

NEWS



Solihull
Community Housing
Shaping our neighbourhoods

For tenants and leaseholders of Solihull Community Housing

Spring 2023



Meet some of our SCHape Panel and learn what they have been getting up to over the last few months.
Read more on page 6

Message from Fiona

Welcome to your first newsletter of 2023. This is another packed edition full of information that I hope you will find interesting and useful.

A few weeks ago we sent out our annual rent statement letters for the new year along with the new heating charges. I am aware of the significant increase in heating costs and understand many of you will be concerned. Unfortunately, the increase in energy costs has affected everyone, including those living in social housing.

If you are struggling to pay your new heating charges, please let us know. Our Money Advice Team has been able to support many of our customers over the past year.

For more general money saving advice please visit Solihull Council's informative online support service at www.here2help.co.uk

This is an important year for those who live and work in social housing. The new Social Housing Regulator has come up with a list of objectives that all housing providers must work hard to achieve. These include things around building safety, customer complaints and customer engagement.

Our own engagement channels have been

strengthened in recent years. We now work directly with customers through the SCHape Panel (formerly known as Scrutiny), our VIP Panel and through our growing network of Building Safety Advocates (BSAs). The volunteer network of tenant BSAs work alongside our own trained teams to ensure the highest standards of fire and building safety are maintained in our high rises.

Please get in touch with us if you would like to join the tenants and leaseholders who now enjoy working with us



Fiona Hughes
Chief Executive

across these platforms. It's also a great way to meet and make new friends and have a direct say and influence on how SCH delivers the services for our customers.

Best wishes

Fiona

Our Inclusive Services Register is now available on My SCH Account

Did you know that you can now sign up to our Inclusive Services Register through your My SCH Account?

All you need to do is complete the online form available on the portal. You must be registered on My SCH Account to do this.

The Inclusive Services Register is a new way for you to let us know about your personal needs, or any

vulnerabilities that you may have, and how we can then best adapt our services to support you.

If you don't have a My SCH Account, you can register now by scanning the QR code.

Don't worry, if you don't have online access, you can call us on **0121 717 1515** and ask for a paper version of the form to be sent to your home address.



It's that thyme again!

It's time to dig out your gardening gloves, grab your watering can and bloom into action as our annual SCH Gardening Competition returns.



You don't need to be an expert gardener to get involved. There are lots of different categories, so 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)

You can only enter one of the categories.

There are three prizes in each category.

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

To enter, please take photos of your garden and email them to us at engagement@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk. The deadline to submit your entries is **Friday 30 June 2023**.

You must be an SCH tenant or leaseholder to enter this competition.

Making every call count

Our Contact Centre is at the heart of our customer contact.

Between the hours of 9am - 10am, our Contact Centre advisors are very busy answering incoming calls. When possible, it is best to avoid contacting us during these times if your enquiry is non-urgent.

The best times to contact us with any non-urgent issues are:

- Tuesdays between 10am - 3pm
- Friday afternoons

If you need to call us about an emergency repair after 5pm, we have a daily out of hours service available. Just call **0121 717 1515** and an advisor will be happy to help you.

- **Our Contact Centre is open on Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am - 5pm.**



Could you be our next Rent First winner?



Congratulations to the winners of our December rent prize draws!

During our Winter Rent Campaign, four lucky people won £250 in our Quarterly Prize Draw.

If you would like to join our list of winners this Spring, all you need to do is keep your rent account clear.

Our upcoming prize draws offer you the chance to win one of four **£250** prizes. You could also enjoy a rent-free week!

Residents who pay their rent by Direct Debit, will automatically be entered into both prize draws.

If you are struggling to pay your rent, there is help available. Please visit Solihull Council's Here2Help website by scanning the QR code below.

Alternatively, you can give us a call on **0121 717 1515** and our Money Advice Team would be happy to discuss support with you.

