

Winter 2024 issue!

# insight

The South Essex Homes  
Resident Newsletter



Our Gardens in Bloom competition relaunches!

HELPFUL HINTS & TIPS!



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of it!

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FREE  
COPY!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...



**BALMORAL  
PROJECT  
FINISHES!**



**SANTA  
CAME TO  
TOWN**



AND LOTS MORE...

- Planning for the future
- Digital Inclusion Project
- Tackling damp, mould and condensation

# RESIDENT PROFILE Survey

In order to help us provide a better service for residents, that suits your and your family's particular needs, it is important that we have accurate, up to date information about the people living in the homes we manage.

This could be about a range of things that we should be aware of when we interact with you - for example you may have a disability that means you can't answer the door quickly when our operatives or other staff members visit you, English may not be your first language so you need us to provide information in a different language or format, or even your household members may have changed since you moved in to your home - you may have had a new baby or a child has 'flown the nest'.

It would be really helpful if you can take 5-10 minutes to complete this form so we can update our records. We look forward to hearing from you!

The easiest and simplest way to complete the survey is via our website, and you can go straight to the form by scanning this QR code.



Alternatively please complete the enclosed paper form, pop it in an envelope and either drop it into the Reception at Southend Civic Centre in Victoria Avenue, or address it to FREEPOST SOUTH ESSEX HOMES and drop it in a post box.

Simply complete the online form or return the paper form by Sunday 31st March 2024 to be entered into a prize draw, where we'll be giving away 4 x £25 shopping vouchers...

*good luck!*



## GARDEN IN

# BLOOM

## COMPETITION

**The Resident Engagement Team would like to invite you to enter the reformed Garden in Bloom competition for 2024.**

**Any resident, leaseholder or young person aged 16 and under can enter.**

All entries will be judged on overall design including use of space, colour, originality, upkeep and presentation. For each category there will be three winners!

Closing Date for entry forms is **Friday 7th June 2024**, we will then contact you directly to confirm entry and arrange a time to photograph your garden when you feel it is looking its best or alternatively you can send your photos to us.

For an "application of interest" form please email Sue at [residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk) or phone South Essex Homes on 0800 833160.

*We look forward to your entries!*



# WELCOME

## Welcome to the winter issue of Insight!

We've had freezing temperatures so far this year, as I write this message in mid-January, so here's hoping we don't have to wait too long after you receive this magazine in February until the signs of spring start making an appearance!

Pages 4 & 5 of this issue of Insight tackle two very sensitive subjects which, while quite different also have one big similarity – that they both involve facing up to what our futures might hold and planning for possible eventualities. One of those articles specifically covers tenancy succession so, if you live with other people, this explains what would happen should the person named on the tenancy pass away. The other article covers lasting power of attorney and why it could come in useful across all aspects of your life, including the management of your tenancy should you become unable to do this yourself. Whilst understandably difficult to think about, planning for the future is extremely important, so I really hope you find these articles informative and useful.

Our next issue of Insight will be in May 2024 – by when I'm hopeful we'll be starting to enjoy some glorious sunshine! In the meantime, please stay warm and you may also find the damp, mould and condensation tips on the back page of interest!

*All the best, Julia*  
Julia Pack Editor



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## Message from Mike

Happy New Year! Now we are in 2024, we have entered the fourth year of our five-year partnership agreement with Southend-on-Sea City Council. It makes me reflect on just how quickly time flies! We anticipate there will soon be active dialogue about the arrangements for the partnership ready for when the current agreement finishes next year, and I shall keep you updated on progress with these discussions. Your ongoing support for the work we carry out on your behalf is key to us being able to maintain the partnership with the Council, so please continue to tell us how we can deliver the services you need us to provide.

2024 also sees some changes within the housing sector, with the Regulator for Social Housing beginning its four-year inspection programme starting from April. While at this stage we do not know where we will feature in that programme, we will continue with the work that has been underway for some time; to prepare for the inspectors to come in and have a look at how we do what we do and for them to tell us what they think. Once we have more information on whether we will be inspected this year or later then we will share that with all residents, so you know what is happening.

There have been some recent further legislative changes in terms of building safety regulations that will come into effect this year, but I am pleased to say that

we were already aware of the changes coming along and have been ensuring our processes and systems for building safety have been reviewed and continue to be fit for purpose, so you can be assured of the safety of the home you live in.

