

Autumn 2025 issue!

# insight

The South Essex Homes  
Resident Newsletter



Your amazing fundraising efforts!

## HELPFUL HINTS & TIPS!



Brightening up the Queensway Estate

**YOUR  
FREE  
COPY!**

*Be part  
of it!*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE...



**GARDEN  
GLOW-UP**

**JOHN'S  
ART  
JOURNEY**



**AND LOTS MORE...**

- Garden in Bloom results
- Building Safety Competition
- Domestic Abuse

## GROWING STRONG THANKS TO YOU!

Just a few months ago, we introduced MySEH, our new online portal designed to make life easier for South Essex Homes residents. From checking your rent balance to updating household details or tracking repairs, MySEH puts control at your fingertips – anytime, anywhere.



We're thrilled to share that over 400 residents have already signed up – and we want to say a huge thank you to each and every one of you!

Whether you've used MySEH to manage your tenancy, report a repair, or simply explore its features, your engagement has helped shape the future of resident services. We're especially grateful to those who've worked with us through some of the early teething issues – your patience and feedback have been invaluable in helping us improve the portal.

### Why MySEH?

If you haven't registered yet, here's what you're missing:

- **24/7 Access** to your rent account, tenancy details, and repair history
- **Quick Updates** to household information with just a few clicks
- **Secure and Private** access to your personal data
- **Convenient Payments** and arrears management tools
- **Full Transparency** on your tenancy and service interactions

### Let's Keep the Momentum Going

If you're already using MySEH – thank you again! Now, please help us spread the word. Tell your neighbours, friends, and family members who are South Essex Homes residents: MySEH is here to make things easier.

And if you haven't registered yet, it's simple to get started. Just visit [www.southessexhomes.co.uk/myseh](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/myseh) and follow the steps to sign up. It only takes a few minutes – and the benefits are immediate.

We're continuing to develop new features and improvements based on your feedback, so stay tuned. MySEH is just getting started – and we're excited to grow it with you.

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# WELCOME

## Welcome to the Autumn issue of Insight!

...I hope you're staying warm and cosy as the evenings grow darker!

It's hard to believe we're nearing the end of another year - and that South Essex Homes has just celebrated its 20th anniversary! Having been part of the team for almost 14 of those years, I've seen the company evolve in many ways. One of the things I'm especially proud of is how Insight magazine has grown. While we've always aimed to share community news, our coverage of local events and projects has really flourished in recent years, thanks to the fantastic partnership we have with our Resident Engagement team.

I hope you enjoy reading about these initiatives as much as I do - and please keep sending in details of any activities you're involved in, so we can celebrate them with you!

As December approaches - Mike, myself, and the whole South Essex Homes team would like to wish you and your loved ones a joyful festive season

We'll be back with the next issue of Insight in February 2026.

*All the best, Julia*

Julia Pack, Editor



## Important Message from Mike: Regulator's Inspection Report

Many of you will have read that the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) published a report about Southend-on-Sea City Council's housing services, including the services provided by South Essex Homes, at the end of September. The report followed on from an inspection process which began in January.

### What did the Regulator say?

The Regulator found that we need to make some improvements in the way we manage homes. They gave us a C3 rating, which means there are some important things to fix. However, the report also recognises that we have already made good progress since the inspection took place. Importantly, there were no aspects of the Regulator's comments which we were not already aware of and had existing plans in place to address.

### What are we doing about it?

We are working closely with Southend City Council to make things better for you. We have updated our improvement plan and are focusing on key areas, including:

- Regular electrical safety checks.
- Surveys to check the condition of every home.
- Extra work on fire safety, especially in blocks of flats and sheltered housing.

In terms of each of these areas, we have made significant progress during the course of this year and

the Regulator's report recognises the work we have been carrying out to continue to ensure the safety of you and your home. These efforts reflect our long-standing commitment to maintaining and enhancing your living environment. We have delivered annual programmes for many years and will continue to do so, carrying out all necessary works as part of our long-term approach.

### What does this mean for you?

Your safety and comfort are our top priorities. We want you to feel confident that your home is safe and well looked after. We will keep you updated as we make these improvements.

### What can you do?

When our teams or our contractor partners make arrangements to visit your home to carry out inspections or surveys, or to carry out works, it is really important that you allow them access. The majority of surveys and inspections we carry out are related to required regulatory works, and we must carry them out. Allowing reasonable access means we all benefit from that work being completed.

If you have any questions or want to know more, please contact us by sending an email to [sehcustomerservices@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:sehcustomerservices@seh.southend.gov.uk), heading your enquiry 'Inspection Outcome' in the subject line.

*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)

If you are unhappy about the services you have received and would like to make a complaint, you can do this via our online form at [www.southessexhomes.co.uk/complaints](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/complaints), by emailing [sehcomplaintsandfois@seh.southend.co.uk](mailto:sehcomplaintsandfois@seh.southend.co.uk) or via a call to our customer services team on 0800 833160.

# JOIN OUR BOARD MEETINGS!

South Essex Homes is run by a Board, a group of people who make important decisions about housing and services. They meet regularly to talk about how to improve things for residents.

## Come Along to a Meeting!

Anyone can attend a Board Meeting to listen to the public items being discussed – but please note that members of the public are not allowed to speak during Board meetings, they can only observe.

Some meetings happen in person at the Civic Centre, while others are online using Microsoft Teams.

**Next Meeting: Thursday 22 January 2026 at 3:00 PM, Committee Room 3 of the Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend, SS2 6FY**

Public documents: Available on the South Essex Homes website 5 days before the meeting.

## How to Join the Meeting

**When they are in person: Just turn up on the day!**

**When they are on Teams: Email Carol Cooper (carolcooper@seh.southend.gov.uk) at least 5 days before to get the link to join.**

## Share Your Views!

Board meetings are a great chance for residents to ask questions and share their thoughts – we call this 'Resident's Voice Your View' (RVYV).

As members of the public are not able to talk during Board meetings, you need to send us items for RVYV well ahead of each Board meeting, to make sure that Board members can look into any questions you raise and prepare to respond to them during the public session of the Board meeting.

Come along, share your voice, and help make South Essex Homes even better!



## Want to ask something?

Send your question to:

**Email: daniellyons@seh.southend.gov.uk or carolcooper@seh.southend.gov.uk**

**Write to: South Essex Homes, Civic Centre, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS2 6FY**

Deadline for questions for the January meeting: Wednesday 31 December 2025

All questions and answers will be published on our website. You can also check past RVYV submissions at [www.southessexhomes.co.uk/our-board](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/our-board).

If you need more information, contact Carol Cooper at the email above.

# ASB – WE ARE TAKING ACTION

South Essex Homes works hard to keep our communities safe. When someone's anti-social behaviour (ASB) causes problems for others, we take action.

In one case, South Essex Homes, on behalf of Southend-on-Sea City Council, had already secured a two-year injunction against a tenant due to ongoing disruptive behaviour caused by both the tenant and their visitors. An injunction is a legal order given by a court that requires someone to stop doing certain activities, in this case, it was behaviour that was negatively affecting the community.

For the first 18 months, the tenant followed the terms (rules) set out in the injunction. However, further incidents occurred which were considered breaches, meaning

the tenant broke the rules of the injunction. As a result, the case was taken back to the County Court, where a Judge agreed that the injunction had indeed been broken.

The Judge issued a two-month suspended custodial sentence, which means the tenant could be sent to prison for two months if they break the rules again. This sentence is suspended for two years, meaning it won't be enforced unless there are more breaches during that time. The Judge also extended the injunction for two more years to keep protecting the community.

While we're not always able to



share details of the actions we are taking, we do take steps to protect our communities, and we do get results. This case is a great example of a positive outcome thanks to the hard work of our Housing Community Safety Team behind the scenes.

# DAMP, MOULD AND CONDENSATION

What You Need to Know

From the 27 October 2025, South Essex Homes has been changing the way we deal with damp and mould to align with new legislation - and we welcome this change. We are working hard to meet the new standards and make sure our residents live in safe, healthy homes.

## What Is Damp, Mould and Condensation?

Damp and mould in your home is unpleasant and can be bad for your health. It's more common in winter when the weather is cold and wet. Damp can come from leaks, poor ventilation, or rising moisture from the ground.

