customers keen to become Building Safety Advocates (BSAs). This is a great new way in which you can voice your opinions about the safety of your building.

Even if you disagree with this decision you can still become a BSA to learn more about building safety and the part you can play in keeping both yourself and your neighbours safe and well.





## Keep your BBQ sizzling safely

With the peak of Summer fast approaching, we want to remind residents that although barbecues are a great way to enjoy the sunshine, they can also be dangerous if handled carelessly.

When friends and family are around for the annual summer barbecue, it can be all too easy to be distracted.

To avoid injuries or damage to your property, we recommend following these top tips:

- Make sure the barbecue is on a flat site, away from a shed, trees or shrubs
- Keep children and pets away from the cooking area at all times
- Never leave the barbecue unattended
- Keep a bucket of water or sand nearby for emergencies
- Ensure the barbecue is cool before attempting to move it
- Never use a barbecue indoors, this includes any temporary outdoor shelter such as tents, marquees or gazebos

It is extremely important that you do not take a lit or smouldering barbecue indoors, even if you have finished cooking as barbecues can continue to give off fumes that can give you carbon monoxide poisoning. Always leave them outside.

Gas, charcoal and disposable barbecues are safe when used responsibly. Please take care this summer.



# Water hygiene in your home

As the weather gets warmer during summer, we also need to remember that the temperature of our water and pipes will also be rising which can cause harmful bacteria.

Bacteria can grow in water that is left standing. Sometimes this can develop into Legionella bacteria which can cause Legionnaires' Disease.

Legionnaires' is a disease which affects the lungs and can be contracted if droplets of water containing bacteria are inhaled.

With average summer temperatures of around 22°C - 30°C. Cases of Legionnaires' Disease are known to increase during summer months.

To prevent bacteria from growing, it is extremely important to maintain good water hygiene in your home. This is especially important in the summer months as standing water will be in the temperature range that the bacteria prefers.



- Always run taps when you return from a holiday or if you move into a new property
- Taps and showers that are not used often should be run for at least two minutes each week
- Clean and descale taps and shower heads at least every three months
- Leave water heaters and boilers on

## Summer in blammer

## Are you ready to bloom into action with the return of our favourite SCH Gardening competition?

It's time to dig out those gardening gloves and get your spade and watering can at the ready!

You don't need to be a gardening expert to enter. There are a number of categories which have been designed to suit everyone.

The categories this year are:

 Best Community/Shared Garden (communal garden, collective effort of multiple residents)



- Most Improved Garden (significant before and after transformation)
- Best Floral Display (best creative colour of flowers in bloom)
- Best Mini Marvel (best creative small space garden/balcony/patio/hanging baskets)
- Best Traditional Garden (complete garden, lawn, flower beds, shrubs, hedges, paths, patio)
- Best Budding Gardener (under 16's grow bag, container, plant/veg/fruit)

You can only enter one of the above categories.

There are three prizes in each category.

- 1 First prize £50
- 2 Second Prize £25
- 3 Third prize £10

The deadline to submit your photo entries will be Friday 30 July, 2021.

We would like to be able to judge the gardens in person but we need to make sure we are acting in line with current government guidelines. For now we are asking you to send your garden photos in, but if we can we will come out to judge the winners.

■ You can enter this competition by sending your photos to us by email at engagement@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk, messaging or posting on our social media pages or using our freepost address.



## It's a scam!

Unfortunately, more of our residents are receiving cyber scams than ever before. National Standards have raised concerns about the significant rise in scam phone calls during the coronavirus pandemic.

These scams are becoming more sophisticated and targeting those spending more time at home.

#### The most common reported scams are:

- Claims to sell insurance for 'white goods' kitchen appliances
- Impersonating the NHS, BT, Amazon or utility firms
- · Offering domestic home repairs
- Text messages from numbers pretending to be Royal Mail asking for payment of a parcel
- Impersonating banks or building societies
- Offering the Covid-19 vaccine for payment

It is so important that you do not click on any suspicious links or give out any personal information including your card details, passwords or address unless you have confirmed the correspondence is genuine.