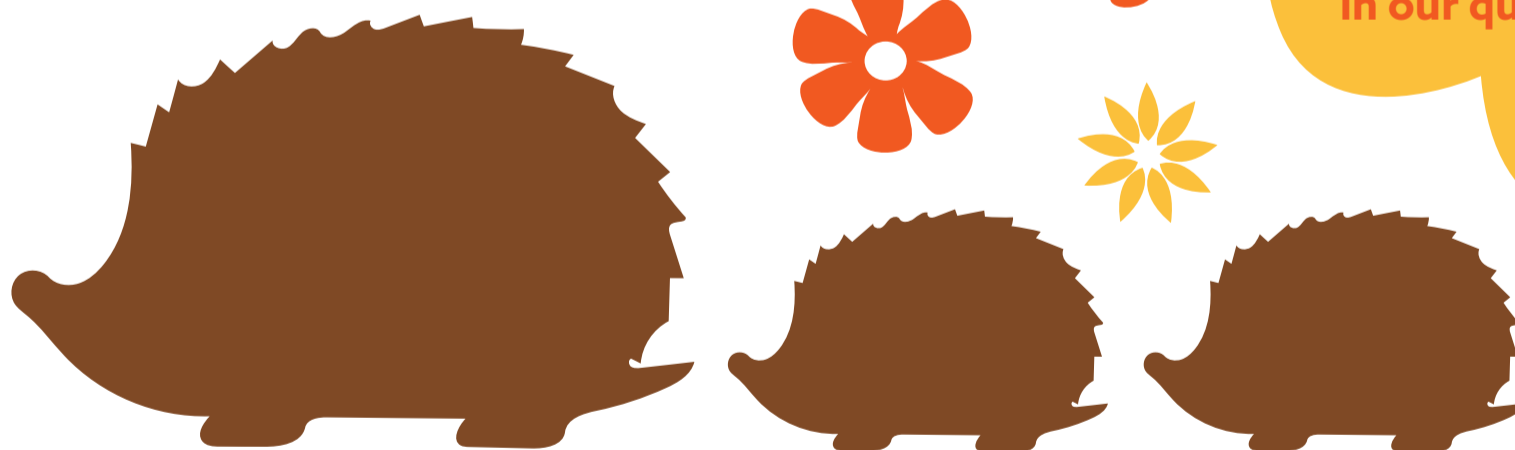
There are lots of ways for you to pay your rent, such as:

- Online through our website www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk
- Using the automated telephone system on **0300 456 0502** - available 24/7
- Using your My SCH Account, if you are registered
- At any Post Office using your rent card (swipe card) or Paypoint outlets
- Calling our Contact Centre on **0121 717 1515**

If your rent account is clear by Sunday 26 March, you can enjoy a rent-free week from Monday 27 March

If your rent account is clear by Sunday 2 April, you could be one of 4 lucky winners receiving **£250** in our quarterly prize draw

■ To register with My SCH Account, please visit our website



Support for families



Did you know the Government has a Help for Households website?

You can find out what support is available to help you with the cost of living crisis and also how to save money with proven energy saving tips.

You may also be eligible for benefits and grants offered by the government and energy suppliers.

Visit helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk today and find out what you could be saving your household.



BEST WAYS TO SAVE MONEY



TECHNOLOGY

Avoid leaving any technology on standby



LIGHTS

Don't leave lights on in rooms you are not using



KETTLES

Only put the level of water you need in a kettle



RADIATORS

Turn radiators off in the rooms you are not using and avoid blocking them as this makes it harder to heat your rooms



KEEPING WARM

Make a hot water bottle to warm up your bed



Solihull
Community Housing
Shaping our neighbourhoods



SCAN ME



We're increasing our efforts to prevent damp and mould

There has been an increased spotlight on damp and mould in recent months. We are working very hard to support any of our customers that may experience this problem.

We are expanding our team who are working in tenants' homes to specifically reduce the number of cases. If you have contacted us about a problem, we will get to you.

In the meantime, there are some very simple steps that all residents can take to reduce damp and mould in their home.

The main cause is condensation which occurs when moisture in warm air comes into contact with a cold surface and turns into water droplets.

This is most common in rooms where there is a lot of moisture, such as bathrooms and kitchens. Keep doors closed and ventilate, this will stop any excess moisture migrating to other areas to your home.

Condensation can develop when there is not enough ventilation in the home.

If you have a problem and are waiting for us to visit there are some simple actions you can take that may help reduce the impact of damp and mould.

