

Summer 2023 issue!

# insight

The South Essex Homes  
Resident Newsletter



Recycling unused cycles!

## HELPFUL HINTS & TIPS!



Be part  
of it!

**YOUR  
FREE  
COPY!**

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

**ALL YOU  
NEED TO  
KNOW  
ABOUT  
ASB**



**ELECTRICAL  
SAFETY -  
FOCUS ON  
LITHIUM  
BATTERIES**



**AND LOTS MORE...**

- Money saving tips
- Resident engagement update
- Prepare your home for winter months!

# SAVE MONEY

## this Summer!



With summer in full swing, it can often feel like there are lots more activities or events to pay for, especially if you have children to entertain! Here are our top tips on saving money this summer whilst still having a great time.

### Eating out

During the school holidays lots of cafés and restaurants will have deals which mean children eat free or for just £1, we have included some of our local favourites below, or you can visit [www.moneysavingcentral.co.uk](http://www.moneysavingcentral.co.uk) to find out more!

#### £1

- **ASDA** > Kids eat for £1 all day every day in the café with no adult spend, baby food is also available as part of this initiative.
- **Sainsburys Café** > Kids eat a hot main meal or lunch bag for £1 with the purchase of an adult hot main meal from £5.20 after 11:30am.
- **Bella Italia** > Kids eat three courses and a drink for £1 with the purchase of an adult main from 4-6pm Monday-Thursday
- **Hungry Horse** > Kids eat for £1 on Mondays.

#### Free!

- **Beefeater & Brewers Fayre** > Two kids under 16 eat breakfast free with every adult purchase of an unlimited breakfast for £9.99.
- **Morrisons** > One free kids meal with one adult's meal over £4.49 in the café.
- **Tesco** > Kids eat free on weekdays with any purchase of 60p+ from the café.

### Shopping

When shopping for food you could download apps such as Too Good To Go or Olio where you can pick up food that has not sold that day or food that your neighbours no longer need for low prices or even free! Olio also offers the option to list non-food items so you may see children's toys or household items available for free in your neighbourhood.



We want to hear from you!

We would love to hear your favourite money saving tip that you think could help out fellow readers. Get your thinking caps on and send us an email at [amberrodgers@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:amberrodgers@seh.southend.gov.uk) with your tip, we will feature them in the next issue of Insight and the best ones will even win a £20 gift voucher!

New

## TENANCY CONDITIONS NOW LIVE!

You may recall that in a previous issue of Insight we asked you for your thoughts on the proposed new Tenancy Conditions, thank you to all of the tenants that sent in their feedback during the consultation process!

On the 3rd of July these new Tenancy Conditions came into effect. You can take a look at them on the 'Tenancy Conditions Review' page on our website.



# WELCOME

## Welcome to the summer issue of Insight!



It's been a bit of an iffy start to summer, but I remain hopeful that the sun will make a more consistent appearance for the remainder of the season!

I hope you enjoy the contents of this edition of Insight. We recently ran an online campaign throughout ASB Awareness Week in July and you will see from the article starting on page 8 that we have replicated all the information we shared on our website during that week here in Insight. I hope this gives you a good overview of how we tackle anti-social behaviour and proves to be a useful reference guide.

I was pleased to receive an email recently from local resident and Insight reader Paul, who had some great suggestions for the magazine – including the request for your money saving tips that we have included with our article on page 2. Paul also suggested that we bring back a tenants' letters page, which I am more than happy to do, but of course it can only be a successful regular feature if we receive communications from you! Perhaps you have a suggestion to make, a comment on an article you've read, or a question to ask one of our senior managers? If so, please get in touch using my contact details at the bottom of this page and you may feature in a future issue of Insight!

*All the best, Julia*

Julia Pack Editor

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## Message from Mike

In previous articles I have had to reflect on the cost of living increases that everyone has been facing and the pressures that puts on household budgets. While we all recognise that those pressures continue, we were particularly aware of the difficulties created through increased heating charges from April this year for those residents linked to a communal heating system, which were based on the anticipated significant increases we were told to expect from the utility companies.



Officer or our Specialist Income Management Team if you are experiencing problems in managing your rent payments and your finances generally. We are here to help you.

While this edition of Insight will hopefully be dropping on your doormat while we are enjoying some lovely summer weather, our team continues to focus on the challenges some of you face in your home with the issue of dampness and mould caused by condensation. We continue to progress our plans to create some new roles within our team aimed specifically at working with residents experiencing these problems, so that when the colder weather comes along later in the year we can be well prepared to help you. I expect to be able to give some further updates and to see some specific articles on the progress of this initiative in forthcoming issues of Insight so watch this space for further news – and in the meantime I would draw your attention to the

article on the back page of this magazine with useful information on how you can start to prepare your home for the colder months ahead.

On a positive note I am pleased to report that the good work we were able to see taking place last year with colleagues in the local community based organisation Achieve, Thrive, Flourish (ATF) is continuing and developing further. Some exciting plans to create a new partnership with ATF and Southend City Council - which places residents at the heart of the plans - are being progressed as we speak and I look forward to sharing further details about what this might mean for specific neighbourhoods across our city in upcoming editions. I also hope you enjoy reading about some other community engagement work being carried out by our own teams on page 4 of this issue of Insight.