Condensation is the most common cause of black mould. It happens when warm, moist air touches a cold surface, like a window or wall. You might see water droplets or mould in corners of rooms, near windows, or on north-facing walls.

## Top Tips to Prevent Damp and Mould

There are simple things you can do to help keep your home dry and mould-free:

### 1. Ventilate your home

Open windows and vents regularly. Use extractor fans when cooking or showering.

### 2. Heat your home

Try to keep your home warm, especially in colder months. Even low-level heating can help reduce condensation.

### 3. Wipe down windows

Remove moisture from windows and walls each morning to stop mould from growing.

### 4. Use lids on pans

This reduces steam when cooking.

### 5. Dry clothes outside

If possible, avoid drying clothes on radiators. Use a tumble dryer that vents outside or dry clothes in a well-ventilated room.

### 6. Leave space around furniture

This helps air to flow and stops moisture building up.

## How to Report a Problem

If you spot signs of damp or mould, don't wait.

You can report damp or mould in your home by:

- Using our website: [www.southessexhomes.co.uk/repairs](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/repairs)
- Calling us for free: **0800 833160**
- Emailing: [healthyhomes@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:healthyhomes@seh.southend.gov.uk)
- Sending us a message on **Facebook**
- Visiting our office at the **Civic Centre**

We'll arrange a visit and let you know when we'll come. After the visit, we'll tell you what needs fixing and when it will be done.

## How South Essex Homes Can Help

When you report an issue of damp and mould with us, we will make an **immediate assessment** based on the information you give us and what we already know about your home.

**If it's an emergency - such as mould affecting breathing or a large area coverage of mould within the room - we will visit and fix within 24 hours.**

If your home is not safe to stay in, we'll offer temporary accommodation.

Once the emergency hazard has been removed, any further works will be classed as 'significant' and will follow the timescales below.

If your issue is **not classed as an emergency**, the following timescales will apply:

Action	What We Do	When
Inspection	Check the problem	Within 10 working days of your report
Written Summary	Tell you what we found	Within 3 working days after inspection
Repairs	Start fixing	Within 5 working days after inspection
Finish Repairs	Complete any work	Within 12 weeks after inspection

## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO LET US IN

You might remember reading in the last issue of Insight about the importance of letting South Essex Homes staff into your property to carry out essential checks. These checks help keep your home safe and make sure we meet our legal responsibilities as your landlord.

Unfortunately, we've found that in quite a few cases, residents don't let us in - even when we've made appointments in advance. This can cause delays and means we sometimes have to take legal action to gain access, especially for things like gas safety checks.

It can cost up to **£500** every time we have to go down the legal route - and that is without the cost of our officers' time to deal with these cases. That's money we would much rather spend on services and improvements that benefit all tenants.

We're currently working with our **Customer Improvement Panel** to look at how we can tighten up this process and make it more efficient for everyone. Watch this space for updates in future issues of Insight.



# CREATING CALM AND CONNECTION AT CHAUCER HOUSE

After the success of the communal lounge transformation that we previously covered in Insight, residents at Chaucer House were inspired to keep the momentum going. During one of their regular coffee mornings, conversation turned to the garden, and to a small shed that had seen better days. What could have been overlooked as just another outbuilding soon became the focus of a wonderful new idea.

With support from South Essex Homes staff and our contractor, Bell Group, residents began to imagine how the space could be transformed into something meaningful for families. From those early chats, the vision for a sensory and multifunctional room took shape, a calm, inclusive space designed especially for children, including those with ADHD and autism.

Residents helped clear the shed, prepare the space, and repaint the once bright red walls a soft, calming green that now blends beautifully into the garden. The sensory room will soon offer a peaceful retreat where children can play, relax, and explore, a space that supports emotional wellbeing and gives families a quiet place to spend time together close to home.

Once the shed was complete, it was clear the garden around it deserved the same care and attention. Residents, colleagues, and partners came together again, with Bell Group, Axis, SUEZ UK, and South Essex Property Services colleagues all lending their time and expertise. Pallets were turned into planters and low-level seating for children, gloves and litter pickers were provided so everyone could get involved, and SEPS colleagues shared their knowledge to introduce sensory-friendly plants.

The result is a garden that feels calm, welcoming, and alive with purpose. It's a place where residents can connect with nature, children can play safely, and families can enjoy spending time outdoors.

Now, residents and South Essex Homes are planning the final stage of the sensory room's development, equipping it with soft flooring, gentle lighting, and a range of sensory toys and resources that will help children with ADHD and autism to feel calm, focused, and comfortable.



This next step will ensure the room fully meets the needs of families at Chaucer House and continues to promote inclusion and wellbeing for everyone.

Together, the sensory room and garden reflect the spirit of Chaucer House – a community that grows, adapts, and creates spaces where everyone can feel at home.

## South Essex Homes Staff are Getting Involved!

Volunteering is a meaningful way for our staff to give back to the communities we serve, and it's something they genuinely enjoy. Whether it's transforming a communal garden or brightening up an estate with a fresh lick of paint, these projects allow colleagues to connect with residents in a hands-on, positive way. It's not just about improving physical spaces, it's about building relationships, fostering pride in our neighbourhoods, and showing that we care. Staff often say they find volunteering days rewarding and energising, offering a chance to step away from their usual roles and make a visible difference together.

A month before our colleagues found themselves doing a spot of gardening at Chaucer House, we had also joined ATF, The Storehouse, and Queensway Residents Group to bring some colour and creativity to the planters dotted around the Queensway estate.

Volunteers from South Essex Homes, as well as local children and residents, teamed up with artist Ed Taylor-Nottingham to transform the planters with vibrant and playful designs. You can find out more about this on page 9.

We're so excited to see these spaces at Chaucer House and Queensway bloom in the future!



# ARTS AND CRAFTS BRING JOY TO LOCAL FAMILIES

Children living in temporary accommodation enjoyed two fun arts and crafts workshops over the summer school holiday at Chaucer House. The sessions were delivered by Revelation Art and kindly funded by Thermoshield, who wanted to give something back to the community as part of their commitment to supporting local families.

Twelve children took part in the sessions, getting creative by painting their own tote bags and decorating a range of pottery items from animals to popular Disney characters. The activities encouraged imagination, confidence, and a sense of pride as each child made something special to take home.

Emma from Revelation was incredibly welcoming and helped make the sessions a great success. The children thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and it was lovely to see their excitement as they chose colours and brought their designs to life. As you will see from the photos this was a well enjoyed activity!

Following the success of these sessions, Thermoshield have kindly offered to fund another special workshop later this year, where children will have the opportunity to paint Christmas-themed pottery, possibly creating gifts for their parents.

We would like to thank Thermoshield for their continued support and commitment to making a difference to families in our community.



## OUR RESIDENT ADVISORY PANEL IS GROWING!

Our Resident Advisory Panel (RAP), launched in April 2024, is helping us build a stronger community. It gives residents the chance to share their opinions and get involved in important issues. By taking part in short surveys and monthly questions, residents help shape decisions about everyday topics like health and safety and our pet policies.

We now have around 200 residents on the panel, and we hope even more of you will join. The more people take part, the better we can make our services meet your needs.

As you share your views, it's only fair that we share what happens next. Here's how your feedback has recently made a difference:

### Difficult Access for Health and Safety Checks

We asked RAP members what SEH should do when we can't gain access to homes for essential safety checks.

Most residents (93%) felt a firmer approach is reasonable, and some even supported forced entry if needed. You also told us clear communication and flexible appointments are really important.

Your feedback has helped shape our new Difficult Access Strategy, which will go to our Management Board in November. We will keep you updated.

### Pest Control Policy

We also asked residents about pest control. Most people (88%) said they had no problems reporting pest issues. However, some raised concerns about cost, stigma, and a lack of support when the issue wasn't in communal areas. A few also reported ongoing problems with bedbugs and cockroaches, which have caused stress and extra expense.

In response, we're introducing a new Pest Control Policy and an online reporting form so you can report problems quickly and discreetly. We're also creating

an easy step-by-step guide to help residents identify pests, prevent them, and understand what happens after reporting. These changes will make the process clearer and more supportive for everyone.