- Dry your windows and sills every morning if they are damp
- In the kitchen and bathroom, dry any surfaces that get wet
- Wring out a used cloth rather than drying it on a radiator or in front of a heater
- Use a fungicidal cleaner to clean any walls, ceilings and paintwork affected by mould. Use a mould and mildew

remover that carries a Health & Safety Executive (HSE) approved number.

- If you use a tumble dryer, make sure it is vented to the outside (unless it's a condensing dryer).
- Always cook with pan lids on and turn the heat down once the water has boiled. Only use the minimum amount of water for cooking and open a window if pans are bubbling.
- When filling your bath, run the cold water first then add the hot. (This will reduce the amount of steam by 90%.)
- Avoid drying your clothes on radiators or in front of a fire. Hang your washing outside when possible or in the bathroom with the door closed and window slightly open. Always make sure you put the extractor fan on if you have one.



SCAN ME



■ If you are concerned about damp and mould in your home please call us on 0121 717 1515.

BUILDING SAFETY NEWS

Latest regulations designed to improve high rise safety

This year we will be devoting at least one full page in the newsletter to anything relating to fire and building safety. This has always been a priority for us but now more than ever before we will be sharing key updates and messages with you.

We hope you find this interesting and useful. We always like to hear back from customers so if you feel we need to do more please let us know.

This year is an important year in particular for our high rise residents, following the recent launch of the new Fire Safety (England) Regulations.

These are designed to implement a number of recommendations made by the Grenfell Tower Inquiry in its Phase 1 report.

These include:

- Display fire safety instructions in a conspicuous part of the building and include information on the evacuation strategy for the building, how to report a fire and any other instruction that tells residents what they must do when a fire has occurred
- Install wayfinding signage in all high-rise buildings which is visible in low light conditions
- Establish a minimum of monthly checks on lifts which are for the use of firefighters in high-rise residential buildings and on essential pieces of firefighting equipment
- Undertake quarterly checks on all communal fire doors and annual checks on flat entrance doors
- Provide residents with relevant fire safety instructions and information about the importance of fire doors



We are working hard to ensure we meet all the recommendations of the report. We want to involve residents as much as possible in our fire and building safety work.

Members of our SCHape Panel help support this work, as do our growing group of Building Safety Advocates (BSAs). The BSAs are trained to carry out simple but important checks around things such as fire doors and windows.

We are still looking to recruit a few more volunteer BSAs. The work is rewarding, and you get to help your fellow high rise residents while at the same time learning a lot more about what we do.

Please call us on 0121 717 1515 if you would like to learn more about becoming a BSA.



SCAN ME



Fire door inspections

We are currently contacting our high rise residents to book appointments to inspect their fire doors. We now have a legal duty to carry out these checks every year.

Please respond when we contact you to arrange an appointment time and date to carry out this important check.

You can read much more about this on our website. Scan the QR code and it will take you straight there.



Awards

Our work on the sprinkler installation programme has just been recognised by a major UK housing award! We were delighted to be shortlisted in the 'Best Fire Safety Innovation' category for the Housing Digital Innovation Awards.



Structural surveys

As a further measure of our safety programme, all our high rises will soon undergo a structural survey which will offer further insight into the overall health of the blocks.

Ready, set, Engagement!

Our Tenant Engagement Team have been keeping themselves very busy! Take a look at just some of the amazing things they have been getting up to.



Keeping our communities safe

We have teamed up with Solihull Council and our Neighbourhood Services Team to kickstart our Estate Walkabouts.

These walkabouts allow us to make sure your local community is being kept in a good condition and remains safe for all.

This is a monthly event, and residents are welcome to join us for a walk and talk. If this is something you would be interested in, please contact us by emailing engagement@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

Great British Spring Clean

We will soon be taking part in the annual Great British Spring Clean, so the team are currently organising the dates and locations for these sessions. They will start on 17 March and take place over a two-week period.

Keep an eye on our social media pages for details of times and locations. Pop along and say hi if we are in your neighbourhood!

SCHAPE-ing the way for all residents!

