

NEWS



Solihull
Community Housing
Shaping our neighbourhoods

For tenants and leaseholders of Solihull Community Housing

Winter 2023

Season's GREETINGS

**RENT FREE
WEEK**



**CHRISTMAS
PRIZE DRAW**

See full details
on page 3

Chair's Christmas Message

Welcome to your Christmas edition of our newsletter. I hope all our customers are able to enjoy this festive season.

The end of the year allows us to take stock of some of the things we have delivered this year. The high rise sprinkler installation programme stands out and has been completed with just a few isolated flats outstanding.

The sprinklers offer an invaluable new level of fire safety to all our high rise customers. This is further supported by fire doors and other key safety measures we have in place.

Thank you to our team of resident Building Safety Advocates for the great supportive work they do.

All high rise customers can play their part in building safety, please remember:

- Never allow a stranger to tailgate you into the building
- Smoking and vaping are strictly forbidden in communal areas such as stairwells and bin chute rooms
- Never leave the main entry doors propped open for a friend
- Keep communal areas and stairwells clear at all times

Talking to customers is absolutely vital in all that we do. We spoke to hundreds of

people over the summer as part of the SCH Big Conversation. This is a great way for us to learn more about what is important to you.

We can then shape future projects in a way that best serves our customers and wider communities. The Big Conversation was supported by staff from all parts of SCH and I am very grateful for their commitment.

There is always more work to be done and in the New Year we look to further improving on what we do. Can I also invite all customers keen to



Richard Hyde
SCH Board Chair

learn more and work with us to get in touch, we always welcome new faces on the SCHape Panel and VIP Panel.

Merry Christmas

Richard

Christmas hours

Our offices will be closed on the following dates over the festive period:

 **Monday 25 December 2023**

 **Tuesday 26 December 2023**

 **Wednesday 27 December 2023**

 **Monday 1 January 2024**

 **Tuesday 2 January 2024**

- If you need to contact us in the event of an emergency on these dates, please call our out of hours line on 0121 717 1515.



Are you getting all the help that you're entitled to?



Do you need support with your energy and water bills, food and other essential household items this Winter? You may be eligible for help from local schemes funded by the Household Support Fund.



- Please visit Solihull Council's Here2Help page by scanning the QR code and find out what support you may be eligible for this Winter.

Coming to your high rise soon!

From early 2024, all high rise residents will receive a copy of our brand new Building Safety Agreement.

This Agreement will outline specific safety information about your block, how you can report safety concerns and ways you can get involved in working with us.

Read more in our next High Rise Newsletter!



Could you be one of four prize draw winners this Christmas?

With the current cost of living, we understand that it may be challenging for you to manage your rent account this Christmas.

However, it is important you remember to pay your rent first. Keeping your rent account up to date could see you win one of our festive prize draws. To be in with a chance of winning all you need is a clear rent account.

If you pay your rent by Direct Debit, then you will automatically be entered into our prize draws!

Prize Draw

To win one of our four £250 prize draws, your rent account must be clear on 31 December.

If your account is in arrears, you must make a payment during the rent-free week of 25-31 December.

Winners will be drawn in the New Year.

Rent Free Week

If you have a clear rent account on Sunday 24 December, then you can enjoy a rent-free week from Monday 25 December.



Support is available

If you are finding it difficult to pay your rent, please let us know. We understand that you may be faced with financial challenges for personal reasons or because of the current cost of living crisis.

Our teams are here to help and support you. Just call us on 0121 717 1515.

Helping to keep Solihull warm this Winter

Age UK Solihull provide a local Winter Warmth Helpline for anyone who needs help staying warm during the colder months.

You can call the helpline for advice, tips and practical help on keeping warm and making your home more energy efficient.

All vulnerable households should try to keep their main living areas between 18°C and 21°C.

If you would like advice or support on keeping you, your loved ones and your own home warm this winter, please call **0121 704 8080**.

The Winter Warmth Helpline is available every Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm until the end of March.

Scan the QR code to find out all the ways you can keep warm this Winter.



SCAN ME

Tis the season to be safe!

Christmas is the most magical time of year.

