

News



For tenants and leaseholders of Solihull Community Housing

Summer Edition 2017



Take a peek at Ipswich House

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A message from Fiona

Welcome to our summer newsletter. This is the first edition since I have been appointed as Chief Executive – a role I was delighted to accept.

We all recently saw the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in London and I am sure all our thoughts are with the victims of this terrible incident. At the same time, SCH are focussed on working with the Council to ensure that such an event never happens here in Solihull.

We want you to be re-assured that any cladding in our high rise buildings is not made from the same material as that at Grenfell Tower. We work closely with the Fire Service to keep our properties safe. On the next page there is more information about how we can work together to keep everyone safe from fire at home.

We are always looking to improve the quality of your homes where we can and you can read about some great insulation work that we have carried out recently on a number of bungalows on Page 4.

Our new online survey platform 'Share Your Views' is now up and running. This is a great new way for you to

feed back your views to us. Please tell us what we're doing well, so we keep doing it. But also tell us about the areas where you feel we can improve. You can read all about how 'Share Your Views' works below.

Please take a look also on Page 4 at our pictures of Ipswich House. This is a superb brand new purpose-built building that we are using to provide short-term supported housing for those in urgent need of somewhere safe to live.

Finally, if you are currently on our housing register it is very important that all your details are current and up to date. If you are thinking of moving then please take a look at this feature on Page 8.

I'm always delighted to hear from tenants and leaseholders. Please feel free to email your thoughts to me at newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

**Fiona Hughes
Chief Executive**

■ You can email Fiona at newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk



Service with no sting in the tail!



Summer is here. However, so are the wasps!

If you have a problem with wasps our environmental services, SCH Better Places, can help.

Better Places works in partnership with Solihull Council, which means it offers a competitive and environmentally friendly local service you can trust.

Why use Better Places?

Wasps can be aggressive and can attack if threatened which can be dangerous for small children, pets and those with allergies.

Controlling wasps can be dangerous as they will defend their young and nest; although to treat wasps the nest itself does not have to be removed.

The Better Places team has the technical knowledge and use of specialised products and equipment not available to the general public. Residential wasp treatments start from £50 inclusive of VAT.

Get in touch

Call 0121 704 8000 to book an appointment or fill out an online form at: www.schbetterplaces.com.



Better Places operates in Solihull and the surrounding areas and are able to provide a host of other environmental solutions, including: jet washing, graffiti removal, and mould treatment.

Give us your views



Make your voice heard on our new online survey.

In the last edition of the newsletter we told you about Rate and Review, the new customer feedback tool.

This has now been renamed 'Share your views' and you will be able to do just that through our website www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

The new system gives you the opportunity to make sure your opinion counts by leaving your feedback on the services we provide.

This is your chance to tell us what you like and dislike. Your feedback will help us to shape and improve our services.

You can give us your views by mobile, tablet or computer, in any way that suits you. So wherever you are and whenever you want to, you can share your feedback.

Your views are really important, because they will help us to understand what we are doing well and where we need to improve – but we need you to share your opinions.

So why not help us to understand where we are doing things well, and where things need improving. Take a look at the website and share your views about us!

Share Your Views



Fire safety in our high rises

We were shocked and saddened by the dreadful fire at Grenfell Tower in London recently. We appreciate this was distressing for our tenants, especially those living in high rise buildings.

We take your safety and security very seriously. Our buildings are inspected regularly and all adhere to current health and safety and fire legislation. We continue to work closely with West Midlands Fire Service and we await any lessons that can be learnt following the recent tragic events.

We continue to operate a 'Stay Put' policy along with most high rise social landlords. Please cut out and keep the guide here and display in a place where you will see it.



If there's a fire in your flat



- If a fire starts in your flat leave straightaway, closing the front door behind you.

- Ring the Fire Service on 999

- Take the stairs and exit the building

- Call SCH on 0121 717 1515

If it's in a communal area, such as stairwell

- Stay Put - Close windows and doors to keep any smoke out

- Call the fire service on 999, Call SCH on 0121 717 1515

- If smoke enters your flat and you feel you are at risk, leave closing the front door behind you - exit via the stairwell. Do not use the lift.



Your home is required by law to have an electrical test every five years

We are currently carrying out electrical testing with our contractor Dodd Group. It is essential to get this work done for the safety of all our residents. Your Tenancy Agreement states that you must allow us access to carry out this type of work.

