

Spring 2022 issue!

# insight

The South Essex Homes Resident Newsletter



Keats House residents enjoy craft sessions by the Art Ministry



**YOUR FREE COPY!**

Be part of it!

**HELPFUL HINTS & TIPS!**

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE...**

**NEW SPRINKLERS FOR TOWER BLOCK**

Pilot scheme at Cecil Court



**GET CRAFTY!**

Turn household waste into art!



**AND LOTS MORE...**

- Energy saving tips to help you keep your bills down as prices rise
- Raising awareness of mental health

**southessexhomes**  
working smarter together

What is

# MENTAL HEALTH

and how can we look after it?

## What is mental health?

Most of us would have heard it used before when people talk about their feelings or struggles, but what does it really mean?

Mental health can be both good and bad, just like our physical health. Good mental health can stimulate positive feelings and confidence, whereas poor mental health can lead to negative thoughts and feelings.

A mental health problem develops when these negative thoughts and feelings become difficult to cope with in everyday life and stop you from doing the things you enjoy.

## What causes poor mental health?

There are many things that can cause poor mental health, it could be just one thing, or it could be a combination of factors building up over time. This can include big life changes, relationship or workplace issues, discrimination, grief, pressure, abuse and more – the list is not exhaustive.

Once you notice you are struggling, it is important to seek out support. Whether it is a friend or an anonymous helpline, talking about it to someone can help and keeping it to yourself could leave your negative feelings to spiral.

## What is a diagnosis?

Much like a physical diagnosis, it is a way of describing a set of symptoms, or feelings. A diagnosis can be made by your doctor or by a mental health professional who will ask you about your feelings or thoughts and how they impact your life and your physical health.

Some mental illnesses will take longer to diagnose than others as they are complex, and not everyone will showcase symptoms in the same way. Once you have received a diagnosis it may help you to make sense of what you are feeling and can also lead to a sense of relief as you finally have a name for what you are experiencing, and you can look for targeted support. It can also help you to receive reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

You don't need a diagnosis to find support though, there are a variety of charities and helplines available for anyone struggling no matter what their diagnosis may or may not be. Some people may not even find a diagnosis to be helpful, as they feel it labels or misrepresents them. It is important to remember that a diagnosis does not define who you are.

## What about support?

There is no shame in seeking help if you find yourself struggling with your mental health. It is courageous to recognise that you need to talk to someone and to put yourself first.

There's a variety of treatment and support options for mental health issues. Talking therapies such as counselling will work for some people, and others prefer to use medication to manage their mental health. Peer support is also very important, this can include online groups on Facebook for example or local support groups.

You can also access treatment and support from your workplace or school, your doctor's surgery, the hospital, and many other places. There is also the choice for support over the phone or online from charity helplines or peer support message boards.

You also have the opportunity to support yourself. You can do this by reading self-help books, and completing self-care activities such as getting outside, exercising, or simply getting a good quality night's rest.

## Support Groups

- **Andy's Man Club** is a talking support group for men over 18 ([andysmanclub.co.uk](http://andysmanclub.co.uk))
- **Reach out for Mental Health** coffee afternoon every Monday 1-3pm at North Road Chapel

## Peer Support Message Boards

- **The Mix** provides support and information for under 25s ([themix.org.uk](http://themix.org.uk))
- **Side By Side** is a community platform by Mind ([sidebyside.mind.org.uk](http://sidebyside.mind.org.uk))
- **Togetherall** is an online support community that you may be referred to ([togetherall.com](http://togetherall.com))
- **Somewhere to Turn** is a South East and Central Essex Mind support group on Facebook

## Helplines

- **Childline** provides 24 hour support and advice for children and young people ([childline.org.uk](http://childline.org.uk)) – call **0800 11 11**
- **HopeLineUK** – call **0800 068 4141** if you are having suicidal thoughts
- **Samaritans** hosts a range of support services and a 24 hour helpline ([Samaritans.org](http://Samaritans.org)) – call **116 123**
- **Anxiety UK** provides a range of support services to help control anxiety ([anxietyuk.org.uk](http://anxietyuk.org.uk)) – Text **07537 416 905**

## In House Counselling Service

- South Essex Homes has a free and confidential in-house counselling service that we offer to all of our residents. The sessions can be carried out over zoom, telephone, and face to face, the counsellors will facilitate this with you. We are also able to offer group sessions for those who are struggling with anxiety and depression.
- If you would like to be referred to the service, please contact your support services or tenancy officer who will complete the referral form with you.

If you know someone struggling with their mental health or would like to be able to support someone vulnerable, you can access free suicide prevention training from **#TalkSuicideEssex** by scanning the QR code to the right.