If you are unsure about a phone call, email or text, you should avoid responding and immediately contact the company to confirm if they are requesting information.



You should report any scams you witness to Action Fraud, they will pass any details along to the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau to investigate. They'll also give you a crime reference number, which can be helpful if you need to tell your bank you've been scammed.

Never feel embarrassed about reporting a scam - scammers are crafty and it can happen to anyone.



Each week we are finding that some customers are placing bids on properties in areas they do not want to live in.

A customer might be successful on a property they have bid on and then when they are offered this property, they decide to refuse it based on the location.

When this happens, it takes our staff time to process this which causes delays to us helping someone else.

It is important that we ask all our customers to please check the area of a property first, to make sure this is somewhere you are interested in living before you place a bid. This will avoid delays to us letting our empty properties.

Please remember, you do not have to bid every week if there isn't a property suitable for you.

However, if you bid and refuse two or more offers that are suitable for your housing need then you could be suspended from the housing register for three months.

Don't forget, our bidding cycles run for seven days per week so you have enough time to consider:

- Where is the property located?
- Is the location right for me?
- Do I want to live here and will I be happy?
- · What is the area and local facilities like?

So, before you place a bid on a property each week, please stop and think about the above points first and make sure it is the right move for you.



# Thank you for taking part in our STAR survey



#### We would like to thank all our residents who recently participated in our STAR survey.

The survey allowed you to provide us with your honest feedback about your home, neighbourhood, and the services we provide.

Your feedback is very important to us as it helps us to understand what we are doing well and where you think we can improve.

We will be taking onboard the feedback we have received to adapt and develop our services to make sure we are providing you with a quality service standard.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us and take a look at the results below.

## Overall satisfaction with our services

We asked you how satisfied or dissatisfied you were with our services.

81% of residents said they were satisfied with the overall services we provide.



## Value for money

We asked for your opinion on value for money to understand whether you think our resources are allocated fairly to benefit you.

85% of residents said they are satisfied that their rent provides good value for money.

Repairs and

maintenance

We asked for your overall

satisfaction with our repairs and maintained service.

71% of residents said they

were satisfied with the service.



### The home

We asked you to evaluate the quality of your home and share your feedback on its safety and security.

#### Quality of your home 78%

78% of residents said they were satisfied with the quality of their home.

#### Safe and secure 83%

83% of residents said they felt their home was safe and secure.

#### **Building safety 63%**

63% of residents felt the communal areas are kept clean and safe.



## **Customer service**

We asked for your thoughts on our customer service to discover how easy you think we are to deal with.

81% of residents felt satisfied that we are easy to deal with.



## The neighbourhood

We asked for your thoughts on your neighbourhood to understand whether you think it is a good place to live.

85% of residents said that they are satisfied with the neighbourhood they live in.







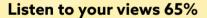




65%

## **Communications**

We asked for your thoughts on our communications. We wanted to learn how well you feel we listen to your views and act upon them. We also wanted to gain your opinions of our online services.



65% of residents felt satisfied that we listen to their views and act upon them.

#### Online services 80%

80% of residents said they are satisfied with our online services.

## Improving our services

We asked you, what three words would you use to describe SCH?

The top three words residents used to describe us were:

Helpful



## Rating our service

We shared with you a range of statements relating to SCH. We asked you whether you agreed, disagreed or felt neither.





Disagree

#### SCH treats me with respect

#### SCH treats me fairly

78%	13%	8%
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#### I trust SCH to take health and safety in my home seriously

75%	11%	14%
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#### **SCH cares about their customers**

73%	16%	12%
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#### SCH understands my needs when delivering services to me

66%	22%	12%

■ This valuable information will help shape and improve the services we provide. If you would like to share your views with us, please look at page 10 to find more ways to get involved.

