

Autumn 2024 issue!

insight

The South Essex Homes
Resident Newsletter



Reflecting on a summer of fun

HELPFUL HINTS & TIPS!

Be part
of it!

YOUR
FREE
COPY!



INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

FIRE
SAFETY
SPECIAL



THE COST OF
FLYTIPPING



AND LOTS MORE...

- Our planned improvement programme
- Could the Housing Support Fund help YOU this winter?
- Our Performance - Neighbourhood & Community

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working smarter together

Have your say

ON THE FUTURE OF SOUTHEND-ON-SEA



Southend-on-Sea
City Council

The Southend City Partnership is seeking to refresh the 'Southend City Vision' by asking residents, visitors and communities to take part in a short survey.

South Essex Homes forms part of the Southend City Partnership, so we have been promoting the survey since it opened at the end of August.

This survey is closing on 22nd November, very soon after this issue of Insight is being distributed, but we couldn't miss one last opportunity to encourage you to take part.

If you haven't already done so, please complete a survey today!

What is the Southend City Vision?

The Southend City Vision is a long-term vision for Southend-on-Sea, which will help to set a direction for the place, and inspire and motivate residents, communities, businesses and organisations to shape key strategies and values across the city over the next 10 years.

Why is the Southend City Vision needed?

Up until recently, we have had the 'Southend 2050 Ambition', which was developed after extensive conversations with people who live, work, study in or visit Southend-on-Sea, but six years have passed since its adoption, and Southend-on-Sea has experienced rapid changes. We have become a city and experienced the impacts of a pandemic, the UK's low economic growth and a cost-of-living crisis. Our vision requires a refresh to make sure it still represents the views of our community.

Tara Poore, Chair of the Southend City Partnership, emphasised the importance of community involvement: "This consultation is a unique opportunity for everyone in Southend to have their say in shaping our city's future. Your input will help us create a vision that truly reflects the aspirations of our diverse and vibrant community."

Colin Ansell, Co-Chair of the Southend City Partnership, added: "We are committed to ensuring that this vision is inclusive and forward-looking. I encourage everyone to participate, whether online, at one of our events, or through your local networks. Together, we can ensure Southend is a thriving coastal city that we are all proud to be part of"

How can you take part?

The online survey, which takes approximately 10 minutes to complete, is open until 22 November 2024.

The survey can be found via the following website: www.yoursay.southend.gov.uk/southend-on-sea-city-vision or you can scan the below QR code on your phone to go straight to the right page.

If Brenda can do it, so can you!

80-year-old Furze field resident, Brenda, has mastered how to use QR codes with her smart phone and, at a recent resident meeting, she was happy to show her neighbours how they can use them too! If you're not sure, why not ask a friend or family member for help, or ask a member of the South Essex Homes team!



Paper copies of the survey are also available at various venues across Southend-on-Sea, including:

- Southend Libraries
- Civic Centre - Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 9SQ
- South Essex Community Hub (SECH) - Victoria Shopping Centre, 1st floor, 324-325 Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 5SR
- Southend Association of Voluntary Services (SAVS) - 29-31 Alexandra Street, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 1BW

After completing a paper copy survey, you can either hand it in at the venue where you collected it from; scan and send it to consultations@southend.gov.uk, or; post it to Southend-on-Sea City Council, Engagement and Partnerships Team, PO Box 6, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6ER

By completing the survey, you will be entered into a prize draw where you could win one of the following prizes:

- Sunday lunch for two at the Roslin Beach Hotel
- Afternoon tea for tea at Roslin Beach Hotel
- 1 of 3 x £20 vouchers for hair and beauty treatment at Beauty Academy South Essex College
- 1 x voucher for family bowling at Kingpins Southend

Winners will be selected at random. Terms and Conditions apply, please see the webpage for details.

Meet the CONTRACTOR

Greg is a Lift Engineer providing lift services to South Essex Homes, who was born and raised in Southend-on-Sea. He now raises his own family here.

When the opportunity came for him to retrain as a NVQ3 Lift Engineer, he leapt at the challenge and when Amalgamated Lifts were awarded the South Essex Homes lift maintenance contract, he was thrilled to work in the place that he knows best.

Greg states, "Working for your local area allows you to take pride in your work and to work in the community holistically with the residents, to adapt to their needs, and communicate with them regularly building relationships".

With that in mind, he hopes to continue improving the lift services in the area and further progress his career with Amalgamated Lifts Ltd.

Greg encourages you all to share the "Liam Loves Lifts" story within



Greg, Lift Engineer,
Amalgamated Lifts Ltd.



your community. This story was created for the Little Fingers campaign and teaches young children the importance of safety around lifts. You can find it on our website:

www.southessexhomes.co.uk/lifts

If you see Greg out and about on the job, be sure to say hello!

WELCOME

Welcome to the autumn issue of Insight!

It never ceases to amaze me how quickly the year whizzes past and, here we are, hurtling towards the festive season already!

This issue of Insight is longer than usual as we simply have so much news and information to share with you as we head into the colder months. This issue contains lots of top tips to help you keep your home safe and warm, which we hope you find useful.

I think the article that has surprised me most is the bulk waste story you'll find on page 5. Those statistics are truly shocking! I hope that you'll help us in identifying those who are carelessly dumping their large items on the grounds of our estates, so we can take action to tackle this issue.

You may notice that we haven't included our usual 'Meet the Board' feature this time. That is because we are welcoming two new Independent members to our Board very near to the publication date, but we will look forward to introducing them to you in a future edition.

Wishing you all the best for the upcoming festive period and we'll be back with the next Insight in February!

All the best, Julia

Julia Pack, Editor



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Message from Mike

I hope you've all been keeping well and have been able to enjoy some of the better weather over the summer period, even if it has been intermittent.



One of the long-awaited events that happened towards the end of the summer was the publication of the final report of the public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower tragedy. While we had been watching closely as the inquiry progressed and were being made aware of the issues being considered, when the final report was published it made very sobering reading indeed. The report has reminded every organisation involved in managing and maintaining people's homes, about just how important our focus on ensuring fire safety must always continue to be. If you would like to read more about the report, please visit www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk.

The South Essex Homes team continue to work very closely with colleagues, particularly at the City Council and in the Essex County Fire & Rescue Service, to ensure all necessary measures are carried out, monitored and maintained to ensure the highest level of fire safety. However, everyone has a part to play in this vitally important issue and that includes all residents. In this issue of Insight you will find a feature section on Fire Safety and I really encourage you to read and take note of

the information it contains.

This edition of Insight is a particularly packed one and I would especially like to draw your attention to page 4 and the article about the improvement works programme. A recent survey of our Resident Action Panel told us that the work we're doing to improve homes is top of the list of topics that you want to hear about from us, so I hope this article provides the information you want to know.

Indeed, I hope you continue to find Insight to be useful, informative and interesting in general. The team always do their best to make it an enjoyable read but, ultimately, it's your views that tell us whether we are producing something which you find worthwhile. Therefore, please tell us what you think of Insight and we will continue to try and ensure your newsletter provides the information you want to see. Our editor, Julia's, contact details can be found at the bottom of this page.

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

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

OUR CAPITAL PROGRAMME

What is it?

Southend-on-Sea City Council allocates a significant amount of money every year for South Essex Homes to spend on the Capital Programme. This involves us planning in advance the larger scale works we need to do to improve the homes we manage for the Council.

Our Capital Programme is an ongoing programme of improvements works to ensure your home continues to meet the Decent Homes Standard. Examples of the improvements we carry out include fitting new kitchens and bathrooms, replacing windows and doors, installing new heating systems and re-roofing work.

How is it developed?

This Capital Programme is developed by South Essex Homes staff and approved by our Board and the Council. This work is often decided based on priorities from:

- Stock condition surveys we have carried out to identify the condition and lifespan of elements on each property, culminating in a 30-year plan and spend profile.
- Information from other departments within the council in providing their needs to specific properties.
- Repairs data on each property from the housing system.
- Local knowledge from the staff within the areas.
- Councillors' information from their respective communities.
- Customer information fed into the council and South Essex Homes by various means.

The delivery of the projects is split into groups, such as kitchens and bathrooms, external works, energy efficiency, communal flats, and fire compliance. With some of these projects, we are able to offer you options on what you would like - including a choice of kitchen colours, flooring colours and paint colours and door type and colours, for example.

Projects carried out as part of this Capital Programme are managed by our Property Services team from inception to completion; with satisfaction surveys carried out on completion of each project, which in turn informs us of what went well and where necessary how we can improve.

Recently completed projects

We have recently installed a new smart door entry system to Yantlet.

The system enables residents to see who is at the door via a video link and speak to them on the doorstep through a speaker, before deciding whether to allow the caller access to the building.

