

For tenants and leaseholders of Solihull Community Housing

Spring 2020







FREE WEEK

See page 3 for full details

### Message from Fiona

Hello and welcome to your first newsletter of the year. This promises to be another very busy year at SCH as we work hard to deliver great homes and services.

Giving good customer service is something that all of us who work here are passionate about. Those of you who follow us online may have seen our recent social media campaigns around 'Keeping Customers Informed'.

This year customer engagement is an absolute priority of ours. We plan to engage with customers

across a variety of platforms over the months ahead. You can read more about this in our special centre spread feature in this newsletter.

With the enquiry into Grenfell continuing as I write, fire safety is never far from our thoughts, in particular with high rise buildings. I am pleased to say that we have agreed to work closely with West Midlands Fire Service across a major campaign in which we will visit residents in all 37 of our high rise buildings.

This is also the time of year when we stage our annual Spring Rent Arrears campaign. Full details of this appear on

page 3. If your rent account is up to date then you'll automatically be entered into our prize draws where you could win £250. If your account is up to date you can also look forward to two rent free weeks in March.

Finally, I'm delighted to announce the return of the SCH garden competition. So if you've got a lovely lawn with fantastic flowerbeds then we'd love to hear from you. Full details of the garden competition appear just below.



Fiona Hughes Chief Executive

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and find plenty of interest. And remember to keep right up to date by following us on social media.

### Get your garden in bloom for our new competition!

Now is the time to start preparing your garden for the SCH **Gardening Competition 2020!** 

We are pleased to announce the competition will return this summer and we are now taking entries.

You don't need to be an expert gardener to get involved. Simply tending to your garden, basket or pots, and giving them a spruce up is just the sort of thing we're looking for.

There are lots of categories so no matter how big or small your garden is there will be something to suit you.

#### 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 16s grow bag, container, plant/veg/fruit)

There are three prizes in each category.

- 1. First prize £100
- 2. Second Prize £50
- 3. Third prize £30

You can only choose one category to enter. So get your gardening gloves on and you could be a winner! All our winners will be invited to a special awards ceremony later in the year.



■ For more details on how to enter visit our website and complete an online application form. Or phone us on 0121 717 1515 and we'll pop one in the post. The closing date for the competition is Friday 26 June 2020.

























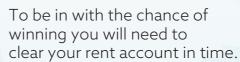
## Could you be our next Rent First winner?

### Congratulations to the winners of our December rent prize draws.

Four lucky people took home £250 from winning the Christmas Prize Draw and another won £200 in our Quarterly Prize Draw.

If you would like to join our list of winners all you need to do is keep your rent account clear!

Our upcoming Spring Prize Draws offer you the chance to win one of our three prize draws. You could also enjoy two rent free weeks.

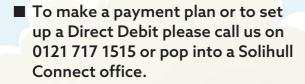


If you pay your rent by Direct Debit you will automatically be entered into both draws. If you are struggling to pay your rent please let us know. We have dedicated staff on hand all year round to support you.





- If your rent account is clear by Sunday 22 March you can enjoy two rent free weeks from Monday 23 March and Monday 30 March.
- If your rent account is clear by Sunday 5 April you could be the lucky winner of one of our three prize draws. You could win £200 in our quarterly prize draw or win one of two £250 prizes in our annual prize draw.







### Look out for the SCH Fire Safety roadshow

### We will soon be starting a major fire safety awareness campaign across our high rise buildings.

We will be doing this with fire crews from both Solihull and Sheldon stations.

We plan to visit one high rise building a month with the fire service, meeting residents and offering useful fire safety advice.

While we will be talking about

fire safety in communal areas, such as the landings and stairwells, we also hope to carry out some general safe and well checks inside your home.

By allowing us into your home the fire service may also be able to highlight any issues to help keep you and your neighbours safe.

We will have a cross-section of staff on each visit who will be able to talk with you about a variety of subjects, including:

- Fire safety
- Repairs
- Safety in your home
- Gas safety check (if applicable)
- Rent arrears
- Bin chutes
- Storage
- Wellbeing service

The day will also be a great opportunity to discuss any issues or concerns you may have about your flat and your tenancy.