We would like to say a huge thank you to all our current RAP members. Your feedback and ideas continue to shape how we deliver our services and improve the experience for all residents. We truly value your input and commitment.

If you're not yet part of the panel, we would love for you to join this growing community. It's a great way to have your say and help us make our services even better. You can answer all the questions or just the ones that interest you.

If you'd like to join the RAP, please scan the QR code, or you can email [residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk), or call 0800 833 160 and ask for the Resident Engagement Team.

We look forward to hearing from you!

### Question of the Month

This month, we would love your feedback to make sure that we can give you the best service we can, and we want to know... what do you think we do well, what could we do better, and what would help you feel more confident and trusting in the services we provide?

Simply scan the QR code or follow <https://forms.office.com/e/cuU21bf68z> to take part. Your feedback is important, and your voice helps shape the way we work. If you are unable to scan the QR Code, you can email your answer to our email address: [residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk) or a paper version is also available, please call the Resident Engagement Team on 0800 833 160.



# COMMUNITY

## POPPIES FOR THE PIER - A FAR REACHING SUCCESS!



Since the last issue of Insight, our Resident Engagement Team has been overwhelmed by the kindness of those who've donated to the Southend Pier poppy appeal. We've received a wonderful array of knitted and crocheted poppies, and we're truly grateful for every single donation. These helped to create a powerful tribute which was displayed at the Pier from Remembrance Day until 16 November.

One special story highlights just how far this appeal has reached. Jean, the mother of one of our sheltered housing residents, lives in Dovercourt and is part of a church group that crafts and donates handmade items.

When her son told her about the poppy project, the group got to work straight away, sending us a beautiful collection of knitted poppies. Although Jean and her group don't live in Southend, their kindness and support for this community project is truly inspiring.

This story is a wonderful reminder of how creativity and compassion can bring people together across towns and communities, for a shared cause. Thank you again to everyone who has been involved. Your efforts helped to make the Southend Pier poppy display something very special.

## SUMMER ACTIVITIES AT CHAUCER HOUSE



This summer, the Resident Engagement team organised five activity sessions for children at Chaucer House. It was a great chance for young residents to be creative, play with friends, and enjoy their holidays close to home.

Activities included handprint wall art, a new welcome canvas as well as making bunting for the communal lounge. The children worked together to design and make their colourful creations which are now on display for everyone to enjoy.

Families said the activities were fun with parents even joining in creating a real sense of community, it was great to see that the children were proud of what they made. It was a lovely way to bring the community together and brighten up Chaucer House.



## AVON WAY MURAL COMPLETED!



In a previous issue of Insight, we shared a vibrant mural project that had begun at Avon Way. The colourful artwork brightened up one wall, but there was still plenty of blank space left to fill!

Since then, we've returned with Achieve Thrive Flourish (ATF) and talented local young people to continue the mural, and the results are fantastic! This phase even includes a special tribute to the Lionesses and their inspiring Euro 2025 victory.

We hope that when you pass by the mural, it brings a smile to your face and adds a splash of colour to your day.



## MACMILLAN COFFEE AFTERNOONS

Jan from Nicholson House recently held a Macmillan coffee & cake afternoon in memory of her dear friend Natalie. With support and baking donations from other residents, residents themselves and family members enjoyed an afternoon of chatting together with a cuppa and a slice of cake. Jan raised £232 from the day!

Linda from Adams Elm House held her annual Macmillan coffee afternoon with help from her friends, offering a large variety of home baked cakes as well as hosting a raffle with items purchased herself. Linda raised an outstanding total of £855 from the baked goods, raffle and donations!

If you are hosting your own resident event or activity, please contact resident engagement so that we can highlight your event in future Insight articles.



Email the Resident Engagement team at [residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk)

## QUEENSWAY ART JAM

This summer, the Queensway Resident Group brought the community together through a vibrant art project that gave local children the chance to showcase their creativity in the heart of their neighbourhood.

Over three weeks, they helped create designs and then decorate the large planters in the courtyard.

During two workshops with professional artist Ed Taylor-Nottingham, residents were able to sketch out their own ideas which were then used to create the final design, turning the planters into bright and colourful works of art that reflect their creativity and pride in the community.

The initiative was made possible thanks to funding from Southend Community Matters, and it was warmly supported by The Storehouse, ATF, and South Essex Homes staff who all joined in to help on the Big Paint Day.

Now, the courtyard is alive with colour and character, more than just decoration, the project has given local residents pride in their surroundings and a sense of ownership in shaping their shared space.

Please visit our website for the full video link of the project!

Are you a resident living in or around the Queensway Estate and want to become more involved within your community?



As one volunteer put it, **'Successful event, great to see local people doing a difference in their community'**

Did you know the Queensway Resident Group hold monthly coffee mornings at the Storehouse and online meetings, please visit your noticeboard for up-to-date information.

ATF offer weekly Leapsprogs sessions on Mondays 1:15-2:15pm and seated exercise classes on Thursdays 5:30-6:30pm, both at All Saints Church and a Tuesday Youth Group at the Storehouse, 4:30-6pm.

We welcome residents to join the bi-monthly online Queensway Matters Meeting, held by local councillors, South Essex Homes, Southend Police and other local organisations where residents can receive updates regarding the regeneration project, community safety and more! If you would like more information, please contact Resident Engagement to receive the e-vite.



## SOUTHEND CITY VISION

At South Essex Homes, we fully support the Southend City Vision, a plan for making Southend-on-Sea an even better place to live, work, and visit over the next 10 years.

This Vision was launched in March following a large public consultation, which gathered the views of over 2200 people. It is being driven by the Southend City Partnership - a group of local organisations, businesses, and community groups working together to build a brighter future for everyone in Southend.

We're proud to be part of this team and excited to now make sure our work supports the goals of the City Vision.

### What the City Vision Is All About

The City Vision is built around four priorities:

- **Safe and Thriving Communities:** Southend should be a place where everyone feels safe, supported, and welcome. We want every child and adult to have the chance to do well and enjoy life, irrespective of their background or origin.
- **Bustling High Streets and Business Spaces:** Southend's high streets and business parks should be full of energy, creativity, and opportunity. We'll help support local shops, businesses, and cultural spaces that make Southend special.

- **Haven for Leisure and Creativity:** Southend is a great place to enjoy art, events, food, and fun. We want to help make sure there are lots of things to do for families, children, and visitors.
- **Clean, Green and Proud:** We care about the environment. We'll support efforts to keep Southend clean, green, and well-connected, with beautiful parks, beaches, and public spaces.

You will notice that from now on our website news stories will link in with one or more of these priorities, to ensure that they become interlinked with the work we do here at South Essex Homes.

### Working Together for a Better Southend

The Southend City Partnership includes many local groups, from the council and emergency services to schools, charities, and businesses. Everyone is working together to make Southend a city where people of all ages can thrive.

We're proud to be part of this journey and look forward to helping make Southend's future bright. Look out for more stories about the City Vision on our website and in future issues of Insight!

**CITY VISION**

# STRUGGLING WITH RENT? WE'RE HERE TO HELP

We know that times are tough for many people right now. If you're finding it hard to pay your rent, you're not alone - and South Essex Homes is here to help.

Rent arrears happen when you miss a rent payment and owe money to South Essex Homes. This can build up over time and become harder to manage. But the good news is - the earlier you speak to us, the easier it is to sort out.

## Why It's Important to Act Early

If you don't pay your rent and don't contact us, we will try to reach you by phone, letter, or by visiting your home. We'll always try to help you first - but if the debt continues, we may have to take legal action.

This could mean:

- Being asked to attend a meeting to talk about your rent
- Receiving a formal notice that we plan to go to court
- Having to pay court costs
- Possibly even losing your home

We don't want this to happen. That's why it's so important to talk to us as soon as you know there's a problem.

## We're Not Here to Judge – We're Here to Help

Our Specialist Income Management Team and Tenancy Services Team are trained to support you. They can:

- Help you make a payment plan
- Give advice about benefits and other money help
- Talk to you about your options
- Help you apply for support funds or grants

We also work closely with other services like **Citizens Advice**, so you can get independent help too.



## What Happens If You Go to Court?

If we do have to go to court, you'll be invited to a hearing. It's important that you attend and get advice from a solicitor or law centre. The court may order you to pay the debt or give us permission to take back your home.

