



For tenants and leaseholders of Solihull Community Housing

Summer 2020



Message from Fiona

These past few months have been incredibly challenging for the whole country including of course for our staff and you, our customers. Covid-19 has forced us all to change the way in which we live our lives.

This edition of the newsletter would normally be full of great summer activities to enjoy, most of which have now sadly been cancelled in line with current Government guidelines.

Staying in to Protect the NHS and Save Lives has been difficult for all of us but I am sure we have all been inspired by the daily examples of our communities rising to the challenge. I know it has been particularly tough on those with young children and the elderly and vulnerable and those who don't have a garden or any outdoor space.

At SCH, we have been working hard to provide support to our customers in these situations - including telephone calls to customers living alone and help with delivering shopping and medical supplies - and we have received some heart-warming feedback from customers about this.

I have been truly inspired by the response from our customers to this global pandemic - we have heard so many stories of support offered to neighbours - often neighbours who didn't know each other before and I hope this neighbourliness will continue even as we come out of the pandemic.

I am also fully aware of the financial hardship Covid-19 has caused. Many of you, I know, have been furloughed, lost hours or pay, and sadly in some cases been made redundant. In response to this, SCH have worked in partnership with the Council to offer practical help and guidance to assist customers facing



Fiona Hughes
Chief Executive

difficult issues. We currently have a lot of information on our website for customers facing personal difficulties.

With the great community spirit shown by so many of you I know there are brighter days ahead as we slowly come through this difficult time.

Finally, can I please draw your attention to the back page where we have an advert inviting applications to join our Board. This is a great opportunity for you to work with us in developing homes and communities that we can all be proud of.

Pretty as a picture!

We are pleased to announce that this summer we are digging up an old favourite with a bit of a twist.

Dig out those gardening gloves and get your spade at the ready to take part in our SCH Gardening Photo Competition!

You don't have to be an expert in gardening to get your hands dirty. There are a few different categories, so no matter the size of your garden there will be something to suit you.

The categories are:

- Best Community/Shared Garden (communal garden, collective effort of multiple residents)
- Best Floral Display (best creative colour of flowers in bloom/balcony/patio/ hanging baskets)
- Best Traditional Garden (complete garden, lawn, flower beds, shrubs, hedges, paths, patio)
- Best Budding Gardener (under 16s
 growbag, container, plant/veg/fruit)



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 17 July.**

You can only enter one of the above categories. So get your gloves on, your watering can at the ready and get gardening!

■ 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 wrap!

If you received this newsletter through the post you may have noticed we have recently changed our packaging. In the fight against climate change, and in line with our colleagues at Solihull Council, we aim to be 'net zero' with our carbon emissions by 2030 - that's only 10 years away!

One of the first steps towards helping us achieve that goal is our newsletter will no longer be sent through the post wrapped in plastic. We are now able to use an environmentally friendly compostable polywrap covering which still protects your newsletter but you can recycle it afterwards or even add it to your compost!

If you're doing you're bit for the environment we would love to share it with other customers! Why not email us at newsandviews@ solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk



We're still there for you

Despite the challenging times we are all currently faced with, our teams have been working extremely hard to support our residents. Here are some of the things we've been up too.

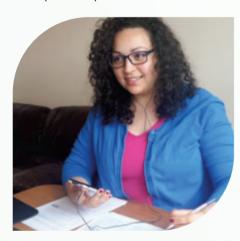


Wellbeing

Our Wellbeing Team have been staying safe at work!

As the team are in and out of your homes, providing our Safe and Sound service, they are making sure they have the correct protective clothing on at all times.

Members of the team have also been making daily welfare calls to some of our more vulnerable tenants and offering contact details for voluntary organisations who are helping deliver food and prescriptions.



Customer and Community Support Project

This project is made up of staff across SCH. They have been contacting our most vulnerable residents to chat about how they have been affected by the coronavirus, checking they're ok and advising on available support.

A lot of the calls we have made simply offer that reassurance that we are still here and we do care.



Operation Shield

The Government and NHS introduced this project during March when they advised those who are extremely vulnerable to stay at home and shield for 12 weeks.

Shielding is a measure to protect people who are at high risk of severe illness to make sure they don't come into contact with coronavirus.



Our staff have volunteered to help out in a food parcel project. We have been putting together essential items to be delivered to our most vulnerable residents.

We currently make bulk deliveries of around 250-300 food parcel drops every Thursday. Emergency drops have also been made during the week including weekends and bank holidays when required.