**Have a great summer!**

*Best wishes,*

*Mike*

**Mike Gatrell, Chief Executive of South Essex Homes**

**GET IN TOUCH!**

For all telephone enquiries freephone **0800 833 160**

For general correspondence write to us at: Insight Magazine, South Essex Homes, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6FY

Email: [juliapack@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:juliapack@seh.southend.gov.uk)



Contact us via Facebook during office hours – simply search for 'South Essex Homes' to find and like our page!

For general information about our services, please visit our website at [www.southessexhomes.co.uk](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk)

# RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT Update

**Our Resident Engagement Officer, Sarah, is here to update you on all the fun events that have taken place over the past few months... and to tell you what's up next!**

Residents from our Hostel accommodation attended an Arts and Crafts session run by Art Ministry at the beginning of the summer months at Chaucer House, as you can see from the photo, they all did a brilliant job!



The children were engaged for a couple of hours in creating their own special bag with lots of flowers and butterflies being very popular designs. Several of the parents got involved and commented on how much they were enjoying it and how therapeutic it was.

There were lots of suggestions and ideas for future workshops including cake decorating. We are working with residents and arranging another session over the summer holidays.

Residents from the Queensway estate also got together at the start of summer to enjoy a delicious BBQ, sports games, and activities. We have been supporting residents to arrange events over the summer months and talk about what they would like to see on their estate.

At the first event in April, the children drew lots of brilliant pictures of new designs for the planters outside the Storehouse, the BBQ gave us an opportunity to talk to tenants about planning the prep work and the final designs. Get the Kids Out, Trustlinks and the Storehouse have supported this project with funding, plants, and lots of paint, not forgetting the delicious burgers and hotdogs! Southend Tenants and Residents Federation also donated colouring books and pencils for the children to enjoy.

One resident remarked 'how good it was to see people coming together, chatting and having fun'. Residents and volunteers from the organisations involved have now been busy painting the final designs for the planters. The photo to the right shows how the planters look now; we can't wait to see the 'after' photo!



## What's Next?

Focal Point Gallery will be working with families from across our hostel section to raise awareness of the climate crisis in relation to coastal communities. The aim of the workshops, which will include working with older people, is to discover ways of highlighting issues and taking action to protect our environment. The project kicked off with 'Chips on the beach' where artist Wyrd Flora asked what does it mean to live in Southend.

The project will involve 8 interactive workshops starting in July through to December and we will keep you updated with videos and photos from the sessions.

## Digital Ambassadors Wanted

We are also currently running the digital project and would like to have more digital ambassadors involved. Volunteering can help you to feel connected with your community and is a great way of making new friends. A Digital Ambassador needs basic IT skills, patience, empathy and enthusiasm. Volunteers generally give 1-2 hours per week supporting tenants. You would be supported by the Resident Engagement Team and have regular contact.

If this is something you are interested in, please contact [suerickard@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:suerickard@seh.southend.gov.uk) for more information.



# RE-CYCLE-ING!

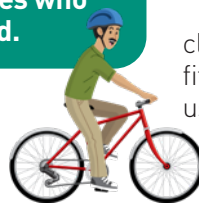
Our Housing Services Team have been working on reviving the bike storage garage at Barringtons so that residents can enjoy a clean and safe space to store their bicycles, whilst donating unused bikes to those that would benefit from using them to get around the city

The project started with residents meeting their Tenancy Officer and claiming their bikes from the 14 and a half that were being stored in the garage, yes, there was half of a bike! These residents would then be given a new key to the garage and their bikes were labelled so that it was clear they had an owner.

The lock was then changed so that only residents with bikes could access this storage area, and the rest of the unclaimed bikes were passed on to the Resident Engagement Team at South Essex Homes who arranged for them to be donated to Forward Motion who could then make sure they went to proud new owners in the community!



**Forward Motion said, 'All bikes donated are fixed up and sold for a low cost back into the community. We offer the service for people to take part in free adult cycle training, and they can then purchase an adult bike for £30 from us. We also offer free bikes to adult refugees who are living in Southend.'**



'We have handed over one of the donated bikes to a family of refugees who are living at a hotel in Southend. Mr Arsalan and his family will be using the bike while they are staying in Southend, and they also received free cycle training, so they are familiar with the roads.'

Mr Arsalan said, 'We have a good feeling now. We need to walk far to get our shopping, and this makes us tired. We are so grateful. Thank you.'

Our Estate Services Team have now cleaned up the garage and will be fitting new bike racks for residents to use this summer!



Our

# PERFORMANCE

This issue of Insight brings us to our final instalment of the performance information that we have been sharing with you since the Autumn issue last year. This time we are sharing information relating to the remaining chapters in the Social Housing Residents Charter; 'To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator for tenants' and 'To be supported to take your first step to ownership'.



## TO BE TREATED WITH RESPECT

This Chapter is all about Landlords treating tenants with respect. We have taken your views into account for this one, so let's take a look at the results from the most recent tenant satisfaction survey...