The visit will normally take about two hours. Any broken switches or sockets will be replaced. If we need a further visit (for example to replace a fuseboard or to fix faulty wiring) then Dodd Group will arrange to do so at a convenient time.

We are writing to all our residents to arrange appointments and we may already have been in touch with you.

■ If you have not yet had your electrics tested please call Dodd Group on 01782 617777 to arrange an appointment. (Mon-Fri 8am-5pm). If you have not been able to keep a previous appointment then please call to arrange a new one.



www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

Tumble Dryer Safety Alert



Owners of tumble dryers manufactured by Whirlpool are being urged to **unplug their device** and not use their machines to avoid a fire risk.

The manufacturer is providing a free modification for the appliances which can pose a fire risk when fluff comes into contact with the heating element.

What machines are at risk?

If you own a Indesit, Hotpoint, Creda, Swan or Proline dryer that was manufactured between April 2004 and September 2015 then your machine could be a fire risk and you need to check if it is faulty.

How to tell if your machine is faulty?

You will need to find the serial code for your machine. You can then either call **0800 151 0905** to see if your machine is affected or you can visit the following websites, which will tell you if **your product** has been recalled.

HOTPOINT: www.safety.hotpoint.eu

INDESIT: www.safety.indesit.eu

SWAN: www.safety-swan.eu



Tenants warm to new home improvements

We are currently fitting external wall insulation to hundreds of homes in north Solihull.

The photos here show the improvement work carried out by our contractors Hamiltons at properties in Chelmsley Wood.

One delighted tenant told us: **“I’ve really noticed how much warmer it’s been since the work was done. I’m really pleased!”**

This work will make the homes warmer to live in and potentially help reduce the size of fuel bills.



Once complete, the external wall insulation also improves the general appearance of the building.

In the long term, maintenance costs will also be reduced in the future.



Similar projects have also taken place at:

- Gloucester Way
 - Wells Walk
 - Exeter Drive
 - Bosworth Drive
 - Crabtree Drive
 - Grandys Croft
 - Lowerstack Croft
 - Wingfield Close
 - Glovers Croft
 - Piggots Croft
 - Winchester Drive
 - Woodclose Road
 - Chapelhouse Road
 - Maytree Close
 - Moat Croft
 - Yorklea Croft
 - Sheepclose Drive
- Our Customer Liaison Officer worked closely to support affected residents during the work.

Ipswich House opens its doors

Our new short term housing facility Ipswich House opened its doors for the first time recently.

The 21-unit building in Chelmsley Wood will provide important short term emergency accommodation for adults of both sexes.

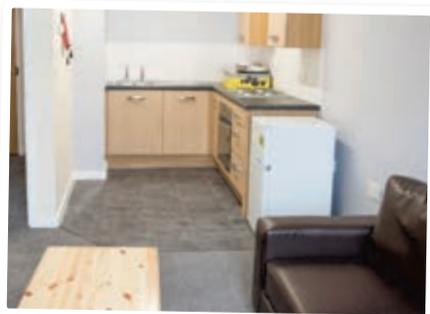
The building has CCTV cameras installed and will be supervised 24 hours a day by trained staff from Fry Housing.

Ipswich House has computer facilities installed to enable those living there to apply for jobs and process benefit claims.

It has kitchen and laundry facilities too.

We staged an open day in May when staff and local residents were invited in to view the building.

The building also has a number of rooms suitable to hold meetings, and local residents will be able to access these free of charge.



Prize Draw

Congratulations to William Patterson, the winner of our annual £500 prize draw.

William, bottom right, pays his rent by direct debit. As his account was up to date he was automatically entered into our prize draw.

William told us that he's looking forward to paying off a few bills with the money that he has won.

Our latest quarterly draw was won by Mr. Bonehill from Chelmsley Wood who



was delighted to receive £200.

We hold a £200 prize draw every quarter and a £500 bumper draw at the end of the financial year.

■ **All tenants with an up to date rent account are automatically entered. If you need help with your rent account, please give us a call on 0121 717 1515.**



Garage applications will be online in the future

We are in the process of introducing a change in the way we let our garages.

In future you will need to manage your own application for a garage online yourself.

There are three key changes to how we will let garages to existing garage applicants and new customers from now on.