Wettons

Our cleaning contractor
Wettons have been working
very hard since the lockdown.
So hard in fact that you have
been praising them for
keeping your communal
areas clean and safe during
this difficult time.

Repairs

Our Neighbourhood Services Team have been working with our gas engineers to complete all outstanding gas services. By doing this we have hit 100% on our gas service target.

Our voids team have also been working hard on our



empty properties and getting any essential repairs complete. By doing this we have managed to have properties available to carry out emergency lettings to a number of people affected by homelessness.

This has allowed us to release some of our temporary accommodation properties to more people and help those who do not currently have a permanent home.



Keeping Solihull tidy

The Great British Spring Clean Campaign, hosted by Keep Britain Tidy, was due to take place in March.

Sadly, due to the coronavirus outbreak, the decision was made to postpone the event to make sure people remained safe and well.

Keep Britain Tidy have decided to reschedule the clean-up dates and they hope to run the Great British September Clean from September 11 - 27.

We hope to join them in September where our staff will help keep Solihull tidy by litter picking around the borough. We will be sharing more details about this closer to the time. Look out for more information on our social media pages.



We are launching our apprenticeship programme

We will soon be launching our 2020 apprenticeship programme! We plan to begin the recruitment process very soon.



We are keen to recruit from within our tenants' families to help make a positive impact for the communities, the business and the new

employee. If you would like to earn while you learn, then get in touch!

Skills and knowledge are not essential as we will provide

you with all the guidance you need.

You will have the opportunity over a two-year period, to develop skills within an Administrative role or as a Maintenance and Repairs Operative.

We are an equal opportunities employer and we encourage all who are interested to apply.

■ The dates for our apprenticeship are still to be confirmed but if you are interested then please email stuartbaxter@ solihullcommunityhousing. org.uk with your name, address and contact details.



VEDay75 Fun!

Friday 8 May marked the 75th anniversary of VE Day, a celebration of Victory in Europe when World War II finally ended.

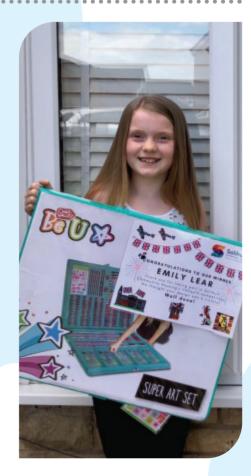
In the run up to VEDay75 we put a lot of work into providing you with fun themed activity ideas through our Facebook and Twitter pages.

Some ideas we gave you were to have some fun with old fashioned recipes to cook together, song lyrics to sing with one another, creative bunting-making ideas and much more!

We wanted to make this day fun for everyone so a living room picnic for residents who may not have an outdoor space was perfect - this way you could all join in the celebrations whilst staying at home.

Posters were put in all our high rises with indoor activity ideas such as bunting-making, creative poster fun, fancy dress, a board game day and a living room picnic you could enjoy together.

There was even a competition for the little ones to join in and have lots of fun!



New ways for you to get involved

In the Spring edition of the newsletter we launched brand new ways for you to get involved with us.

Our new ways of working will give you more opportunities to share your thoughts and have your say about our services.

We want to make sure you can communicate with us in a way that's easy and convenient to you.

Below are some of the ways for you to get involved:

SCHAPE Residents Panel

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 with us on a flexible basis. We will let you know when we are doing something in your area of interest and you can dip in and out if you have the time.

Helping us achieve our objectives

There are four key objectives you can help us to achieve. Take a look at the list below for some of the ways you can get involved.

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
- 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

Other ways to engage with us are:

- 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
- Focus groups
- Online focus groups

■ For more information or to register your interest please visit our website, call 0121 717 1515 or email engagement@ solihullcommunityhousing. org.uk



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We have put together a wordsearch which highlights some of the many ways you can get involved!

Let us know now you would like to be involved	
Name:	
Address:	
Phone number:	
Email address:	
How would you like to be involved?	

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 email it to engagement@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk



Words to find

Inspectors
SCHAPE
Representatives
Surveys
Champions
Panels
Facebook polls
Online
Focus groups

Residents pull to show of commun

It has been a strange time for all of us as the entire world deals with the coronavirus pandemic. While we've all been social distancing and missing the care, comfort and convenience of our normal lives, there has been amazing work carried out by some of our communities.

Many residents have been supporting their communities to help ease the effects of Coronavirus and they have shown just what is possible when we all work together.