An average of **83%** of tenants said that they were satisfied that South Essex Homes treats them fairly and with respect. The results can be further broken down to understand the different feedback from general needs tenants and from Sheltered Housing residents.

**General needs - 81%**  
**Sheltered Housing - 85%**

Following on, **74%** of all tenants said they were satisfied that they are kept informed by us about the things that matter to them as a tenant.

**General needs - 76%**  
**Sheltered Housing - 70%**



Taking everything into account, **75%** of tenants agreed that they were satisfied with the overall service provided by South Essex Homes.

**General needs - 77%**  
**Sheltered Housing - 73%**

## TO BE SUPPORTED TO TAKE YOUR FIRST STEP TO OWNERSHIP

The Right to Buy scheme allows most tenants the opportunity to buy their council home at a discount. The commitment of owning your own home can be a big responsibility and there are many things that need to be considered in the first instance, so our Leasehold and Right to Buy Officers support tenants right from the start of the application process.

- Since 1st April 2022 we have assisted **17** households in purchasing their property.
- The discount increased significantly from 1st April 2012 and since then we have assisted **218** households to achieve home ownership through the Right to Buy Scheme.

The maximum discount is now £96,000, if you are interested and would like to see if you would be eligible for this scheme, please visit our website for more information.

# TO BE BACKED

# BY A STRONG CONSUMER

# REGULATOR FOR TENANTS

## Housing Ombudsman Service

The Housing Ombudsman Service ('the Ombudsman') and the Regulator of Social Housing ('the Regulator') each have a role in dealing with social housing landlords and representing their tenants. The organisations work closely together but have different roles. These roles are complementary, to ensure landlords meet satisfactory levels of service delivery to tenants.

The Regulator ensures that the landlord meets the standards set for social housing providers. This includes that the landlord is well-managed, providing tenants with quality accommodation, choice and protection, and that tenants can hold their landlords to account.

The Regulator cannot help to resolve individual tenant complaints but can consider whether individual complaints are evidence of systemic failings by the landlord. This is supported by its close working with

the Ombudsman, who can refer issues to the Regulator when it finds evidence to suggest individual cases are a result of wider failings.

The Housing Ombudsman service is in place to look at complaints about social housing and other landlords. The service is free for all social housing tenants, independent and impartial. It is focused on helping to resolve individual complaints made by tenants and leaseholders about their landlords. They can consider complaints and disputes and may help mediate to find a resolution.

Following changes made as part of the Charter for Social Housing Residents, the Ombudsman can now look beyond individual disputes and consider the wider issues that can lead to complaints. The Ombudsman seeks to address those issues through a range of interventions including recommendations to the landlord, sharing learning through publications, and through publishing data.

The Ombudsman investigates complaints that it receives by requesting evidence from both the

tenant and landlord, and determining what is fair in all circumstances of the case. When investigating complaints, the Ombudsman will consider whether the landlord failed to comply with relevant legal obligations or codes of practice; failed to apply its own policies and/or procedures; delayed unreasonably in dealing with the matter; behaved unfairly, unreasonably or incompetently; or treated the complainant personally in a heavy-handed, unsympathetic or inappropriate manner.

For the period of 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 we received **7** Housing Ombudsman complaints.

- **3** of which did not qualify as they had not been through our full complaints process.
- **3** more were not actually related to a South Essex Homes tenant or property.
- **1** complaint was investigated by the Ombudsman on behalf of one of our tenants.

## Looking Back on the Year

*Dear Residents,*

I hope you have enjoyed the performance data we have shared in bitesize portions over four issues of Insight magazine.

This fresh approach has aimed at being open and honest with you about how we as a company are performing, whilst not bombarding you with all the information at once.

We'd be really interested in receiving your feedback as to how you have found this approach to sharing performance information about South Essex Homes. Would you be happy for us to continue in this manner and start the cycle again in the autumn issue of Insight? Or would you rather we revert to sharing all the performance information at once? Have you found the information interesting and easy to understand – or do you have any suggestions for how we could improve its delivery?

Please share your thoughts by emailing me at [sarahlander@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:sarahlander@seh.southend.gov.uk) or posting a letter for my attention at the address at the bottom of page 3.

I appreciate your time to help us make the information we share with you as engaging and relevant as possible.

Best wishes

*Sarah Lander*

Director of Operations (Housing)

# ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR WEEK 2023

Anti-Social Behaviour Week 2023 ran from Monday 3rd July until Sunday 9th July.

Here at South Essex Homes, we recognise the negative impact ASB can have on a person and/or community.

If not properly addressed, ASB can significantly impact the quality of life of those affected, which is why we are committed to preventing and tackling such behaviour.

Throughout ASB Awareness Week we published a series of articles on our website, which covered a range of aspects of ASB and how to deal with it, including what South Essex Homes will and will not investigate, and what your rights are.

We are conscious that not all our residents are confident accessing information online, so we thought

we would repeat the content of our ASB Awareness Week articles here in Insight, as a three-page special, and we hope you find it useful!

Let's start by defining what is classed as ASB.