If you break a court order or don't attend the hearing, you could be evicted. This is always a last resort and we'll do everything we can to avoid it.

## Changes in Your Circumstances? Let Us Know

If your situation changes - for example, you start a new job, lose income, or someone moves in or out of your home - please tell us. This helps us understand your situation and offer the right support.

## How to Get Help

If you're worried about rent arrears, contact us straight away. The earlier you speak to us, the more we can do to help.

Call us on **0800 833 160** or visit [southessexhomes.co.uk/rent-arrears](https://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/rent-arrears).

We also have advice on our **Cost of Living** page, which includes help with bills, benefits, and budgeting.

**Remember:** We're not here to punish you - we're here to support you. Talking to us early can stop a small problem from becoming a big one. So if you're struggling, please reach out. We'll do our best to help you stay in your home and get back on track.

# HOW TO STAY SAFE FROM LOAN SHARKS



## Could you spot a loan shark?

A loan shark - or illegal money lender - is someone who lends money illegally without proper authorisation from the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

That means if you borrow from them, they don't have to follow the rules - they can decide how much you pay back and when.

These criminals are not always easy to spot - they can be another parent in the school playground, a friend of the family, a neighbour . . . the list goes on.

Illegal lenders can appear as a friendly face, offering you a favour. They can

make the offer of a quick loan seem hard to resist, but very quickly the situation can spiral out of control and borrowers can be subjected to threats, violence and intimidation if they struggle to make a payment.

Warning signs to indicate that you could be dealing with an illegal lender include:

- being given no paperwork upon the agreement of a loan.
- being given no detailed information about a loan.
- having items such as a bank card or passport taken from you until the debt is paid.
- being threatened or intimidated you if you do not pay on time.



# ENDING YOUR TENANCY: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Ending a tenancy can feel overwhelming, so we want to give you a step-by-step guide to making leaving your home a smooth and easy process. Whether you're relocating, downsizing, or moving into private accommodation, here's everything you need to know to terminate your tenancy correctly.

## 1. Giving Notice

To end your tenancy, you must give at least four weeks' written notice, and the notice must end on a Sunday. You can:

- Deliver your notice by hand to the Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6FY.
- Send it by recorded delivery if posting.

If South Essex Homes needs to end your tenancy, the notice period will vary depending on the reason.

## 2. Returning Your Keys

You must return all keys to the Civic Centre reception by midday on the Monday after your tenancy ends. Be sure to get a signed receipt as proof.

If keys are not returned, a Notice to Quit may be issued, delaying the end of your tenancy and potentially incurring extra rent and lock replacement costs.

## 3. Preparing the Property

Before leaving, ensure the property is empty and secure, clean and tidy (including lofts and gardens), and free of personal belongings and rubbish.

You may be eligible for a tenants' incentive grant if the property is left in good condition. You may get a £350 grant, but only if:

- The home is left clean, tidy, and in good condition.
- There are no unpaid rent, charges, or benefit overpayments.
- You're moving to a private rental or housing run by another registered landlord.

This grant only applies if you're leaving a property owned by the Council.

## 4. Avoiding Recharges

To avoid being charged for repairs or cleaning after you leave:

- Keep the garden tidy and grass mowed.
- Complete any repairs that are your responsibility.
- Clean surfaces, floors, and re-hang any removed doors.
- Replace or repair any damaged items.

South Essex Homes may conduct a pre-inspection to identify repairs that are needed and to help you avoid recharges. If you're concerned about the condition of your property, contact your Tenancy Services Officer on 0800 833 160 for support.

## 5. Final Steps

- Redirect your post and update your address with the relevant services.
- Transfer your utility accounts to avoid future charges.
- Allow contractors access for final repairs before you leave.

Leaving your home in good condition not only helps you avoid extra costs but also ensures the property is ready for the next tenant who may be in urgent need of a home.



The England Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT), also known as Stop Loan Sharks, is a dedicated team of specialists that are leading the fight against loan sharks across the country.

Set up over 20 years ago, the team has helped tens of thousands of people escape the clutches of these criminals and wiped out more than £91.6 million worth of illegal debt. It has successfully prosecuted hundreds of illegal lenders.

If you or someone you know is affected by illegal money lending, contact Stop Loan Sharks for support and advice without delay.

## STOP LOAN SHARKS

Intervention . Support . Education

There is a confidential 24/7 hotline available on **0300 555 2222** and a Live Chat facility is available on the website [stoploansharks.co.uk](https://stoploansharks.co.uk) between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

For further information, advice and more ways to get in touch, visit [stoploansharks.co.uk](https://stoploansharks.co.uk)

Remember that you are not in trouble if you have borrowed money from a loan shark. You should feel no blame or shame – they are the people committing a crime, not you.



# WE'RE LISTENING

## How Complaints Help Us Get Better



At South Essex Homes, we see complaints not as problems but as opportunities. When residents speak up about what's not working, it gives us the chance to listen, learn, and make things better for everyone.



David Smillie, our Complaints Team Manager, puts it simply: "We genuinely welcome complaints. Listening to residents is the only way we can grow, improve, and build trust."

We know that in the past, raising a concern may have felt frustrating or even pointless, but we've worked hard to change that. What started as a one-person team has grown into a dedicated group of seven, and we're still expanding. That growth reflects our commitment to hearing you and acting on what matters.

"We're making it easier than ever to share your concerns," David explains, "And more importantly, we're taking real action based on what you tell us."

Your voice matters. Every complaint is a chance to do better - and we're here to make sure it's heard.

### How You Can Make a Complaint

You can complain in lots of ways, which are listed at the end of this article.

Anyone at South Essex Homes should recognise when you're making a complaint and help you get it sorted.

### What Happens Next?

When you raise a complaint with us, it's never just a tick-box exercise. We start by listening, really listening, to understand what's gone wrong and what outcome you're hoping for. Your experience matters, and we want to get it right.

Once we understand the issue, we investigate thoroughly and work closely with other teams to put things right. It's not just about fixing one problem; it's about making sure it doesn't happen again.

We also look at the bigger picture. If several residents are raising the same concern, that's a signal for us to dig deeper and make broader changes.

As David explains: "We meet regularly with other teams to share feedback and spot patterns. That way, we can prevent issues before they grow - and build a better service for everyone."

### Real Changes from Real Complaints

One powerful example of how resident feedback drives real change is our work with the Estates team. When residents shared concerns about the upkeep of communal areas, we took that seriously and passed the message on.

The team responded by reviewing their schedules and making meaningful improvements to how those spaces are maintained. It's a great reminder that your voice matters.

As David puts it: "If we hadn't received those complaints, the service would still be running the way it

was months ago. Your feedback made the difference."

We're also making big strides in how quickly we respond. At the start of the year, we were only meeting our response targets about half the time. By August, that figure had soared to 92%.

That's the power of listening, learning and above all, acting.

### Working Together with the Resident Complaints Panel

We're proud to work closely with the Resident Complaints Panel - a dedicated group of residents who help us stay on track. They review how we handle complaints and give us honest, helpful feedback. Their insight helps us make sure we're always thinking about what's best for residents. We're grateful for their time, their challenge, and their support in helping us do better every day.

### We're Not Perfect - But We're Trying

We know there are still areas where we need to do better, especially when it comes to repairs, but your feedback is helping us move forward. Every concern you raise helps us understand what's not working, and we're working closely with our main contractor to make meaningful improvements.

David shares this heartfelt message: "If we've fallen short, I'll be the first to say sorry. Thank you for giving us the chance to put things right."

He also wants every resident to know they're seen and valued: "You're not just a number. You matter to us. You'll get our time, our attention, and our commitment. We're here for you."

### So, What's the Most Important Thing?

"Please don't wait, send your complaints to us as soon as you can," urges David.

"You can trust that every concern will be treated with care, respect, and the seriousness it deserves."

We're proud to be shifting towards a more resident-focused approach, one that puts you at the centre of everything we do. Your voice isn't just heard, it's helping shape the way we grow, improve, and serve our community.