We asked you to get in touch and let us know about the amazing things that people in your communities have been

doing. From helping the NHS, to providing support for our most vulnerable residents, here are some of the Coronavirus 'acts of kindness' that caught our attention. After all, there's never been a better time to share some good news!

Great Scott to the rescue!

Hayley's partner Scott has been making food parcels for people who can't get out to shop. He has also donated a lovely hamper of goodies to our local Heartlands Hospital which was given to the Intensive Care Unit. Thank you Scott!





Well done Jason and Mark

Julie got in touch about two of her friends, Jason and Mark, who have been entertaining over 200 people every weekend with bingo and singing. They've also raised money to help local care homes and our friends in the NHS. Well done all!





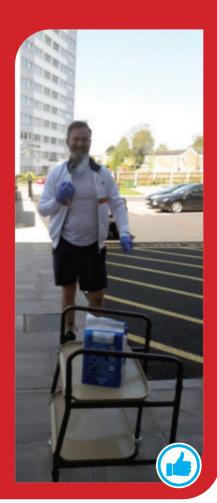
Parish Hall helps all

Marston Green Parish
Hall was given a shout
out by Dave. The team
there have been
supporting vulnerable
people by shopping,
delivering prescriptions
and much more.
They have also made
hampers for care homes
and people in need.



Celebrity chef a tonic at Saxon

Chelmsley Wood's very own celebrity Chef Glynn Purnell, also helped out by dropping off some essential medical supplies at Saxon Court in Chelmsley Wood. Back on his old patch helping the community, thank you Glynn!



Rainbow Alliance shines through

Carol shared information about the Rainbow Alliance Kingshurst Trust who have been doing so much good work including supporting a food delivery and prescription service for vulnerable people and families. Thank you!



gether in ity spirit

Litter picking heroes

Jane from Chelmsley Wood got in touch to tell us all about the wonderful work her two children, Charlotte and Joshua have been doing.

Charlotte, aged 10, and Joshua, aged 7, have been keeping themselves busy during the lockdown by litter picking their local area.

One day they noticed the rubbish flying around where they live and they decided to take action! They began their operation clean-up and used their one hour's exercise per day to make their community a cleaner and happier place to live. Fantastic work Charlotte and Joshua!



Redwood House

The residents of Redwood House have Many have been shopping also been swapping unwanted food items with each other to ensure



Star support

Heather gave a shout out to Demi for being 'a star' for all the support she provides for local



vulnerable people.

Thank you, Elizabeth





Trinity Close and Greenhill Way **Residents Groups**

Trinity Close and Greenhill Way residents groups are supporting each other by shopping for residents who are self-isolating. They are also telephoning those who are feeling lonely and knocking on doors to see people for face to face support. The group are also doing some litter picking and trying to keep the area tidy while being aware

of social distancing.



Seeds of Hope

supporting her local

residents of Redwood touch with the different

large book collection many of them have found the closure of

supporting the wider



Great work, Karen!



Karen from Solihull is making the most of her time by making masks for anyone who needs one!



Help us to shape our Service Standards!

Later this year we will be rolling out a series of new Service Standards for all our customers. These are our commitments to you on the wide range of key services that we deliver.

They include things such as:

- Customer Contact
- Finding a Home
- Repairs
- Antisocial Behaviour

We have listened to the feedback you have given us over the past year, both in phone surveys and online through Share Your Views.

We will also look back on your complaints and messages of thanks to make sure that these are also reflected in the Service Standards

All of these things help us understand what is important to you. We will then be able to deliver Service Standards that are meaningful to all our customers.

We have a team working to shape these Service Standards but this is a journey we want to make with you - so please come forward with your ideas and suggestions.

Keep an eye on our social media pages where we will be sharing some draft examples of our Service Standards soon.

■ Email your ideas to newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

Share your mobile

number with us

We want to make sure we



Have you experienced domestic violence, sexual violence, forced marriage or FGM?

Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid

can support you

Call **HELPLINE 0808 800 0028**

Or visit **COMMUNITY DROP IN**

Text 07891 492 327

For hard of hearing

18001 0808 800 0028



You can update this

(see page 10).







bswaid.org **f @ y** @bswaid



Fly-tipping is a crime - you could be fined!

Fly-tipping is illegal. It is a breach of your tenancy conditions and if you are caught you could be fined.

With more time being spent at home, more of us are taking the time to clean and strip our houses of waste.

Although most of our customers dispose of their rubbish correctly, unfortunately there are a few who simply leave their unwanted items in communal areas.