## Definition of ASB:

- Conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to any person.
- Conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises.
- Conduct capable of causing housing related nuisance or annoyance to any person.

In practice, South Essex Homes will exercise judgement in deciding what amounts to ASB in individual cases, in line with our ASB Policy.

## Dealing with Noise Nuisance

With regards to noise nuisance particularly, we often advise tenants that the best way to deal with the problem is to go to the source and talk to the person causing the issue. However, we do stress that before a tenant approaches their neighbour, it is important to assess the risk to their personal safety and property.

If they deem it appropriate to approach the neighbour, we suggest that they:

- Be careful
- Plan in advance what they are going to say or write a carefully worded letter.
- Keep calm and be pleasant and then they are more likely to respond positively to the complaint.
- Never approach the neighbour when the noise is actually happening as they are more likely to be angry and argumentative. This is especially the case if a party is taking place and alcohol is likely to be involved.

If the complainant is frightened or intimidated by their neighbour or believes they may react aggressively, then they first need to check whether the neighbours are SEH tenants. It is contained within the Conditions of Tenancy that tenants must not cause nuisance to neighbours so their Tenancy Services Officer will be able to assist in such cases.

If the complainant gets a negative response from their neighbour when they approach them and the problem continues, the next step would be to consider mediation. In which case they can contact their Tenancy Services Officer via email or call them on 0800 833 160 or via our 24-hour Anti-Social Behaviour reporting line 0800 833 163 and the appropriate referrals can be made.

For noise nuisance queries relating to non-SEH tenants, we suggest that residents may wish to visit the Southend-on-Sea City Council web pages relating to Noise Pollution, which you can access via [www.southend.gov.uk/pollution-0/noise-pollution](http://www.southend.gov.uk/pollution-0/noise-pollution).

## Focus on Graffiti

Graffiti is a problem worldwide. It is classed as criminal damage and is therefore a crime.

It can be offensive, but by working together we can try and wipe the majority of it out and deal with the offenders. Regulations under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 enable local authorities in England and Wales to issue £80 on-the-spot fines for graffiti.

In line with our service standards, our caretaking team aim to clear graffiti within 24 hours with our specialist products, however if the graffiti is stubborn to remove or covering a vast area we may paint the entire damaged area within seven days

South Essex Homes works with the Police to record and share details of graffiti and 'tags' or signatures and will seek damages where Council owned sites are defaced.

## How to report it

Contact South Essex Homes on antisocialbehaviour@seh.southend.gov.uk or 0800 833163, email the Caretaking team on estateservices@seh.southend.gov.uk or report it via our online ASB form at [www.southessexhomes.co.uk/anti-social-behaviour](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/anti-social-behaviour).

## What can SEH investigate?

Looking at ASB more generally, we can highlight examples of conduct that South Essex Homes WILL consider to be ASB. Such examples include:

- Noise nuisance such as regular parties or loud music being played regularly.
- Intimidation or harassment.
- Aggressive and threatening language or behaviour.
- Physical violence against people and/or property.
- Taking part in unlawful activity such as fly tipping or pirate radio.

If you are experiencing ASB as described above within a building or estate managed by South Essex Homes, please report it directly to the Tenancy Services Officer (TSO) who manages the relevant area.

You can find the names and contact details of TSOs on the Tenancy Services Officer page of our website [www.southessexhomes.co.uk/tenancy-services-officer](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/tenancy-services-officer) where you can search using the street or building name.

## Issues SEH won't investigate

Here are some examples of conduct that do regularly get reported to us, but as standalone or irregular occurrences South Essex Homes WILL NOT consider to be ASB. This includes:

- Children playing in the street, around their home or park and not causing damage or being abusive.
- Children arguing.
- People gathering and socialising in the street, unless causing damage, being abusive or threatening.
- The riding of bikes or skateboards around the estates that we manage.
- Events in the home such as; flushing toilets, showering, cooking smells, smoking in own home, vacuuming floors, washing machine in use, babies crying or playing.
- Staring or looking at someone.
- Pets straying across garden areas.
- One off noise nuisance such as a one-off party or BBQ.
- Normal conversation heard through walls or floors.
- Noise travelling through ceilings or walls due to poor insulation or type of flooring.
- People carrying out DIY in reasonable hours (inside hours of 8am-10pm Monday to Friday and 9am-10pm on Saturdays and Sundays).
- People mowing lawns during reasonable hours of the day (inside hours of 8am-10pm Monday to Friday and 9am-10pm on Saturdays and Sundays).
- Normal vehicle noise.
- Neighbours walking around their home and across floors.
- Neighbours closing doors, cupboards, or windows.
- Parking issues, including parking across driveways.
- Civil disputes such as boundary issues.
- Certain incidents which may be considered a criminal offence, and which should be reported to and dealt with by the Police, such as burglary and theft.

**Please note, however, we remain mindful that when incidents such as those listed above are repeated or especially severe, they can develop into more serious problems that can have a negative impact on the quality of life of other residents.**

We therefore consider each case individually from the perspective of both the person reporting the incidents and from the point of view of the person(s) they are complaining about, so please do discuss any ongoing such issues with us for guidance on how we may be able to help you find an amicable compromise.