This year sees the likelihood of both local elections and a general election, and we wait with interest to see what the national political parties propose in terms of their approach to housing across the country and especially to social housing. Again, once we have more understanding of what this might mean for you and your home, we will provide updates as soon as this becomes clearer.

As always there are a range of interesting and informative articles in this edition of your magazine, and I would draw attention to the articles regarding Succession and Power of Attorney. These articles encourage you to take time now to consider what will happen to your tenancy should you pass away, become seriously ill or be unable to make decisions, and understand how that affects anyone else who lives with you. I know these are difficult and complicated matters to consider but I would strongly urge you to have those conversations with your loved ones to help you and others in your household to plan for the future as much as possible.

*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)

# PLANNING

for the

# FUTURE

When it comes to our future, many of us find it challenging to contemplate the difficult scenarios that life might throw our way. However, as responsible social housing tenants, it's crucial to consider the various possibilities of what may lie ahead - including developing health issues, such as dementia - and begin to plan for such eventualities.

In the articles on these pages, we'll explore the importance of planning for the future, including the concept of Power of Attorney (POA), and how it can make a significant difference in ensuring your best interests are protected. We will also explain more about tenancy succession and the laws that dictate what is allowed to happen when the person named on a tenancy passes away, so you are made aware of how such an event would affect your household.

## The Importance of Future Planning:

The reality is that some of us may encounter health challenges such as dementia in our lifetime, and these aren't exclusively tied to old age; early onset dementia can also impact individuals at a younger age. While it's not a pleasant thought, taking proactive steps now can make a world of difference for your future and ease the burden on your loved ones. One essential aspect of this planning is assigning lasting power of attorney.

## Understanding Power of Attorney:

In simple terms, power of attorney is a legal document that grants someone you trust the authority to make decisions on your behalf if you become unable to do so. This person, known as the attorney, can handle various aspects of your life, such as managing your finances or making health-related decisions.

## The Role of Power of Attorney in Social Housing:

At South Essex Homes, we've witnessed situations where family members are unable to assist their loved ones with tenancy issues due

to the absence of a power of attorney. This often leads to involvement with the Court of Protection, a process that can be both emotionally challenging and time-consuming.

By appointing a power of attorney, you ensure that someone you trust can step in and make decisions in your best interests, especially when it comes to maintaining your tenancy and managing your affairs. This planning can prevent unnecessary complications for your family and provide you with peace of mind.

## How to apply for Power of Attorney:

A good start point is to visit the government's webpages regarding this issue at [www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney](http://www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney), which talks you through the process step-by-step.

At the time of going to print the cost of registering a lasting power of attorney is £82, however if you are in receipt of certain benefits or if your salary is under a certain amount you may be eligible for exemption from this fee or a reduction. If you don't feel confident making the application yourself, you can approach a solicitor to do it for you and the cost for this is usually between around £200 and £500.

There is also a good article on this topic from Money Saving Expert Martin Lewis, which you can find at

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2023/03/martin-lewis-power-of-attorney/>

## Alternatives for Those Not Ready for Power of Attorney:

If you're not ready to designate power of attorney, South Essex Homes offers an alternative solution. You can grant permission for us to speak to a trusted friend or family member about your home and tenancy-related matters. This arrangement ensures that someone you trust is informed and can act on your behalf when needed, potentially saving your family from future heartache and difficulty.

**Planning for the future, especially when it involves potential health challenges, may seem daunting, but it is a responsible and caring step to take. By understanding and considering options like power of attorney, you can make informed decisions that will safeguard your interests and ease the burden on your loved ones.**

**Don't wait until it's too late - take control of your future today.**

# NAVIGATING TENANCY SUCCESSION

Losing a loved one is an emotional and challenging experience, and when it comes to housing, the process can be complex. For social housing tenants faced with the passing of a family member or partner who is named on the tenancy agreement, understanding the concept of succession is crucial.

## What is Tenancy Succession?

Tenancy succession allows you to remain within council accommodation after the death of the person named on the existing tenancy agreement. Taking over their tenancy, known as succeeding, involves assuming responsibility for rent payments. However, whether you can stay and succeed depends on various factors; including your relationship with the deceased, the duration of cohabitation, and the nature of the tenancy agreement.

## Succession to Tenancy and Property

In the case of succession to both tenancy and property, the successor inherits the tenancy along with the associated property. This involves the successor taking on the existing tenancy conditions and rental payments.

## Succession to Tenancy Only

Succession to the tenancy but not the associated property occurs when the successor continues the tenancy rights but is not able to stay within the current property. This scenario is often seen when the property is deemed too large for the successor's needs or has specific adaptations that may not align with their requirements.