- 1. You will need an e-mail address**
- 2. You will need to bid for a garage online, via our website**
- 3. You will need to pay by Direct Debit**

This new process will enable you to choose the garage you want.

We don't need to know why you would like a garage – you can rent one even if you do not have a car, possibly for storage.

Photos of the garage sites being advertised will be made available on the website so you can see the style and size of the garage units near where you live.

Once you have bid for a garage of your choice we will then email you to let you know if you have been successful.

The payments you make for the garage will show up on your rent statement alongside your actual rent.

Prices start from as little as £6.83pw. If you already rent a garage then there will be no changes for you.

All existing garage applicants will be notified by letter in the next few weeks explaining the new process and the date the website will be available.

■ **For further information visit www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk or call 0121 717 1515.**



Scrutiny Spotlight

With Janet Jackson
Chair of the
Scrutiny Committee



Hi everyone,

Last month saw the introduction of the first tenant-led Hot Topic meeting.

As part of the Scrutiny review on fly-tipping, a Hot Topic was planned which I chaired and Scrutiny member Bernie Donnelly, gave a presentation.

We invited tenants and leaseholders who had previously reported fly-tipping to attend.

It was great to hear the views of our tenants, and it was lovely to meet tenants who had never attended a Hot Topic before. The information gathered will give us a much needed tenants' perspective on fly-tipping.

This input will help us with a fly-tipping report we are preparing for the SCH Board. The report will be presented to the Board in June and I will let you know the outcome.

Scrutiny has now begun work on the next review which will focus on Repair Communications. This review will help shape a new Repairs Charter for customers.

We plan to hold a Hot Topic around this issue in the summer and this will again be tenant-led. If this sounds like something that you would like to be involved in, please get in touch on 0121 717 1515.

Scrutiny is also revising the Complaints Policy. This will now be called the Feedback Policy and will include compliments, complaints and vexatious customers.

Keep an eye out for the consultation and a date for our Hot Topic meetings.

■ **Are you interested in becoming a Scrutiny member? The committee meets about four times a year. It is always keen to welcome enthusiastic new members keen to contribute their ideas. Call 0121 717 1515 to find out more.**



Community room given a new look

The residents of Woodbrooke House were delighted recently when a team from our contractors, Novus arrived to give their community room a welcome makeover.



Adam and Reece get to work



The community room is a focal point for the residents (all of whom are over 55 years of age). The room is in use most days for a variety of activities including coffee mornings, bingo, darts and quiz nights.

Novus, who carry out a wide range of improvement works on our properties, sent two operatives along where they spent a few days transforming the community room.

As you can see from these pictures, Adam Osbourne and Reece Stacey-Jones did a great job and all the residents are delighted at the transformation of this popular community facility.

Health & Safety Information for SCH tenants



Water hygiene

Why is water hygiene important?

- To raise awareness of Legionella and Legionnaires' Disease
- Help you understand how to improve your water conditions

What is Legionella?

- Legionella is a bacteria found in water
- It usually grows in stagnant water between 25-45°C
- The bacteria in the water will increase daily if the taps are not used. High levels could be reached by the seventh day without use
- Legionnaires' Disease affects the lungs. It's very rare and can only be caught by breathing in water vapour

What can you do to help?

- Run all infrequently used taps (indoors and outside) and showers for at least two minutes each week
- Clean and descale your taps and shower heads quarterly
- Leave your water heater and boilers on to avoid the water sitting at temperatures between 25-45°C

If you have been away for over a week

Run your taps slowly for a few minutes before use. You'll also need to run the water in your shower. Make sure you remove the shower head before doing this so the water doesn't spray and create water droplets. If you can't remove the shower head, cover it with a towel or a plastic bag while you run the water. Then just pour the contents away.

Solihull Community Housing will:

- Give advice about caring for your water system
- Carry out any repairs needed



For further information on water hygiene please phone us on 0121 717 1515 or email info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk



ReCOM

bridging the IT gap in the community

Need help getting on-line to save yourself time & money?



Why not join one of our FREE 1-to-1 Workshops on

- Tuesday mornings 10am-Noon
- Wednesday afternoons 1-3pm

We are at Citizens Advice, Bosworth Drive, Chelmsley Wood

Phone ReCOM for an appointment
0121 663 0335

- Learn how to search the internet
- Find savings and shop cheaper!
- Master on-line forms
- Get to grips with using email



Universal Credit – How it affects you



When Universal Credit was first introduced it was aimed at single working age people only. From July 5 couples and families will gradually be moved to Universal Credit.