## Be Informed and Know Your Rights

ASB Awareness Week is organised by RESOLVE, who are a Centre of Excellence solely focussed upon community safety and ASB. Members of the South Essex Homes Executive Management Team also sit on the RESOLVE Board, so as an organisation we are committed to promoting messages relating to this important topic.

RESOLVE's key messages for this year's ASB Awareness Week were aimed at dispelling myths about ASB so here are a few facts we have taken from their website:

› **ASB is not low-level, it devastates the lives of victims and communities and can be a precursor to more serious crime.**

YouGov research commissioned by RESOLVE shows that almost 1 in 7 people have had to consider moving home because of the impact anti-social behaviour was having on them.

› **Despite the harm ASB is causing, many victims and witnesses do not report it.**

A staggering 51% of ASB victims and witnesses surveyed did not make a report because they 'didn't think anything would be done'. 15% said they did not know how to report ASB or where they would turn to do so.

› **Young people are often seen as the main perpetrators of ASB - we need to bust this myth.**

Young people are not the main perpetrators of anti-social behaviour; adults are. In fact, young people are often the silent victims of ASB. Groups of youths hanging

out in public spaces are often perceived to be causing trouble/ASB, but we'd like people to consider 'What harm is actually being done here (if any)?' and 'why are youths hanging out here in large groups?' - Could it be that they don't know where else to go and that being in a larger group helps young people to feel safe? One of our goals for ASB Awareness Week 2023 is to improve public understanding of ASB while also signposting young people to places they can go to chill out, have fun, learn skills and be themselves.

› **Victims do not know what to do if they are unsatisfied with the handling of their case.**

The Community Trigger, now called the ASB Case Review, was introduced in the 2014 Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act for victims who have reported ASB but are unhappy with the response or lack thereof.

As noted in the 2021/2022 Victims' Commissioner's Annual Report "It empowers a victim to bring agencies together to commit to purposeful action to bring an end to repeat ASB. It can represent the best hope for victims to escape their nightmare. But it remains poorly promoted and underutilised."

This is highlighted by further research commissioned by RESOLVE, which shows that 9 years after its introduction, just 6% of people have heard of the ASB Case Review, and only 2% of people fully understand how it works.

Find out more about requesting an ASB Case Review in Southend by visiting <https://www.southend.gov.uk/communities-neighbourhoods-environment/crime-anti-social-behaviour-1/6>

## It's a Wrap!

If you still have questions about ASB please don't hesitate to get in touch.

For general queries please email us on [antisocialbehaviour@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:antisocialbehaviour@seh.southend.gov.uk) or call us on **0800 833163**.

You can report ASB by completing the online form available from the ASB pages of our website [www.southessexhomes.co.uk/anti-social-behaviour](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/anti-social-behaviour). Alternatively you can report it directly to your Tenancy Services Officer who you can find on our website, [www.southessexhomes.co.uk/tenancy-services-officer](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/tenancy-services-officer), where you can search using the street or building name.



# COMMUNAL AREA ETIQUETTE

If you have access to communal areas where you live, whether that be communal lounges, gardens, lifts, or even staircases, you and your neighbours have a responsibility to keep the area as clean and safe as possible for everyone that uses those areas.

Here are some dos and don'ts for communal living etiquette, to help you and your neighbours maintain your living space as a positive place to be.

## Do

### Report it to us:

- This applies to repairs, cleaning and caretaking. If you see graffiti or bulk refuse dumped outside your home, please take pictures and report this to us so that we can send out our Estate Services Team to rectify the issue as soon as they can.
- If you see that something is broken or unsafe, please report this to us and don't assume that someone else will. We often get reports of lifts that have been broken all day, but as no one reported it to us we were unaware and unable to fix it as soon as possible.

### Get involved:

- If you live somewhere with a communal lounge, it is likely that there are events going on throughout the week that you can get involved in. This helps you to meet your neighbours and sometimes our staff will come along too and have a chat.
- Find out when the next Estate Walkabout is happening in your street/building and go along to it if you can! The schedule is available on our website [www.southessexhomes.co.uk/estate-inspections](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/estate-inspections) and they provide a great opportunity to meet and speak to your Tenancy Services Officer about any issues you wish to raise with us.
- If you notice that there are no events planned where you live, get in touch with us and we can help you to get something planned!

### Look out for your neighbours:

- If you haven't seen your neighbour in a while or if you are worried about them (as perhaps they don't have much food in the cupboards when you go over for a cup of tea), let us know and we can check in with them to make sure they're okay and to offer support.

## Don't

### Allow tailgaters:

- Don't let people you don't recognise follow you into your building. As impolite as it may seem, holding the door open for someone coming in behind you could be letting the wrong people into your communal areas.
- Make sure you are familiar with your neighbours faces so you know who should be in your building and let us know if you think people who don't live there are gaining access.

### Block access:

- If you own a mobility scooter, bicycle, pram, or other large item, please do not store these in your communal areas or corridors as they can block access in the event of an emergency.
- You should also keep outside areas clear by parking sensibly and only in the marked bays if you have a communal car park, to make sure emergency services can access the area if needed.
- Please do not prop open fire doors in your communal areas as this is a fire hazard and can also be a method of entry for outsiders to gain access.

