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For tenants and leaseholders of Solihull Community Housing

Summer 2023



# Message from Fiona

Hi, and welcome to the summer edition of SCH News. I hope it brings the sunshine with it as most of us tend to have an extra spring in our step when the sun is out.

Rain or shine though, we continue to deliver the services that you need and care about. We will be hosting a number of our popular customer engagement dropin sessions over the summer months. I urge you to attend one of these if you are able to do so.

These informal chats, normally over a cuppa and cake, are a great opportunity for you to share your thoughts, and tell us where we are going right and perhaps other areas where you feel we need to raise our game a little. It is by meeting and talking with our customers directly that we can really grow and improve the many services we deliver. We are able to learn from customers through regular satisfaction surveys, and the latest batch of figures fortunately looked very positive.

However, we never want to become complacent. We know we can always strive to improve and by talking with you all at informal drop-ins we are able to gain a real insight into any possible areas of concern.

For those customers with a little more time to spare, please think about working even more closely with us by joining things such as our SCHape Panel, VIP Panel or becoming a Building Safety Advocate if you live in one of our high rises.

That brings me onto the sprinkler installation programme. This has gone very well and the team involved are actually shortlisted for a major national housing award. You can read about this on page 5.

Fiona Hughes

Fiona Hughes
Chief Executive

Focus is already turning to the next big piece of work, the replacement of the external spandrel panels. This is affecting 16 of our high rises. High rise residents will hear more about this in their high rise safety newsletter.

I hope you enjoy the summer months.

SCAN ME

Fiora



Home Contents Insurance may bring peace of mind knowing that your furniture, belongings and decorations can be insured against theft, fire, vandalism and burst pipes.



For more information visit: www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/tenants/your-home/home-contents-insurance/

Or ask your housing officer for an application pack.

Terms Limits and exclusions apply.

A £50 excess applies in respect of Accidental Damage Claims

A full policy wording is available on request.



## It's that thyme again!

Have you entered our annual SCH Gardening Competition yet? If not, then it's time to dig out your gardening gloves, grab your watering can and bloom into action.

There are lots of different categories, so there is something for everyone:

- 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 growbag, container, plant/veg/fruit)

You can only enter one of the categories.

There are three prizes in each category.

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

You must be an SCH tenant or leaseholder to enter!

All you need to do is take photos of your garden and email them to us at **engagement@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk**. The deadline is **Friday 30 June 2023**.



## Improvement plans to Kingshurst Park

As part of the Kingshurst Village Centre Regeneration we have been given the opportunity to update Kingshurst Park - the small park situated on Gilson Way/Marston Drive by the side of Redwood House.



We want this space to be well used by the community and not just used as a short cut to and from the centre. We have hosted some activities in the Park over the last few weeks and shared our ideas with the local community whilst listening to their suggestions. This will be fed back to our design team and the project board for a final design to be produced before the works begin.

If you didn't have an opportunity to share your ideas, pop along to Kingshurst Library where you can see the concept design and put forward your suggestions. You can complete our online survey by scanning the QR code or speaking to your Kingshurst Engagement Officer Becki on **07920 045 945**.









# Safety guidance over e-scooters

E-bikes and e-scooters are becoming increasingly popular. Most are powered by lithiumion batteries. Worryingly, there has been a recent rise in e-bike and e-scooter battery fires.

To avoid risk of a fire starting, it is important that you:

- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when charging and unplug your charger when it's finished
- Only charge batteries when you are at home, but never overnight
- Only ever buy chargers and batteries from reputable retailers
- If you spot any signs of wear and tear or damage, buy an official replacement charger for your product from a reputable seller.
- Always store e-bikes, e-scooters and their batteries in a cool place.





#### What is External Wall Insulation?

External Wall Insulation is a thermally insulated and protective exterior cladding procedure.

#### What can External Wall Insulation do for me?

- Help keep your home warm in winter and cooler in the summer
- · Save money on your fuel bills
- Can help reduce condensation and mould on internal walls
- Refreshes the appearance of external walls

We are currently working alongside Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and West Midlands Combined Authority to fit 50 properties with EWI under the Social Housing Decarbonisation fund and Sustainable Warmth programme.

Both tenanted and private properties are part of phase 1 of this project.

The appointed contractor Sustainable Building Services (SBS) are currently completing work on the first selected properties in Alston Road with further schemes due to take place later this year.

Keep an eye on our social media channels for more information.

Before

■ Take a look at some before and after photos of the EWI process from start to finish.



#### **Broadband discounts**

#### If your household is in receipt of Universal Credit, you may be eligible for a 'social tariff' broadband discount.

Ofcom have reported that more than four million UK households may currently be missing out on average savings of £144 a year.