Call **999** if you have seriously harmed yourself or may be about to.



# WELCOME

## Welcome to the spring issue of Insight!

After what feels like a very long winter, isn't it lovely to be surrounded by the signs of springtime?!

We cover a wide range of topics in this issue, including lots of great stories about what's going on across the city. Stories about you, our residents, and what you've been up to always make for my favourite articles in Insight so please keep them coming – we love to hear from you!

You may remember that at the time of writing the last issue of Insight, Amber Rodgers had just joined me in the Comms team – well she has been very busy



writing stories for this edition, including pulling together some of the excellent craft ideas on pages 6 & 7. If you have a go at making anything yourself, please send in your pictures and we'll include them in the next issue.

Please also let us know if you have any celebrations to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in your neighbourhood! Tag us on social media or email your pics in to us, we would be thrilled to see them.

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

*All the best, Julia*  
Julia Pack, Editor

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## Message from Mike

I hope you have had an enjoyable break over the Easter period and have been able to enjoy the improving weather. I also hope you have managed to avoid contracting Covid but if you have, as the latest variants have proved more prevalent and easily transmissible, I hope your symptoms have been mild and you've recovered quickly. Thankfully, that was the case for me when I contracted the virus recently and it looks increasingly like Covid will be something that will become a part of everyday life as we move ever closer to normality.

For residents in our sheltered housing schemes, if you haven't already been advised then you will shortly be receiving information regarding upcoming meetings at your scheme to explain a range of changes intended to further improve the services we provide for you at your individual location. A future edition of Insight will explain those changes in more detail.

All of our pockets are set to be affected by the increasing global energy prices, so now is a good time to take a look at the energy consumption in your household

and consider where you can make savings – an article on page 9 may help give you some handy tips.

I am also pleased to see that this edition of Insight contains details on page 2 of the excellent mental health services we enjoy here in Southend and I hope you find it useful. This article was suggested by one of our residents, so thank you especially to them for taking the time to get in touch; we are always delighted to receive feedback from tenants along with your ideas for the subjects of articles you would like to see in Insight magazine, so please contact Julia or Amber in our Communications team if there is a topic you'd like to see covered in a future edition.

I do hope we are destined for some warm weather over the coming months and that you are able to enjoy getting out and about outdoors! Don't forget to check the STRF website to see if there are any events happening near you over the summer months (more details on the centre pages).

*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)

# DIGITAL INCLUSION Project



These puppets were exhibited at the Focal Point Gallery in January

The SEH Digital Inclusion Project was launched in 2020 and has been helping residents in Sheltered Housing to get online ever since. The aim of the project is to help tenants understand the benefits of using technology and to enable them to focus on the changes it could bring to their day to day lives and to help them gain the confidence to deal with modern technology.

We started working with volunteers, many of them residents, who wanted to share their skills whilst meeting new people. We call these volunteers our Digital Ambassadors. We set up workshops for the Digital Ambassadors so that we could help and support them with any questions they had around volunteering and to all to get to know one another. They are supported throughout their volunteering with regular contact from staff.

Supporting tenants to get online can include helping with a smart phone, to online shopping or setting up an email account. The volunteers also show residents trustworthy sources of information online and how to search the web and help them access the sites they need to support them. The Digital Ambassadors visit schemes to give regular 1-2-1 sessions, they also provide drop-in sessions in the communal lounges.



## Meet our DIGITAL AMBASSADORS

**Sally** "I really believe that it's important for people to know a little bit about the internet, not everything, but at least the basics. I really believe in people; anyone can do it! Everything is online these days so it's very important. Volunteering is like being back at work, it's something nice to do after retiring."



**Tony** "I have a background in IT, and I know that as time progresses it is getting more and more complicated. I had some free time, so I wanted to volunteer to help other people keep up with technology."

**Colin** "I already do voluntary driving for the hospital and Jewish Care, so I love helping and talking to older people as they have some amazing stories to tell. I have been involved in this for about six months and I get something out of it too, it's nice to be able to help people. I started out just wanting to help people to learn the basics of IT but now I'm excited to do more coding work like the puppets we exhibited with Focal Point Gallery in January. It's something good to do after retiring, but I enjoy this more than I would a job!



I think if you can put a smile on people's faces then you've done your job. It leads to a domino effect, the person you taught will teach the next person and step by step people will learn."

**Susan** "I have only moved into sheltered housing recently, but I have a long background in IT. I have worked in the field since I was very young and so I was already a point of contact for a lot of people when they had computer issues. I like using my knowledge to help people, I help people to order their shopping online and to make hospital appointments."