## Non-Succession

Non-succession means there are no rights for a succession to take place leading to the end of the tenancy.

### Key factors that influence whether someone would be eligible to succeed to a tenancy include:

- **Shared Residence:** In general, you would not be eligible to succeed to the tenancy unless you lived with the deceased in your main home before their passing for a period of at least one year
- **Relationship Status:** Living together as a couple strengthens your claim for succession.
- **Family Relationship:** Only certain relations are included when considering eligibility to succeed to a tenancy (this also depends on when the tenancy started).
- **Duration of Cohabitation:** The length of time you lived with the deceased is a factor.
- **Tenancy Type:** The type and duration of the deceased's tenancy, along with the tenancy agreement terms, and when the tenancy commenced, play a role.
- **Personal Circumstances:** Your individual circumstances and how they align with the property type are considered.
- **Localism Act 2011:** If the tenancy commenced after April 2012, eligible successors must be a spouse, civil-partner or have been living together as spouse or civil-partner for at least one year prior to the named tenant's death.

If you meet the criteria, notifying South Essex Homes about the tenant's death is the first step. However, it is very important to be aware that only one succession is allowed per tenancy. Once a succession occurs, no further successions are permitted, even if the succession happened decades ago. This process is laid out by law

in the Housing Act 1985 and is not the decision of South Essex Homes.

When a joint tenant dies, the surviving joint tenant inherits the tenancy by the common law rule of survivorship. This means that the succession is used up so there wouldn't be any further right to succeed to a tenancy.

## Real Life example:

Mrs A was married for 15 years and lived with her husband in a house in Leigh throughout their married life. Her husband had previously lived in the house with his first wife, who was the named tenant. This meant that he succeeded her tenancy when she passed away in 1995. When Mrs A's husband passed away recently, Mrs A was not able to succeed the tenancy as it had already been succeeded once. Unfortunately this meant she was not entitled to succeed to the tenancy and could not remain in this property. South Essex Homes has been working with her to support her to find an alternative property.

## Dealing with Grief and Transition

Understanding that dealing with these changes while grieving is exceptionally challenging, South Essex Homes offers dedicated officers to provide guidance, support, and empathy throughout the process. The commitment is to assist tenants in finding a new home, if necessary, and making the transition as smooth as possible. Officers can also refer residents for bereavement counselling, which is free of charge.

## Taking Over the Tenancy: Step by Step

To take over the tenancy, you'll need to complete a form and prove your right to succeed. After notifying the authorities about the death, an officer will assist in completing the required forms during a property visit.

### Documentation required may include:

- **Evidence of Residence:** Bank statements, bills, or benefit letters.
- **Death Certificate:** The deceased tenant's death certificate.
- **Marriage or Civil Partnership Certificate:** If applicable.
- **Proof of Main Residence:** Demonstrating the property was your main home for at least a year before the person's death.
- **Current Residence Proof:** Confirming your current residence in the property.

Understanding that each situation is unique, South Essex Homes encourages tenants with questions regarding succession to contact their Tenancy Team at **0800 833160** or via email at [sehcustomerservices@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:sehcustomerservices@seh.southend.gov.uk).

For additional assistance, tenants may also reach out to Citizens Advice Southend at **0344 4770808** or visit their website at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk). The charity Shelter has lots of useful information and advice on their website too – visit [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk) and search for 'succession'

Navigating the process of tenancy succession is undoubtedly complex, but with the right information and support, tenants can find stability during challenging times. South Essex Homes is dedicated to ensuring the well-being and seamless transition for tenants faced with such circumstances.

# BALMORAL PROJECT:

We are pleased to confirm that works on the Balmoral Estate are now complete.

Given the disruption the works caused to residents we wish to thank everyone for their patience and understanding while these essential works were undertaken.

Special thanks to Ranj Singh, Bob Ayriss, and Keith Ducker for their help and assistance in ensuring residents welfare was always considered throughout the project. As well as Houghton & Son and all South Essex Homes staff involved in the project especially Paula, Donna, and Sarah.

Notable points on the project include Houghton and Son providing a monthly financial donation to the Balmoral Food Bank for the past two years, the community projects and BBQs that were held for the local community and of course the structural and improvement works that were delivered which will ensure the long-term future of the Balmoral Blocks.

*Paul Longman*

Head of Major Projects, South Essex Homes



*Time to reflect*

Since the opening event in 2021, several community events have taken place during the Balmoral Project with the help of our Resident Engagement team, here are some of our favourites...