We want you and your loved ones to enjoy the season's festivities safely. Here are some tips on how to make sure you stay safe this Christmas:

- Do not place candles near your Christmas tree or furnishings. If you decide to have a real tree, please remember that the tree is still flammable because of its needles and sap.
- Candles create a cozy atmosphere, especially during the holidays. It is important that burning candles are never left unattended.
- Decorations can be flammable so do not place them near or on lights and heaters. They can overheat and could catch fire. If possible, try to use flame-resistant decorations to prevent this.
- We all love the festive mood Christmas lights provide. Make sure they are unplugged and turned off before bed and leaving the house.
- Avoid overloading plug sockets or extension leads. Make sure you always turn off plugs when they are not in use, except smart plugs that are designed to be left on. Check cables and power sockets for damage before use.
- You should test your smoke alarm weekly. Just press and hold the 'test' button. If the detector is working the alarm will sound.
- It is always a good idea to check on elderly relatives and neighbours, to make sure they are safe and well this holiday season.

Christmas rubbish & recycling



Across the festive season we see a lot more rubbish than usual. This means everything needs to be disposed of correctly, especially by those living in our high-rise buildings.

If you live in one of our high rises you should never leave rubbish in the stairwells, communal landings, in the chute room or outside of your building. This is a serious fire safety hazard and could put you and your neighbours at risk.



When using the bin chute, it is important that you:

- Do not overfill your bags as this can block the chute (the chute is only designed for small carrier bags)
- Any items too big for the chute need to be broken down and placed into carrier sized bags
- Please recycle what you can if there is a recycling bin outside your block
- Never drop cigarettes down the chute as this could easily cause a fire.

To dispose of any larger items, please contact us about our Bulky Waste Collection service by calling 0121 717 1515.

Christmas rubbish collections

Friday 22 December	Saturday 23 December	Sunday 24 December	Monday 25 December	Tuesday 26 December	Wed 27 to Fri 30 December	Sunday 31 December	Monday 1 January 2024
Normal rubbish collection	No collection	Will collect Monday's rubbish	No collection	No collection	Normal rubbish collection	Will collect Monday's rubbish	No collection

Recycling update

Thanks to a new state-of-the-art recycling facility which uses AI technology, you no longer need to separate your recycling. All recyclable items can go in your brown bin, clear sacks or communal recycling bins.

Keep your old glass recycling box as it will come in handy if you have too much to put in your brown bin – particularly over the Christmas period.

All households can easily recycle items such as:

- Cardboard food boxes and egg boxes
- Plastics e.g. drinks and shampoo bottles
- Aerosol cans
- Food and drink cans and tins. Please ensure all items are rinsed and cleaned first
- Wrapping paper: The easiest way to see if wrapping paper is recyclable is to tear a bit, and if it rips easily then it can be recycled.

■ For a full list of recyclable items and to read more about the recycling update, scan the QR code above.



BUILDING SAFETY NEWS

Be careful not to trigger high rise smoke alarms

Unfortunately, the fire service has had to respond to a number of false alarms our in high rises.

The most frequent cause for this is often smoke rather than an actual fire.

Some of the most common causes for false activations are:

- Scented candles
- Bed bug smoke bombs
- Steam from cooking
- Smoking/Vaping
- Aerosol sprays



If the smoke alarm is triggered by things such as this and you are at home, you can usually deal with the situation.

However, if you are out the smoke can build up, triggering the alarm and alerting the fire service.

We work very closely with the fire service on all aspects of fire safety. We have fire doors and sprinklers in our high rises.

But it is important that all residents take care to try and reduce the fire service being called out.

Can we also remind those living in high rises that smoking and vaping in communal areas such as stairwells is strictly forbidden.

Home safety checks

Customer safety is at the very top of our priorities. The gas and electricity checks carried out inside tenants' homes are a vital part of this.

If you receive a letter from us about a safety check, please respond quickly. We can then arrange a convenient time to visit you to carry out the checks.

This is something we legally must do – so please do not ignore the letter.

Gas and electric safety checks keep you, your family and your neighbours safe.

Keep communal areas clear

We have a zero-tolerance policy to anything being left in our high rise communal areas, such as:

- Outside your front door
- In the drying areas
- Stairwells

Reducing damp and mould

As the weather turns colder, homes can be affected by condensation, damp and mould. If you spot damp or mould in your home, please contact us straight away so we can investigate the cause, treat the area, and fix any underlying issues.

Here are a few simple steps to help reduce the risk of damp and mould in your home.

1. Heat your home a little more

- Keep your heating on low all day rather than short bursts of high heat. Warm air holds more moisture and is likely to leave droplets of condensation around your home.
- Heating one room makes condensation worse in the rooms that aren't heated. It is better to have a constant level of heat, ideally between 18°C and 21°C.