## Waiting for a move?

#### Have you been awarded a Band D priority and are currently waiting for a move?

We often receive questions from our Band D customers asking how long they will be waiting to move home.

A Band D is awarded for a variety of reasons. These include, but are not limited to:

- Households that are one bedroom short
- Sharing a bedroom with another household member
- People in designated supported accommodation

- Vulnerable people/witness protection tier 2
- Homeless cases who are currently owed the full housing duty under section 193
- Ex-offenders who have given up their council tenancy upon entering prison

Waiting times are based on banding, the length of time you have been awarded that banding, our available property stock and also location or property preference.

Here are some current statistics taken from our housing register in April 2021:

802
customers
currently awarded
a Band D

291
Band D customers are waiting for a 1 bed property

243

Band D customers are waiting for a 2 bed property

Band D customers are waiting for a 3 bed property

Band D customers are waiting for a 4 bed property

Band D customers are waiting for a 5 bed property

Band D customers are waiting for a 6 bed property

Unfortunately, due to our limited housing stock and high number of customers on our

customers on our housing register, waiting times to move will still be very long.

Currently, our estimated waiting times for applicants and transferring tenants awarded a Band D are:

1 bed 143 weeks **2 bed** 145 weeks

3 bed 160 weeks 4 bed 235 weeks

5 bed 219 weeks 6 bed 302 weeks

To speed up your wait time we do advise you to consider all property types and locations. We also suggest the options of private renting or a mutual exchange.

Before contacting us for an update, please consider all of the above information.

As soon as we can, we will contact you when you are successful in bidding for a property.

## **Switch to Direct Debit today**

Direct Debit is the easiest way to pay your rent and service charges.

A Direct Debit gives us permission to take money from your bank account in agreed amounts at agreed times.

There are lots of benefits to signing to up a Direct Debit. These include:

- It's convenient You can choose the best payment option for you. This could be any date monthly Direct Debit or you might choose to pay weekly or fortnightly on a Friday
- It's secure The Direct
   Debit guarantee protects all
   your payments
- It's efficient The money we save can be put back in to improve services



- Incentive scheme When your Direct Debit is set up you will be entered into our free prize draw
- It saves you time It takes away much of the hassle associated with paying bills, and means that you can spend more time doing the things you want to
- It gives you peace of mind

   Payments are made
   automatically so bills are
   never forgotten

We now have an online form you can use to set up a Direct Debit. Visit our website 'Contact Us' page and select rent account. Or you can call our Contact Centre on 0121 717 1515.

■ Visit our website www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk



## Faulkner Road bungalows are shortlisted for awards!

We are delighted that our beautiful new sustainable bungalows at Faulkner Road in Solihull have been shortlisted in the prestigious Inside Housing Development Awards.

The scheme, featuring seven fully adaptable net zero carbon bungalows, has been shortlisted in the 'Best Healthy Homes Development' category. The bungalows are now occupied and the new tenants are delighted with their new homes.

The bungalows are superbly insulated and fit in with the council's net zero carbon ambitions. All new SCH homes will be built to the same eco-friendly standards.

A special awards ceremony is scheduled to take place in London on 4 November.

## Rent Calendar 2021/22

We are sorry to report an error in the rent calendar which appeared in the Spring newsletter. Unfortunately, weeks no.44 and 48 were showing incorrect dates. We have now rectified the mistakes and you can view the correct version below. We are sorry for any confusion or inconvenience caused.

Your rent is due weekly but if you prefer to pay fortnightly then you should pay on the weeks in blue.