Current Projects

During the year 2024-25, we are working on a number of large scale projects including:

1. Replacement roof to Adams Elm House.
2. New scooter housing to The Jordans.
3. Upgrading the boiler room to Longmans.
4. Upgrading the ventilation systems to Sutton Court, Temple Court, Bewley Court & Longbow.

At present, we have operatives working at various properties throughout the city to carry out:

- Decent Homes improvement works including:
 - Replacement bathrooms and kitchens
 - Replacement windows
 - Electrical rewires
 - Boiler replacements
- Fire compartmentation works & fire door installations

We are also busy with the remodelling/refurbishment works to ex-sheltered housing managers' properties located at various sheltered housing schemes across the city.

Additionally, we are involved with the refurbishment of properties that have been recently purchased by the Council to add to their housing stock, getting them ready to be rented out to people on the Housing Register.



BIG PROBLEMS WITH BULK WASTE!

Illegal dumping of bulk waste - including items like mattresses, sofas, and chairs - is causing a significant financial strain on South Essex Homes. These items require specialised and costly disposal to ensure public safety and environmental protection.

With fly-tipping incidents on the rise, we need the support of our community to combat this issue and prevent unnecessary increases in service charges. Here's a closer look at the problem and how you can help...

There are different charges to dispose of different bulk waste items, and some of the items that we have to dispose of due to fly tipping - such as mattresses, cushions, sofas, armchairs, office & dining chairs, headboards etc - are known as 'POP' waste items, which stands for 'Persistent Organic Pollutants'.

There is a duty of care and a legal requirement for us to ensure these items are disposed of correctly to protect human health and the environment, therefore disposing of these items commercially comes at quite a cost as they cannot be disposed of in the same way as general household waste.

Over the last year we have spent:

- **£12,040** on POP loads disposal (56 loads at £215 each)
- **£14,200** on individual mattress disposal (568 items at £25 each)
- **£5,550** on other large POP items disposal such as sofas, armchairs, cushions, dining chairs etc (222 items at £25 each)
- **£11,115** on general bulk waste disposal (57 loads at £195 each)



This amounts to around £42,905 on bulk waste disposal per year!

That does not include collection and disposal of special items such as fridges, oil, tyres, asbestos etc which we cannot dispose of ourselves and therefore must pay for a contractor to collect and dispose of, similarly to the treatment of items which are contaminated with bed bugs.

The images on this page are from some of the fly tipping that our Estate Services team has dealt with in just one month - you can imagine what a year's worth of bulk waste could look like! Unfortunately, it is not sustainable for South Essex Homes to keep covering this cost and so, if we are overspending on bulk waste disposal in a particular area, this may lead to an increase in the service charge there, sadly only due to the actions of a few.

A large part of the problem appears to be non-South Essex Homes residents also dumping items illegally at our blocks. Colleagues in our Estate Services team are working hard alongside the Council to resolve some of these issues but any help that residents can offer is extremely valuable.

If you see someone dumping an item in your community, make sure you report this to us with photographic evidence so that it can be recharged directly to the person who the item belongs to, and not to you in your service charge! Photographic evidence could be an address on a dumped box, or the number plate of a vehicle that the item has come out of.

We have already seen incidents where residents have submitted photos of illegal dumping which has led to a successful recharge, but we need as much community involvement and help as possible!



How to
DISPOSE OF BULK WASTE RESPONSIBLY

If you have a large item to dispose of, there is lots of information on the Council's website on the correct ways to dispose of bulky waste and how to arrange a collection with Veolia: www.southend.gov.uk/recycling-waste-0/bulky-waste-collection

You can also pass on larger items using websites such as 'Freecycle' where you can give away your unwanted furniture, and some local charity shops will even come and collect your old furniture and resell it if it is in good enough condition!

FIRE SAFETY

Fire safety is one of the most important topics that we need to talk to our tenants about and it just so happens that we have been sent a number of stories for this issue of Insight in some way connected to this issue.

- Over the next few pages, we are going to cover:
- Smoking – from both a fire safety and a health perspective
 - Other causes of fire and steps you can take to prevent them
 - Seasonal fire prevention top tips
 - What happens after a fire – work we do to turn around a property after it suffers extensive fire damage

Main Causes of Fire in UK Homes

Every year, thousands of house fires occur across the UK, leading to property damage, emotional trauma for families and in some cases even serious injury or loss of life. While fire safety measures have improved, and education has spread awareness, many home fires can still be prevented. Understanding the main causes of these incidents and knowing how to take the right precautions can make a significant difference in safeguarding your home and loved ones.

The most common causes of fire in the UK are:

- Cooking Appliances
- Electrical Faults and Appliances
- Smoking Materials
- Candles and Open Flames
- Portable Heaters
- Barbecues and Outdoor Fires



Preventative Measures for Tenants

Fire safety in the home doesn't require extensive effort or expense, but it does demand awareness and practical habits. Here are some effective measures that can help prevent house fires:

1. Stay Vigilant in the Kitchen

- Never leave cooking unattended, especially when frying with oil.
- Keep flammable materials such as tea towels, paper, and cleaning products away from the hob.
- Ensure appliances like ovens, toasters, and kettles are clean and free from grease buildup, as this can act as fuel for a fire.
- Consider installing a heat alarm in the kitchen to detect any excessive temperature increases.

2. Check Electrical Appliances Regularly

- Avoid overloading plug sockets, especially with high-power devices like heaters or kettles.
- Unplug appliances when not in use and refrain from leaving devices like tumble dryers or washing machines running overnight.
- Regularly check cables and wiring for any signs of wear or damage. Replace frayed or cracked cords immediately.
- Have your home's wiring checked by a qualified electrician if it's an older property.
- Take extra care with lithium batteries (see separate article on the next page)

3. Practice Safe Smoking Habits

- Never smoke in bed or when feeling drowsy.
- Use deep, sturdy ashtrays and ensure all smoking materials are completely extinguished before disposal.
- Consider smoking outdoors to reduce the risk of accidental indoor fires.
- See our full article about this issue on page 8

4. Use Candles and Flames Responsibly

- Always extinguish candles when leaving the room, and never leave them burning while asleep.
- Place candles on stable surfaces, far away from curtains, papers, or any other flammable materials.
- Consider using flameless LED candles for ambiance without the fire risk.

5. Maintain Portable Heaters

- Keep portable heaters at least three feet away from anything flammable.
- Never place them near bedding, curtains, or upholstered furniture.
- Turn heaters off when leaving the room or going to sleep, and avoid using them overnight.

6. Take Precautions with Barbecues and Outdoor Fires

- Always monitor barbecues while they are in use and ensure they are placed on a flat, stable surface away from flammable materials.
- Keep a bucket of water or a fire extinguisher nearby in case of an emergency.
- Ensure all outdoor fires are fully extinguished before going indoors.

Regularly Test Smoke Alarms and Create an Escape Plan

The most important line of defence against fire is having working smoke alarms installed in your home. Smoke alarms provide early warnings and can save lives by giving you enough time to escape. UK fire safety guidelines recommend having at least one smoke alarm on each floor of your home.

In addition to smoke alarms, it's essential to have an escape plan. Make sure every member of your household knows how to exit the house safely in the event of a fire. Plan at least two escape routes and practice your fire drill regularly to ensure everyone knows what to do.



FOCUS ON: LITHIUM BATTERIES

Lithium batteries are a type of rechargeable battery that use lithium ions as the primary component for storing and releasing energy. They are widely used in devices such as smartphones, laptops, tablets, electric vehicles, and power tools because of their high energy density, lightweight design, and long lifespan.

As we own more and more devices containing lithium batteries, it is important for us all to recognise risks involved with this type of battery so we can use them safely.

How to Handle Lithium Batteries Safely to Avoid Fires

Take care when charging

Always use chargers and devices recommended by the manufacturer. Cheap or uncertified chargers may not have the necessary safeguards to prevent overcharging or overheating.

Overcharging a lithium battery can cause it to overheat, leading to thermal runaway - a dangerous condition where the battery becomes uncontrollably hot, potentially igniting a fire. Always unplug devices once fully charged.

Do not charge devices overnight or rest them on a flammable surface (such as a bed or cushion) while they are charging.

Store Batteries Properly

Lithium batteries should be stored in cool, dry places, away from direct sunlight and heat sources, as extreme temperatures can increase the risk of a fire. Store batteries at room temperature and away from flammable materials.

Water and lithium batteries don't mix well. Exposure to water or high humidity can cause corrosion or short circuits, which can increase the risk of a fire.



Prevent Physical Damage

Handle lithium batteries with care, and do not drop or crush them. Physical damage such as punctures, crushing, or exposure to extreme impact can cause internal short circuits.

If a lithium battery becomes swollen, emits a strange odour, or leaks fluid, this is a sign of potential failure. Do not continue using the battery in this condition, as it could ignite or explode. Dispose of it safely following your local guidelines.