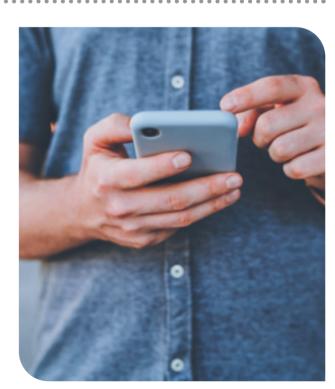
If you are currently paying for a bundled package of Phone, TV and Broadband from Virgin or Sky, you could save even more by switching to Freeview and a broadband only deal.

But if you don't want to do that, then you should still contact your provider and ask about the social tariff discount.

For example, the price of Sky's Broadband Basics (36 Mbit/s) package is just £20 a month under their social tariff compared to the £26.50 for the cheapest deal available on their website.

If you would like to know more about this, you can check out the Ofcom website by scanning the OR code.





# BUILDING SAFETY •• IIIII • IIII • III • I

# Sprinkler team on awards shortlist



# The teams from SCH and Dodd Group delivering the sprinkler installation project across our high rise buildings have been nominated for a major UK housing award!

The Sprinkler team are on the shortlist in the 'Team of the Year' category at the prestigious Housing Heroes Awards.

This reflects brilliantly on all their work over the last 18 months in installing the sprinklers in customers' homes. The feedback from high rise residents has been overwhelmingly positive to this important programme of work.

The teams have taken great care when visiting tenant homes and have been very supportive in meeting specific requests from individual customers. This attention to detail clearly caught the eye of the judges.



We wish the team the very best of luck when they travel to Manchester for the Housing Heroes Awards at the end of June.

#### New approach to damp and mould

Earlier this year we asked you to tell us if you were concerned about levels of damp and mould in your home. Many of you did. We are now working through this list as quickly as we possibly can.

We are trying to prioritise customers where the problem is most severe, but we hope to reach everyone soon.

All properties are different, and this is reflected in the damp and mould cases we come across. Rather than simply trying to patch things up, we are looking to do as thorough a job as possible, with a room by room inspection.

Once improvement works have been made, we now revisit the home three months later to make sure that things are still ok for the customer.

This approach will help keep the damp and mould at bay, not just in the short-term but in the long-term too.





# Home safety checks are there to keep you safe

We have a legal duty to carry out gas and electricity checks in all our customers' homes. We will write to you first to arrange a convenient time to visit. Please respond promptly when we do this.

If you do agree an appointment slot but are then unable to keep it, please let us know quickly so that we can rearrange.

Your Tenancy Agreement states that you must allow us access to your home to carry out these checks. We will seek the support of the Court if this is denied.

Please support these checks which are designed to keep you and your neighbours safe.

Can we also remind all customers that gas or oil heaters should never be used inside the home. Residents should only use the standard heating systems.



#### Spandrel panels work underway

With the sprinkler programme drawing to a close this summer, attention will switch to a further important piece of work we need to do around spandrel panels.

Not all our blocks have these, so not everyone is affected. But a total of 16 blocks will have this work done soon.

Ten of the blocks will see all the work carried out externally. However, six will involve us having to enter individual flats. The six blocks affected are:

- Redwood House
- Catesby House
- Demontfort House
- Digby House
- Kingshurst House
- Wingfield House

We will of course share more details of this with those tenants most directly affected.

The spandrel panel works are due to be completed by April 2024.



#### **Emollient cream warning**

Most of our customers understand the importance of fire safety and the work we do to keep them safe in their homes.

One potential hazard that is perhaps less well known is that of emollient creams, often used to treat dry skin conditions such as eczema or psoriasis.

Emollients are easily transferred from skin to clothing and bedding. If fabric with dried-on emollient comes into contact with a naked flame, the resulting fire burns guickly.

To stay safe, when using emollient creams:

- Do not smoke
- Do not use naked flames, such as candles



# Getting involved at SCH!

Did you know that each newsletter is reviewed by an editorial panel made up of our engaged tenants and leaseholders?



We want to make sure we are providing you with as many opportunities as possible to share your thoughts and make your voice heard.

Please get in touch by emailing engagement@solihullcommunityhousing. org.uk if you would like to hear more about how you can get involved with us.

## **SCHaping the way**



Our Engagement Team recently held an exciting training and review day with our SCHape Panel.

The aim of the day was to bring all our current and new members together, supporting them to build on their knowledge and capacity as a committed SCHape member.