### How to Make a Complaint

You can make a complaint in any of the following ways:

- Online: [southessexhomes.co.uk/complaints](https://southessexhomes.co.uk/complaints)
- Email: [sehcomplaintsandfois@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:sehcomplaintsandfois@seh.southend.gov.uk)
- Phone: 0800 833 160
- Write to us: South Essex Homes, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea SS2 6ER
- Speak to your Tenancy Officer or any member of staff
- Via social media: @SouthEssexHomes

# BIG CHANGES

# TO WASTE COLLECTIONS

## What South Essex Homes Residents Need to Know

Southend-on-Sea City Council, working with waste contractor SUEZ, has recently made changes to how rubbish and recycling are collected across the city. These changes affect all types of homes, so it's important to understand what's been happening.

### What's Changed?

Most homes now use wheelie bins instead of plastic sacks. This helps people recycle more and keeps streets cleaner.

If your home is suitable for wheelie bins, you should have received:

- **Black bin with black lid** – for rubbish that can't be recycled (collected every two weeks)
- **Black bin with pink lid** – for plastic, glass and cans (collected every two weeks)
- **Black bin with blue lid** – for paper and card (collected every two weeks)
- You will already have a **blue food caddy** – for food waste (collected every week)

Other services include:

- **White textile sack** – for clothes and fabrics, monthly bookable collection
- **Small electricals** – placed in a carrier bag, monthly bookable collection
- **Green garden waste bin** – collected weekly if you pay for the service

### What If I Live in a Flat?

If you live in a flat with communal bins, your collections will still be weekly. If your flat doesn't have space or access for wheelie bins, you'll keep using:

- **Black sacks** – for general rubbish
- **Pink sacks** – for clean and dry recycling
- **Blue box** – for paper and card
- **Blue food caddy** – for food waste (if your flat has a food waste bin)

### IMPORTANT REMINDER

If you use a bin chute this is for small, bagged everyday household waste only. Please ensure all rubbish bags are securely tied before disposal to prevent spills and blockages.

**Do not** place the following items in the chute:

- Large, full black sacks (these are too big and must be taken to the external waste areas)
- Bulky items
- Cardboard boxes
- Flammable materials
- Loose waste

These items can cause dangerous blockages and increase the risk of fire spreading between floors.

For bulky waste disposal, please visit the Southend City Council website to arrange a collection.

### Why Are Things Changing?

The new system helps:

- People recycle better
- Stop injuries from lifting heavy sacks
- Keep streets tidy
- Help the environment

Southend residents use over 10 million single-use recycling sacks each year. Switching to bins will help reduce this number.

### Common Questions

- **Do I have to use the new bins?** Yes, if your home is found to be suitable.
- **Can I get a smaller/bigger bin?** Smaller bins are not currently available, but larger homes (six plus residents), or those with care waste (one adult with incontinence pad use, or two children in nappies) can apply for bigger 240 litre bins.
- **Can I still use my pink sacks?** No, if you have been given wheelie bins, please do not use your pink sacks. Recycling should be cleaned and put straight in the bin, pink sacks are not recyclable.
- **What if I need help putting my bins out?** Assisted collections are available for residents with medical or mobility issues. Apply online ([www.southend.gov.uk/assistedcollections](http://www.southend.gov.uk/assistedcollections)) or phone Customer Services on 01702 215006. If you already have assisted collection service in place you do not need to re-apply.

For more answers, visit the Council's website: [www.southend.gov.uk/recycling-waste-0](http://www.southend.gov.uk/recycling-waste-0)

### Stay Updated

You can download the **Southend Waste App** to get reminders about which bins to put out each week, check what you can recycle, and report any missed collections or fly tipping through MySouthend.

Find it on the Apple App Store or Google Play Store – just search 'Southend Waste'!



# JOHN'S JOURNEY WITH ART

We're proud to share the story of John, a resident at Bishop House, whose passion for art has changed his life and is now helping others too.

John recently graduated with a 2:1 degree in art after three years of study. His love for art began when he joined art therapy classes, which gave him confidence and inspired him to take adult college courses. From there, he went on to study for his degree and now he hopes to continue his studies by doing a master's degree.

Alongside his own learning, John gives back to the community in a very special way. Having once experienced homelessness, he received support from HARP, an organisation that helped him through a difficult time. Today, John volunteers at HARP by supporting art classes, using his skills to encourage others just as he was once encouraged.

The Resident Engagement Team has been delighted to see John share his creativity, knowledge, and experience with the community. His journey shows how art can inspire, heal, and bring people together.



Abstract



Self Portrait



Pastel landscape of New York

# RECOGNITION FOR TACKLING ASB

We have earned Resolve Accreditation, a national award for doing a great job dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB).

This means that we help people feel safe in their homes and communities. We listen to residents, work with the police and other groups, and support both victims and people who cause problems.

We were praised for acting quickly, being kind and fair, and helping people change their behaviour. We also train our staff well and ask residents for feedback to keep improving.

This award shows that South Essex Homes is working hard to make neighbourhoods safer for everyone.

Chris March, the Chair of our Board, received the award at an event in September





## Leaseholders struggling with the Cost of Living-Where to get help?

The rising cost of living can feel overwhelming, especially when coupled with service charges, large repairs, and other leaseholder obligations. As a Leaseholder you may incorrectly think that because you own your own home, no help is available to you.

So, planning for costs, and knowing where to get help can make an enormous difference.

This guide equips leaseholders with practical strategies and resources to navigate these challenges with confidence.

### 1. Plan for Ongoing and Unexpected Costs

Budgeting is key. Consider:

- **Service charges and ground rent:** Check your lease for predictable costs and anticipate any upcoming major works.
- **Sinking funds or reserves:** If your building has a reserve fund for repairs, understand how it works and how contributions are calculated.
- **Insurance and utilities:** Factor these into your monthly budget to avoid surprises.

Even small adjustments, like setting aside a monthly contingency fund, can reduce stress when large bills arrive.

### 2. Seek Financial Support

If you are struggling to meet service charge payments or other leaseholder costs, there are several practical options available:

#### Universal Credit claimants

- If you own your home and receive Universal Credit, you may qualify for extra help with your service charges as part of your housing costs.
- You might need to attend an interview at Jobcentre Plus and provide documents such as your lease, service charge invoices, and mortgage statements.
- There can be a waiting period of around nine months before help is available, during which you cannot have earned income.
- Contact the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to discuss your specific situation and find out what support you can receive.

#### Other financial support

- Government benefits: Check your eligibility for Universal Credit, Council Tax Reduction, or other schemes. Use the Government benefits calculator to ensure you are not missing out.
- Charities and advice organisations:
  - o **Citizens Advice Southend:** For free, confidential guidance, you can contact them at **0808 278 7951** or visit **citizensadvicesouthend.org.uk**. They can advise on benefits, debt, and leaseholder issues.
  - o **Leasehold Advisory Service (LEASE):** Provides independent advice on leasehold rights and service charges. Visit **www.lease-advice.org**
  - o **Turn2Us:** Helps you find benefits, grants, and support. Visit **www.turn2us.org.uk**

These resources can provide immediate guidance, help you understand what you are entitled to, and support you in managing short-term financial pressures effectively.

### Are your contact details up to date?

To ensure you receive important updates about your leasehold property, including service charges, repairs, and other notices, please make sure we have your current contact details. This includes your email address, phone number, and mailing address. You can update your information at any time by emailing us at [leaseholderservices@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:leaseholderservices@seh.southend.gov.uk)

## YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

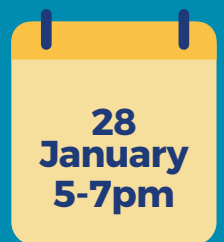
### Join the Leaseholders Meeting!

Are you a leaseholder with ideas, concerns, or questions about your building or service?

- Share your experiences and feedback
- Hear updates on estate services and planned works
- Meet other leaseholders and build community
- Influence decisions that affect your home

**Spaces are limited - reserve your spot today!**

[leaseholderservices@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:leaseholderservices@seh.southend.gov.uk)  
0800 833 160



# CELEBRATING YOUR IMPACT

Our new Resident Engagement Annual Report is now available! This report highlights how your feedback has shaped services over the past year and celebrates the incredible work our residents do to support and strengthen the community. You can view the report online on our website at [www.southessexhomes.co.uk/resident-engagement](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/resident-engagement) or request a hard copy if you prefer by emailing [residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:residentengagement@seh.southend.gov.uk).