The National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) is running a campaign called 'Charge Safe', specifically focussing on the safe charging of e-bikes and e-scooters. If you own one of these machines please take a few minutes to check out their guidance by visiting: www.nfcc.org.uk/our-services/campaigns/charge-safe/

Fire safety in UK homes is a vital concern, but many house fires can be avoided by adopting safe practices and taking preventive measures. From being vigilant while cooking to maintaining electrical appliances and installing smoke alarms, every small effort counts. By staying informed and prepared, residents can significantly reduce the risk of fire and protect their homes and loved ones from potential disaster.

Stay safe, stay aware, and take fire prevention seriously - it could save your life.



CLOSE CALL

ANDY'S STORY "Stopping Smoking is the best thing I could have done to keep me and my neighbours safe"

Andy lives in a flat within a sheltered scheme managed by South Essex Homes. He has kindly agreed to share his story of a terrifying incident back in June, which has led to him giving up smoking...



"I started smoking when I was about 13 or 14. My struggles with peer pressure at a young age, ended up with a 44-year nicotine addiction. I wanted to give up many times, but I just didn't have the willpower. Even though I struggled with sleep apnea, I continued to smoke.

"In the early hours of the 7th June 2024, I was restless in bed, I lit up a cigarette and suddenly dropped off to sleep. I was woken up by the sound of the automated fire alarm system. I was coughing and gasping for breath. I was faced with hot flickering flames millimetres from my face. The flames singed the top of my head! I shouted out for help, I managed to get out, I was petrified. I sought safety in the neighbouring flat. The Essex County Fire & Rescue Service arrived and was able to guide me and my neighbour outside. My neighbour and I were taken to hospital for smoke inhalation.

Thankfully the other residents were unhurt. Unfortunately, my flat and its contents were destroyed. On reflection, I lost all my belongings, but I was lucky to be alive. I had to act. I could not put myself or my neighbour's lives at risk anymore. I signed up to the Southend Stop Smoking Service. I was assessed by the team. They provided me with a choice of Nicotine Replacement Therapy, an e-cigarette along with behavioural support. I can proudly say, I have been smoke free for the last few months, and I have no intention to smoke again. For anyone who is thinking of giving up smoking, don't wait for something like this to happen, take my advice, stop thinking about it, and do something about it. I feel so much better in myself for being smoke free, I just wish I had stopped smoking years ago. My health has improved, and I have saved so much money."



If you, a family member or friend would like help to stop smoking...

...please email eh.southend@nhs.net or phone: 0333 005 0095

Webpage: <https://southend.everyonehealth.co.uk/stop-smoking-service/>

everyonehealth
because everyone matters

Southend-on-Sea
City Council

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) Home Fire Safety Visits



Knowing how to reduce the risk of fire in your home is an important part of living safe and well. We offer free Home Safety Visits to all Essex residents. If you do not have working smoke alarms or have working smoke alarms but would like more information about how to live safely and securely at home, book one of our free visits today.

By booking a Home Safety Visit you're making sure your home is checked over by a fire safety specialist who will also talk to you about your individual needs and safety concerns. The easiest way to book a visit, either for you or someone you know, is to use our online booking form or call our Home Safety Team.

The service we offer includes:

- Smoke alarms
- Sensory smoke alarms for the hearing impaired

- Advice on home fire safety
- Health & Wellbeing check & referral if required
- Electrical hazards, kitchen safety & safety in the home
- Crime prevention advice
- Advice around carbon monoxide & gas safety
- Fire retardant bedding

If you have any questions about fire safety, need to refer someone for a Home Safety Visit, tell us that someone is at risk of fire, or just need some advice and guidance, please do call our Home Safety Team.

The phone line is open Monday to Friday, between 9.30am and 4pm (or leave a message out of hours) or you can email.

- Phone: 0300 303 0088 (9.30am - 4pm, or leave a message out of hours)
- Email: home.safety@essex-fire.gov.uk
- Online forms: complete on our website www.essex-fire.gov.uk/contact-us
- Home safety videos: check out the ECFRS YouTube channel

RISING FROM THE ASHES

In late November 2023, a large fire broke out at a three-bedroom end-of-terrace house in Leigh, which is managed by South Essex Homes.

The residents of the property had bought a second-hand camera and had left it to charge up in their main bedroom before going to bed.

The device caught fire and, thankfully, the residents were able to escape unharmed. However the fire soon spread throughout the house, and left the top floor and roof of the property completely devastated, along with substantial damage downstairs too. Damage was also caused to the loft area and roof of the adjoining property.

South Essex Homes procured the services of our contractors Houghton & Son to completely renovate the fire-damaged house. Keith Wortley, Building Surveyor at South Essex Homes, said: "Due to the unsafe nature of the building's structure following the fire, this was an extremely complex case, which involved Houghton & Son fitting extensive scaffolding and temporary floor structures just to be able to start the rebuild operation.

"Over the course of several months, the house has been completely renovated and, because we were largely starting from scratch, we have even been able to make some slight layout changes so the house is now more suited to the tenants' needs.

"This is probably the largest renovation of a single property we have ever undertaken and we are really pleased with the results.

"Just the last few finishing touches to go, then the residents will be able to move back in and we hope they will be really happy with their new improved home".



SAFETY TIPS

for the

FESTIVE SEASON

Lights

- Inspect all Christmas lights for any sign of wear and tear before displaying them.
- Do not leave Christmas lights on when the property is unoccupied or when you are asleep.
- Ensure lights have the correct kite mark and correct rated fuse in the plug.
- If using an extension lead, no more than 3 sets of lights should be plugged into it.
- Ensure all extension leads are uncoiled and do not place them under rugs or mats.
- Do not place extension lead sockets with plugs in under your tree covered over by gifts.

Christmas Tree

- Place your tree as far away from any heat sources, curtains or furnishings as possible.
- Ensure natural Christmas trees are kept watered to prevent the tree from drying out.

Candles & Open Fires

- Take care with candles, incense sticks or oil burners. Do not place them near combustible materials such as curtains.
- Do not leave lit candles unattended and ensure they are put out before going to bed or leaving the room.
- Keep decorations and cards away from candles or other heat sources such as open fires.
- If smoking ensure all cigarettes are extinguished and never drop into a litter bin immediately after smoking.

Cooking

- While cooking Christmas Dinner never leave your property with the kitchen unattended.
- Never attempt to cook under the influence of excess alcohol.

Outdoor decorations

If the front door of your home opens onto a communal area:

- This area must be kept completely clear at all times, so please don't display any outdoor decorations.
- Decorative door ribbons should be avoided because they compromise the reliability of your fire-safe front door

CHARITY COFFEE MORNINGS



A Coffee Morning event was held at Keats House by residents and a local pub in aid of Prostate Cancer. Ex-Southend United player Frankie Banks attended, and he generously donated a signed Southend United football and two tickets for one of the games for their raffle. The residents would like to thank Frankie for his support.

In total, they raised £720.00!

Residents are also looking to start a monthly coffee morning to raise money for various charities and are in the process of organising this. We can't wait to see what they do next!



Tenancy Services Officer Treena with Frankie Banks

Nicholson House came together on Wednesday 25th September to hold their Macmillan Coffee Morning. The event was a great success, bringing together friends, family and neighbours for a shared purpose of supporting those affected by cancer. With a selection of delicious home baked cakes, numerous cups of tea and over 40 residents, the event created a very inviting atmosphere.

Thanks to the generous contributions from Nicholson residents, friends and family - the event raised £163.00 for Macmillan Cancer Support. The money will help in providing essential services and support for individuals and families facing the challenges of cancer.

Jan, who arranged the event, sends her thanks to everyone who attended as they have made a difference. The amount raised can pay for 8 weeks' counselling. This event is close to her heart, as she is currently supporting a dear friend through their own battle with cancer.

This was a great opportunity to come together and support such an important cause.



ESTATE DAYS and ROADSHOWS

Back in the summer, several of our colleagues attended the Queensway Estate Day, where residents had the opportunity to speak to members of our Tenancy Team, Specialist Income Management Team, Caretaking Team and more down at The Storehouse. The event also saw representatives from ATF, Southend Community Safety Partnership, and our repairs contractor, providing residents with a variety of sources for advice and help.



We later held a similar event at Longbow, where residents were again offered advice and were able to speak to several of our teams about issues they are experiencing within their community. ATF also attended this event and entertained the children with outdoor games and music, along with Axis Europe who came to engage with residents regarding their repairs.



SECH SUMMER PARTY



South Essex Community Hub (SECH) Youth Club held their annual End of Summer Party at North Road Chapel in partnership with South Essex Homes. There was plenty of party food, a Slush Puppy machine, face painting, and lots of games and arts and crafts. The party was superhero-themed, so we spotted lots of little heroes running around with their masks painted onto their faces.

The Mayor also came down and chatted with SECH and our Resident Engagement Officer, Sarah, about the work that is being done with young people within the local community.