2. Ventilate rooms

- When you cook, open a window, or use the extractor fan and shut the door to prevent moisture from spreading.
- Open bedroom windows for a bit in the morning – remember to shut them before you go out.
- Leave space between furniture and cold walls.

3. Reduce the amount of moisture

- Dry your clothes outside, where possible.
- Use a clothes airer in the bathroom or kitchen with the door closed and the window slightly open or the extractor fan on.
- Make sure tumble dryers are vented to the outside using the correct vent and fittings, not inside the home.

4. Treating mould

Mould can be removed by scrubbing with a mould-specific cleaning product. When removing mould, you should wear protective gloves and a face mask.

For more advice on damp and mould scan the QR code.



SCAN ME

By keeping these areas clear, all our residents can enjoy a higher level of safety.

If these areas become cluttered, they can slow down the fire service, should they have to attend in the event of an emergency.

The zero-tolerance policy remains in force 365 days of the year.

Our staff will remove anything they find that should not be there during their regular block checks.



Could you be our next Tenant Board Member?



We are currently looking for two new Tenant Board Members to join us. Are you enthusiastic and passionate about making a difference in housing and have time to commit to this purpose? Then we'd love to hear from you!

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

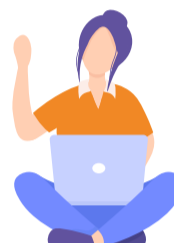
Board members are expected to:

- Value customer views and consider issues from their perspective
- Attend all meetings and training sessions
- Work well in a team
- Provide constructive feedback
- Communicate effectively

Joining the Board might seem a little daunting but we're here to support you every step of the way. You'll be provided with an induction programme, as well as a 'Board buddy' to help you settle into the role. We'll also provide ongoing training support, reimburse any expenses, and a taxable allowance of £4,000 per year.

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.



■ For an information pack, please visit www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

SCH Big Conversation - What you told us!



Thank you to everyone who took part in the SCH Big Conversation over the Summer. We spent seven weeks out and about talking to as many of you as possible, finding out what you think about SCH and the services we deliver.

We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who took the time to talk with us or complete our survey. Your feedback is helping to shape our future priorities and gives us a better understanding of what you want and need from us.

We held over **50** events

Received **418** completed surveys

Spoke to **838** residents



Here's what you said

Listening to our customers is key to all that we do. Whilst regular surveys give us a broader picture of what residents think, face to face conversations can be more meaningful. This approach widens the voice of the customer and allows us to communicate with residents we don't have regular contact with.

What is a priority?

Top three priorities that residents feel are the most important that SCH can do are:

- Listen to my views and concerns, and act on them **71%**
- Maintain good communication with me when you deliver services (such as repairs) **59%**
- Provide me with good customer service **58%**

Residents' top three priorities when thinking about the services SCH deliver are:

- My home being safe **77%**
- A good quality and timely repairs service **63%**
- A service that responds quickly and effectively to anti-social behaviour **41%**

Things SCH do well:

- Repairs – especially the conduct of our operatives
- Customer service
- All the services (overall service delivery)

Things SCH could do better:

- Maintenance of communal areas
- Communication and updates about repairs
- Safety / ASB



Your Feedback

The basics are important:

- Keep me safe in my home and neighbourhood
- Keep my home maintained
 - Reasonable level of upkeep
 - Immediate environment clean
- Listen, act, follow up and update
 - Simple, transparent, considerate communication

Residents also used the opportunity to discuss other issues of concern they had. A further **124** enquiries were raised. These have been forwarded to the relevant teams who have responded directly to the resident.

Many residents were also keen to be given the opportunity to get involved with SCH, with **122** residents being added to the engagement framework.

Next steps

The feedback from the sessions has incorporated a brand-new theme into the first draft of our next Delivery Plan. This will set out how we will get the basics right and deliver core services well.

Our Engagement team are currently meeting with other teams to feedback on themes, successes and areas for improvement. These will be used to drive progression forward within these areas of operation.

All residents who registered to be more involved have been contacted and are now part of the relevant areas of interest.

If you'd like to take part in more activities like this, please call the Engagement team on **0121 717 1515** or email us at engagement@solihull.gov.uk



SCHaping our communal areas



SCHAPE
Residents Panel
Solihull Community Housing
Achieving Performance Excellence

Our SCHAPE Panel are coming to the end of their communal areas review.

They chose this area for review as survey feedback showed that satisfaction wasn't very high amongst residents.

SCHAPE have been speaking to staff to find out what we do to maintain the communal areas, as well as visiting some of our high and low-rise blocks to review how they are managed and the service standards.