## SUMMER PARTIES

Two end of summer parties were held during this project. In 2022 Houghton & Son donated paints and tote bags for the children to design and make their own! One girl designed a bag for the contractor to say thank you as she really enjoyed the afternoon. The team enjoyed burgers, chatted with residents, and helped with the clear up. Working with South Essex Community Hub (SECH) Youth Club, Get the Kids Out, and Triple-T's on this project enabled our Resident Engagement team to make sure that we were connecting with children from the Balmoral estate and the surrounding area.

In 2023 South Essex Homes worked with SECH to host an end of summer Hawaiian themed party! The party included a BBQ, slush machine, plenty of games, stalls from local organisations, a crafts station, and a face painter! Staff from Houghton & Son joined the party, as well as local councillors and even the Mayor.



# ART PROJECT:



Over the Easter holidays, children from the Balmoral estate, SECH Youth Club and Get the Kids Out worked together on an art project. Houghton & Son, in partnership with South Essex Homes, asked children to design four of the site hoardings. John Bulley, a local painter, helped them turn their work into attractive murals.

Over the 2 weeks, approximately 20 children contributed by designing, planning and painting the hoardings which expressed their ideas about climate change. As you can see from the photographs, they are bright, colourful and display their artistic skills. This was such a fun and exciting activity as they were able to experiment with paint, mixing colours and drawing with their imagination.

The project ended with the children visiting the site and seeing their artwork displayed on the hoardings. This visit also gave the children the opportunity to meet the contractors who congratulated them on their excellent achievements.

## CHRISTMAS EVENTS

Two Christmas events were also held during the project, in conjunction with SECH. In 2022, staff from Houghton & Son helped us to set up a makeshift Santa's Grotto and Santa handed out selection boxes to the local children and the young people at the youth club.

In 2023, the works at Balmoral were coming to an end, so SECH, South Essex Homes, and Houghton & Son came together one last time to host a cosy Christmas event. The young people at SECH had designed a thank you banner for the contractor to acknowledge all their help within the community over the past few years.



## What's being said?

"We received a monthly donation of £50.00 from Houghton's until their contract finished. They also provided endless help with lifting and carrying heavy items, and provided further donations as and when possible from workers when we've had events happening. The support has been wonderful and we're very grateful to you and your team."

- Southend Communities Outreach Group Food Bank

"Houghton and Son are proud to have worked alongside South Essex Homes to deliver a number of community events over the last couple of years. It's great to have met and engaged with so many local residents of Balmoral and Southend and to see how we, as a contractor, have been able to contribute to so many exciting projects and exceed our social value commitments.

"Part of our business ethos at Houghton and Son is to drive towards a more sustainable future and a particular event highlight for us, was the Balmoral Art Project. We discussed key areas such as climate change and carbon footprints with the children and found it to be a very rewarding experience. The children painted some fabulous artwork, which have been proudly displayed on our hoardings throughout the project.

"I would finally like to make a special mention to the teams that have made it happen. To those that gave up their time, everyone who attended and, especially to Sarah and her team from SEH, who helped organise these events.

"It's great to see how much of an important impact these events have had to the local residents and how we as a contractor have been able to contribute to so many of these brilliant events. It's been a pleasure contributing to and helping all of the events and projects during our time at Balmoral!"

- Houghton and Son

# CHRISTMAS WITH SEH



We were very happy to hear that a lot of our residents enjoyed a fun and festive Christmas and New Year in December. We have seen some beautiful Christmas trees set up in our Sheltered Schemes!

We also attended a Christmas party organised by South Essex Homes and ATF, kindly funded by Southend Tenants and Residents Federation and our generous contractors. Taking place at Kids Kingdom, the children were able to spend an evening playing with their friends and their neighbours and were also greeted by Santa who gave everyone an early present!

It was great to get positive feedback from parents who enjoyed being able to take their children to an event in the evening, rather than events usually being held during the day. They said it was great to see their children mixing with friends outside of school too. 😊



# CHRISTMAS COOKING!



In the run up to the festive period, The One Love Project worked with Welcome to the UK to provide a cooking course to Southend on Sea Residents. Clare, from Radish Community Cookery, led the course in the kitchen at Buckingham House, one of our Sheltered Schemes. Throughout the five-week course participants learned recipes for soups, scones and more.