TRAFFORD HOUSE GARDEN SUCCESS

During 2024, one of Trafford House's garden projects was finally completed. The main project was a garden shed which could house all of their tools and other equipment.

They have been fundraising for a couple of years to buy a decent-sized shed, by holding bring and buy cake sales, open table sales and finally a summer barbecue. The barbecue was held in August this year and thanks to the donations from many residents, they finally had enough funds to purchase a shed. They decided to support a local company and found the ideal shed at B & Q. Thanks to the hard work of one of the residents,

namely Lain, the shed was assembled in a short space of time and is an attractive addition to the garden.

The garden at Trafford House has become a sanctuary for so many residents, offering more than just a peaceful place to unwind. It is a community space which can be enjoyed by all.

Finally, the residents would like to mention the Grounds Maintenance team who pulled out all the stops to help them bring the communal garden back into a more manageable state by cutting back some overgrown trees and bushes.



If you would like to plan an event around Christmas time where you live, please get in touch with the Resident Engagement team by calling 0800 833 160 or email residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk



An Update from **MENDIP** **COMMUNITY GARDEN**

In 2024, Mendip Community Garden had another successful year of moving the project forward. This is thanks to the help of our current volunteers and our very own Alan Titchmarsh, Steve (our resident gardener), who has done some amazing work in helping us to both clear and maintain the area. For those of you that know the garden, Steve has started work to turn the far end of the garden into a wildflower meadow while keeping it as a picnic area.

Thanks also to the Probation Service who sent us two teams of workers, who have completely rebuilt the fencing around the two ponds in the garden using nothing more than pallets that were donated to us by South Essex Homes contractor Houghton & Son! On this occasion we would like to say a big thank you to Sarah Gallagher, Resident Engagement Officer from South Essex Homes, who has supported Mendip Community Garden from the beginning when it reopened, as without her knowledge and engagement with the residents some of this project would not be possible.

We have now also had our official opening, which was conducted by the Mayor at the time, Stephen Habermel, who was amazed by the way we have managed to turn the area into a valuable community space and saw the interest it generated from the local community. On the day, we had an animal farm, face painter, a puppet show, and other activities for between 250 - 300 attendees.

We have also held other events in the garden including a teddy bears' picnic and a Halloween event and the garden is also being used on a regular basis by a local

nursery to give the children an early insight into our natural world. We also have interest from other organisations who would like to use the area during 2025, so hopefully the work already started will show more benefits in the future.

Behind the scenes work has been going on to gain charity status for the garden to allow us to further develop the area, making it a more relaxing and environmentally friendly area and to allow us to take the area to the next level. We are pleased to announce that we have received full charity status and are now a registered body, which will enable us to apply for much needed funding to develop the area to its full potential!

We are always looking for volunteers to help with the maintenance of the garden and one of our main tasks for 2025 is to completely refurbish the two ponds, which are a natural habitat for the wildlife the area attracts. We also have limited spaces for you to take on your own area or planter where you can plant your own vegetables or flowers. In fact, one of our volunteers has done just that and produces a very fine crop of potatoes!

As we are now a charity, we are also looking for people who would like to take a more 'behind the scenes' role and become a Trustee and help with the organisation and managerial side of things. If these roles interest you then please contact us at either [info.mendipcommunitygarden@gmail.com](mailto:mendipcommunitygarden@gmail.com) or by phone on 07397 796269 for more information.



ACHIEVE, THRIVE, FLOURISH AT QUEENSWAY!



Achieve Thrive Flourish

South Essex Homes have been working in partnership with local charity Achieve Thrive Flourish (ATF), to strengthen the sense of togetherness and wellbeing within our neighbourhoods.

ATF offer a wide range of fun, positive and inclusive opportunities such as participation in sport, heritage, cultural, and creative activities. These help to bring people together, build confidence and skills and open up new horizons. Many participants have seen an improvement in their mental health and feel a sense of renewed purpose, community, and have something to look forward to. We have also seen a positive reduction in anti-social behaviour in priority areas, with residents expressing that they feel safer.

The youth sessions build connection, focus, achievement and a sense of friendship and support. Many participants have gone on to become 'Young Leaders' who in turn support others.

Youth Club

Achieve, Thrive, Flourish (ATF) hold a youth club on a Tuesday night from 4-6pm based at the Storehouse - Southend Vineyard offering a safe and warm place for young people to hang out and socialise! We try to offer our young people the chance to explore new interests and hobbies including, but not limited to, boxing and football - all of which are provided at no cost to our residents!

We hope our youth club leads to better health and wellbeing for young people, we provide food and drink and teach our young people how to cook healthy meals. We also offer our young people attending (and their parents) opportunities in volunteering, so please get in touch if this is of interest to you.

"I think the youth club is important as young children have activities to do something outside of school, where I live is no green space or places to go and the Storehouse provide me a safe space to be and meet new people."

Raisa - Queensway South Essex Homes youth resident



The new Tenancy Services Officer for Queensway is Jamie Cooper, email sehcustomerservices@seh.southend.gov.uk to get in touch with her!

'I think ATF are an amazing organisation and I am so glad I found them. I take my little girl to most of their baby groups and my little boy goes to their youth club on a Tuesday evening I am so grateful they hold these groups as it is somewhere to take the little ones and get them used to socialising and I think the youth club is amazing for the older ones to go somewhere and socialise in a safe way!'

Jenny - Queensway South Essex homes resident and mum of youth who attends youth club

Seated exercise



ATF understands that some residents are not able, or do not wish, to take part in high impact workouts, so we offer a fun filled seated exercise class in the Storehouse on a Thursday afternoon from 1.20-2.20pm. This session is gentle chair-based exercise with muscle stretches and light cardio. This class can appeal to so many, those with mobility issues or those who just would like to come for the social aspect! Everyone is welcome, it's a lovely group, full of fun with a bit of exercise thrown in there for good measure. *Here's what South Essex Homes residents, Alex and Jo, had to say:*

"We love taking part in the group and doing the exercises with everyone. It gives us a great sense of wellbeing!"

Stay and Play family engagement sessions

ATF also offer hugely popular Leapsprogs / Stay & Play Sessions on a Thursday from 11.30am-1pm. Parents have the chance to come along for some company, some support and to engage in their child's learning and development whilst having fun!

The sessions offer a variety of fun, physical games but give the options for singing and dancing or crafts if they prefer something different. They tailor the sessions to the group on the day!

"ATF is a great addition to the community. Lovely staff, so friendly and welcoming. ATF have done amazing things bringing the families of the estate together. It's been needed for a long time!"

Natalie - Queensway South Essex Homes resident

"We have attended most of the events in Southend. It's always been fun. My daughter is gaining her confidence level and behaving well since. It's a great way to keep the community together and in touch with each other."

Kamilla - Queensway South Essex Homes resident

All of the ATF sessions at Queensway are held at the Storehouse, you can find out more about the sessions on their social media, they are on Facebook @atfcommunity and Instagram @achievethriveflourish.

The Storehouse Needs YOU

The Storehouse opened in 1995 and is here to serve and support the community of Southend-on-Sea. They offer food bags, hot meals, a safe warm space and weekly family sessions with stay and play. They have also opened a Storehouse Shop, providing guests with clothes, toys,

and books, for a small donation. Their foodbank is open 6 sessions a week, they have mixed as well as separate sessions for men and women. These sessions include Bingo for the ladies on a Wednesday afternoon and board games on Friday afternoon for the men's session. They also work alongside ATF to facilitate the youth club, Leapsprogs, and Seated Exercise sessions.

In August 2024 they gave out over 1000 food bags and 51 homeless packs, and there were 61 new registrations.

The Storehouse has set up a Steering Group, which involves volunteers from the Storehouse, outside organisations which will include SEH, ATF, and trustees from Southend Vineyard. They would love to encourage residents of Queensway to be a part of the Steering Group. They would like your opinions/ideas on how to improve The Storehouse and support Queensway, in partnership with South Essex Homes.

Please contact Marie, The Storehouse Manager, on **07888 831306**, if this is something you would like to be involved in. This is a new and exciting time for The Storehouse to work alongside South Essex Homes to improve the estate with residents' input and support.

Join the

RESIDENT ADVISORY PANEL (RAP)

The Resident Advisory Panel (RAP) is a valuable option for residents who prefer to participate in a less formal way. RAP is a database of residents who are willing to share their opinions on various issues. As a member, you might be contacted to:

- Complete short surveys via email or post.
- Provide feedback on draft policies/documents.

Anyone can become a member of RAP and help shape the housing services they receive.

If you are interested in joining, please scan the QR code using the camera on your digital device and complete the form. Alternatively, if you would like a paper copy of the form, please contact Sue Rickard by phone on **0800 833 160**.

By joining RAP, you will have the opportunity to shape the housing services and contribute to improving our community. Thank you for your interest!