Looking for a

# FRIENDLY, SOCIAL GROUP IN SOUTHEND?



The Southend District Pensioners meet monthly to promote wellbeing, share ideas, and enjoy good company.

**When:** Third Wednesday of each month, 2.00–4.00pm (doors open 1.45pm)

**Where:** Balmoral Community Centre, Salisbury Avenue, Westcliff-on-Sea (SS0 7AU) Near “Cricketers” bus stop, parking & disabled access available.

Enjoy guest speakers, local history, music, and more. Past highlights include talks on Southend Pier, community safety, and performances by the Ladybirds Singing Group.

## Next meeting: Wednesday 19th November

This issue may reach you just in time! Join us for a heartwarming talk from Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, featuring Sheree Lester, Simon Davie, and hearing dog Dory.

Visitors are always welcome, and there's no pressure to join right away. Just come along, enjoy the afternoon, and see if it's for you. If you'd like to know more, feel free to ring Jean Howes on 01702 341047 or Sue Stacey on 07957 725647 for a friendly chat.

So why not give it a try? You might just find a new community waiting for you.

# KEEPING YOUR WATER SYSTEM SAFE WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LEGIONELLA



To protect yourself from Legionella bacteria - which can cause Legionnaires' disease - it's important to manage your home water systems carefully.

Legionnaires' disease is a serious form of pneumonia caused by breathing in tiny droplets of water that contain Legionella bacteria.

Here are practical steps residents can take to stay safe:

## Regular Maintenance & Hygiene

- **Flush unused outlets**  
Run taps and showers for at least 5 minutes if they haven't been used in over a week, for instance after a holiday or hospital stay. This helps clear stagnant water where bacteria can grow.
- **Clean showerheads**  
Disinfect every 1–3 months using chlorine tablets or a mild bleach solution. This removes any build-up that could harbour bacteria.
- **Hot water** - Keep your boiler or immersion heater set to at least 60°C. This temperature kills Legionella bacteria.
- **Cold water** - Make sure cold water stays below 20°C. Warmer water can encourage bacteria to grow.
- **Thermostatic mixer valves (TMVs) are fitted in some properties** - These blend hot and cold water safely at the tap or shower head, without lowering the temperature in the system itself. This helps maintain safe water temperatures while preventing scalding.



Bacterium dormant



Legionella will multiply



Legionella will survive but cannot multiply



Legionella will not survive

## Water System Monitoring

- **Check for changes** - Report any unusual signs to South Essex Homes, such as:
  - o Water that smells strange or metallic
  - o Discoloured water (e.g. cloudy, brown or yellow)
  - o Low water pressure or slow flow from taps
  - o Unusual noises from pipes or water tanks
  - o Warm cold water or cold hot water - these could be signs that your water system isn't working properly and may pose a risk.

## Awareness & Action

- **Know the symptoms** - Early signs of Legionnaires' disease include fever, chills, muscle aches, and headaches. More serious symptoms may include coughing, shortness of breath, or confusion.
- **Seek medical help** - If you feel unwell and think you may have been exposed to Legionella, contact your doctor or the NHS 111 service, and mention the risk. Early treatment is important.

If you have any concerns about your water system, please contact South Essex Homes on **0800 833 160**. We're here to help keep your home safe.

# BUILDING SAFETY COMPETITION TIME!

Sponsored by Blake Fire and Security Systems

Building safety matters, and it's never too early to start learning how to spot hazards in the home and think about how to stay safe. That's why we're launching two exciting competitions for children to get involved, learn, and have fun!



## SPOT THE HAZARD CHALLENGE

Take a close look at the South Essex Homes living room picture. Something's not quite right... Can you find 15 hidden hazards?

Tell us:

- How many hazards you found
- Why each one is dangerous
- Any other safety tips you have!

Remember, finding lots of hazards is great but knowing why they're dangerous is even better!

Write down or type your answers and send them in using the 'How to Enter' details below.



### What is a hazard?

A hazard is something that could hurt someone or damage a building. It might be something sharp, hot, broken, or just in the wrong place!

## DESIGN A SAFETY POSTER

Time to get creative! Make a poster that shows how to stay safe in buildings, we'll display the winning entries!

You could focus on things like fire safety, lift safety, electrical safety, damp and mould... or any other topic you can think of!

Use paint, pens, pencils, collage, or digital art - just make sure it's your own work. Bright colours and creative ideas are encouraged!

Your poster must be no bigger than A3. (Top tip: You can stick two pieces of A4 paper together to make A3)

## COMPETITION DETAILS

### Who Can Enter?

You can enter just one of the above competitions, or you can go above and beyond and enter both if you'd like to, for two chances to win! Prizes will be awarded for both competitions within the two age groups below:

- Ages 5-10
- Ages 11-16

### Prizes

Four lucky winners will get a £50 voucher to spend at a shop of their choice! Thanks to our generous sponsor, Blake Fire and Security Systems.

- **Everyone who enters gets a certificate too!**
- **Winners will be celebrated at a special event with the Mayor on 17th December!**

### How to Enter

Write your name, age, address, and contact details on the back of your entry. Please also let us know if you're happy for your name to appear in the next issue of Insight magazine as recognition for taking part!

### Terms & Conditions

- By entering, the child's parents are agreeing that SEH may display poster artwork at events, in publications and online.
- Artwork cannot be returned, so please make sure you take a photo before sending it in.
- We will use the information you provide only for the purpose of running this competition and contacting winners. Your details will be stored securely and not shared with anyone outside SEH.

Our

# PERFORMANCE

## SAFETY & QUALITY

In this issue of Insight, we're looking at how South Essex Homes is doing with the Safety and Quality consumer standard. This covers how we keep homes safe, well-maintained, and up to date – and how we support residents who need adaptations to live independently.

### STOCK QUALITY

**The standard says that landlords must know the condition of the homes they manage and use that information to keep them safe, well-maintained and good quality.**

As of mid-October 2025, we've completed stock condition surveys within the last five years on 4,154 of the 6,089 homes we manage - that's 68.3%.

To speed up progress, we've expanded our team to four Stock Condition Surveyors. They're working through a fast-track programme to make sure we have the most current information about every home. These surveys help us plan future works and ensure homes are maintained to a high standard.

We know that having someone inspect your home might feel intrusive, but these visits aren't about judging how you live - they're about making sure your home is safe and that we have the right data to plan

improvements. If we spot anything that needs attention, we'll either pass it to our repairs team or consider it for future investment programmes.

Survey results are recorded in a specialist asset management system. This includes details about each property's age, condition and key components like windows, kitchens and bathrooms. The data helps us plan capital investment and schedule works based on actual need.

We also update this data when we carry out repairs, capital works, or when homes are re-let. Surveys are done for new builds and mutual exchanges too. Before planning improvement works, we double-check records - for example, if something is old but still in good condition, we'll schedule another inspection later instead of replacing it.



### DECENCY

**The standard says that landlords must listen to tenants and work with local councils and other groups to help make communities better places to live. They must also explain how they help with things like health, money, and the environment.**

Meeting the Decent Homes Standard is a key goal for South Essex Homes. We use the stock survey data to check how we're doing and to guide our investment decisions.

The standard looks at:

- **What it is** - the main parts of a home like roofs, walls, kitchens and bathrooms.
- **How old it is** - but age alone doesn't mean it's not compliant.
- **Its condition** - whether it's working properly or needs replacing.

We track this using our asset management system, which links age and condition data. Right now, 98.2% of our homes meet the Decent Homes Standard. We're working towards 100%, but this depends on being able to access homes.

You can read the full guidance at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-decent-home-definition-and-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-decent-home-definition-and-guidance)



# HEALTH & SAFETY



**The standard says that landlords must take all reasonable steps to keep tenants safe in their homes and shared areas.**

Keeping residents safe is at the heart of everything we do. We manage six main health and safety risks:

## Asbestos

- We maintain an asbestos register showing where asbestos is present.
- We inspect communal areas annually to check its condition.

## Electrical Safety

- We carry out electrical tests every five years.
- We test portable appliances in communal areas.
- We check door entry systems and lightning conductors annually.