Members of our VIP engagement panel and other engaged residents have also been sharing their views on communal areas with the Panel.

Now that SCHAPE have all the information required, they are pulling together their findings which will be presented to our SCH Board. This will include recommendations to help improve this important service area.

- If you are interested in finding out more about what SCHAPE do or you would love to join the Panel, please email engagement@solihull.gov.uk



Survey results are in!



SCAN ME

During September we carried out our second round of quarterly satisfaction calls this year.

A sample of our tenants were contacted to carry out a telephone survey to hear how residents feel we are performing. The feedback helps us shape how we deliver our services to you.

It's important to us that we understand how you feel we are doing and where we can improve. The results are also looked at by our resident SCHAPE Panel when they are deciding which service areas they would like to review.

In this latest round, our overall satisfaction with services was over 80% which is our highest result in recent years.

Where we have seen dissatisfaction increase, or results are particularly low (such as complaints and ASB) we will be

carrying out follow up calls with residents to understand the individual circumstances so that we are able to put things right.

- To view our most recent resident survey results, visit our website or scan the QR code.



LATEST NEWS AT KINGSHURST



Council Leader, Councillor Ian Courts with SCH Chief Executive, Fiona Hughes

Housebuilding gets underway

Work has started in Kingshurst to build 25 new sustainable homes that will be managed by ourselves.

The net-zero carbon-regulated houses are being built on the site of the former Mountfort pub as part of a much wider regeneration scheme, to completely transform Kingshurst Village Centre.

Set to be delivered in phases, the final scheme will provide a new mix of sustainable housing and modern retail space, centered around a brand-new community health and wellness hub.

Solihull Council have appointed Willmott Dixon to deliver this initial phase of housing development.

This exciting latest step marks a major milestone for the Council-led regeneration scheme and will make a significant initial contribution to the 78 new homes envisioned in the Kingshurst Masterplan.

What's on at the library!

Kingshurst Library have lots of community events on each week. There is something for everyone!



Adult Craft Group An arts and crafts session open to all. Every Monday 11am-12.30pm. Drop in or call Michelle on 07946177710 for more information



Gateway Lifestyle Services Health practitioners giving advice on weight, diet, blood pressure & lifestyle. Mainly GP referrals but people can self-refer. Every Tuesday 10am-1pm. Call 0800 599 9880 for more information



Stop Smoking Clinic Part of Gateway Lifestyle Services. Every Tuesday 2pm-4.45pm. Referrals and drop in. Call 0800 599 9880 for more information



Kingshurst Needle Crafters Group of people who meet to enjoy needle crafting over a cup of coffee, everyone is welcome! Every Thursday from 10am-12:00pm



Family Craft Group Craft activities for children under 12yrs and their parents and carers. Every Thursday from 3.15pm-4.45pm



Rhyme & Story time Rhymes and stories for children under 4yrs and their parents and carers. Every other Thursday 10.30am-11am. Contact the library on 0121 770 3451 for the next date



Kingshurst Book Club Reading group sharing books over a cup of coffee. Every other Friday from 10am-11.30am. Contact the library on 0121 770 3451 for the next date

Cut-out and keep



Training Hub

Are you looking to take your first step into the construction industry? To help local residents unlock opportunities in the industry, free training is on offer by Solihull Council.



Funded by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), the Kingshurst Construction Training Hub includes construction work practice on the Kingshurst Mountfort site and classroom-based learning at the training providers premises.

On completion, learners will obtain a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card and a guaranteed interview.

Scan the QR code to find out more about this fantastic opportunity!



Tenant Wellbeing Offer



We are always looking to improve our wellbeing offer. One way we are doing this is offering all residents, who have no arrears at the time of sign up, the opportunity to directly access our Safe and Sound pendant alarm service, without paying the usual upfront charges.

What is our Safe and Sound service?

Our low cost Safe and Sound plan provides you with a pendant alarm service, giving you confidence in your own home. This pendant supports nearly 2000 people in Solihull and provides benefits to customers such as:

- a 24/7 monitoring service, with the added benefit of an emergency responder service
- reduces the risk of isolation and acts as a support for those who are at risk of falls
- personalised contact list for use in the event of activating your alarm
- for an additional cost, you can have exclusive access to our 24/7 responder service. A staff member will attend all 'no response' activations within 45 minutes to complete welfare checks
- offers peace of mind to you and your loved ones.



How much does it cost?

- A weekly charge of £4.94 or £7.46 depending on the level of service received and will be paid by monthly direct debit (price subject to review in April 2024).
- There is a standard set up fee of £48.50 and a further £48.50 installation fee.