**Hilda** "Over lockdown I found it important to be able to introduce people to Zoom so that they could talk to friends and family online. It's also important now because you can talk to your doctor and order prescriptions online. I feel like I really needed to be a part of this, it has helped to bring back my confidence and has given me a new purpose. I've just come back from a holiday in Scotland on my own, which I never would have done before!

"I also now do painting workshops, I recently went into a scheme and had lots of residents come to paint with me, more than I expected! Some of the art is now waiting to be exhibited after covid restrictions ease, and I can't wait to do more in the future."

Volunteering can help you feel connected with your community and is a great way of making new friends. It is an excellent way of improving job opportunities. It also gives a sense of accomplishment when you have helped someone discover a new skill. To become a Digital Ambassador, you need basic IT skills, patience, empathy and enthusiasm. Our volunteers generally give 1-2 hours per week supporting tenants. If you would like to know more about this project and volunteering, please contact [sarahgallagher@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:sarahgallagher@seh.southend.gov.uk) or [nevebarr@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:nevebarr@seh.southend.gov.uk).

*Unfortunately, a cup of tea isn't the answer to everything*

## Sometimes you need Tenants' Contents Insurance

Are you covered?

Find out more about protecting your furniture and personal possessions.

Call: 0800 023 4057 [www.southessexhomes.co.uk/contentsinsurance](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/contentsinsurance)

Connect: with your Tenancy Services Officer

As your landlord, South Essex Homes insure the structure of your home, but our cover doesn't include what's inside it (your furniture and your personal belongings).

If you have to replace the contents of your home, it could prove very expensive. We therefore strongly recommend that you get your personal belongings insured against events including:

- Accidental damage
- Fire
- Theft
- Flooding/escape of water

South Essex Homes work with a leading insurer to offer home contents insurance that can be paid weekly with your rent. Unlike some

insurances, on this scheme, exclusively for South Essex Homes customers, there are no excesses – so nothing to pay in the event of a claim.

The covers have also just improved, to give you even more flexibility –

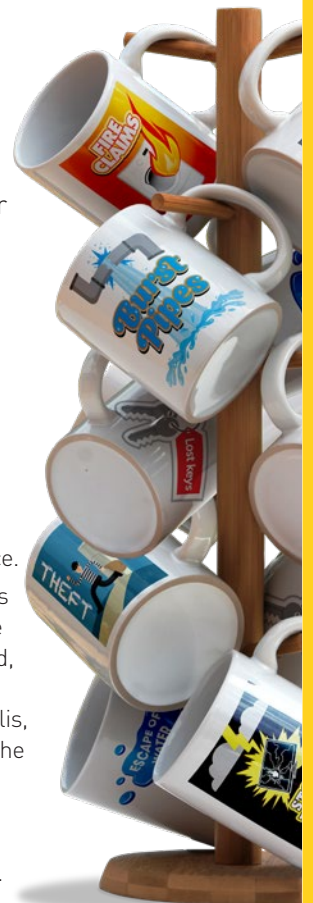
- Cover is available at a starting minimum of **£4,000 for all residents, meaning cover starts at 34p per week\***
- You can insure your contents up to a maximum of **£40,000.**
- Optional covers are available (for an additional premium) for **accidental damage, personal belongings outside of the home, wheelchairs and mobility scooters and also hearing aids.**

For more information and to apply online, please visit our website [www.southessexhomes.co.uk](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk) or call the contact centre on **0800 833 160** to request a paper application form.

\* Premiums shown apply to standard cover. Price includes Insurance Premium Tax (IPT) charged at the appropriate rate.

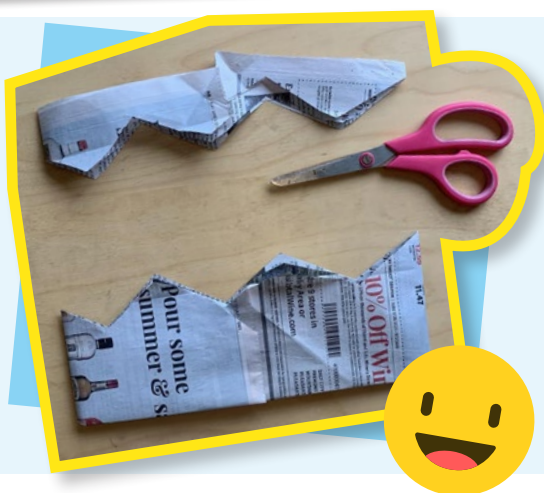
Terms and conditions apply, contact above. Acceptance restrictions may apply for conviction and claims experience.