This will affect you if you receive any of the following:

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit

Universal Credit supports families and single people who are on a low income or out of work. It helps ensure that you are better off in work than on benefits.



Universal Credit will give you the support you need to prepare for work, move into work, or earn more. In return for this support, it is your responsibility to do everything you can to find work or increase your earnings.

If you are currently receiving Universal Credit and your circumstances change then you must let your Job Coach know at your local Job Centre.



This would include things such as:

- A change of address
- Annual changes to your rent applied by your landlord (increase or decrease)
- Changes to service charges applied by your landlord (increase or decrease)
- A new child joining your household
- A move to supported or temporary accommodation
- A change in other income or capital/savings
- A partner joining or leaving the home you rent and live in (if a partner leaves the home you may need to speak to your landlord and get a new tenancy agreement).

If you receive Universal Credit you may be able to get help with your Council Tax. This depends on:



- Where you live
- Your circumstances
- Your household income - including savings and pensions
- If any children live with you
- If other adults live with you

If you are claiming Universal Credit for the first time you should apply for a local council tax reduction straight away. You do not need to wait until your claim for Universal Credit has been assessed.

For further information or to apply for Council Tax Reduction visit www.solihull.gov.uk/Resident/Council-tax/counciltaxreduction

Increasing your income

Universal Credit is designed to improve your income. If you are receiving Universal Credit you will have access to a work coach who will help you make positive changes to your life.



This could help with:

- Finding work
- Increasing your hours at work
- Improving or teaching you new work skills or life skills.

You need to manage your Universal Credit account online. When you log in to your account you will be able to:



- Report any change in your circumstances to your Work Coach
- Gain access to your work coach through your online journal

If you have an interview planned to discuss your Universal Credit claim at your local Job centre please take with you if possible:



- A current tenancy agreement
- A current rent statement
- A signed letter from your landlord

When you first move on to Universal Credit you may not receive any money for six weeks. Therefore, if you think you may be moving onto Universal Credit, please try and save some money first if possible.



Correct details essential if you're hoping to move

Are you registered on the Home Options website for a move?

If you are then you need to make sure your details are up to date and correct. It is your responsibility to update your application and ensure that the information is correct.

Applications for a move must be renewed every year at www.solihullhomeoptions.org.uk

The Home Options website will prompt you when your renewal is due.

When it does this simply click on the 'Update your Housing Register Application' link.

You will need your login reference number and your 'memorable date' to do this.

If you do not do this we will send you a reminder letter.

If you do not respond to this letter within 28 days – or update your details online – your application for a move will be cancelled

You will then need to begin the whole process again from the start.

■ **If you have difficulty with the online application please call us on 0121 717 1515.**



We've £ incentives to downsize your home!

Are you thinking about downsizing? Perhaps your children have now grown up and moved away. Maybe you no longer use their bedrooms?

The Movement Incentive Scheme is designed to help people in this situation.

If you are an SCH tenant living in a house that is now too large for you, we will offer you money to move to a smaller property.

For every bedroom you 'release' you could receive £1,000.

If you move from a 4-bedroom house to a one

bedroom flat or one bedroom bungalow (over 50s only) you could receive a £3,000 cash incentive.

If you are only willing to downsize to another house you will then only receive £500 for every bedroom you release.

So someone moving from a 4 bed house to a 2 bed house would receive £1,000.



We have lots of families waiting on our housing register and the Movement Incentive Scheme helps to free-up larger homes suitable for families.

And we can help you with removal costs too!

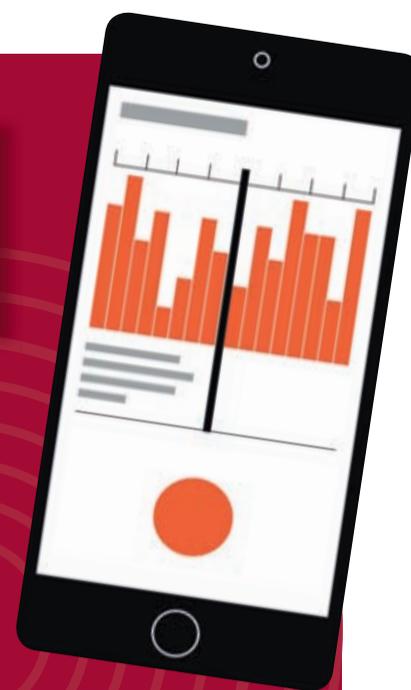
If you downsize through the Movement Incentive Scheme but are in arrears this sum will be deducted from any monies you are entitled to.