We will write to you when it is time to visit your building and we will also publicise the visits on social media.

## **Increase**

We wrote to you recently to let you know about the increase in your rent.

This is set to increase on 6 April due to the Government's Rent Reduction policy coming to an end after five years.

Your rent will increase by 2.7% overall, although there may be different charges that apply to your account.

If you receive Universal Credit, you will need to notify the Universal Credit Service Centre of the changes to your rent and charges. You can do this in the following ways:

- Your Online Journal
- Calling 0800 328 5644
- Texting 0800 328 1344

In this financial year customers with a clear account will enjoy two rent-free weeks, starting 21 December 2020 and 29 March 2021. These are highlighted on your rent calendar on the next page.

■ If you are struggling to pay your rent please visit www.solihullcommunity housing.org.uk for further advice or call us straight away on 0121 717 1515.



### Please help us keep your contact details up to date

We want to make sure we have your most up to date contact details.

Sharing your mobile number with us will allow us to keep

you more informed.

Sharing your mobile number with us

We hope that keeping you informed will improve your experience with us.

Some of our staff are calling tenants to confirm their details with them.

If you have recently changed your number please let us know. You can update this through our website at www.solihullcommunity housing.org.uk or through My SCH Account.



### Rent Calendar 2020/21

This is your rent calendar for 2020/21. Please pin it up as a reminder or keep it somewhere safe. It shows all the days on which your rent is due. We will write to you in March with details of your 2020/21 charges. If you claim Housing Benefit then you will also receive a letter from Solihull Council, explaining your entitlement for 2020/21. These two letters will tell you what you will need to pay.

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

# Nothing about you, without you

We are excited to announce that we are developing better ways for you get involved with everything we do.

This is great news for our residents because it provides more opportunities for you to get involved, share your thoughts and make sure your voice is heard. We are now offering a much more flexible approach to engagement as we want to make sure no decisions about the services you receive are made without you.

This new framework will offer many opportunities for you to engage with us. This will include digital methods where you can share your thoughts with us from the comfort of your own home!

We hope that this new way of engaging will help us to improve the customer experience and achieve greater levels of satisfaction. Please let us know what you think of our new plans.

#### Our aims are to:

- Improve your experience of us
- Improve our service delivery
- Be open and honest with you and build trust
- · Offer you the opportunity to learn new skills
- Build thriving communities together

Outlined below are our new ways of working. This breaks down the many ways you can get involved with us.

#### **SCHAPE Residents Panel**

The Solihull Community Housing Achieving Performance Excellence (SCHAPE) Residents Panel will give you the chance to hold us to account, review our services and suggest changes to committee.



We will be looking for 10-12 people to work with us on a regular basis.

We will help develop your skills and knowledge so you can carry out this demanding yet rewarding role. We will do this through ongoing support and training to help you build your confidence.







### **Virtual Improvement Panel**

The Virtual Improvement Panel (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 around key services areas on a flexible basis with no commitment.

You can dip in and out depending on your areas of interest or if you have the time.

The VIP will offer you the chance to test ideas, review changes, join task and finish groups and much more.

## Objectives

### Helping us achieve our objectives

Below are a selection of ways you can get involved within each key area. As you look down the list you may see ways you have been involved with us before or some may be brand new.

### **Creating homes**

Block representatives to support the safety of the block

Improvement works representatives

Void inspectors

Leaseholder representatives

Repairs representatives

New tenants satisfaction surveys

### More than Bricks and Mortar

Block representatives

Estate walkabouts
Green forums

ASB satisfaction survey

Homelessness services satisfaction surveys

Wellbeing service satisfaction surveys

Financial advice satisfaction surveys Estate Services satisfaction surveys

### Strengthening Communities

Community representatives

Street representatives

Resident associations

Community events

Using our communities spaces more effectively

### **Excellent Customer Service**

Performance and Value for Money Champions

Reader's group/ editorial team

Complaints Forum

Contact centre satisfaction surveys



### **Engagement toolkit**

We want to make sure we are offering you the right activities, at the right time, in the right place. Below are a few examples of ways you can engage with us.