SPECIAL OFFER!

We are currently inviting SCH tenants who have a clear rent account at the time of sign up to take up this service without the need to pay any upfront charges.

- To find out more about this exclusive offer, call us on 0121 717 1515 or scan the QR code and complete our online referral form.

Accessing your Solihull Home Options Account



Following the launch of our updated Solihull Home Options Portal, we have put together some frequently asked questions (FAQs).

Creating a password

The first time you log in you will need to create a password. Your password must:

- Be between 6 and 10 characters long
- Contain at least 2 lower case letters, 2 upper case letters, and 2 numbers
- Not include punctuation or symbols

Logging in

Each time you log in you will need your PIN, memorable date and password.

Resetting your password

To reset your password, you will need to add your current email address.

When you request a reset, you will receive an email with a temporary password and memorable date. You must change these when you log in to something you will remember for next time.

What is my memorable date?

This is usually your date of birth unless you have chosen another memorable date. If you receive an error message when logging in, try opening the website in another web browser before contacting us.

Applications

- If you wish to apply for a garage, please follow the instructions on the customer portal.
- If you wish to apply for a Mutual Exchange, you will need to register with Homeswapper not SHO Customer Portal.
- If you have a large family and we have agreed that you can bid on different bedroom sized properties, the system will still only show your actual bedroom size/need. It will not show what has been agreed. You will still be able to bid on the agreed properties that you are eligible for.

Call us on 0121 717 1515 if you have any further log in issues.

Saxon raise funds for local charities

Saxon Court have been very busy this Autumn, hosting social events and raising money for local charities.

Coffee, cake and company

Saxon Court hosted their own Macmillan Coffee Morning on 29 September and raised an incredible £215.

The residents, their families and friends took part in a raffle with lots of prizes donated by Saxon Hair Salon and the local community.

There was a bake-off competition with lots of mouth-watering cakes. Our very own Saxon Court Manager, Mandy came 1st with her Lime Cheesecake.

Everyone at Saxon Court had a brilliant and joyous morning.

Walk-A-Ron

One of Saxon Court's most loved residents' completed a sponsored walk for charity this Autumn.

Ron took up walking two years ago and realised the positive benefits it has on his mental health and wellbeing. So, Ron decided to use something he enjoys and give back to those in need by raising money for local charities.

This is Ron's second year raising money for charity. So far, he has raised over £250 for Birmingham Childrens Hospital, the 3Trees Centre and Saxon Court Resident's Group.

Saxon's Garden Project

Balfour Beatty recently supported Saxon Court through a social payback project.

Alongside Macdonald Surfacing, they worked to extend the residents wellbeing garden, making it more accessible to wheelchair users by placing bark chippings down.

Balfour Beatty donated £50 in vouchers so Saxon Court could buy plants to spruce up the new area.

The team at Saxon Court are hoping to get some intergenerational projects up and running to make some benches.

Thank you to Balfour Beatty and Macdonald Surfacing for putting a smile on residents' faces.

■ To stay up to date with Saxon Court and their social events, follow them on Twitter.



Saxon Court enjoy a slice of cake and a natter.



Ron is fit and ready to walk for charity



Balfour Beatty volunteers spend the day extending the wellbeing garden at Saxon Court.

Help us improve our complaints handling

SCH are committed to improving our services and recognise we need to improve complaint handling, in particular our response times.

We have seen a 25% increase in complaints being made to the organisation. This clearly reflects that our customers are aware of how to make a complaint and are confident in doing so.

We are currently reviewing our complaints processes and have developed a new Complaints Improvement Plan.

We are keen to work with our residents to improve our complaints handling and learning from complaints. We want to be sure that we take every opportunity to improve our services by listening to our customers when they are unhappy, and if something has gone wrong.

In the coming months we are looking to strengthen the work of our complaint reviewers, a small group of

engaged residents that review anonymised complaint letters to see if they are customer friendly and resolve the original complaint issue.

To register your interest, call us on 0121 717 1515 or scan the QR code and complete our online form.



SCAN ME

Competition time!

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

For a chance to win a £25 voucher you must complete our Christmas-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 5 January 2024**

Enjoy the puzzle!

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

WIN A £25 VOUCHER

Words to find:

BAUBLE	DECORATIONS	PRESENT
CAROLS	FRUITCAKE	STAR
CRACKER	GINGERBREAD	TINSEL
CRANBERRY	HOLIDAY	TREE

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



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