## Fire Safety

- We inspect fire doors and carry out fire risk assessments regularly.
- We test fire safety equipment like dry risers, air vents, extinguishers, smoke and heat detectors.

## Gas Safety

- We test gas boilers every year – 100% of homes with gas have a valid certificate.
- We test communal boilers and carbon monoxide detectors.
- We check gas supply integrity.

## Water Hygiene

- We carry out Legionella risk assessments every two years and review them annually.
- We test booster pumps every year.

# REPAIRS, MAINTENANCE & IMPROVEMENTS



**The standard says that landlords must provide a repairs and maintenance service that is effective, efficient and timely.**

## Repairs

We aim to respond quickly and effectively to repair requests. In 2024-25:

- Number of completed responsive repair requests = **14,979**
- Number of empty properties brought back into use = **494**
- Average routine + planned maintenance repair costs per property = **£996**
- Average cost per responsive repair = **£202**

We continue to listen to your feedback and remain committed to improving our repairs service. The Service Improvement Plan we introduced with our main contractor Axis is still very much in progress, and we're working hard to ensure repairs are completed more reliably and to a higher standard. We truly appreciate your patience and understanding as we make these changes.

## Capital Programme

In 2024-25, we spent £6 million on major repairs and improvements, including:

- £1.5 million on Decent Homes upgrades
- £2 million on building safety projects
- £1.46 million on major works at the Balmoral Estate
- The rest on essential improvements across our housing stock

This investment helps us maintain high standards and respond to the changing needs of our residents and buildings.

# ADAPTATIONS

**The standard says that landlords must help tenants access services for housing adaptations.**

From Southend on Sea City Council's Adaptations Team: In 2024-25, Southend-on-Sea City Council's Adaptations Team completed 155 adaptations in social housing. These included:

- Bathroom adaptations – **51%**
- Stairlifts/internal lifts – **10%**
- External works (paths, ramps etc.) – **12%**
- Other adaptations (kitchens, visual impairment aids etc.) – **27%**

We support tenants who need adaptations to live independently. This includes help with personal care, cooking, sleeping and getting in and out of the property. Tenants can refer themselves to the Occupational

Therapy (OT) team for an assessment. There's no means test, and the OT will recommend the right adaptations based on your needs.

## What kind of adaptations are available?

Examples include:

- Ramps
- Stairlifts
- Bathroom changes

## How to get a referral:

Complete a self-referral form at: [www.southend.gov.uk/health-wellbeing/independent-living-occupational-therapy-ot/3](http://www.southend.gov.uk/health-wellbeing/independent-living-occupational-therapy-ot/3)



# MAKING HOMES BETTER

## Our Property Improvements

We thought we'd show you what one of our newly completed wet rooms looks like.:

Unfortunately we don't have any 'before' photos so you can see the transformation, but we're sure the tenant is really happy with their new bathroom!



And here are some photos showing the stages of a roof replacement in Philpott Avenue, Southend.



### Keeping Homes Safe, Modern and Comfortable

Across Southend, our teams are hard at work improving homes as part of our ongoing Capital Programme – a long-term investment in making sure our properties meet modern standards and remain safe and comfortable for residents.

### What's Underway?

We're continuing with key upgrades under the Decent Homes initiative, which includes:

- Kitchen and bathroom replacements, along with essential electrical improvements, to ensure homes meet the latest standards.
- New windows and doors are being installed in many properties, following the rollout of our improvement programme that began in June.

These works are part of our commitment to maintaining high-quality homes and delivering improvements that make a real difference to everyday living.

**We'll keep you updated in each issue of Insight as we continue making homes better!**

## INTRODUCING VOICESCAPE

We've started using a new system called Voicescape to help us manage rent accounts more smoothly.

### What is Voicescape?

Voicescape is a secure online platform that helps us stay in touch with you in a quicker and more personal way. It lets us send useful reminders and updates about your rent account, making it easier for you to take action when needed.

### What does this mean for you?

- **Clear messages:** You'll get text messages from South Essex Homes with friendly reminders, updates, and links to make payments.
- **Supportive tone:** We will be working with residents to make sure the messages are easy to understand and feel respectful and helpful.
- **Quick and easy:** If you need to make a payment, you can do it straight from the link in the message.
- **Help is always here:** If you're having difficulties or have questions, just call or email us. We're here to support you.

### Is the message really from us?

Yes – if you get a text about your rent from South Essex Homes, it's part of our new Voicescape system. If you're ever unsure, please call us on **0800 833160** to check. We want you to feel confident and supported at every step.

### Why are we doing this?

We want to make it easier for you to manage your rent and get help when you need it. Voicescape helps us respond faster, reduce missed payments, and spend more time supporting those who need it most.

If you have any questions or thoughts about the new messages, we'd love to hear from you. Your feedback helps us make sure our messages are clear, useful, and right for everyone.



# LET'S TALK ABOUT DOMESTIC ABUSE



Everyone deserves to feel safe at home. But sadly, some people live in fear because of domestic abuse. At South Essex Homes, we take this issue very seriously and want all our residents to know that help is available.

## What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic abuse is when someone hurts or controls another person in a close relationship. It can happen between partners, ex-partners, or family members. Abuse isn't just physical - it can also be emotional, financial, or controlling behaviour.

Here are some examples:

- Being shouted at or made to feel worthless
- Being hit, pushed, or threatened
- Being stopped from seeing friends or family
- Having money taken or controlled
- Being watched or followed

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone – no matter your age, gender, or background.

## How South Essex Homes Can Help

South Essex Homes is proud to be accredited by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA). This means we follow best practices to support people affected by domestic abuse.

If you're a victim, or worried about someone else, we can:

- Help you stay safe in your home or find somewhere safe to go
- Work with the police and support services
- Offer advice and emotional support
- Keep your information private and treat you with respect

Our staff are trained to listen and help. You can speak to your Housing Community Safety Officer or any member of staff or call us on 0800 833160. We'll never judge you - we're here to help.

You may prefer to email our Housing Community Safety Team at [hcst@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:hcst@seh.southend.gov.uk) where our specially trained officers can assist you.

## Domestic Abuse Awareness Month

October was Domestic Abuse Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness and show support for those affected. It's a reminder that domestic abuse is never acceptable - and that help is always available.

## White Ribbon Day - 25 November

Every year, **White Ribbon Day** takes place on **25 November**. It's a national campaign to end violence against women and girls. This year's theme is "**We Speak Up**" - encouraging everyone to challenge harmful behaviour and support those affected.

**White Ribbon Day** reminds us that abuse is never okay. It starts with small actions - like calling out sexist jokes or supporting someone who's struggling. Men and boys are especially encouraged to be part of the solution by speaking up and showing respect.

You can take the **White Ribbon** pledge to never commit, excuse, or stay silent about abuse. Find out more at [www.whiteribbon.org.uk](http://www.whiteribbon.org.uk).

## What You Can Do

If you're experiencing domestic abuse, or worried about someone else, here's what you can do:

- **Talk to someone you trust** – a friend, neighbour, or support worker
- **Contact COMPASS**, the Essex Domestic Abuse Helpline, on 0330 333 7 444 (open weekdays 8am–8pm, weekends 8am–1pm). Visit [www.essexcompass.org.uk](http://www.essexcompass.org.uk).
- **Call South Essex Homes on 0800 833160**
- **In an emergency, always call 999**

Remember - you are not alone. Help is out there, and things can get better.

# MORE THAN JUST PAINT

Our Resident Engagement team is very grateful to Dulux Decorator Centre Westcliff for their generous donation of paint and decorating supplies for residents living in temporary accommodation. Their support has offered far more than just materials, it's given residents the chance to make their space feel like home.

Being able to personalise and brighten their surroundings can make a big difference to comfort, confidence, and wellbeing during a difficult time. This is a wonderful example of social value in action, showing how a company's generosity can help people create welcoming spaces they can truly call their own.





# SAFETY THROUGH THE SEASONS

We know wreaths and door decorations can add a lovely seasonal touch to your home especially throughout autumn and winter... but please don't hang them on fire doors.

Fire doors are specially designed to slow the spread of fire and smoke, giving you and your neighbours vital time in the event of a fire. Hanging anything on them, even a small wreath, can affect how well they work in an emergency.