■ **If you would like to find out more about downsizing please call us on 0121 717 1515.**



Don't turn a deaf ear to noisy neighbours



If you have a problem with noisy neighbours then the new noise app may be able to help.

This is the best way to record and report noise problems.

Around 200 people have started using the noise app since it was introduced in January. We have so far received more than 1,600 recordings and opened 60 noise cases.

The most common cause of noise complaints are:

- Loud voices
- Music
- Animals
- Antisocial behaviour



If you are experiencing noise problems call us first on 0121 717 1500. We will then send you a text or email with a link from which you can open and save the noise app.

The app is proving very effective in helping make clear if a particular noise is unacceptable or not. This means we can prevent a full complaint where the noise is not deemed a nuisance.

A number of Noise Abatement Notices have been served where the noise app has played a significant part in determining evidence where there has been a statutory nuisance.

If these notices are breached in the future

then we will have Mandatory Grounds for possession of a tenancy which means a person could lose their home.

If a breach of tenancy is proven by the noise app then other legal actions could be considered, such as injunctions or Community Protection Notices.

So please consider your neighbours.

- To sign up to The Noise App please phone our Contact Centre on 0121 717 1515.

Have your say on our complaints procedure

We would be delighted to hear your views on our proposals for a new customer complaints procedure. We currently have a formal 3-stage complaints policy.



We are proposing a more efficient procedure which includes the removal of the current Stage 3 - a Board member panel hearing. The outline we propose is:

Stage 0: We hope to introduce 'Stage 0' as an 'Informal Expression of Dissatisfaction'. Where possible we try to find an early resolution to a complaint at the first point of contact.

Stage 1: This is for more complex issues that cannot be resolved at an early stage and require further investigation. Wherever possible personal contact (e.g. visit, phone call) will be made to record full details of the complaint and try to find a satisfactory resolution. We will try and deal with Stage 1 complaints within 10 working days.

Stage 2: This is an Independent Review of the Complaint that will try and resolve the situation in 15 days. A senior officer from outside the service area of the original complaint will investigate.

For the Stage 2 appeal our Governance Team will review the grounds for requesting an independent investigation and if accepted will send an acknowledgement.

If a customer remains dissatisfied at the end of a Stage 2 complaint they have the right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

We will include any complaints and comments in our overall feedback policy so we can learn lessons.

- If you have any comment or views on the proposed changes, could you please forward them to info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk Our current Complaints Policy can be viewed on our website.



A perfect venue for a special occasion

Are you planning a party, or setting up a community group?
Or maybe you're thinking of running a fitness class or kids club?

If so, why not get in touch to see if one of our community halls is suitable for your event?

We have three halls available for hire:

- **Auckland Hall** 25 Sunbeam Close, Smith's Wood B36 9JR
- **Whar Hall** Whar Hall Road, Solihull B92 0PG
- **Crabtree Hall** Crabtree Drive, Chelmsley Wood B37 5BU

They only cost £12 per hour to hire (including VAT).

All the halls are available between 9am – 10pm and all have a fitted kitchen, toilet facilities, disabled access and parking.

The pictures shown here are of Crabtree Hall which has recently had a wonderful makeover.



■ For more information about our halls, or to make a booking, please email facilitiesman@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk or call 0121 717 1515.

Green light on two new flats

We have just finished converting an old community centre into two brand new flats.

The Greenfield Centre in the north of the borough was rarely used and needed a lot of work to make it attractive to rent. Unlike our other community centres, there was no car park which also made it less user friendly.

So instead we have converted the plot into two flats – a one-bed and a two-bed. Both flats have an open plan kitchen, dining and living room, central heating and fitted bathrooms, as well as storage space.

The two flats will provide much needed accommodation for local people.



Bright sparks help make a difference!

A team of local M&S staff marked Volunteers Week by transforming the communal garden area at Elizabeth Grove in Shirley.



The M&S volunteers spent a slightly soggy day pulling up some old shrubs and flowerbeds.

Thanks also to a team of helpers from our grounds maintenance contractor Amey who also supported the clean-up event. Amey planted some wild flower seeds that are low maintenance so will require less work. They will be also be laying some new turf later in the summer.