BECOME A DIGITAL AMBASSADOR

We need you!

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.

What is a Digital Ambassador?

As a Digital Ambassador, you will use your basic IT skills, patience, empathy and enthusiasm to support residents in Sheltered Schemes. This is a rewarding role where you can make a significant impact by helping others become more digitally literate.

What can we offer?

- **Time Commitment:** Volunteers generally give 1-2 hours per week training residents

- **Support:** You will be supported by the Resident Engagement Team staff and have regular contact with them to ensure you have everything you need to succeed in your role.

Interested in becoming a Digital Ambassador?

If you are interested in becoming a Digital Ambassador, please contact Sue Rickard in the Resident Engagement Team. You can contact her via:

- **Phone:** 0800 833 160
- **Email:** residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk



GARDEN IN

BLOOM

2024

Congratulations to all the participants in this year's Garden in Bloom 2024 competition! It's wonderful to see the hard work and dedication of the residents being recognised. The judging took place by the Resident Scrutiny Forum members and here are the awards for each category:

Best Front Garden

- **Gold:** Miss Ryan – Sandhurst Crescent
- **Silver:** Mrs Poole – Charles Close

Best Back Garden

- **Gold:** Ms Roberts – Bulwark Road
- **Silver:** Miss Bearcroft – Ruskin Avenue

Best Communal Garden

- **Gold:** Adams Elm House Residents
- **Silver:** Senier House Residents
- **Bronze:** Yantlet Residents

Best Vegetable Plot

- **Gold:** Mike Craig – Senier House

SOME OF THE WORTHY WINNERS!



A huge well done to all the residents for their efforts in beautifying the community! We can't wait to see the creativity and talent bloom again next year.

FIGHT MOULD AND CONDENSATION THIS WINTER

Every home is subject to condensation at some point, and it is quite normal to find your bedroom windows with moisture on them after a cold night. You may notice condensation on other cold surfaces such as walls, pipes, and your toilet. However, not all dampness is caused by condensation, sometimes dampness can be as a result of leaking pipes and radiators, leaking roofs, guttering or chimney flashings, penetrating damp from porous bricks, or rising damp. If you suspect any of these issues, please report this to us on our website via the 'report a repair' form, or by calling us on 0800 833 160.

Mould can be found on and adjacent to windows, in the corners and edges of rooms and behind and inside wardrobes and cupboards, especially if they are against an external wall. Mould can even grow on clothes, handbags, and shoes if they are hung up in wardrobes when still damp or wet, or stored so tightly it prevents air from circulating.

How to deal with mould

It is important to treat any mould you may already have in your home. If you then deal with the basic problem of condensation, mould should not reappear. Do NOT use bleach to clean walls or ceilings. This may be hazardous.

To kill and remove mould, wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash which carries a Health and Safety Executive approval number, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely. Dry-clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets, as disturbing mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning can increase the risk of respiratory problems.

After treatment, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint, sometimes known as damp seal paint, to help prevent mould recurring. Please note that this paint is not effective if overlaid with ordinary paints or wallpaper. The only lasting way of avoiding severe mould is to eliminate dampness.



How to deal with condensation

Once you have treated the mould you will need to work to deal with and prevent condensation to stop the mould from reappearing. Condensation is caused by warm moist air condensing on cold surfaces such as glass and walls. It's mainly a winter problem, as at this time of year walls are much colder than the air inside. Condensation is made worse by poor ventilation and not heating the property enough.

Ordinary activities can produce a lot of moisture quite quickly. Some steps you can take to reduce moisture production in your home are...

- No drying clothes or towels on radiators – dry them outside or in a room with the window ajar and the door closed
- Ensure that tumble dryers are properly vented to the outside through a wall vent
- Cover pans when cooking and use extractor fans if fitted
- Reduce steam when running the bath by running cold water first and then adding the warm
- Wipe down surfaces where moisture settles, such as windows, pipes, cisterns etc

Increasing ventilation will help prevent moisture laden air from being trapped in your home and condensing on the windows, walls and ceilings. Each morning, you should air your home by opening the windows for a little while and wiping down any wet windows and sills. If your windows have trickle vents fitted, leave these open as this will provide a steady flow of fresh air and always remember to shut your windows before you go out.

Keep your home warm

Condensation can be worse in a cold home. This is because cold air cannot hold as much moisture as warm air. Keeping your home warm can really help to reduce condensation, as condensation and mould often form in rooms that are unused or under-heated.

The best way to heat your home is through steady background heating. This is because warmer air can hold more moisture and as the temperature of the walls increases the possibility of condensation forming on them is reduced.

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 on 0800 833 160 and our Housing Support and Income Management teams will be happy to talk you through the help that is available to you.



The next Leasehold Focus Group meeting will be on Wednesday 26th February 2025 from 4-6pm at the Civic Centre – email leaseholdservices@seh.southend.gov.uk to confirm attendance.

Service Charges

As you may already be aware, we recently sent out the finalised service charge statements for 2023/2024 to all leaseholders. Understanding service charges is important for leaseholders to ensure they are paying fair amounts for necessary services.

Your service charges are made up of the following costs:

- Ground rent, currently set at £10 per year unless it is a new or extended lease where ground rent does not apply;
- Day to day minor repairs and maintenance of the block of flats;
- Electricity costs for communal areas;
- Grounds maintenance for communal gardens and/or areas around your block;
- Management charge (our costs in managing leasehold flats);
- Buildings insurance;
- Caretaking and cleaning services where provided;

- Entry phone maintenance where applicable;
- Lift maintenance where applicable;
- Refuse collection;
- Contribution to Renewals Fund

If you have any queries relating to your service charges, then we invite you to put this in writing and email the Leaseholder Services Team or post your query to us. This is our preferred method of contact to keep a log of queries, investigate them thoroughly and ensure a comprehensive response can be provided.

Gas Safety Certificate

Gas Safety Certificates are crucial documents that ensure the safety and compliance of gas appliances within your property. For landlords, it is a legal obligation to have an annual Gas Safety Certificate for all rented properties. The law mandates that all gas appliances, fittings, and flues are inspected by a Gas Safe registered engineer to ensure they meet safety standards. Therefore, we request an up to date copy of a valid Gas Safety Certificate is supplied to be held on record. A copy of this certificate can be sent to us via email to leaseholdservices@seh.southend.gov.uk.

THROUGH THE LENS PROJECT

Focal Point Gallery is working on a unique project called 'Through the Lens' in which South Essex Homes residents have the opportunity to share their perspective on life by capturing the moments that make everyday life extraordinary.

This project is self-led, allowing participants to pick up the camera

whenever creativity strikes. A checklist is provided to inspire the photographs taken, encouraging residents to capture the world in surprising ways.

The goal of this project is to challenge traditional ideas about Sheltered Housing and Temporary Accommodation and to showcase



life in a different light. After residents return the cameras to Focal Point Gallery, the photos will be developed and displayed as part of the "S for Southend 2025" exhibition in the gallery, which launches on Saturday, January 18, 2025.

FOSSETTS FARM DEVELOPMENT:

A Positive Turn for Local Housing

Many of you are familiar with the Fossetts Farm development, once tied to Southend United Football Club's now-scrapped plans for a new stadium. If you've driven past the site near B&Q, accessed via the Temple Farm Industrial Estate roundabout, you've likely seen the unfinished houses and the halted construction work. This pause occurred earlier this year when the original developer went into administration, leaving around 35 homes at various stages of completion, some nearly move-in ready.

Unfortunately, due to complex building regulations, the new developers cannot simply continue where the last team left off. Instead, they must demolish the existing structures and start afresh.

In a positive twist, the new developers have prioritised recycling and repurposing materials from the site.

They have generously donated kitchen and bathroom fixtures and fittings to South Essex Homes for use in council-owned properties. We attended the site in late September to carefully deconstruct the kitchen and bathrooms, which are now stored for future improvement projects across the city.

Lloyd Williams, Property Services Manager at South Essex Homes, commented: "While it's unfortunate that the newly-built houses must be demolished, the developers are making the best of the situation by ensuring many materials are reused, recycled or repurposed. We are grateful for their donation, and these fixtures will soon benefit other residents of the city."



Our

PERFORMANCE

In this issue of Insight, we re-visit our series of articles exploring how South Essex Homes has been performing against the Consumer Standards that were introduced by the Social Housing Regulations Act 2023.

Our focus this time is on the 'Neighbourhood & Community' consumer standard, so we hope you enjoy reading about the actions we have been taking to meet these requirements.



SAFETY OF SHARED SPACES



The standard says: Registered providers must work co-operatively with tenants, other landlords and relevant organisations to take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of shared spaces.

Estate Inspections

We carry out a rolling programme of estate inspections which ensure every estate that we manage is visited at least twice a year.