- Customer experience journey mapping
- Ad-hoc surveys
- Facebook polls
- Live streaming of meetings through Facebook video

- Reviewing and editing documents
- Community walks
- Pop ups/drop-in sessions
- Facebook chats
- Coffee mornings

- Mini public panels
- Focus groups
- Online focus groups
- Visits to established groups

■ What do you think of our new plans? Have we offered the right sort of opportunities? Is there anything else you would like to see? Please let us know! Look out for the launch of our new way of working in April. In the meantime if you would like to register your interest email engagement@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk



### Step onto the property ladder

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 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.

### Repairs set for change

Over the last few months we have been working really hard to improve your experience with our repairs service.

You have told us that sometimes we take too long to carry out repairs. Currently, emergency repairs should be carried out within 24 hours and all other repairs should be carried out by appointments to longer timescales.

From April, we are introducing two new categories so some jobs will now be completed within three days or seven days. This will mean that many repairs will be carried out much sooner.

If we carry out a repair to your home you may be sent a survey. Please take the time to share your feedback even if you think we have done a good job. This helps us to know what we should be doing more of!

## Are you registered for a move?



There are a lot of things you need to consider when you are moving home.

If you are waiting for a move on the Solihull Home Options website, please take a look at the guide below. This will provide you with a step-by-step breakdown of what you can expect if you are successfully matched to a home.

1

### Matched to a new home

If you are successfully matched to one of our properties or another registered provider, you may be contacted for a pre-vacation visit.

2

### Pre-vacation visit

A pre-vacation visit is where one of our officers will visit your home to check all fixtures and fittings are in place and the property has been kept to an acceptable standard. If your home passes the visit you will then receive an appointment to view your new potential home. If the visit fails you will have 48 hours to complete the works required and another visit to your home will be made. If you are unable to complete the work the offer will be withdrawn.

3)

### Lettable standard

Most of our properties are advertised during the notice period. When the keys are returned to us our team will carry out an inspection to identify any repairs. Depending on the works required it may take some weeks before they are complete.

4

### Viewing your new home

The viewing will take approximately 30 minutes. You will have to make a decision at the viewing whether you want to accept or refuse the property. If you refuse more than two reasonable offers of accommodation your housing application could be suspended for three months.

5

### Accepting the offer

If you accept the offer you will usually be expected to move within a week. Therefore if you notice that you are close to being matched to a property you should consider making moving preparations, such as packing and sorting unwanted items.

6)

### **Giving notice**

You will need to give notice on your current property. This can be taken by the officer when you sign your new tenancy agreement. We will accept one week's notice for a move to another one of our properties or registered provider. If you are moving home for any other reason the notice period is 4 weeks from the following Monday.



### **Moving out**

You must leave the property completely empty. All rubbish, carpets, flooring and furniture must be removed. If you do not remove all items we will remove them and recharge you for the cost. Keys must be returned to Solihull Connect before 12pm on the Monday the tenancy ends.

■ For further information about moving home please visit our website.

### We're building for the future!

Last year we recruited a number of apprentices and we have really enjoyed working alongside our new recruits!

We interviewed one of our apprentices, Lewis Burgess, to ask him about his experience of working with us.

#### What is it like working for SCH?

"SCH are a great employer and they provide good benefits - I feel well looked after. There is a good atmosphere at work and all the staff are really helpful."

#### What do you think about your apprenticeship?

"I started my apprenticeship at the beginning of 2019 and I spend four days out on site and one day at Solihull College. I have gained experience in a variety of job roles including carpentry, floor tiling and brickwork.

I have been given the chance to work with different teams

(if you're on a meter).

Hose pipes can use up to a

whopping 1,000 litres of water

a watering can

in just one hour.

Top tip: swap your hose pipe for



and staff have always been willing to provide support and guidance."

#### How do you feel the apprenticeship has helped you?

"The training has improved my learning, listening and organisational skills. I really enjoy working at SCH and am pleased to have been given the opportunity!"

■ Look out for future job opportunities on our web site and social media pages

That's more water than a family

of four uses in two whole days!