1. It can stop the door from closing properly. Fire doors need to shut tightly to work. If something is hanging over the door, it might leave a gap where smoke or flames can get through.
2. It can damage the door. Nails, hooks, or sticky pads can weaken the door or its seal, making it less effective in a fire.
3. It can be a fire risk itself. Some decorations are made from materials that catch fire easily.

Instead, try hanging your wreath indoors somewhere it won't pose a risk. You'll still get that seasonal charm, without compromising safety.

## Autumn Is a Great Time to Declutter!

As the seasons change, it's a good opportunity to clear out things you no longer use. Tidier homes and storage areas aren't just nicer to live in, they're safer too. Less clutter means fewer fire risks and better visibility, especially in communal spaces.

If you choose to get rid of any large items please make sure you do this responsibly – every household now has one free bulky waste collection per year. Visit the Council's website for more information: [www.southend.gov.uk/recycling-waste-0/bulky-waste-collection](http://www.southend.gov.uk/recycling-waste-0/bulky-waste-collection)

**Fire safety tip:** Before you start drying your fluffy onesies to keep you warm, make sure to clean out the dust and lint from your tumble dryer. It's a small job that can prevent serious fires.

**Your safety matters to us – thank you for helping keep your building safe for everyone!**

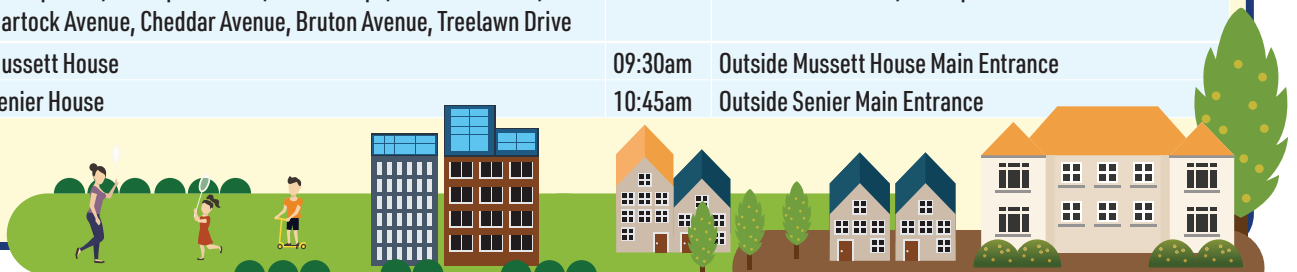
# ESTATE INSPECTIONS

Please see below the details of Estate Inspections due to take place between the production of this issue and the Winter 2026 issue, which is due out in February.

To download the full schedule of Estate Inspections, please visit our website: [www.southessexhomes.co.uk/estate-inspections](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/estate-inspections).

The inspections usually re-start in the springtime, so once the schedule for 2026 inspections is finalised in the New Year, this will be available from the above webpage.

DATE	PLACE	TIME	START POINT
19-Nov-25	Leighwood Avenue, Eastwood Road North	09:30am	Junction with Oakwood Avenue
19-Nov-25	Little Fretches	10:30am	Meet Outside Main Entrance
19-Nov-25	Shannon Close, Danescroft Close	11:30am	Meet Outside Main Entrance
19-Nov-25	Danbury Close	1:00pm	Meet in Car park
26-Nov-25	Viking Court	09:30am	Outside Viking Court Main Entrance
26-Nov-25	Delaware Crescent	11:00am	Block 21-31 Delaware Crescent
27-Nov-25	Kestrel House	09:30am	Outside Kestrel House Main Entrance
27-Nov-25	Crouchmans	10:30am	Outside Crouchmans Main Entrance
27-Nov-25	Great Mead	11:30am	Outside Great Mead Main Entrance
02-Dec-25	Bradfordbury, Rothwell Close, Eastwood Old Road	09:30am	Outside Community Hall on Bradfordbury
02-Dec-25	Westwood	10:30am	Communal Area Entrance
03-Dec-25	Mendip Road, Mendip Crescent, The Mendips, Dunster Avenue, Martock Avenue, Cheddar Avenue, Bruton Avenue, Treelawn Drive	09:30am	Outside West Office, Mendip Road
04-Dec-25	Mussett House	09:30am	Outside Mussett House Main Entrance
04-Dec-25	Senier House	10:45am	Outside Senier Main Entrance



# GARDEN IN

# BLOOM

## 2025 WINNERS

We had a fantastic response to this year's Garden in Bloom 2025 competition, with 14 wonderful entries from our residents!

Congratulations to everyone who took part, it's been a joy to see the creativity, dedication and community spirit reflected in so many beautiful gardens across our neighbourhood and huge thanks to our contractor partner Sureserve for their sponsorship of this annual competition.

The judging was recently carried out by members of the Resident Advisory Panel, and we are delighted to announce this year's winners:

### Best Front Garden

**Gold – Annette Bourke -**  
Westbury Road

**Silver – Mrs Poole -** Charles Close

**Bronze – Michael Beck -**  
Centurion Close



### Best Back Garden

**Gold – Miss Roberts -**  
Bulwark Road

**Silver – Tony Newman -**  
Cluny Square

**Bronze – Sharon Coker -**  
Hamstel Road



### Best Communal Garden

**Gold – Janet Linnett -** The Jordans

**Silver – Senier House residents**

**Bronze – Miss Smith -**  
Trafford House



### Best Flowerpot

**Mike Craig -**  
Senier House

**Erica Newman -**  
Cluny Square



### Children's Garden in Bloom

This year, we also enjoyed a special planting session with children, who showed incredible enthusiasm and imagination as they planted sunflowers and sweet peas. Their creations will be transferred to their garden where they will bloom beautifully next year!

### Honourable Mention

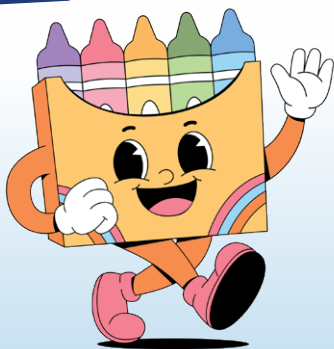
We would also like to give an honourable mention to the residents who, although they didn't win a prize this year, created beautiful gardens and contributed to making our community even more vibrant.

Thank you for your effort, creativity and for taking part.

A huge well done to all the residents and children for their efforts in beautifying the community!  
We look forward to seeing the creativity and talent bloom again next year.



# COLOUR ME IN



# CROSSWORD

## ACROSS

- 1 What word was on the sign of a new picture, designed by the children of Chaucer House? (7) *Page 8*
- 3 What's the name of the Bishop House artist we have featured in this issue? (4) *Page 14*
- 6 The arts and crafts sessions were delivered by which organisation? - \_\_\_ Art (10) *Page 7*
- 9 At which Southend estate is there a vibrant project called 'Art Jam'? (9) *Page 9*
- 13 What's the name of the Adams Elm House resident who raised £855 at her Macmillan coffee morning? (5) *Page 8*
- 14 Who is the sponsor of our Building Safety Competition? \_\_\_ Fire and Security Systems (5) *Page 17*
- 16 What's the name of the accreditation South Essex Homes has achieved for the work we do to tackle anti-social behaviour? (7) *Page 14*

## DOWN

- 1 In a recent change to waste collections, what type of bins have replaced plastic sacks? (7) *Page 13*
- 2 What have residents been busy knitting and crocheting for a display on the Pier? (7) *Page 8*

- 4 What type of bacteria can cause Legionnaires' disease? (11) *Page 16*
- 5 What is the shortened term for the accreditation South Essex Homes has received to show we follow best practices to support people affected by domestic abuse? (4) *Page 21*
- 7 What is the name for the legal order given by a court that requires someone to stop doing certain activities? (10) *Page 4*
- 8 What is the common term for an illegal money lender? (4,5) *Page 10*
- 10 The final building to be visited in the 2025 estate inspection schedule will be \_\_\_ House (6) *Page 22*
- 11 What's the surname of David, our Complaints Manager? (7) *Page 12*
- 12 At which community centre do Southend District Pensioners meet on the third Wednesday of every month? (8) *Page 15*
- 15 Condensation is what happens when warm air hits what type of surface? (4) *Page 5*