The Panel took time to assess current social housing trends such as:

- the changing housing sector landscape and performance monitoring
- changes to regulations
- building safety resident engagement

The panel also received an insight into the new tenant satisfaction measures that are being introduced and how they will affect SCH and other housing providers. Talks were held on what service areas the Panel would like to review at their next session.

We had a great turn out which we were very grateful of as it was a Saturday. This shows our Panel members dedication to SCH! We treated them to a spot of lunch as a thank you for dedicating their time to working with us.





# Get your knit on!

Saxon Court have been successful in a grant application from Solihull Voluntary Sector Resilience Fund.

Saxon Court Resident's Group, Pins and Needles, have been awarded an amazing sum of £5,000. The grant is funded by Heart of England Foundation and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.

The resident group is craft based and focuses on knitting, crocheting, cross stitch, and anything in between. This

group is inclusive to residents and the wider community. It provides a free, safe space to share skills and make new friends whilst enjoying a hot drink together.

Local volunteers support with extending links to food banks and helping to increase financial support networks. With the rising costs of living, many residents feel less able to participate in hobbies or social activities, so this is a wonderful way to help and unite people.

#### Great British Spring Clean helps to keep Solihull tidy

The Great British Spring Clean is an event that happens every year and is part of the national campaign, Keep Britain Tidy. This year's spring clean took place from 17 March to 2 April, and our Engagement team got stuck in to help out.

Jill, our Engagement Officer pulled together volunteers from SCH, SMBC and the wider community, to take part in planned litter picks across the borough.

Chief Executive Fiona Hughes also joined in the litter picking fun around Kingshurst.

We went out in all weather conditions, armed with litter pickers and black bags to keep our community clean and tidy. It was a huge success and in total we collected over 138 bags of rubbish – 23 more than last year's 115!

The campaign makes a huge difference in keeping Solihull clean and safe for everyone.



# LATEST NEWS AT KINGSHURST

There's lots going on in Kingshurst as we get ready for an exciting time of change and transformation this Summer. Regeneration works are underway. You can discover the latest news and updates with our round-up below.

## Staying safe

A secure physical site perimeter has been in place for some time now restricting access to the demolition area. To help keep everyone safe, pedestrian routes onto the main site have been cordoned off preventing the overlap of vehicle and pedestrian routes.

As work ramps up you may notice an increase in vehicles entering and leaving the site. The demolition has been planned to minimise the movement of excavators and other heavy equipment off site, however when they have to, they will be accompanied by banksmen at all times to guide vehicles and keep the area clear, making sure pedestrians and road users are safe.

Although some disruption is unavoidable, we will continue working with the contractors to ensure the impact on local residents is as little as possible. No heavy demolition work will be carried out at weekends and all work will be restricted to between the hours of 8:30am and 6pm.

A range of dust suppression measures will be used to try and minimise dust blowing off site and additional efforts are also being taken to maintain a smart and clear site boundary and prevent the spread of mud onto the roads.





## **Building demolition starts**

The latest stage of demolition in Kingshurst is now well underway. Over the last few months our contractors have been busy stripping out building interiors and removing any potentially hazardous material.

Alongside this work, demolition of the buildings has also begun, this includes a number of individual houses as well as the entire body of the main parade. We

expect to have this significant phase of demolition completed by the end of July.

The lower Parade, which currently houses a range of local shops and services, and nearby Kingshurst Medical Practice are not included in the current phase of demolition. Public access to these buildings will be maintained throughout this work.



#### Are you a resident of Kingshurst and interested in learning more about the current regeneration works?

Pop into Kingshurst Library on Thursdays from 10am-12pm and meet with your Kingshurst Engagement Officer, Becki.

#### This is a safe space for you to:

- ask questions
- find out more information on the regeneration plans
- find out what local community groups are available
- Talk about starting your own community group or just have a cuppa and a chat.

Kingshurst
Library
Thursdays from
10am - 12pm

### Solihull Home Options portal is getting an upgrade!





Our Solihull Home Options customer bidding portal is finally getting an upgrade.

#### The new user-friendly customer portal will be:

- Easier to use with less form-filling
- An online application, with no more 'Housing Wizard' to complete
- Linked to Google, to enable you to look at the services within your area, when deciding to bid on a property
- More secure with additional security log in features

#### If you have a pin number for an existing application, this will not change.

Our weekly bidding cycle will stay the same, so you will still be able to bid from a Wednesday to a Tuesday each week.

The new portal will still allow you to bid on two properties per week and you will also be able to see recent properties letting information.

It will now provide you with information on any New Build Schemes that are being developed in the area and other housing options.

Look out for further updates on our website and social media platforms.

# 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 guidance below. This will provide you with a step-by-step breakdown of what you can expect if you are successfully matched to a home.