Our SCHape Panel has been very busy recently reviewing some of our service areas. The Panel is in place to hold SCH to account by identifying areas of non-compliance, to review our services and make recommendations for improvements.

They have recently reviewed how our services are supporting the cost of living crisis as well as how we are responding to reports of damp and mould. They have made some fantastic recommendations and a plan has been put in place to action these.



SHAPE members Daniel, Dale, Louise, Michelle and Susan with Engagement Team Leader Sophie and Engagement Officer Jill.

Also members but missing from the photo are Denis, Thelma and Sylvia.

Our carpentry apprentices nail it!

A big focus in our latest apprentice recruitment campaign was to support our commitment to deliver an excellent fire integrity and building safety service.

This included the opportunity for two young local people to join us as our 'Carpenters of the Future'.

The recruitment campaign identified two amazing candidates, Keira Dowry and Joshua Yardley who we welcomed on-board in November.

Their carpentry journey will include working closely with our Responsive Repairs team and Building Safety team. So far, both Keira and Joshua have made a fantastic start by quickly establishing themselves as part of these teams.

They are supported by their mentors, Rob and Mark, who are teaching them new on the job skills and preparing them both for all aspects of their Level 2 Carpentry qualification at Solihull College.

Look out for Keira and Joshua and say hi if you see them working in your home or neighbourhoods!



New Apprentice Keira



New Apprentice Joshua with his mentor Mark

LATEST NEWS AT KINGSHURST

There's lots going on in Kingshurst as we get ready for an exciting time of change and transformation. With regeneration works set to begin soon, you can discover the latest news and updates with our round-up below.



Library Update

Since the launch of the new look library, it has become a popular meeting place for the community of Kingshurst. Not just to read a book or use the computers but as a place to meet, have a chat and a cuppa, keep warm and enjoy the hobbies they love!

Since the start of the New Year we have had a few new groups start up to enhance the offer to Kingshurst residents and beyond. These include:

- Family Arts & Crafts
- Knitting Group
- Book Club
- Adults Arts & Crafts
- Mental Health support group
- Free Stop Smoking support
- Weight Management
- Activities run by the library

These groups are run by local community groups and volunteers. To find out when they are running, please pop into the library or follow us on social media.

There is still plenty of space for new groups to come and join the ever-growing timetable. If you have an idea for a new group and would like support getting this set up, contact our Community Engagement Officer Becki on 07920 045945.

Defib at The Vicarage

Safety is of the utmost importance to Wilmott Dixon, so their sites always come with a defibrillator. As part of the ongoing commitment to

Kingshurst there is a defibrillator located in Wilmott Dixon's site offices at The Vicarage. Use the postcode B37 6EY if required for community use.



Introduction To Wilmott Dixon

Wilmott Dixon are delighted to have started at Kingshurst with enabling works for the new development. They are now set up in their site office in the Vicarage where they will remain while the work takes place.

They have now finished installing the site boundary hoarding and at present are removing identified trees and protecting the remainder. The trees

removed have been cut down into logs and processed into chippings.

Wilmott Dixon are currently disconnecting and diverting existing utility services to the Parade and existing residential properties on Church Close and Colling Walk.

Complete demolition of the existing arcades main body is expected to last from late March until the end of July.



Kingshurst team: Jim Donnelly (Senior Operations Manager), Jordan Cooper (Management Trainee), Neil Lawrence (Senior Build Manager) and Katie Butler (Principal Surveyor)

Building site safety lesson

If you have visited Kingshurst recently you may have noticed Wilmott Dixon have started work on the site of the old Parade. To ensure the safety of our community, the team recently visited Kingshurst Primary school to deliver some Stay Safe assemblies.

Wilmott Dixon want to ensure that children are aware of the hazards and dangers of playing on or around construction sites. The children learnt about machinery, dangerous tools, trip hazards, PPE, signage, lorries and deliveries.

The team have asked the children to design some safety posters on what they have learnt and hopefully these can be displayed on some of the site hoardings.

There are two further primary schools within the catchment area and Wilmott Dixon will be looking to deliver the same messages to those children soon.





Have you been offered a new property or are thinking about downsizing?

If so, you should think about your furniture and belongings, what you want to take with you and what you wish to dispose of before you leave.