Our estate assistants Richard and Kevin also rolled up their sleeves to help things along (pictured top right).

The residents are delighted with the new gardens and now just need a few sunny days to really enjoy their new area!



We're delivering new £2m 'envelope' works

Our contractor Wates has just started work on a new £2million programme of home improvements.

This is the sixth year running that Wates have delivered this important Envelope Improvement and Refurbishment Works.

This year's work focuses on 42 low rise buildings and includes properties at:

- Frensham Close
- Marlene Croft
- Whitebeam Road
- Helmswood Drive
- Circus Avenue

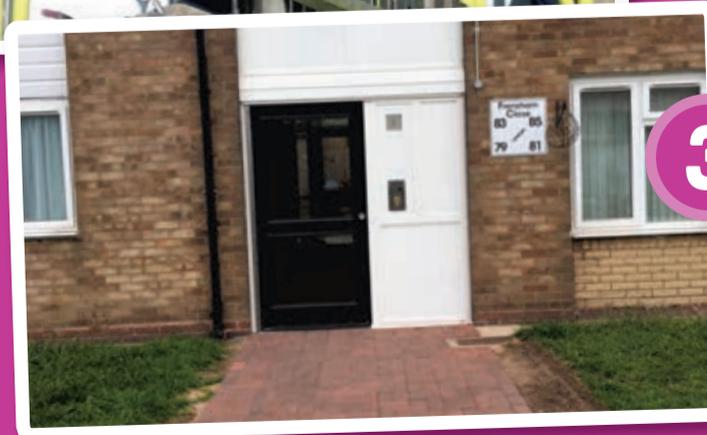
The Envelope and Improvement Works concentrates on the communal areas of our low-rise buildings. This makes them look much more attractive, improves the integrity of the building and also helps to improve the look of the wider area.

We've had some great feedback from other tenants who have had this work done already.

The new communal entrance doors make them feel safer and the bright new look really helps to freshen up these areas.

One told us: "It's made a most pleasant and definite improvement to my home. As an older leaseholder, I now feel completely safe and secure after the works.

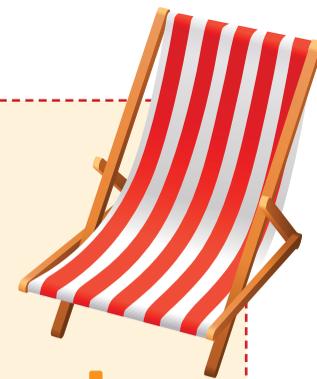
"The added bonus is the extra value that has been added to my property after the works have been completed. Thank you SCH for a fantastic job!"





U	D	Z	F	S	F	N	B	P	N	M	T	H	I	L
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Kids Competition: Summer Wordsearch



Find the eight Summer words in the grid and you could win one of four £10 gift vouchers. Once you have found all eight words cut out and send your entry, with your name and address to: Newsletter Competition, Solihull Community Housing, Endeavour House, Meriden Drive, Solihull B37 6BX or email your entry to info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

Closing date: Friday 4 August 2017.

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| SUNGLASSES | SHORTS |
| SUN | FLOWERS |
| ICECREAM | BBQ |
| BEACH | HOLIDAYS |



Find me and win

What page can you find me on?



Win £25 in shopping vouchers!

Find our hidden yellow fuzzy bug on one of the pages in this newsletter.

Email your answer, name and address to info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk by Friday 4 August 2017.

We will put all correct entries into a prize draw - if your entry is picked, you're the winner.

Please note we will use your email address to contact you in the future.

Winners names will be published in the next issue.

Winners from the last issue



Many congratulations.

Find the bug competition winner

- Miss Susan Swann from Solihull

Kids spot the difference winners

- Elicia Maxwell from Chelmsley Wood
- Daisy Phillips from Chelmsley Wood
- Sapphire Evans from Solihull
- Lenaye McDonagh from Chelmsley Wood



For live updates join us on social media.



facebook.com/solihullcommunityhousing



twitter.com/@solihullhousing



[solihullcommunityhousing](https://www.instagram.com/solihullcommunityhousing)



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



Email: info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk



Website: www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk



Protecting your personal information: We promise only to use your information strictly within the Data Protection Act 1998. If you supply your email address we will use it to contact you in the future.