The inspections involve a walk around each block or area by the Tenancy Services Officer (TSO - who look after tenants and their needs), and they are usually joined by a surveyor from our Property Services Team (who deal with repairs and maintenance) and a member of our Estate Services team (who deal with cleaning and general upkeep).

Residents are always welcome to join in with these inspections. They provide the perfect opportunity for you to meet your TSO, raise any issues you're aware of and ask any questions relating to your home, building or neighbourhood. We also share the schedule with local Councillors so they too can come along to inspections if they wish to and raise any issues on behalf of residents who live in their ward.

You can find the full schedule and the latest Estate Inspection Report for your area on our website - www.southessexhomes.co.uk/estate-inspections. We also print details of upcoming estate inspections in Insight magazine for your easy reference.

120 Estate Inspections have been scheduled in for the year 2024 (see page 24 for details of remaining inspection dates between now and the end of the year)

Rough Sleepers

We work closely with Essex Police and other partner agencies to tackle the issue of rough sleepers accessing the buildings we manage and misusing communal areas.

Operation Quick is currently running as a joint initiative, and targeted patrols resulted in the issuing of:

- 14 Criminal Protection Warnings (CPWs)
- 4 Criminal Protection Notices (CPNs)
- 1 Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO)

Take Pride in Neighbourhoods

Our Resident Engagement Team carries out a range of activities at key locations in order to encourage residents to take pride in their neighbourhood and help promote a culture whereby shared spaces are treated with respect by all residents who use them. Meetings are held with resident groups at key locations including the Storehouse at the foot of the Queensway tower blocks and the Mendip Wildlife Garden.

Play Area Safety

We carry out weekly inspections of the play areas located within the grounds of the estates we manage.

Engagement with young people

We partner with local organisations to engage young people within our communities, particularly those at risk of exclusion, offending, or needing guidance. Our aim is to encourage them to get involved in positive activities that promote their well-being. For more information about the local activities on offer visit www.atfcommunity.com or speak to your Tenancy Services Officer.

LOCAL CO-OPERATION



The standard says:

Registered providers, having taken account of their strategic objectives, the views of tenants and their presence within the areas where they provide social housing, must:

- a) identify and communicate to tenants the roles registered providers play in promoting social, environmental and economic wellbeing and how those roles will be delivered; and
- b) co-operate with local partnership arrangements and the strategic housing function of local authorities where they are able to assist local authorities in achieving their objectives.

We work closely with Southend-on-Sea City Council, Essex Police and the Southend Community Safety Partnership to get out in the community and perform community engagement activities including:

- Resident meetings
- Estate Days – focussing our efforts on one particular area where residents may be experiencing issues such as anti-social behaviour or financial difficulties
- Days of Action with Essex Police – where the police target a locality in numbers and speak to people to tackle a specific issue
- We also work with police to ‘design out crime’ – seeking their advice so we can make changes to estates which deter ASB and criminal activity

- Door knocking exercises to speak to residents, gather local views and offer reassurance

We use a range of communication methods – including our website, social media channels and here in Insight magazine – to promote local and national projects that exist to support residents’ wellbeing and we work alongside other local agencies to help deliver them.

For example, we support ASB Awareness Week (this year taking place from 18th – 24th November) and use the opportunity to share information about what ASB is, how to report it and how we respond to it.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) & HATE INCIDENTS

The standard says: Registered providers must have a policy on how they work with relevant organisations to deter and tackle ASB in the neighbourhoods where they provide social housing.

Our ASB Response

We provide prompt responses to reports of ASB, as determined by a risk assessment – for standard risk cases we respond within 10 days, for medium risk we respond within 5 days and in high risk cases we respond within 24 hours.

Our Housing Community Safety Team (HCST) work hard to take appropriate action against the perpetrators of ASB in the form of informal and formal resolutions.

Partnership working

We have an excellent working relationship with Essex Police, the Council’s Community Safety team and other local agencies. Representatives from the HCST attend daily local briefings as well as the quarterly Local Community Meetings (LCMs).

Working with our partners, as required we may carry out:

- Joint visits to discuss issues with residents
- Door knocking to gather the views of a specific neighbourhood
- Residents meetings to discuss, or raise awareness of, any specific local issues or concerns
- Community events as a tool to engage with local communities

Knife Angel

Members of South Essex Homes’ staff worked within a team of community volunteers for the Southend Community Safety Partnership, speaking to members of the public about The Knife Angel sculpture which was situated at the top of Southend High Street during the month of July 2024.

Created as an illustrative symbol against violence, The Knife Angel is made from 100,000 confiscated or surrendered weapons, including blunted flick knives, and kitchen knives, received from 43 Police Forces across the UK.



Committed to tackling ASB

South Essex Homes is a member of Resolve – a community safety organisation who work closely with HM Government, the Civil Service and their members to develop best practice, and shape national policy and legislation. (www.resolveuk.org.uk)

Our Housing Community Safety Team was recognised for its outstanding work at the 2024 Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) Network and Awards Day with a nomination for Team of the Year.

More information, including our full Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, can be found on our website – www.southessexhomes.co.uk/anti-social-behaviour

The standard says: Registered providers must clearly set out their approach for how they deter and tackle hate incidents in neighbourhoods where they provide social housing.

Hate Crimes are any crimes perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice. Hate Incidents feel like crimes and often escalate to crimes or tensions in a community.

Both are committed because of a person's actual or perceived:

- **Race:** including ethnicity, nationality or national origin.
- **Religion or belief:** including no faith.
- **Sexual Orientation:** including gay, lesbian and bisexual.
- **Gender Identity:** including transgender, non-binary and gender fluid.
- **Disability:** including learning, mental health, physical or sensory disability.

Hate crime can take many forms including:

- Threat of or actual assault.
- Verbal abuse.
- Inciting others to commit Hate Crime.
- Intimidating behaviour or harassment, including online.
- Damage to property, including arson.
- Offensive leaflets, posters or graffiti.

We have recently published our new Anti-Social Behaviour & Hate Crime/Incident Service Standard, which was developed in consultation with residents. This document clearly sets out the service that people reporting such incidents can expect of us.

We respond to 100% of cases within the target timeframe.

When we receive reports we can refer the resident to counselling sessions and signpost other local agencies who can offer them help and assistance. Information we receive about hate incidents is shared with our colleagues in the Community Safety Partnership where appropriate, so action can be taken to tackle the matter and also to help shape the local overall response to the issue.

The standard says: Registered providers must enable ASB and hate incidents to be reported easily and keep tenants informed about the progress of their case.

At South Essex Homes, we help our customers report hate crime incidents by providing an online reporting form and working closely with them to reduce the risk of harm. Anyone can report Hate Crime, regardless of whether they are the victim, witness, or are reporting on behalf of someone else. Please visit our website for more information – www.southessexhomes.co.uk/hate-crime. If you feel a crime has been committed (but is not happening at the moment), please also report it to the police on 101 and make note of the incident number. Always call 999 in an emergency.

When such incidents are reported to us, we will agree an action plan to set out the regularity and method of our contact with the resident and a risk assessment will be carried out to determine target times. The status of reported cases are regularly monitored and case reviews completed by Officers during their 'one to one' meetings with their line manager.

Residents who report ASB to us are later contacted and asked to complete a survey to provide feedback about their experience. As at the end of September 2024:

92% of respondents were satisfied with the ease of reporting to us

75% were satisfied with the level of contact they received

83% were satisfied with the outcome of the case

We have **218** open cases of ASB & Hate Incidents.

The standard says: Registered providers must provide prompt and appropriate action in response to ASB and Hate Incidents, having regard to the full range of tools and legal powers available to them.

When South Essex Homes receive a report of ASB or a Hate Incident, the case is thoroughly investigated in conjunction with appropriate partner agencies.

We use a range of informal and formal remedies. From September 2022 – September 2024 our Housing Community Safety Team has pursued:

5 x Partial Closure Orders
- for safeguarding issues

8 x Injunctions - for noise, unruly visitors and abuse

5 x Full Closure Orders - for drugs, weapons and serious ASB

4 x Introductory Possession Orders - for noise and drugs

14 x Possession Orders - for rape, drugs, criminal conviction and noise



COMMUNITY SAFETY ACCREDITATION SCHEME (CSAS)

We are members of the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS), operated by Essex Police, which grants individuals the powers to perform certain functions - such as requesting an offender's name and address and confiscating items - should they come across ASB taking place in the community.

Several members of South Essex Homes staff are currently accredited through the CSAS.

The standard says:

Registered providers must support tenants who are affected by ASB and hate incidents, including by signposting them to agencies who can give them appropriate support and assistance.

Our Housing Community Safety Team has referred 26 residents to counselling services since April 2024.