This includes the significant increase in fly-tipping around the borough on communal land which is attracting vermin and leaving odours in hot weather.

As you know, we take fire safety in our high and low rise blocks very seriously. Items left within and around our blocks pose a significant fire risk and puts other residents in danger. We have noticed a pattern that once one resident witnesses this behaviour, others begin to think this is acceptable and the problem increases.

How are SCH trying to combat fly-tipping?

- Photographs are taken and the incident is placed on social media and any information you may have is requested
- Hazardous items will now be removed from fly tips however, the remainder will be left while we investigate
- We will be using hazard 'Grime Scene' tape and signs to cordon off the area once the hazardous items have been removed
- Our Estates team will remove the remaining fly-tip 10 working days after the Grime Scene tape has been placed.



Please note, fly-tipping is adding increased pressure on our Estates Team who are already very busy.

If you have any information on who may be fly-tipping, please get in touch and call our Contact Centre on 0121 717 1515.

Together we can keep our neighbourhoods clean and safe.

Team refuses to be blown off course by Storm Dennis

Back in February of this year Storm Dennis came to cause trouble for us all. A lot of damage was caused and one road in particular took a bit of a battering.

Bannerlea Road in Kingshurst saw two conifer trees topple during the storm. One fell against a house causing damage to their garden and the other fell into the drying area of one of our low rise blocks. Thankfully, there were no injuries to anyone.

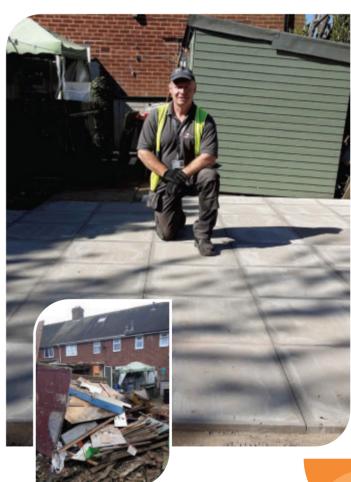
A path of destruction was left which we knew would be a big job to clear up. We came across issues with the access where the trees had fallen. This meant we needed to use a crane to remove the conifers before we could see how bad the damage was underneath.

A lot of debris was left from a damaged shed and broken fencing. There was also a large crater left in the garden of the house struck by a tree in the storm.

Our Estates Team were very quick to respond and once the trees were cleared from the area they started removing all the debris. By the end we had filled nine vans full of bulk rubbish and bits of debris.

lan, one of our Estates Assistants, noticed an elderly couple lived in the property with a lot of damage. As a goodwill gesture he wanted to make their garden accessible again. So he decided to replace all the slabs in their garden even though this is not part of his day to day duties.

lan and his colleagues were fantastic in arranging for all the debris to be removed and for completing the works to allow the elderly couple to use their garden again in such a short amount of time!



Over 2,000 residents now using My SCH Account!

My SCH Account has been up and running since last October and more than 2,000 customers have already signed up - have you?

It's the new, easier way for you to get in touch. You can:

- Check your rent balance
- Make a payment
- Update your personal details
- Book or cancel a repair*
- See a breakdown of current charges

Now is the best time to sign up! With most of our offices closed to the public, it allows you to keep your rent account up to date, giving you piece of mind.

Our current users prefer the easy access and convenience of logging on whenever and wherever they are. It also saves waiting on the phone when our Contact Centre staff are extremely busy.

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

*Please note, due to the impact of Covid-19 our report a repair function is currently suspended, we will update you as soon as this is up and running.



How long will I wait for a new home?

If you are registered for a move on the Solihull Home Options website, you may wonder 'how long will I be waiting?' This is a very difficult question for us to answer because it depends on a number of things.

Below is some helpful advice and information if you are waiting on the housing register.

Applicants

The demand for social housing is extremely high. We currently have approximately 2,400 people waiting on our housing register.

Those waiting on the housing register include:

- Homeless applicants
- General needs applicants who need a home
- Families who need larger accommodation
- Applicants with medical conditions and need to move to an adapted property
- Applicants that need to move to smaller accommodation
- Tenants who have a good tenancy record and wish to move but have no housing need

Banding

Properties are allocated based on housing need and how long you have been waiting for.
Housing need is applied through a banding system of Band A to E. Band A is the highest priority and Band E is the lowest.
We also give a Band T to tenants with a good tenancy record who wish to transfer, but have no urgent need for a move.

For more information on the banding system please call 0121 717 1515.

Waiting times

Between October 2019 and December 2019 there were 883 applicants awarded Band A or B waiting on the register.