SEVERN

TRENT

### Still time for heating offer



#### There is still time to get a free brand new central heating system through the Warm Homes Fund.

Affordable Warmth Solution created the £150million Warmer Homes Fund to help some of the four million households in the UK who are living in 'fuel poverty'.

Some SCH customers have already had the free heating installed in their homes.

If you rely on either storage heaters or a coal fire then you may be able to benefit from this scheme, which is also available to home owners as well as council tenants.

A team from Act on Energy carry out the work. This is a fantastic chance to transform your home and is open to people living in a house, bungalow or low rise flat.

Hundreds of residents across the UK are now enjoying gas central heating for the first time. There is still time to sign up to this offer so get in touch today.

■ To see if you qualify for this fantastic offer please email advice@acton energy.org.uk or call Freephone 0800 988 2881.



## Have your say on Kingshurst Village

Following last year's consultation, a new plan has been developed for the Kingshurst Village Centre.

The plan has been produced to provide an overview of what the new development may look like.

If you live in the local area we want to hear from you. Please take part in an online survey to share your views.

To view the new plans and

complete the survey please visit http://kingshurst. investinukcentral.com/. The survey will be available until Wednesday 18 March.

■ If you live or work within the proposed development area and want to talk confidentially about your property or business, please call Carol Jordan on 0121 704 8736 or email carol.jordan@solihull.gov.uk to set up a meeting.



WONDERFUL ON TAP

# Employment support to help you into work



Are you struggling to find work or training? Would you like to build your confidence and motivation? Help is available with Colebridge Trust!

Colebridge Trust is a voluntary project that can help you into employment, training or volunteering. They can offer individual support that is tailored to suit you to help you overcome barriers that are preventing you from moving forward.

They offer many services that will help you get work ready, including:

- Information and advice on career planning and training
- One-to-one support with qualified advisors
- Job search with internet access
- Personalised CV preparation
- Cover letter writing and applications
- Interview preparation in a friendly environment
- Counselling and mentoring
- Opportunities for self-employment

Colebridge Trust provide their services at Junction, 100 Chapelhouse Road, Chelmsley Wood B37 75A. For more information or to see if they can help you please contact them.

Telephone: 0121 448 0720

Mobile: 07795 561 943 /

07798 884 906

Email: skillsforjobs@ colebridge.org

Dog owners have to be more responsible

We have serious issues with dog fouling on low and high rise communal grass areas.

All dog owners are responsible for immediately picking up after their own dogs. Not to do so is antisocial, a health risk and is illegal.

The grass areas are cut by Solihull Council's grounds maintenance contractor. They have now decided that because of health and safety concerns they will not cut any grass areas where they have to use a push mower if they come across a large build-up of dog mess.

If this happens they will leave a sign in the grass explaining why it has not been cut.

This is not what we want to see happen. It is also unfair on all the good dog owners and of course residents who don't own a dog.

We need all dog owners to take responsibility for their animals. Dog mess can be placed in your bin chute as long as it is securely bagged. To not clean up after your dog is a breach of your tenancy agreement or lease.

If we find evidence of irresponsible dog ownership we will refer it to Solihull Council's Environmental Compliance Team and the owner could be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice of £100.

Please help us and your neighbours to keep these grass areas tidy and well-maintained by not letting your dog foul there.



# WHAT'S ON! SPRING

We are pleased to announce that we will be taking part in the Great British Spring Clean Campaign. The national campaign run by Keep Britain Tidy encourages everyone to take part in a litter pick and clean the local area.

Below are a list of pre-arranged litter pick dates you can get involved with. We will be sharing more information about our dates on social media. Please follow us to keep up to date!