We joined them on the last session when they were making mince pies and gingerbread biscuits for the residents of the scheme. The kitchen smelt amazing after they were finished, and each participant even got to take a slow cooker home with them to keep on with the cooking!

As well as this, a Christmas dinner was hosted at Keats House and cooked by Project 49. Residents were kind enough to raise money to gift Project 49 a new pizza pan, which they can put to good use as they continue cooking meals in our sheltered schemes in 2024. As well as the meal, there was a Christmas quiz and disco too. A big thank you to Kerrie and Amanda from Project 49 for all their hard work throughout our schemes.



# DIGITAL INCLUSION PROJECT

The South Essex Homes Digital Inclusion project has been running since 2020 and has since been helping residents in Sheltered Housing to get online. This project is aimed to help residents to understand the benefits of using technology and to enable them to focus on the changes it could bring to their day to day lives and to help them gain confidence to deal with modern technology.

We have Digital Ambassadors who are resident volunteers, and they love sharing their skills with others whilst also meeting new people. They can visit schemes to give regular 1-2-1 sessions whether it be on a device you own, or using a Chromebook loaned by South Essex Homes.

One of our Digital Ambassadors said the following:

"I visit sheltered housing where I meet up with those who need help with ICT skills. If the person has their own laptop, mobile or tablet, I can help them to use it more efficiently and effectively. If not, then they can borrow a Chromebook from South Essex Homes. Once I have helped them set it up, I then teach them whatever they need to know to make their lives easier.

"I have shown people how to attach documents and photos to emails, texts and WhatsApp. I have helped fill in repair forms, sign up for prescriptions and set up a printer.

"It is very rewarding to watch someone's confidence grow and to know they can now use their equipment without my help".

Since the project started, we have trained over 50 residents across the Sheltered Schemes, and residents have really enjoyed learning how to use a Chromebook to get online or have training on their own devices. Some comments we have received from residents are:



"My Digital Ambassador was very patient and an understanding tutor, she was very good at explaining it all to me, I am very grateful for all her teaching".

"The training I received was excellent and the skills I learnt were good with clear explanations which I understood well".



"Thanks to my Digital Ambassador, I can now send emails with attachments and report repairs online to South Essex Homes".

If you think the digital project would be any help to you, even if it is to learn one thing on a computer or another device, then please contact Sue in the Resident Engagement Team on **0800 833 160** or email [residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk)

## DIGITAL AMBASSADORS WANTED

Volunteering can help you feel connected with your community and is a great way of making new friends. It also gives a sense of accomplishment when you have helped someone discover a new skill. To become a Digital Ambassador, you need basic IT skills, patience, empathy, and enthusiasm. Our volunteers generally give one to two hours per week supporting tenants. You would also be supported by the Resident Engagement Team staff and have regular contact. If this is something you are interested in, please contact [residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk) for more information.



Our

# PERFORMANCE

Following on from the article in the autumn issue of Insight, throughout the coming issues of Insight magazine we will be including annual performance review information in line with the new consumer standards that were introduced by the Social Housing Regulations Act 2023.

Our focus in this winter edition of the magazine is the 'Transparency, Influence and Accountability' consumer standard.



## FAIRNESS AND RESPECT

**The standard says:** Registered providers must treat all tenants with fairness and respect.

We undertake annual tenant perception surveys where we ask a cross section of residents for their views on the services we provide.

In 2023, the questions we asked during these surveys were aligned with the requirements of the Regulator for Social Housing and the 'Tenant Satisfaction Measures' (TSMs) they say we need to gather information for.



## WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY 'TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES'?

Tenant Satisfaction Measures in social housing refer to ways of assessing how happy and content residents (tenants) are with the services and conditions provided by their housing provider.

In simpler terms, it's a way of figuring out if people living in social housing are happy with where they live and the services they receive. This can include things like the quality of the housing, maintenance services, how well the community is managed, and how responsive the housing provider is to residents' needs.

Measuring tenant satisfaction helps housing providers understand what they're doing well and where they might need to improve. This information helps the housing provider make changes or improvements to make sure people living in social housing have a good quality of life.



# TENANT PERCEPTION SURVEYS



2022 to 2023

Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them - **64%**

Compares to average of other comparable social housing organisations of **61%**

Percentage of respondents very or fairly satisfied that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them - **74%**

Compares to average of other comparable social housing organisations of **71.6%**

Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect - **83%**

Compares to average of other comparable social housing organisations of **74.5%**

## DIVERSE NEEDS

### The standard says:

Registered providers must take action to deliver fair access to, and equitable outcomes of, housing and landlord services for all tenants.