#### 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. This 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.

#### 2 Pre-vacation visit

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, then the offer may be withdrawn or alternatively you will be charged for any work required to the property.

#### 3 Lettable standard

Most of our properties are advertised during the notice period. When the keys are returned to us our voids team will carry out an inspection to identify any repairs. Most repairs should be completed before we let the property, some will be completed as follow-on work if they are not urgent. Depending on the works required, it may take some weeks before they are complete.

#### 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.

#### 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 four weeks from the following Monday.

#### **7** 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.

# Help for work and training

Do you need help finding the right job or training? The Council's Employment and Skills team can provide you with advice and support for:

- · Overcoming barriers
- Connecting you with local employers for job opportunities
- · Building your CV and completing job applications
- Developing your skills for interviews
- Supporting you with a range of courses for further training covering English, Maths and digital skills
- · Guiding you with access to apprenticeships or traineeships

A resident recently secured a placement at Solihull Council with the support from the Employment and Skills Team for overcoming his barriers and applying for the role. The team also supported him during the interview process and getting prepared for starting. It was his first job having been unemployed for more than a year.

Working with the team, he was inspired to study part time for better grades required to improve his career opportunities.

#### This is what he has said about his experience:

"I am very happy with the support I have received throughout the application process and while working for the council, I feel I have gained the necessary experience to move on to other roles and experiences. I am very thankful for all the support I have received from everyone at the centre!"

If you need support or advice for work or training, you can visit the Solihull Recruitment and Training Centre in Chelmsley Wood Shopping Centre and have a chat with the Employment and Skills Team.





**Address:** 16-18 Maple Walk (Upper Mall), Chelmsley Wood Shopping Centre B37 5TS

**Phone no.:** 0121 704 6869

**Opening hours:** Tuesdays – Fridays from 9:30am – 4:30pm

# **Breaching your tenancy**

Your Tenancy Agreement outlines your responsibilities as a tenant. This includes taking care of your home, paying your rent on time and being respectful to your neighbours and our staff.

If for any reason you do not maintain these conditions, you would be breaching your tenancy. If this happens, we will talk to you about the breach and advise further.

Those struggling with their tenant responsibilities can reach out to us. We can help and support you.

In most cases, tenancy breaches are easily resolved. However, if you ignore our advice or continue to breach your tenancy, we may have to take legal action which could include:

- issuing a Notice of Seeking Possession if you are a secure tenant, or a Notice of Possession Proceedings if you are an introductory tenant
- applying for an Injunction or Closure Order through the courts

 asking you to give up your tenancy or applying to the courts to repossess your home

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to understand what we expect of you and what you can expect from us in return.

More information on your rights and responsibilities as a tenant can be found in your Tenancy Agreement.

■ If you require a copy, please call us on 0121 717 1515 or scan the QR code for more information.





#### Walk with confidence

As part of your Tenancy Agreement, you are responsible for the control of your own pets both in public and at home, as well as any pets visiting your home.

All dogs must:

- be kept under control at home
- always be on a lead when in public or communal areas
- never be allowed outside your property on their own

The majority of dog owners are responsible people who clean

up any mess their dogs make, a persistent few fail to do the right thing.

It is important that you clear up any dog mess immediately as this can be harmful to others, especially young children.

If you are caught letting your dog foul and not cleaning it up, you could be fined up to £1,000.

Pick it up or pay the price.



# We are targeting illegal off-road bikers in this area.

Police are on patrol and targeting people riding offroad bikes in a dangerous and anti-social manner.

If you use a motorbike in this location you could:

- Have your vehicle seized and crushed
- · Be prosecuted, arrested or given a fine

We take anti-social behaviour seriously and we're taking action in your area:

- In an emergency, always call 999
- You can report crime online or by calling 101
- Call our ASB hotline 0121 717 1500 or bikeissues@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk



Working in partnership, making communities safer www.west-midlands.police.uk

#### Stop fly-tipping!

It is illegal to dispose of or throw rubbish out of your high rise window. Fly-tipping attracts vermin and poses a serious health and safety risk to anyone located in the grounds below, such as maintenance staff or members of the public.

If you have any information on who may be fly-tipping, please call us on 0121 717 1515 and report this.



# Keeping your space clear

It is important to keep your garden clear and tidy.

Leaving items in your communal garden such as plant pots, children's toys and garden furniture could stop the grass from being cut.