### TALKING RUBBISH AND CLEAN & GREEN

#### Saturday 14 March

Meet at Citizens Advice Bureau, Bosworth Drive, Solihull B37 5DZ

10am to 12pm

#### **DAMSONWOOD LITTER PICKERS**

#### **Tuesday 28 April**

Meet outside the Damson Pub, Rowood Drive, Solihull B92 9NN

1.30pm to 2.30pm

### **CASTLE BROMWICH LITTER PICKERS**

#### **Monday 11 May**

Meet at Hickories car park, The Green, Birmingham B36 9AR

1.30pm to 3pm

### **DAMSONWOOD LITTER PICKERS**

#### Tuesday 26 May

Meet outside the Damson Pub, Rowood Drive, Solihull B92 9NN

1.30pm to 2.30pm

#### **CASTLE BROMWICH LITTER PICKERS**

#### Monday 1 June

Meet at Hickories car park, The Green, Birmingham B36 9AR

1.30pm to 3pm



■ If you know an area that could do with a bit of extra care please let us know by emailing engagement@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

### Make the most of My SCH Account

### We are pleased to report almost 1,600 customers have registered with My SCH Account!

My SCH Account is available for all of our tenants and leaseholders and it makes it easy for you to access our services 24/7, whenever and wherever is best for you.

The online service will allow you to:

- Report 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

We have received some great feedback from our customers but we would love to hear your thoughts! If you have any suggestions about what you would like to see on My SCH Account please let us know by emailing myschaccount@solihull

let us know by emailing
myschaccount@solihull
communityhousing.org.uk

Navigation
is easy

It's a quick way to pay my rent I can see what I'm paying and sort repairs quickly

Using the site is easy

I was able to book a repair very quickly and check my rent

Easy to find my rent balance and statements

It's easy to get to my rent account and check my details Easy to find and use

To sign up to My SCH Account please visit our website and click on 'My SCH Account'.

# Gas safety service will keep you safe

### We have a legal duty to service your gas appliances.

When your gas service is due, our contractors Dodd Group will write to you giving you at least seven days' notice of the appointment.

If the time or date is not convenient you will have to call to rearrange.

Under the terms of your tenancy agreement, you must allow Dodd Group into your home to carry out this service.

### **Gas Safety**

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning kills about 50 people each year in their own homes, with more than 200 suffering from health problems as a result of CO exposure. Carbon monoxide is dangerous because you can't see, smell or hear it. We recommend you buy a carbon monoxide alarm.

#### Please remember to:

- Never block the outside flue, grille or air brick for a gas appliance
- Never tamper with a gas appliance or attempt to repair it yourself
- Never use a gas appliance if you do not think it is working properly - report it to us straight away
- Never block air vents



### **Competition Time!**



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

Congratulations to our winner, Mrs Turner from Chelmsley Wood on the lovely picture of Bluebell Park in Solihull. Your £25 voucher is in the post!



For a chance to win a £25 voucher this time you must complete our Spring themed word search. Only SCH tenants and leaseholders can 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: Monday 27 April 2020 Enjoy the puzzle!

I	V	N	С	Υ	Н	Q	W	В	Е	Α	Υ	Т	I	J	Υ	V
U	Н	L	Α	Н	Н	V	U	0	Р	Z	Т	Υ	В	F	N	Z
М	0	0	L	В	I	Т	L	R	В	S	С	Q	Т	U	N	N
Χ	N	V	K	I	Т	С	I	Α	Е	N	С	С	С	S	U	D
J	F	Z	В	Е	N	L	K	Ν	М	D	ı	Р	С	R	В	В
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Н	Α	F	D	L	L	I	D	0	F	F	Α	D	R	W	Z	С
U	L	R	W	А	Н	Р	Т	R	0	Н	K	S	0	0	Υ	V
Υ	Α	Р	W	Н	G	Υ	S	N	Р	I	Р	Z	С	Н	Н	В
G	F	Υ	I	С	Y	W	Н	М	Р	Q	Ε	K	U	S	Н	K
В	Е	Е	S	L	Q	В	L	S	0	D	Е	С	S	W	В	С
Р	Α	V	Н	N	U	R	U	Y	L	R	Т	0	М	Е	K	Z
Ε	Α	S	Т	Ε	R	Т	W	G	С	0	N	K	М	G	I	Q

APRIL BEES BLOOM BUNNY BUTTERFLY CHICKS CROCUS DAFFODIL EASTER GARDEN LAMB NEST RAINBOW SHOWERS TULIP

### 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







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