We expect tenants when moving home to leave their property clean and tidy. You will need to clear your property of any belongings and rubbish. This also includes your loft, gardens, outbuildings, and garage.

Unfortunately, we are seeing many tenants not taking this action. This means we must dispose of the items left behind. The disposal of goods comes at an additional cost to us and can delay that property being available for someone else on the housing waiting list.

If items are left in your property, garden or shed after you have returned the keys to us, you will now be charged for their removal. There is a minimum charge of £78.91 for up to 5 cubic metres and every additional 1 cubic metre will be charged at a further cost of £18.76 for its removal.

Please note these costs will be going up in April 2023.

All properties should be left in the following condition:



How can I avoid clearance costs?

If you need help to dispose of any unwanted items from your home, you could consider donating any furniture or smaller items to our furniture recycling project. Details can be found on our website.

Alternatively, if your unwanted furniture is in a good condition, you could donate it to one of the following charities who may collect it for free.

CT Furniture

CT Furniture collect good quality re-saleable furniture for free, including suites and mattresses with fire resistant labels. They will also collect some electrical goods and bric-a-brac. CT Furniture can also arrange small removals and house clearances for a small charge. You can contact CT Furniture by visiting their website www.communitytransport.org/donate-furniture or by calling 0121 773 2858.

Sue Ryder

You can help to provide incredible care to people with life changing conditions by donating your unwanted items of furniture, bric-brac or electrical goods to Sue Ryder. You can contact Sue Ryder by visiting www.sue Ryder.org or by calling 0333 003 1883.

Reuse Networks

There are several reuse networks where you can post unwanted items online. You can reuse your items by posting on: **Freecycle** or **Freegle**

We offer a Bulky Waste Collection Service.

If you have a large bulky item, you need to get rid of we may be able to remove it.

The prices for a Bulky Waste Collection are:


1 item	£15
2-5 items	£22.50
6-10 items	£30

See our website for more details on what we are able to collect. To book a collection, please call us on **0121 717 1515**.

Rent Calendar 2023/24

This is your rent calendar for 2023/24. It shows all the days on which your rent is due. We wrote to you in February with details of your 2023/24 charges. If you claim Housing Benefit, then you will also receive a letter from us in March detailing your entitlement. If you claim Universal Credit you will need to update your online journal when your rent charges change. This will be 1 April if you are charged monthly or 3 April if you have a weekly charge.

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

 £200 prize draw  £250 Christmas draw winners

To enjoy the rent free weeks and be entered into our prize draws, please make sure your rent account is clear by the dates highlighted on the calendar.

If you pay by Direct Debit, you will automatically be entered into our prize draws.

Supporting your community

Are you keeping your communal garden tidy?

The grass cutting season will start week commencing 27 March.

To ensure your communal garden is maintained, please keep the grass areas clear of belongings. This includes:

- plant pots
- ornaments
- toys and play equipment
- garden furniture.

Leaving belongings outside will prevent the grass from being cut as operatives will not move residents personal belongings and they will not be held liable for any damage caused by their mowers.

Any dog fouling that is present on the grass areas will also prevent operatives from cutting the grass, so please clean up after your dog straight away.

Thank you for your understanding.

Bonfires and BBQ's

Bonfires are not allowed under any circumstances. Please make enquiries with SCH around using Barbecues.



Put waste in the right place!



If you live in a high or low rise building please do not throw any rubbish from your windows. This can be dangerous and pose a serious health and safety issue for anyone located within the grounds below.

Throwing rubbish or food containers out of the windows creates an unsightly mess and will also attract rats.

Under no circumstances should you be throwing cigarette butt ends out of your window as this is a serious fire risk.

Thank you for your cooperation, together we can keep our neighbourhoods clean, safe, and environmentally friendly.

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

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Placing items that can't be recycled, or are still covered in food or liquid, into the recycling bin can impact the quality of the recycling and lead to your bins not being collected.

You can recycle:

- Clean paper, card and cardboard – remember to break down the boxes
- Tins, cans and aerosols
- Plastic bottles, plastic food tubs, plastic food trays, yoghurt pots
- Juice and milk cartons

Please remember to rinse off food and liquid before placing the items in the recycling bin.