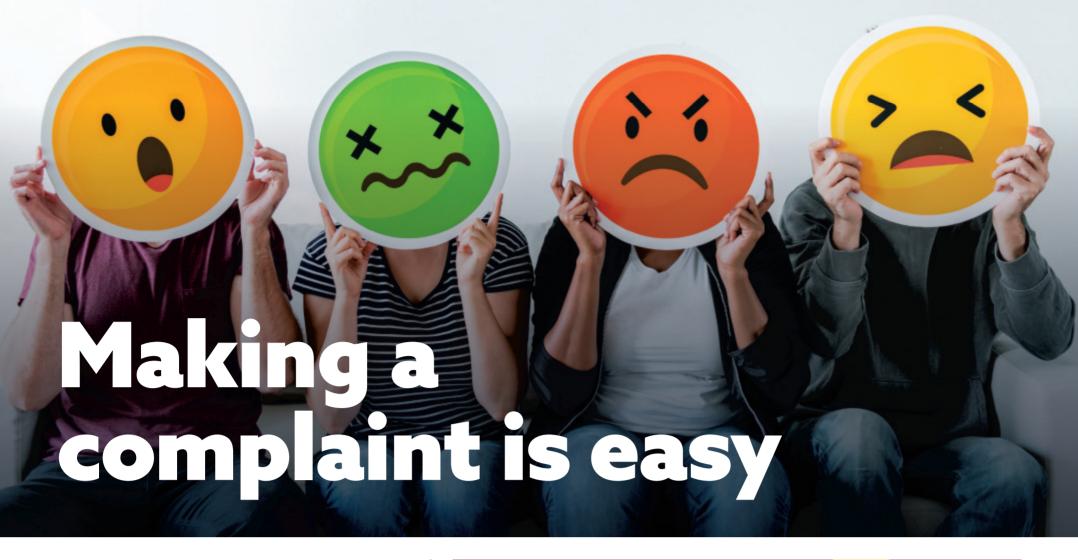
The ground maintenance crew will not remove any items before they begin and will not be responsible for any damage that may be caused.

If dog fouling is present, grass will also not be cut. Please make sure you clean up after your dog or face a fine.

#### Keeping you safe

Just a reminder that smoking is prohibited in internal communal areas in both high rise and low-rise blocks, to ensure the safety of your building.

Additionally, under our new zero-tolerance policy, no personal items should be left in communal areas. This includes pushchairs or mobility scooters.



Listening to our customers and ensuring that we can work together to resolve complaints is really important to SCH. We are always reviewing the way we work and hoping to make improvements. Receiving and looking into complaints is a way in which we can do this.

The Housing Ombudsman require every organisation to complete a self-assessment against their complaints code and to publish the results. We will be beginning this work in July ready to publish the results in October. Part of this is to make sure we have a variety of easily accessible ways that customers can make complaints.

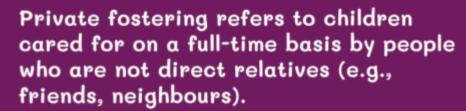
We recently asked our engaged residents who form our VIP group to access the website and tell us how easy it was to find information and log a complaint. Overall, the feedback was very positive, but we are listening to their suggestions and are in the process of making further improvements.

We have created a guide for customers on how to make a complaint and what kinds of things you might want to include. You can read this by scanning the QR code.



# Private fostering

HELP US TO HELP CHILDREN IN SOLIHULL



Please report any instances of private fostering as children who are in these arrangements can be some of the most vulnerable young people in the borough.



Scan the QR code for more details and how to report.

Or call the mash team on 0121 788 4300



Competition time!

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

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

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

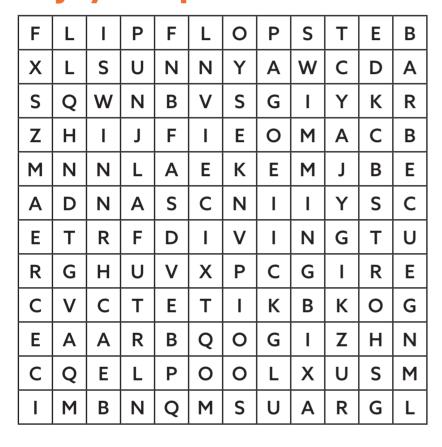
Cut out and send your entry, with your name and address to: Freepost RLSS-UEBA-RTUZ, Solihull Community Housing, Endeavour House, Meriden Drive, Solihull B37 6BX

or take a picture of your entry and email it to

newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

Closing date: Friday 21 July 2023.

#### **Enjoy the puzzle!**



# WIN A £25 VOUCHER

Words to find:

BARBECUE BEACH BIKINI DIVING FLIP FLOPS ICE CREAM KITE POOL SAND SHORTS SUNNY SWIMMING

#### Your name and address:

Name:	
Address:	

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















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