Tenants Contents Insurance is underwritten by Aviva Insurance Limited. Aviva Insurance Limited, Registered in Scotland Number 2116. Registered Office: Pitheavlis, Perth PH2 0NH. Authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority. FP.ENT.286.VC



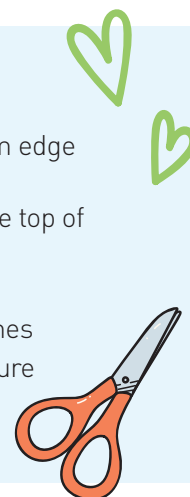
# SUSTAINABLE ARTS & CRAFTS

CELEBRATE THE PLATINUM JUBILEE SUSTAINABLY



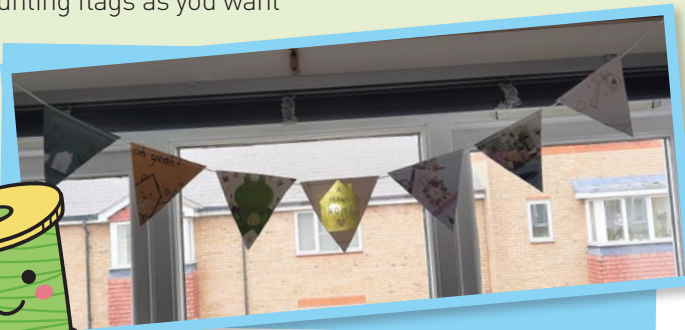
## A crown made of newspaper

- Fold a piece of newspaper in half to form a long rectangle
- Working with the folded edge at the bottom, fold the bottom edge up by 2 inches
- Keep folding this up by 2 inches until you have a band at the top of about 2 inches left
- Fold one edge of the rectangle towards the centre
- Do the same with the other edge, overlapping by a few inches
- Tape along the bottom where the two edges overlap to secure
- Cut a zigzag pattern horizontally across the top
- Open it out to reveal your crown!



## Bunting using old cards

- Cut a piece of ribbon or twill to the length that you want your bunting to be
- Make a triangle template so that all of your cards will be cut to the same shape
- Use the template to cut a triangle out of each card, make sure the prettiest parts are showing!
- Use a hole punch to make holes at the top two corners of the triangles
- Thread your ribbon through these holes, adding as many bunting flags as you want



## Paper chains using old magazines (use this one when you're done with it!)

- Cut this page into several strips
- Create the first circle with one strip by gluing the edges together
- Link each strip through the last circle and continue the process until you have reached the length you need



## Flags made of a lollipop stick and cardboard

- Cut out a rectangle from the cardboard, to be the flag
  - Decorate the flag using red, white, and blue – or other colours if you want to make a different flag!
- Glue the cardboard flag onto a wooden lollipop stick



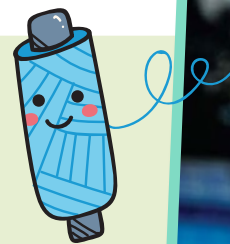
## NATURE CRAFT IDEAS

### Use a plastic bottle as a planter

- Cut an empty 2 litre water or fizzy drink bottle in half (you could cut a design such as cat ears into this)
- Make drainage holes at the bottom of the bottle for watering
- Add soil and a plant or seeds

### Bird feeder out of plastic bottle

- Cut two holes opposite each other about a quarter of the way up an empty 500ml drink bottle
- Stick a wooden spoon through these holes, this will act as a little perch
- Repeat this again slightly further up
- Fill your bottle with birdseed and it should come out onto the spoons too
- Tie some string around the top so that you can hang it in the garden



### Plant sunflowers in toilet roll tubes

- Fold the edges in on one end of the toilet roll tube to make a pot
- Fill it with soil
- Use your finger to make a hole for the sunflower seed
- Add the seed in and cover it back up
- Make sure you water them and keep them somewhere warm
- A plastic bag can be placed over them to create a mini greenhouse



### Easter Bonnet

This delightful Easter bonnet was made from recycled materials by a resident at Stephen McAdden House!

Please send us photos of your crafty makes using the contact details on page 3, we love to see them!

# AARON SERVICES

*Here to Stay!*



We're delighted that Aaron Services have successfully retained our Domestic and Commercial Gas Servicing, Maintenance and Electrical Testing contract, following a competitive tendering process.

They are a familiar face around town, having proudly worked with South Essex Homes, our residents, and our local community since 2014.

The new contract started on 1st April 2022 and will run for an initial 5 years with the option to extend for a further 5 years.



## First Time Gas Servicing Access

Allowing Aaron Services access to your home for our annual gas safety check is essential to ensure the safety of all.