### Litter:

- Please do not litter in your communal areas. Not only can this make where you are living look untidy, but it can also cause operating issues with lifts when pieces of litter get into the doors or tracks.
- You should also refrain from dumping bulk rubbish in communal areas or outside of your home, this is unfair on your neighbours and this can also be a fire hazard.

# KEEP US UPDATED

Have you recently had a change in your circumstances at home? A new baby? A partner has moved in or moved out? You will need to notify us of any change to your contact details or the people who live in your household so that we can keep our records updated and make sure that we are supporting all residents living in our homes appropriately.

Please send your Tenancy Services

Officer an email or letter clearly stating your address with your updated details and let them know your preferred contact method so they can get back to you with any follow up enquiries.

It is important to note that you must not allow someone to move in unless you have obtained permission, as there are some circumstances where this will not be possible.

Please also let us know if someone in the household has passed away. We know it will be a difficult time for you so please just give our Customer Services Team a call on 0800 833 160 or email [sehcustomerservices@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:sehcustomerservices@seh.southend.gov.uk) to let them know that someone named on the tenancy, or another member of the household, has passed away and a member of our Tenancy Services





# LITHIUM BATTERIES

More and more modern appliances and equipment are powered by lithium batteries. The benefits of longer life, lighter weight, smaller size, and the reduced frequency of replacement make them a popular choice with a whole range of manufacturers. However, the charging of these types of batteries, used in mobile phones and laptops, needs to be understood carefully. These types of batteries are also used to power E-Bikes and E-Scooters which offer a great alternative to public transport and driving.

With a single cell lithium battery, once the cell has released all of its energy, the battery has finished its life. However, the lithium-ion batteries used in devices such as mobile phones, laptops, power tools and electric vehicles, have more cells and can be recharged many times. It is important to understand that they are also volatile under stress, and the failure of a lithium battery (usually due to a short circuit or damage from overcharging, overheating, penetration or crushing) makes them a high fire risk.

Lithium battery fires can spread quickly out of control, and within minutes can start a ferocious fire. When these batteries are charged in communal areas or escape routes, a fire breaking out can quickly block people's ability to escape.

## How can you reduce the risks when charging lithium batteries?

- Don't block your exit or any communal areas when charging batteries in larger devices. If a fire breaks out, you won't be able to safely leave your home.
- Keep an eye out for warning signs that your battery might be failing and becoming a fire risk, we have included some of these signs in the next section for you.
- Never leave your battery to charge when you are out or whilst you are asleep.
- Make sure your battery and charger are genuine and meet UK safety standards.

- Use the correct charger for your battery, and make sure to buy from a reputable seller, it is not always wise to buy the cheapest product available when it comes to electrical safety.
- Let your battery cool before charging it.
- Unplug your charger once the battery has charged.
- Fit extra smoke alarms in the area where you charge your batteries if possible.

## What are the warning signs to look out for?

- **Heat** > It is normal for batteries to generate some heat when charging or in use. If your battery feels extremely hot to touch, there is a risk that it is defective and may start a fire.
- **Bulging** > A battery bulging or swelling out of shape is a common sign of it failing. If your battery looks swollen, you should stop using it immediately. Similar signs include any type of lump or leaking from the device.
- **Noise** > Failing lithium batteries have been reported to make hissing or cracking sounds.
- **Smell** > If you notice a strong or unusual smell coming from the battery, this could also be a sign of it failing.
- **Performance** > A failure to fully charge or longer charge times can be a sign of failure.

## What should you do if your lithium battery is a fire risk?

If your battery shows any of these signs of failing, immediately turn off the device and unplug it from the power source. Call the device manufacturer or retailer for further instructions. If the device starts smoking or catches fire, raise the alarm, get out, stay out and call 999 immediately.

## How should you dispose of a lithium battery?

Lithium batteries should not be placed in the same bins as your regular rubbish or recycling. If they overheat, they may cause it to catch fire. Instead take them to your local Household Waste Recycling Centre.

# ELECTRICAL SAFETY INSPECTIONS

## HELP US HELP YOU!

According to Electrical Safety First, 89% of electrical fires are caused by electrical products. The remaining 11% are caused by faults in installations, such as the wiring, or by people not using installations properly. By having the electrics in your home checked regularly and by taking some simple precautions with your electrical appliances, you can reduce the risk of fire.

It is important that you allow us inside your property to carry out necessary electrical checks. Electrical checks of South Essex Homes properties are carried out by our electrically competent contractor Aaron Services every 5 years, and when our properties become vacant. A regular electrical inspection will reveal if any electrical circuits are overloaded, find any potential electric shock risks and fire hazards, identify any defective electrical work, and highlight any lack of earthing.

Aaron Services will then issue an Electrical Installation Condition Report detailing any observed damage, deterioration, defects, dangerous conditions, and anything that might give rise to danger. If anything dangerous or potentially dangerous is found, urgent remedial action will be organised to rectify the hazard.