Our Housing Services Officers have been doing household surveys (focussing on Sheltered Housing this year) to identify support needs of those residents. On occasion, these surveys have identified people who are vulnerable and in need of help, and we have then been able to provide them with additional support such as benefit advice, access to grants to help them pay their rent or

heating costs or accessing support from Social Care and Health Services.

We've also proactively approached people who are in rent arrears and living in non-standard properties (for example those with electric heating, who have been particularly affected by cost of living rises and who are struggling to cope with their inflated bills). By doing this we have been identifying the issues that have led to them being in rent arrears and offering help, money advice and referrals to other local services who can help them.



## ENGAGEMENT NEEDS

**The standard says:** Registered providers must take tenants' views into account in their decision-making about how landlord services are delivered.

We have established a Panel of Residents to enable us to get feedback on new ideas or tenants views on our services, quickly and easily. This is called the Residents Advisory Panel (RAP) and we send out a very short survey – usually one question – every month via email. So far we have asked residents views on a number of things, including whether we should extend our policy on allowing tenants to have dogs (there was a real variety of views regarding this particular issue) and we will be using this to inform a revision of our Pets Policy. We also asked residents what the most important thing about the repairs service was. Residents told us that they want to be given an appointment time, for operatives to turn up on time and complete the work at that visit wherever they can, or if they can't make it, to let them know and be kept up to date on progress. We agree that this is a very reasonable expectation and as we are currently procuring a new Repairs Contractor we will make sure that these issues are given priority in the management of the contract.

If you are interested in joining the RAP then please email us at [residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk)



## YOU SAID, WE DID

Residents were citing health concerns as a major issue on their estate and one resident suggested a diabetic drop-in clinic – this was then set up in partnership with the Queensway Matters Group, local charitable organisation Vineyard (who operate the Storehouse) and local GP (General Practice) surgery to deliver diabetic checks.



## RESIDENT SCRUTINY FORUM

The Resident Scrutiny Forum (RSF) was formed in 2012 and is currently made up of three tenants, who undertake reviews of South Essex Homes services. This year they have been working on two reviews; one was on how we manage the process when somebody asks to 'Succeed' to a tenancy ('take over the tenancy' in circumstances when the existing tenant/s has passed away) and the RSF are currently looking at the Contact Centre. The Resident Scrutiny Forum made several recommendations and as a result we have amended the letters we send to surviving tenant and the forms we use during this process.



## QUEENSWAY MATTERS COMMUNITY PROJECTS

The Resident Engagement Team, in collaboration with residents and other organisations, held several events on the Queensway estate over the past year. We attended coffee mornings and spoke with residents who wanted to have more opportunities to get together. They also wanted the planters on the estate to have a makeover! They were looking overgrown and very tired so with the support of The Vineyard Storehouse, Get the Kids Out (GTKO) and Trust Links, we held the first event in April to plan what we could all do.

The children worked on producing murals for the planters and we received some brilliant designs and suggestions. We have planned for Spring 2024 to complete the planters with residents and volunteers.

In May, we held the first of our Summer BBQs and another in August. Again, working with GTKO and The Storehouse, we had approximately 90 people attend both events which included face painting, outdoor games and music provided by one of the residents who did a marvellous job as the Queensway DJ! The face painting was a huge success with adults as well as the children.



# INFORMATION ABOUT LANDLORD SERVICES

## The standard says:

Registered providers must communicate with tenants and provide information so tenants can use landlord services, understand what to expect from their landlord, and hold their landlord to account.

In 2023, on behalf of Southend City Council, South Essex Homes revised the Tenancy Conditions for tenants living in the Council's homes. This process took several months as we needed to make sure that all tenants had the chance to make comments about the proposed changes and that they were fair.

The main factors that we wanted to reflect when reviewing the tenancy conditions were;

- Enabling ease of access to property for health and fire safety purposes as well as building maintenance
- Expanding on what we consider to be anti-social behaviour and tenants' responsibilities with regards to visitors and household members
- Consequences for perpetrators of domestic abuse
- Clarifying the position on CCTV, mobility scooters, pets and parking in residential parking permit areas
- Clarifying responsibilities for both landlord and tenant with regards to repairs and maintenance (including damp, mould and condensation issues)

We received around 60 individual responses from residents, which was very useful. Residents who replied generally agreed with the proposed changes and agreed that anti-social behaviour has a negative impact.