Many of us will have a separate bin or box for glass bottles and jars – please place these into the glass recycling box or bin. Do not place glass into the mixed recycling bin.

For more information about how to recycle correctly, please visit our website by scanning the QR code.



Working together to manage complaints

It is important to us that we make sure all our residents feel they are listened to and treated fairly and equally. We want there to be no barriers for anyone wanting to make a complaint or provide feedback about our services, and ensure that any complaints are handled fairly.

We collect data about our residents who have had cause to complain. An independent team review our complaint handling, to ensure that residents aren't disadvantaged in any way.

For the calendar year January 2022 to December 2022, we received 319 complaints about our services, of which 52% were upheld following investigation.



Of those 319 complaints:

37% were received from residents who declared a disability including mental health and physical disability

59% were received from residents who identified as White British

21% were received from residents whose ethnicity was not known

3.4% were received from residents who chose not to specify

16.5% were received from residents of Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

If you think you could help us improve our Complaint Handling process and have some feedback for us, please email governance@solihull.gov.uk, with 'Complaints Handling feedback' as the title of your email.

Dodd Group making foodbanks a priority

Our Sprinkler team and Dodd Group, our gas and electrical contractors, visited Colebridge Trust's Around Again Social Supermarket recently to donate £1,000 in shopping vouchers to help the local community.

Dodd Group always choose a Charity of the Year and this year they have decided to support foodbanks.

With such a generous donation, Around Again will be able to purchase food and personal hygiene items as they require them.

Dodd Group also arranged for 500 LED low energy light bulbs to be donated to the charity. These will be issued to customers in a bid to reduce energy reliance in their homes.



Steve Murray (SCH) Daniel Camp (Dodds) and Phyllis Bailey (Around Again).

The Electoral Commission

Find out more at

electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID

No ID? You can apply for free voter ID

REMEMBER TO
1- Register to vote
2- Check my photo ID
3- Vote at a polling station!

Competition time!

Thank you to everyone who entered our wordsearch competition.
 Congratulations to our winner, Jade from Chelmsley Wood.
 Your £25 voucher is in the post!



For a chance to win a £25 voucher you must complete our Spring-themed wordsearch.
 Only one entry per person is allowed. You must 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 14 April 2023

Enjoy the puzzle!



WIN A £25 VOUCHER

Words to find:

BEE	FLOWER	RAIN
BUNNY	FROGSPAWN	SNOWDROP
BUTTERFLY	HATCH	
CHICK	LAMB	

L	Y	Z	K	B	Y	L	F	R	E	T	T	U	B	Z
B	A	Q	U	C	J	Y	S	C	L	Y	M	E	O	R
Y	Y	N	G	U	I	N	E	V	X	O	F	Q	G	V
M	N	W	D	C	O	H	E	V	E	W	J	M	O	S
Y	N	V	L	W	L	T	C	L	A	M	B	M	Y	L
V	Y	D	D	M	R	S	A	T	V	U	D	K	B	U
B	H	R	R	F	P	E	C	N	B	I	X	S	K	R
N	O	Q	I	V	Q	U	W	U	E	E	Z	G	P	G
P	G	Z	B	N	S	A	T	A	E	L	H	V	P	D
L	W	K	O	I	P	E	R	A	J	O	C	G	L	H
U	S	N	W	S	D	J	K	S	T	R	T	J	V	B
J	Z	O	G	M	J	Y	D	L	B	Y	A	X	M	K
C	W	O	V	E	L	I	W	V	A	I	H	I	N	K
T	R	Z	I	Y	L	D	F	T	I	Z	J	I	N	P
F	A	U	Q	M	R	E	W	O	L	F	U	C	T	X

Your name and address:

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

Phone number:

Email 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



Follow us!

solihullcommunityhousing

@solihullhousing

solihullcommunityhousing

For live updates join us on social media.

Protecting your personal information:

We promise only to use your information strictly within the Data Protection Act 2018. If you supply your email address we will use it to send future editions of the newsletter. For further information on our Privacy Policy visit: www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/About-us/Data-Protection-and-freedom-of-information/Data-protection