From the 883 applicants 196 required a three-bedroom property.

The average waiting time for an applicant waiting for a three-bedroom property, in urgent housing need (Band A or B) is approximately two and half years.

If you are not an urgent housing need, the waiting time for a move can be considerably longer.

Housing stock

Our housing stock is limited. We have very few four and five-bed houses. If you are waiting for properties of this size you will be waiting a long time. This will be longer for those who are not awarded a high banding priority.

Flexibility

It's important to be as flexible as possible when you are bidding on properties. If you can, always consider bidding on all property types and areas.



Bidding

We often receive questions from applicants who ask why there is nothing to bid on. We can only advertise properties when a tenant notifies us that they would like to move. We also advertise some properties for our partner Registered Social Landlords when they have vacant properties to let.

Consider other options

We encourage you to consider other options if you are waiting for a move. Think about privately renting or registering for a mutual exchange on the Homeswapper website www.homeswapper.co.uk

■ For more information about the housing register please visit www.solihullcomunityhousing.org.uk

We're here to help

Solihull Council recently launched a new service called 'Work Now' as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

This is a free service that is available to all Solihull residents who are unemployed or out of work due to the coronavirus.

Whatever your situation, the Council's Employment and Skills Team are ready to help you.

They can help you with:

- Access to job information from employers who are recruiting now
- Telephone meetings with a qualified adviser who specialises in supporting people into work
- Creating or updating a CV relevant to the types of job you might be interested in
- Up-to-date information and advice on interview techniques, such as what to expect, how to impress and how to do research on the job you are applying for
- Access to partner organisations offering support to job seekers

This service is tailored for each person and you don't have to sign up to any programmes or courses.

■ For more information contact Lita Thornhill on 07557 633369 or email litathornhill@solihull.gov.uk



Help us breakdown stereotypes

See the Person is a campaign that aims to change some of the negative views about social housing tenants.

It looks to set the record straight by challenging the way some of the public think about social housing tenants. The press and media often portray tenants in a poor light and we want our tenants to share their views on how this makes them feel.



We know a large number of our tenants do great things in their areas and communities from helping neighbours, volunteering for groups or charities, running groups and lots of other things.

We want you to tell us how you support your local community and how it makes you feel when you hear negative comments about being a tenant.

We want people to know how great you are as people and that social housing is a good thing and gives lots of people a home.

So if you want to share a story with us either give us a call on 0121 717 1515 and leave a message for an Engagement Officer to call you back, send an email to engagement@ solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk or send us a private message on Facebook.

Help us celebrate you and all the great things you do!

Keep your property safe, now more than ever!

Did you know, as part of your tenancy conditions, it is your responsibility to allow us access to your home to service your gas appliances and carry out electrical inspections?

It is a breach of your tenancy conditions if you do not allow this to happen.

You may be unsure with the new government guidelines around coronavirus and social distancing, however it is still a requirement for us to keep you all safe at home. We cannot do that without your support in allowing us into your homes.

We are all spending more time at home than usual, so it is extremely important that your appliances are checked for issues you may not be able to spot yourself.

■ If you have any concerns regarding your gas and electric or around our updated process, please call the Contact Centre on 0121 717 1515.



Could you be our next Tenant Board Member?

Would you like to play a part in the future of Solihull Community Housing? You can do just that by becoming one of our Tenant Board Members.

This is an exciting opportunity for a person interested in housing and keen to help us make our communities a great place to live.

You need to be enthusiastic, passionate about making a difference and have time to commit.

Tenant Board Members have a responsibility to represent the interests of other tenants, so it important you understand your neighbourhood and the wider community.

Board members are expected to:

Value customer views and consider issues from their perspective

Attend all meetings and training

Work well in a team

Provide constructive feedback

Communicate effectively

We are an inclusive organisation and we welcome expressions of interest from all members of our diverse communities.

We understand joining the Board may be a daunting idea but we're here to help you every step of the way.

Board Members are volunteers and do not get paid, however in return this role will offer new experiences, training and development. All expenses will be reimbursed.

If you are interested in becoming a Tenant Board Member and

learning more about the role please get in touch.

You will find lots of interesting information about the role, including some videos from our current Tenant Board Members, on our website.

We will also be hosting a virtual Question and Answer Session with our current Board Members where you can learn more about the role.

For an information pack please visit www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk or call Mary Moroney on 0121 717 1515.

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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www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/ About-us/Data-Protection-and-freedomof-information/Data-protection





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