Week No.	Date	Payment Made	Week No.	Date	Payment Made
1	April 5		27	Oct 4	
2	April 12		28	Oct 11	
3	April 19		29	Oct 18	
4	April 26		30	Oct 25	
5	May 3		31	Nov 1	
6	May 10		32	Nov 8	
7	May 17		33	Nov 15	
8	May 24		34	Nov 22	
9	May 31		35	Nov 29	
10	June 7		36	Dec 6	
11	June 14		37	Dec 13	
12	June 21		38	Dec 20	No rent due unless in arrears
13	June 28		39	Dec 27	
14	July 5		40	Jan 3	
15	July 12		41	Jan 10	
16	July 19		42	Jan 17	
17	July 26		43	Jan 24	
18	Aug 2		44	Jan 31	
19	Aug 9		45	Feb 7	
20	Aug 16		46	Feb 14	
21	Aug 23		47	Feb 21	
22	Aug 30		48	Feb 28	
23	Sep 6		49	Mar 7	
24	Sep 13		50	Mar 14	
25	Sep 20		51	Mar 21	
26	Sep 27		52	Mar 28	No rent due unless in arrears

## Share your views and make a difference

At SCH, we believe that working closely with our residents is the most effective way to improve our services. Hearing what is working well and what we can improve on, helps us to make the necessary changes to our services.

## Virtual Improvement Panel

We are actively looking for residents to join our Virtual Improvement Panel (VIP). VIP offers you the opportunity to be involved with us on your own terms. There will be no formal groups, instead you can register to be involved with us on a flexible basis with no commitment.

## The VIP online hub will allow you to:

- Access latest news and updates
- Take part in consultations or complete surveys
- Chat with other residents through online forums, live chats and online meetings
- Watch live streamed meetings
- Complete online training opportunities

### Building Safety Advocates

We are also looking for new Building Safety Advocates to join the team. Building Safety Advocates are residents that wish to support our high and low rise building management and safety.

You can get involved in building safety processes,

reporting concerns and taking part in annual safety events at our blocks.

If being a VIP or Building Safety Advocate isn't what you're looking for, we have a range of other roles that residents can take part in, some of these include:

#### **Creating homes**

If you love your home or want to help us make improvements to the homes we provide, you can support us in many ways.

#### Ways to get involved:

- Home Improvement Advocate
- Empty Homes Advocate
- Leaseholder Advocate
- Satisfaction Surveys

There will also be opportunities to look at customer experiences and make recommendations. You can also look at budgeting and attending pop-up and drop-in sessions.

## More than Bricks and Mortar

If you are passionate about the area where you live, take a look at the list to see how you can help make a difference.

#### Ways to get involved:

- Block Advocate
- Estate Walkabouts
- Green Forum
- Satisfaction Surveys

There will also be opportunities for you to take part in mini public panels, focus groups and attend pop-up and drop-in sessions.

## Strengthening Communities

If you are all about communities, you may want to help us make improvements and build networks in your local area. There are many ways you can do this.

#### Ways to get involved:

- Community Advocate
- Street Advocate
- Resident Associations

There will also be opportunities to take part in visits to established groups, live streaming of meetings, chips-and-chat evenings and community walks.

## **Excellent Customer Service**

If you believe in excellent customer service, this could be for you.

■ If you are interested in any of these roles, you can register your interest here: https://feedback.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/resident-engagement/

#### Ways to get involved:

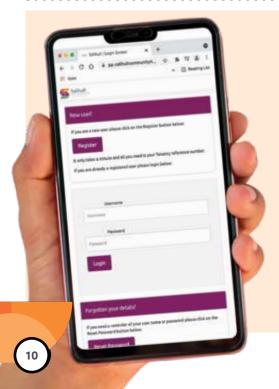
- Performance and Value for Money Champion
- Readers' Group and Editorial Team
- Complaints Forum
- Join the SCH Conversation
- Satisfaction Surveys

There will be opportunities to take part in coffee mornings, Task and Finish groups and reviewing and editing documents.

## How your engagement helps us

We have engaged in many activities over the last 12 months, some of these include:

- Developing more ways to promote the Wellbeing service
- Creating clear and accessible Service
   Standards
- Developing of a video to help residents access the housing register
- Resident-approved Winter and Spring Newsletters
- Developing a new contact us page on the website
- Insight on the new complaints policy
- Increased uptake of Building Safety Advocate role



## Your details at your fingertips

Did you know you can access our services 24/7 and on the go with My SCH Account?