There were some suggestions that we provide more detail about the repairs responsibilities of both the tenant and South Essex Homes - this was implemented prior to the new Tenancy Conditions going live from July 2023, and we have also since amended the explanation on our website.

We hope this has made much clearer the rules for living in the Council's properties and what South Essex Homes' responsibilities are and, as a result, help us to make sure that our tenants are living in safe and well-maintained homes.

# PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

**The standard says:** Registered providers must collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in delivering landlord services.

We are about to start a pilot to use QR Codes to share information with tenants about their specific block more quickly and efficiently. This is starting at Malvern and we are currently testing its effectiveness with residents who are part of the 'Queensway Matters' group.



## Number of residents we engage with

RAP - **112 members**

Resident Engagement Events & meetings held in 2023 - **1011 engaged with (coffee mornings, various projects, digital project meetings, events)**

Focus Group members -

**25 (Disability, Leaseholder, Income)**

Digital Project - **20 residents trained on own device or Chromebook (April 23 - Dec 23)**

# COMPLAINTS

## The standard says:

Registered providers must ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively, and promptly.

Look out for details about Complaints in the issue of Insight that covers the 'Tenancy' consumer standard as there are some overlaps between these two topics.

# SELF-REFERRAL

**The standard says:** Registered providers must communicate in a timely manner with the regulator on all material issues that relate to non-compliance or potential non-compliance with the consumer standards.

As well as sharing information with our residents, all social housing organisations like South Essex Homes are required to share information with the Regulator for Social Housing about our performance. This is particularly important if we have concerns that we are not complying with any of the standards set by the Regulator.

Meet the

# LEASEHOLD TEAM

Do you have questions about service charges, your lease, or are you considering the Right to Buy of your property? Look no further! Meet the dedicated Leasehold Services Team, who are always ready to assist.

The Leasehold Services team, comprised of James Williams and Katy Baker, is here to address any questions or concerns you may have. Reach out to them via email at [Leaseholderservices@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:Leaseholderservices@seh.southend.gov.uk) or by phone at **0800 833 160**. You can also visit <https://sout Essexhome/leaseholder-information>



Katy Baker



James Williams

# LEASEHOLD FOCUS GROUP

The last focus group meeting had low attendance, and we are eager to welcome new members. This is your chance to actively participate, voice your opinions, share ideas or concerns, and connect with fellow leaseholders in your community.

Meeting

## Next Meeting:

**Date:** Wednesday 6th March 2024

**Time:** 2:00 to 4:00 PM

**Location:** Civic Centre

If you are interested in joining the Focus Group, please contact us at **0800 833 160** or email [LeaseholderServices@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:LeaseholderServices@seh.southend.gov.uk)



# OUR STANCE ON XL BULLIES

Southend City Council's Tenancy Conditions includes a provision that tenants cannot keep a dog at the property that is named as dangerous under the Dangerous Dog Act 1991. Recently, XL Bullies have been added to the banned breed list, and we understand that this will be a difficult and stressful time for some owners.

South Essex Homes aims to take proportionate and fair action in response to this change in legislation and so respects the national approach that if tenants have registered their dogs and comply with all of the government

requirements to keep their XL Bully, and the dog does not cause any other issues of nuisance and they have previously had our permission to have the dog, then we would honour this and allow them to keep their dog. We would need tenants to provide us with the exemption certificate.

Unfortunately, if this approach isn't taken and we are not provided with an exemption certificate then it would be considered a breach of tenancy conditions if we subsequently find that an XL bully is being kept in a South Essex Homes property.

According to the Government website, to keep an XL Bully dog you will need an exemption certificate, and the dog must be...

- Microchipped.
- Kept on a lead and muzzled at all times when in public.
- Kept in a secure place so it cannot escape.
- Neutered.



# COMMUNITY EVENT FUNDING

The family events we are able to hold throughout the year for residents living in South Essex Homes properties would not be possible without the very generous donations of our contractors, including: Aaron Services (Gas contractor), George Jones (Decorating contractor), Houghton & Son (repairs contractor), Morgan Sindall and Re-Gen (M&E Services) Ltd.

**AaronServices**  
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**MORGAN SINDALL**  
PROPERTY SERVICES

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(M&E Services) Ltd

We are very grateful for your financial assistance and on behalf of everyone who's attended one of our events this year...  
**THANK YOU!!**



## KEY FOB PRICE INCREASE



Please note that as of Monday 15th January 2024, the cost of purchasing main entrance fobs has increased to £10.00.