Lots of information can be found on the Southend Community Safety Partnership website (southendcsp.org.uk)

The South Essex Homes website contains the following support details:

Victim Support is the national charity that provides free and independent practical and emotional support to victims of crime or traumatic incidents. Victims can access their services regardless of when the crime happened or if the police are involved:

- Call Essex Victim Support on **0808 178 1694** (open 8am-5pm, Mon-Fri).
- Call the national, 24/7 Support line on **0808 168 9111**
- Visit their website at www.victimsupport.org.uk

Visit www.asbhelp.co.uk for valuable information and advice about ASB.

Hate Incident Reporting Centres are community venues offering confidential advice and support:

- **Southend-on-Sea City Council - 01702 215000**

- **Estuary Housing - 0300 304 5000**
- **Mencap - 01702 341250**
- **Transpire - 01702 668060**
- **Peabody - 01702 445870**

Details can be found by searching 'Hate Crime' at www.essex.police.uk

You can also:

- Speak to the police directly:
 - o In person at a police station
 - o By calling 999 for emergencies
 - o By calling 101 for non-urgent enquiries.
- Online - Report online to True Vision at www.report-it.org.uk
- Report anonymously to Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**
- Call Stop Hate UK on **0800 138 1625** (free 24-hour helpline) or **0808 801 0576** (for under 18s) or visit their website: www.stophateuk.org/. Stop Hate UK are a national Hate Crime charity that provide a free 24/7 Hate Crime reporting and information line to residents in Essex.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

The standard says: Registered providers must have a policy for how they recognise and effectively respond to cases of domestic abuse.

South Essex Homes is committed to tackling domestic abuse - it is a priority for the organisation which led us to achieving accreditation from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) in 2023. However that was just the beginning, and our efforts in this area continue, and we are committed to spreading awareness of this issue and helping anyone who is living in an abusive relationship.

We actively condemn any act of abuse whether it be verbal, psychological, physical or sexual and we do this by including specific sections in our Conditions of Tenancy relating to this. We will take action against any tenant who abuses a member of their household.

We have a robust 'Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) Policy', which can be downloaded from our website www.southessexhomes.co.uk/domestic-abuse

All of our staff members receive training regarding Domestic Abuse & Intimate Partner Violence and frontline staff are also trained in handling reports of domestic abuse.

As at the end of September 2024, we were dealing with

35 open cases of domestic abuse.

The statement we include in all our communications regarding domestic abuse is: 'Everyone should feel safe at home' and we will continue to do all we can in an effort to achieve that goal.

The standard says: Registered providers must co-operate with appropriate local authority departments to support the local authority in meeting its duty to develop a strategy and commission services for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation.

We have forged very close relationships with Essex Compass and Safe Steps.

The Essex Domestic Abuse (Compass) helpline is 0330 333 7 444 Safe Steps is a specialist provider of community services for survivors of domestic abuse in Southend and the wider Essex area.

For more information about the strategy, please visit: www.setdab.org/about-us/



HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND

SUPPORT



Southend-on-Sea City Council is launching a new round of the Household Support Fund (HSF) from October 2024 to March 2025, with a strong focus on supporting pensioners with rising living costs.

This extension of the HSF, funded by the UK Government, provides £1,413,079 to support local households, and the joint administration has ringfenced £250,000 specifically for pensioners who are particularly vulnerable to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, such as those who may fall just short of Pension Credit eligibility.

The new funding aims to address immediate needs such as food, energy bills, and other household essentials, ensuring that those who need it can access vital support. Pensioners will be able to apply for grants of up to £360 to cover essential living expenses, with the opportunity to claim up to two grants throughout the winter.

Applications for support:

Southend-on-Sea City Council has set up a dedicated webpage for pensioners and other eligible residents to apply for support under the Household Support Fund, providing full details of how to apply and eligibility criteria

Please visit: www.southend.gov.uk/extra-financial-help/support-pensioners

If you would like to apply for support under the HSF but do not have the ability to complete the online form, the South Essex Homes Housing Support Team are here to help. Please contact us on 0800 833160 (or send an email if you can, to housingsupport@seh.southend.gov.uk) providing your contact details and someone will be in touch to help you to complete an application form.

UC DIRECT PAYMENTS

Did you know that you can ask to have the housing portion of your Universal Credit paid directly to your landlord?

If you're receiving Universal Credit, you may not be aware that you can request for the Housing Element of your claim to be paid directly to your landlord.

By having the housing portion sent straight to your landlord, you can simplify your finances and reduce the stress of managing multiple payments. This option is especially useful if you've experienced difficulty keeping up with rent in the past, or if you're concerned about budgeting.

To set this up, you'll need to speak with your Universal Credit work coach or request the change through your online account. In some cases, if you are behind on rent or have specific financial challenges, your landlord can request this arrangement on your behalf.

This small step can make a big difference in helping you maintain your tenancy and keep your finances on track. If you're interested in this option, please contact your

work coach or South Essex Homes Specialist Income Management team or Tenancy Services team on 0800 833 160.

Please be aware that the Housing Element of Universal Credit covers only net rent and service charges. If your total rent includes water rates, this will not be covered by Universal Credit, and you may need to make an additional payment. If you're unsure, please contact us to confirm.

READY TO DOWNSIZE?

Are you spending money on heating a large house you don't need and/or struggling to maintain the house and garden? Would you like to move to a smaller home?

South Essex Homes wants to help Council tenants living in larger properties to move to more suitably sized homes, which in turn will help families who need larger accommodation. In order to do this, we are offering a financial incentive to move. Any Southend-on-Sea City Council tenant who wants to move to a property with fewer bedrooms is eligible to apply.

The Tenant Incentive Scheme (TIS) is here to help Southend-on-Sea City Council tenants who are thinking about downsizing to a more suitable home. For every bedroom you give up, you'll receive £500, up to a total of £1500 (this will be subject to funds available), and there are even extra benefits if you're moving into a hard-to-let property. Plus, we're here to provide practical assistance every step of the way – from finding your new home to

settling in. Please note, any outstanding debts may be deducted from the incentive grant, but we'll work with you to make the process as smooth as possible.

You will need to apply for a transfer, which can be done by creating a Homeseekers Application via the login/My Account tab on the Council's 'On the Move' website (www.southend-on-the-move.org.uk/). Your application will be assessed and you will be placed on a waiting list in accordance with your assessment priority.

You can then contact South Essex Homes for a Tenancy Incentive Scheme Application form. Only after you have been made an offer of accommodation will your request for a TIS grant be processed. This will be subject to funds available.

If you need assistance with your Homeseekers application or completing the TIS application form, please contact your Housing Support Officer on **0800 833160** or email housingsupport@seh.southend.gov.uk.

WATER BILLS

Many of you will pay South Essex Homes for your water charges, which we collect on behalf of Essex and Suffolk Water. However, there are other options available to you.

You can apply directly to Essex and Suffolk Water for a water meter, and they will endeavour to install a meter whenever they are requested to do so, however, in some cases, this may not be possible.

Depending on your water consumption, a water meter may be more cost-effective for you as you will only pay for the water you use. You can apply for a water meter online at www.eswater.co.uk. If you would like to discuss this or if you require more information, please call the Essex and Suffolk Water Metering

Department on 0345 7820 333.

If a water meter is not suitable for the property you occupy you can apply for an 'Assessed Measured Charge', where you would pay the water supplier directly (rather than via South Essex Homes) the rateable value, which historically was provided as standard.

An assessed charge is based on the average consumption for a one person or a two person household and works out cheaper than the rateable value for the majority of tenants, but the saving will vary depending on how many people live in your property and what you currently pay.

For more information on the current charges and to make an application to move to an assessed charge, please call the Essex and



Suffolk Water Metering Department on 0345 7820 333.

If you're already on an assessed charge or have an individual water meter, you can seek financial assistance directly from Essex & Suffolk Water through their website at www.eswater.co.uk/help/ or by calling 0345 782 0111.

SOCIAL VALUE @ SEH



By Sarah Gallagher, Resident Engagement Officer

What does social value mean? Simply put, social value is all about the good things that projects can bring to our communities, like safe and affordable homes, better living conditions, and stronger connections between neighbours.

It's important for everyone to feel like they belong and have access to the resources they need to thrive. Working with contractors is essential to make this happen. When we choose the right contractors, we can ensure that they also share our commitment to creating positive impacts for our residents, whether it's local job creation, using sustainable materials, or involving residents in the planning process.

For residents, social value means being included in the decision-making that affects their neighbourhoods. When contractors and organisations focus on social value, they engage with local people to understand their needs and opinions. This engagement helps ensure that projects truly reflect what the community wants and needs.

At South Essex Homes, we believe that social value is important when we work with contractors. It's more than just completing the job, it's about having a positive impact on the community. By focusing on social value, we aim to create benefits that last beyond our projects.