It is important that you allow us access to carry out these inspections as it is for the safety of not only yourself and your family, but also your neighbours. Any damaged or defective electrics pose a serious fire risk for all if not checked and remedied. If you refuse to allow us access to your property to complete an electrical check, we may have to take further action against you to ensure your home remains safe.

### Electrical Safety in Your Home

Here are a few things you can do in between inspections to make sure your home remains safe...

#### Do

- Check your sockets regularly – if you see burn marks, cracks, sounds of buzzing or cracking or they feel hot, report this to us to check if they need repairing or replacing.
- Turn off any electrical appliances that you are not using,

particularly at night, when a fire can quickly spread unnoticed and cause more damage.

- Check flexible cables to appliances before plugging them in to use – check for damage, and wear and tear, and that the plug is fastened securely to the cable. Don't use the appliance unless the cable is in good condition.
- Be careful when using hand-held electrical appliances, such as hair dryers and straighteners, and make sure that you switch them off and unplug them when you have finished. If you leave them on, they can easily cause any combustible material that they are in contact with to catch fire.
- Make sure that your electrical items are safe and are purchased from reputable retailers who you can trust (usually British kite marked). It's not worth the risk of buying a cheaper product from an untrustworthy site or from social media.
- Ensure that smoke and heat detectors are clean, and regularly tested once a week, or at least once a month. This can be done simply by pushing the test button located on the body of the unit. Any issues should be reported to us immediately.

#### Don't

- Overload electrical adaptors by plugging too many appliances into one socket, especially appliances with a high electrical current rating such as kettles, irons, and heaters.
- Put electric heaters near curtains or furniture, or dry clothes on them.
- Cover the air vents on storage heaters or fan heaters.
- Trail flexible cables under carpets or rugs.
- Buy second hand appliances if you can help it. If this cannot be avoided, make sure you register the product on [www.registermyappliance.org.uk](http://www.registermyappliance.org.uk) so that you are always up to date with any recalls.





## Welcome back to Leasehold Matters; the page in Insight devoted to Leaseholder issues

Welcome back to Leasehold Matters the page in Insight devoted to Leaseholders. We hope you are enjoying the summer months and are enjoying this issue of Insight. After a long hiatus, it was great to see the Leaseholder Focus Group meet again including some new members. Details of the next meetings can be found below, which includes confirmation of the location for December's meeting. You can view the minutes of the last meeting on our website but note next year will include a Leaseholder specific event together with a variety of differing times in which the Focus Group will meet. Members were keen to include some articles in Leasehold Matters, with the next couple of issues devoted to their request. In this edition we highlight the best way to contact the Team.

Best Wishes  
The Leasehold Team

### **LeaseholderServices@seh.southend.gov.uk – Our preferred method of contact**

Following recent communication, it appears some leaseholders are unaware of our group email address. Despite being up and running for some time, members of our Focus Group were keen to run an article on this to increase awareness.

#### **Why use the email address to contact Leaseholder Services?**

The primary reason for this is the group email address is monitored by all Team members throughout the working day. This can result in your query being dealt with quicker; particularly when staff members are on leave or unavailable. In addition, we use the email address to monitor our workload in our regular meetings, allocating queries to team members and recording when they have been completed.

Sending queries to us in writing assists in ensuring we have records of your query which can be particularly useful if a matter is likely to take some time e.g. the sale of a property or is particularly complex. Furthermore, our response will ensure you have a written record of the matter.

#### **Is this now the only way I can contact you?**

Although this is our preferred method of contact, you can still get in touch with us via other means. This includes:

- Contacting us by our free phone number: 0800 833 160
- By post: Leaseholder Services, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6FY

#### **Can I use the Group email address to report communal repairs or estate issues?**

The Team will forward these on to our Customer Services Team but would recommend contacting them directly either by email or phone:

SEHCustomerServices@seh.southend.gov.uk  
0800 833 160

If reporting a repair, they will provide you with an anticipated completion date and take your contact details so our contractors can arrange access, if required, and keep you updated on progress.

Issues concerning Caretaking and Grounds Maintenance can also be reported to our Customer Services Team.

#### **Don't forget to check out our website first!**

The South Essex Homes' website has an extensive array of information for leaseholders. This includes a specific leaseholder section together with details of all our other services. The website is mobile and tablet friendly so can be accessed on the go. The website address is below:

**[www.southessexhomes.co.uk](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk)**

**The next Leaseholder Focus Group meeting will be held at our offices in the Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6FY:**



**Tuesday 5th September  
2pm-4pm  
Committee Room 2**

# PRIVATE FOSTERING

Are you or someone you know looking after a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if they have a disability) who is not a close relative and it is going to be for longer than 28 days? The child might be your cousin, great niece/nephew or a family friend's child or their parent might be your ex-partner and you don't have parental responsibility.

If so, this is Private Fostering, which is when the arrangement has been made between the parent and the person looking after the child. Parents and private foster carers are legally required to notify the Local Authority when a private fostering arrangement is made at least 6 weeks before it is due to start or 48 hours after they have arrived if it happens suddenly. Don't worry if you didn't know about this, as the main thing is that you do this now.