The previous price had remained the same for some time however, after a review of the cost of materials and programming, we found it was necessary to increase this charge.

## WINDOW WANDERLAND

### *Festival*

Southend-on-Sea City Council have unveiled plans for their 'Window Wanderland' art festival- set to take place between the 22nd and 24th March 2024, illuminating windows across the city.

The idea is to transform the city of Southend "into a spectacular outdoor art gallery", and all residents of Southend are invited to take part, using their windows as their canvas. Across the city, people will be decorating their street-facing windows to exhibit their very own art installations.

Some opting to use coloured tissue paper to produce a stained-glass effect, where others are keeping it monochrome, creating silhouettes out of black paper or card. Maybe you've taken up crochet or cross-stitching as a hobby and want to show off your newfound skills, or maybe you have some whiteboard pens in a drawer somewhere you can put to good use. What better way to re-use Christmas cards headed for recycling than for a mosaic for all to admire?

However big or small, the possibilities for creativity are endless. To join in, simply visit <https://www.southendculture.co.uk/ww> and scroll down to the button that says 'Join In'. If you are unable to access this website, please contact Laila Kricha, Resident Engagement Officer at SEH on [lailakricha@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:lailakricha@seh.southend.gov.uk) and she will be happy to complete this on your behalf.

When you sign up, you will be asked to enter your address. This is so that you will be added to a map of all residents participating in the festival. This map can be viewed on the website as stated above. Using this map, you can create your own route for a walk, drive, cycle or 'wander' to discover what artwork has been displayed in windows across your city.

If you choose to take part in the festival, please contact Laila Kricha on [lailakricha@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:lailakricha@seh.southend.gov.uk) or Graham Hart on [grahamhart@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:grahamhart@seh.southend.gov.uk) to ensure your ideas comply with fire safety regulations beforehand. Please also keep in mind that these are to be temporary art installations only, so must not cause any damage to SEH property.

We encourage all of our residents to be creative this new year and take part. If you would like us to feature your artwork in the next edition of our Insight magazine, please send your photos in to Laila - we can't wait to see what you come up with!



**Best of luck**



# TIPS FOR REDUCING DAMP, MOULD, AND CONDENSATION

*in Your Home*

Dealing with damp, mould, and condensation in your home can be a persistent challenge, especially during the colder months. Not only can these issues affect the look of your living space, but they can also impact your health. Here at South Essex Homes, we understand the importance of creating a comfortable and healthy environment for our residents. Here are some practical tips to help reduce these issues in your home:

## Ventilation is Key:

- **Use Extractor Fans:** Make sure your kitchen and bathroom extractor fans are in good working order. Use them while cooking or bathing and leave them on for a short period afterward to remove excess moisture.
- **Open Windows:** Regularly ventilate your home by opening windows, especially after showering or cooking. This allows fresh air to circulate, reducing moisture build-up.

## Manage Moisture:

- **Cover Cooking Pots:** When cooking, cover pots and pans to reduce steam. This can significantly lower the moisture level in your kitchen.

- **Dry Clothes Outside:** If possible, dry clothes outside or in a well-ventilated room equipped with a dehumidifier.

## Top Tip:

You may wish to consider buying condensation moisture traps, which are inexpensive and are available from DIY stores and discount shops. They help to gather excess moisture from the air and therefore prevent that moisture from condensing on cold surfaces in your home.

## Heat Your Home Efficiently:

- **Maintain Constant Heating:** Keeping a low level of background heat in your home can help prevent condensation. Try to maintain a constant temperature rather than rapid heating and cooling cycles.
- **Use Thermostatic Radiator Valves (if you have them):** These valves help control the temperature in individual rooms, preventing cold spots where condensation tends to occur.



## Tackle Mould:

- **Clean Mould Promptly:** If you notice any mould, clean it immediately with mould cleaner or a mixture of water and vinegar. Remember to wear gloves and a mask.
- **Check Furniture Placement:** Try to avoid placing furniture against outer walls, as this can restrict airflow and contribute to mould growth.

## Contact Us

If you're experiencing persistent or worsening condensation and mould issues despite following these tips, don't hesitate to get in touch with us. Reporting such issues promptly allows us to address them effectively. You can reach us by calling 0800 833160 or emailing us at [healthyhomes@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:healthyhomes@seh.southend.gov.uk).

**Remember - preventing damp, mould, and condensation requires a joint effort. By implementing these tips and promptly reporting any concerns, together we can create a healthier and more comfortable living environment for everyone.**