Social Value in Action

Adams Elm Choir was established over 2 years ago by three residents living at the sheltered scheme. The choir has grown considerably over the past couple of years, and now has up to 26 members. This has brought many benefits to members, including making new friends and feeling more connected to one another. The benefits also

include feeling happier, less lonely, and keeping minds active. Overall, the growth of the choir has made a positive difference in the lives of its members by bringing them together through music. The choir has recently purchased a new 'second-hand' piano and organise regular fundraising events including raffles and afternoon teas.

Arts and crafts sessions for children living in our temporary accommodation are a great way for kids to express themselves and have fun. Art Ministry, who run the sessions, created a dinosaur-themed afternoon, with lots of excitement and creativity. The children engaged in various activities related to the dinosaurs, which both entertained them and helped them to learn in a playful way.

For families living in temporary accommodation, these sessions provide not only a creative outlet but also a vital sense of community and stability. The sessions allow children to express their feelings and experiences in safe and supportive environment.

We would like to thank Mountfield Services for their donations towards these projects. Their support has played a crucial role in helping us to create meaningful activities and resources for our residents and in doing so, they build stronger relationships with the community and have demonstrated their commitment to making positive changes.



PRIZE DRAW

Let Aaron Services in first time for your annual gas safety check, and you'll be in with a chance of winning £100!

To qualify for your chance to win, all you have to do is agree an appointment with Aaron Services and then allow them into your property on their FIRST VISIT, to carry out your annual gas service.

You will then be entered into a prize draw which is carried out every month.

Recent winners include...

Lisa, who said "The money came in really handy, I put it towards general household costs. I'd recommend everyone to allow first time access to Aaron's - it's the easiest £100 I've ever got!"



Charlene, who said: "I used my £100 towards my gas bill, it seemed like a good way to spend it! I would absolutely recommend letting the gas engineers in first time, so you stand a chance of winning too."



RIGHT TO BUY

The Right to Buy scheme offers a unique opportunity for eligible council tenants to purchase their home at a substantial discount, making that dream a reality. Let's explore how this scheme can benefit you and the steps to take if you're interested in participating.

Understanding the Right to Buy Scheme

The Right to Buy scheme was introduced to give eligible tenants the chance to buy their rented homes at a discount, making homeownership more accessible and affordable. This initiative has empowered countless individuals and families, turning tenants into homeowners.

Key Benefits of the Right to Buy Scheme:

- 1. Significant Discounts:** Eligible tenants can receive substantial discounts on the market value of their home. The longer you have been a tenant, the higher the discount you may be eligible for.
- 2. Investment in Your Future:** Buying your home can be a sound financial investment. Instead of paying rent, your monthly payments contribute towards owning a valuable asset.
- 3. Security and Stability:** Homeownership provides long-term stability, allowing you to make improvements and modifications to your home without needing landlord approval.

Do I qualify?

You can apply to buy your council home if:

- It's your only or main home.
- It's self-contained.
- You're a secure tenant.
- You've had a public sector landlord (eg Southend-on-Sea City Council or another council, housing association or NHS trust) for 3 years – it doesn't have to be 3 years in a row.
- You don't have any rent arrears, outstanding possession orders or other legal problems with debt.

You don't have to do it alone, you can make a joint application. So if you're eligible, you might be able to buy your home with:

- Someone who shares your tenancy.
- Your spouse or civil partner.
- Or 3 family members who've lived with you for the past 12 months. They don't have to be on your tenancy agreement but it must be their main home.

How do I apply

If you're interested in the Right to Buy scheme, follow these steps to get started:

- 1. Check Your Eligibility:** Use the government's online eligibility checker to see if you qualify for the scheme. Ensure you meet the residency and tenancy requirements.
- 2. Understand Your Discount:** The discount you receive depends on the type of property you live in and the length of your tenancy. Houses and flats have different discount rates, and the maximum discount available may vary.
- 3. Get Your Finances in Order:** Consider your financial situation and whether you can afford the costs of buying and maintaining a home. This includes mortgage payments, insurance, and repairs.
- 4. Apply:** Complete the Right to Buy application form (RTB1) and submit it to your landlord. Please see our website to download the forms.
- 5. Receive Your Offer:** If your application is accepted, your landlord will send you a formal offer notice (Section 125), detailing the property's value, your discount, and the price you will pay. You have 12 weeks to decide if you want to proceed.
- 6. Arrange a Mortgage:** If you choose to proceed, arrange a mortgage or other financing. Seek advice from financial advisors to find the best mortgage deal for your circumstances.
- 7. Complete the Purchase:** Appoint a solicitor or conveyancer to handle the legal aspects of buying your home. Once everything is in place, you will complete the purchase and officially become a homeowner!
For more information, visit the official Right to Buy government website or the South Essex Homes website. Your dream of homeownership could be closer than you think!

ESTATE INSPECTIONS



As seen in the last issue, we have reintroduced the inclusion of the Estate Inspection schedule here in Insight magazine.

Please see below the details of Estate Inspections due to take place between the production of this issue and the Winter 2025 issue, which is due out in February.

To download the full schedule of Estate Inspections for 2024, please visit our website: www.southessexhomes.co.uk/estate-inspections.

The inspections usually re-start in the springtime, so once the schedule for 2025 inspections is finalised in the New Year, this will be available from the above webpage.

DATE	PLACE	TIME	START POINT
19-Nov-24	Avon Way, West Road	09:30am	Outside 2-30 Avon Way Main Entrance
20-Nov-24	Leighwood Avenue, Eastwood Road North	09:30am	Junction with Oakwood Avenue
21-Nov-24	Anson Chase, Ashanti Close, Bulwark Road	09:30am	Corner of Anson Chase and Bulwark Road
22-Nov-24	Longbow, Bewley Court, Archer Avenue, Newington Avenue Flats	09:30am	Outside Longbow Main Entrance
26-Nov-24	Snakes Lane	09:30am	Corner of Brendan Way and Snakes Lane
27-Nov-24	Sherwood Way	09:30am	Outside 1 Sherwood Way
28-Nov-24	Townfields	09:30am	Outside Townfields Main Entrance
28-Nov-24	Hardwick Court	09:30am	Outside Hardwick Court
29-Nov-24	Christchurch Court, Norman Harris House	09:30am	Outside Christchurch Court
03-Dec-24	Cecil Court	09:30am	Outside Cecil Court Main Entrance
05-Dec-24	St Mary's Court	09:30am	Outside St Mary's Court on the corner of Victoria Avenue/ Roots Hall Football Stadium
06-Dec-24	Trevett House	09:30am	Outside Main Entrance Trevett House
10-Dec-24	Bruton Avenue, Dunster Avenue, Martock Avenue, Cheddar Avenue	09:30am	Meet at corner of Bruton/Mendip Crescent
11-Dec-24	Neil Armstrong Way, Scott House	09:30am	Outside Scott House Main Entrance
12-Dec-24	Bishop House	09:30am	Outside Bishop House Main Entrance
12-Dec-24	Western Approaches	09:30am	Outside Western Approaches Main Entrance
13-Dec-24	Lundy Close	09:30am	Corner of Lundy Close
18-Dec-24	Dickens Close	09:30am	Outside 1 Dickens Close
19-Dec-24	Stephen Macadden House	09:30am	Outside Stephen Macadden House

SOUND ON IS BACK!

Elevator Arts is excited to return to Chaucer House this autumn with Sound ON, a creative initiative designed for children and young people living in South Essex Homes' temporary accommodation. These weekly after-school sessions, open to children aged 6 and up, take place every Wednesday from 4.00-5.30pm until the 11th of December. They provide an invaluable opportunity for participants to explore their creativity through drama, crafts, and creative writing. The project, running during school terms, offers children a positive and expressive outlet, helping them build confidence, improve communication skills, and find joy in creative activities.

This term, Sound ON will focus on superheroes, encouraging the children to discover their own unique "superpowers"—from kindness to resilience. By channeling these themes, Elevator Arts aims to develop the children's sense of self and empowerment, allowing their imaginations to run wild. As the term progresses, these superhero themes will transition into broader ideas of transformation and personal growth, nurturing participants' emotional wellbeing and self-esteem.

Elevator Arts brings professional artists to these sessions, creating a safe and welcoming environment for all children involved. This approach not only fosters a sense of belonging but also introduces participants

to new creative skills and techniques that support both their mental and emotional health. The project is gratefully funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, ensuring its continuation and success in empowering the children to find strength through creativity.

With the positive impact of previous Sound ON projects, children have told us they feel happier and more equipped to handle emotions. Parents have also observed improvements in their children's ability to express themselves and manage feelings. These sessions have consistently shown that engaging in arts-based activities can have a transformative effect on the participants' confidence, communication skills, and overall wellbeing.

Elevator Arts' commitment to supporting the local community, particularly those experiencing homelessness or living in challenging circumstances, is at the heart of the Sound ON project. It continues to provide a vital platform for young people to express themselves, connect with others, and develop essential life skills through creative play.