You will be visited at home and formal checks with agencies are made and an assessment completed to consider the needs of the child and your ability to meet



these. There will also be regular visits to offer advice and support and to make sure that things are working well.

## What do you need to do?

Contact Southend's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH+) Team on 01702 215007 Option 1 or email [mash@southend.gov.uk](mailto:mash@southend.gov.uk)

To find out more, you can contact the Private Fostering Team on 01702 212938 or visit [www.southend.gov.uk/fostering-1private-fostering](http://www.southend.gov.uk/fostering-1private-fostering)

# BOARD UPDATE

As of its March 2023 meeting, the South Essex Homes Board decided that it would hold Board meetings alternately between in-person and MS Teams for the foreseeable future.

The Board meets four times per financial year and the next meeting will be held in person on Thursday 26th October 2023 at 3.00pm in Committee Room 4a at the Civic Centre. If you would like to attend, you do not need to inform anyone in advance, please just come along. If you wish to view the public papers, the pack will be available on the website approximately five days prior to the meeting.

Thank you to Mr Ali for contacting Daniel Lyons to suggest that this information is shared.



# MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Would you like to be a member of South Essex Homes' Board?



In January 2024 there will be a vacancy for a Tenant Board member. The successful candidate will serve along with 10 other high calibre non-executive directors to help South Essex Homes continue to build effective relationships across the city, with both external partners and the tenants that we serve.

South Essex Homes manages and maintains homes in the city of Southend on behalf of Southend City Council. We work hard to improve our services and provide our tenants with good quality social housing.

We are looking for potential applicants with skills or knowledge relating to business acumen, financial awareness or housing experience to ensure that the organisation evolves and continues to develop in order to improve our services in an ever-changing environment.

We anticipate that people interested in this role will be passionate about making a contribution, can take on an ambassadorial role and be a strong team player, whilst embracing the future ambitions of South Essex Homes to continue to provide good value quality housing. The role will require attendance of up to 10 meetings per financial year.

The vacancy is a compensated voluntary position (£2,000 PA) and could actually enhance future job opportunities for the successful candidate.

The South Essex Homes' Group welcomes applications regardless of race, sex, age, disability or marital status. To be eligible to apply you need to be a secure tenant of South Essex Homes (other criteria for application can be found in the recruitment pack).

In addition, as part of the recruitment drive, we are also looking for tenants who would like to be involved in the process of choosing a suitable tenant Board member. If you feel that you do not fit the bill as a Board member or you do not have the time to commit to the role but would still like to be involved, why not consider applying to be part of the recruitment team?

For an informal chat about either role please contact Carol Cooper on 01702 212701 or email [carolcooper@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:carolcooper@seh.southend.gov.uk)

An application pack is available on the South Essex Homes' website or can be requested from Carol at the above email address. Closing date for applications is Friday 10 November 2023.

# WINTER IS COMING!

It may seem a little premature to start talking about the colder months of the year during warmer and lighter days but there is an inevitability about the seasons and autumn and winter will be with us before we know it. As we approach the colder and darker months, we thought we would give you some helpful tips and hints associated with how to reduce the possibility of mould in your home. Help us to help you in reducing mould, which is not just an unsightly occurrence but can have some other far-reaching consequences.

Our website and advice leaflet gives information and tips about reducing the amount of moist air in your home and using various techniques to combat damp air. This article will provide a few initial tips to help you start getting your home prepared for the winter now and therefore reducing the occurrence of mould in your home.

~Kevin Hazlewood, Director of Operations (Property)



## Ventilation

It is important to make sure that your property will be well ventilated once the winter weather starts to creep in. One way to do this is to check that all ventilation systems in your home are operable now. Make sure that all windows open properly, and check that your extractor fan is working too. The best way to maximise efficiency of your extractor fan is to give it a Hoover if it is safe for you to do so, you can then use a piece of tissue to test if it works well enough... hold it up to the extractor fan, if the tissue sticks then you're good to go!

You can do a few things to further increase air ventilation in your property as the winter months approach. Pulling furniture, such as wardrobes, away from the walls can allow air ventilation at the back to protect the items inside from mould. Decluttering, especially in small rooms, can also increase air flow in that particular room and reduce the risk of damp and mould.



## Heating

Another way to prepare for winter is to put your heating on now. We know it sounds strange to be putting your heating on in summer, but we don't mean for long! It is better to test that everything is working now so that you can report any issues to us and get them fixed in advance of the cold weather getting here.

Heating your home is an important aspect of reducing damp and mould. If you are worried that you will struggle financially to heat your home to an ambient temperature throughout the winter, please get in contact with us and our Support Services and Income Management teams will be happy to talk you through the support that is available to you.



## Repairs

If you currently suspect a leak in your home or have a damp patch that you are worried about, contact us as soon as possible so that we can treat this before it has a chance to get worse or cause further issues in winter. You can report repairs to us by calling the contact centre on 0800 833 160, or by visiting our website and filling in an online form.



Top Tip!

We recommend picking up some affordable moisture traps like this now so that you have them handy for the winter weather. These small contraptions can collect moisture from the air to limit the risk of damp and mould growth, especially in damp prone areas such as wardrobes.