My SCH Account is an online service that is available to all our tenants and leaseholders.

It is very easy to use and gives you online access to:

- Report and check a repair
- Book/cancel a repair appointment

- · View your rent account details
- See a breakdown of your current charges
- See your rent statement
- Make a payment

So why not sign yourself up today and have full access to our above services wherever you are, at any time of the day.



■ For more information on how to sign up for a My SCH Account please visit our website www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

# Solihull Recruitment and Training Centre is reopening

We are pleased to announce that the Solihull Recruitment and Training Centre, located in Chelmsley Wood Shopping Centre, will be reopening their doors this Summer.



The SCH Employment and Skills Officer, Rosie, will be supporting the team of dedicated advisors who are looking forward to welcoming you back into the centre so they can help you secure your next job.

New processes have been put in place to make sure the centre is Covid secure and all government guidance will be followed.

During your appointment with the team, you can expect to:

- Have time to talk about your aspirations, your previous work or educational experiences, your concerns, worries and questions
- Be provided with guidance, support and materials that are right for you
- Leave the first meeting with a plan of action that is based on the best thing for you

Your plan of action may include:

- A personal advisor you can trust to help and support you confidentially
- Updated CV
- · Introduction to employers who are recruiting now
- Identification of vocational training opportunities
- Help with addressing any barriers that are standing in your way
  of getting the job you want



If you are over the age of 16, live in Solihull and not currently in employment, education or training, please get in touch with Employment Support Team on employmentteam@solihull.gov.uk







## **Chelmsley Wood at 50!**

Chelmsley Wood hit a huge milestone this year!

On April 7, Chelmsley Wood reached its 50th anniversary since being officially 'opened' by The Queen in 1971.

In celebration of this, the Chelmunds Heritage have teamed up with our local communities to arrange four special events throughout the year.

For regular updates and more information on where and when these events will take place, please head over to the Facebook page 'Chelmsley Wood At 50' - www.facebook.com/chelmsleywood.atfifty



# Free and safe online support for young people

Kooth is a free, safe and anonymous place for young people to find online support and counselling.

Experienced practitioners are able to help with a wide range of emotional issues from having a bad day to things like bullying, stress, anxiety, depression, family relationships, sexuality, eating disorders and self-harm.

Their online service has a variety of features you can access at any time such as 1:1

support, peer to peer support, online magazines and a mini activity hub.

Kooth is a fantastic way for young people to get the help and support they need, when they need it. There are no long waiting times or no minimum criteria to register with this service.



■ For more information visit www.kooth.com

## Competition time!

Thank you to everyone who entered our last wordsearch competition.

Congratulations to our winner, Miss Siska from Chelmsley Wood. Your £25 voucher is in the post!

For a chance to win a £25 voucher you must complete our Summer-themed wordsearch.

Only one entry per person is allowed. You have to be an SCH tenant or leaseholder to enter.

Cut out and send your entry, with your name and address to:

Freepost RLSS-UEBA-RTUZ Solihull Community Housing Endeavour House Meriden Drive Solihull B37 6BX

Or take a picture of your entry and email it to newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

Closing date: Friday 23 July 2021. Enjoy the puzzle!





## WIN A £25 VOUCHER

Words to find: BARBECUE BEACH HOLIDAY HOT PICNIC POOL SUMMER

SUNGLASSES SUNSCREEN SUNSHINE

#### Your name and address:

## To get in touch

- Freepost RLSS-UEBA-RTUZ
  Solihull Community Housing
  Endeavour House
  Meriden Drive
  Solihull B37 6BX
- Phone: 0121 717 1515
- Typetalk: 18001 0121 717 1515
- Text: 07781 474 722
- Website: www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk
- Visit the contact us page on our website to complete an online form with details of your enquiry









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