Badly fitted and poorly serviced gas appliances can cause gas leaks, fires, explosions, and carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. CO is a highly poisonous gas that can kill quickly and without warning, as you cannot see it, taste it, or smell it.

Every month, all South Essex Homes residents that have allowed Aaron Services first-time servicing access are entered into a prize draw. The winner (selected at random) receives a £100 shopping voucher.

Congratulations to the lucky residents listed who have received their £100 shopping voucher:

Danescroft Drive	Leigh on Sea	Jan 2021
Norwich Avenue	Southend on Sea	Feb 2021
Eastwood Old Road	Leigh on Sea	Mar 2021
Blyth Avenue	Shoeburyness	Apr 2021
Snakes Lane	Southend on Sea	May 2021
Hornby Avenue	Westcliff on Sea	Jun 2021
Longbow	Southend on Sea	July 2021
Bridgwater Drive	Westcliff on Sea	Aug 2021
Royston Avenue	Southend on Sea	Sept 2021
Bewley Court	Southend on Sea	Oct 2021
Chelmer Way	Shoeburyness	Nov 2021
Sutton Court	Southend on Sea	Dec 2021
Norwich Avenue	Southend on Sea	Jan 2022

## Energy Efficiency Advice and Guidance

As a large heating contractor, Aaron Services are acutely aware of the effects of fuel poverty within our local communities. The cumulative impact of rising energy prices, the ongoing pandemic and cuts to Universal Credit will make this a particularly difficult period for many.

To combat fuel poverty and assist South Essex Homes residents - Aaron Services are proud supporters of The Sureserve Foundation. A charity whose purpose is to create warmer communities by helping to alleviate fuel poverty, promoting fuel efficiency and in turn, lessening the financial burden of high energy bills.

Thanks to their close relationship with the industry leading energy efficiency organisation National Energy Action, the Foundation are able to offer advice and guidance to help individuals tackle the challenges of energy efficiency and fuel poverty, including:

- Energy Supply – switching energy and gas supplier.
- Changing your energy usage habits.
- Making your home more energy efficient.
- Advice relating to fuel debt.
- Water Saving Tips.



Please follow the link to access their advice and guidance:  
<https://www.thesureservefoundation.org/advice-and-guidance>



# ENERGY SAVING

## Secrets



As you may have heard in the news, the cost of gas and electricity has risen at an unprecedented rate over the past few months and looks set to continue to increase further as the year goes on.

This unfortunately means that the cost of heating our homes will be rising for most households across the country this year.

We want to make sure you know all the tips and tricks to keep your energy bills as low as you can over this period.

### 1. Turn the thermostat down

- For each degree you can save around £65\* a year
- The World Health Organisation says that 18c is enough to heat a home of healthy adults
- Only have your heating on when required, leaving it on all day is not more energy efficient



### 2. LED Lightbulbs

- LED Lightbulbs use up half as much energy as 'energy saving' fluorescent lightbulbs
- Make sure you are turning your lights off when they are not in use



### 3. Draught proof your home

- This could save around £30 a year, and you can even make your own draught excluders if you are feeling creative



### 4. Cut your shower time

- This can save around £75 per year in energy bills and even more in water bills
- Some people even turn the shower off to lather their shampoo!



### 6. Avoid the tumble dryer

- This can save a lot of energy very easily, simply make sure you have a window open for a well-ventilated room to prevent damp and mould



### 5. Wash more clothes less

- Doing one less wash a week could save up to £10 a year when using a modern washing machine
- Also try washing your clothes at a lower temperature and for a shorter cycle to save even more money



### 7. Don't overfill the kettle

- This could save you a possible £8 per year, as the more water your boil, the more energy you use up



### 8. Be safe

- Some energy tariffs may mean it is cheaper to run appliances at night. Please don't do this if you are going to be asleep as it is extremely dangerous and could lead to a fire.



\*The estimated savings amounts are based on the average four person household in the UK.



# NEWS FROM YOUR FEDERATION

The first thing you should remember is that you are a member of the Federation as soon as you obtain your property. No signing up, no joining and no invitation needed. The Federation is here for you and to help where we can no matter who you are or where you live. Got a question or a problem, we are here for YOU.



## SOUTHEND becoming a CITY

The Federation was very honoured to be invited to the celebrations of Southend being a city on the 1st March 2022. Bob our Vice President was invited to the ceremony at the Civic Centre and I was invited to attend at Sands by the Sea where Prince Charles and Camilla came for lunch and also to meet the delegates from across Southend.



## The CRAFTING CLUB

The Crafting Club run by the Federation to help the residents, has now found a way to raise funds that everyone can very easily get involved with. If you would like to help with this, it is very easy and there is no cost to yourselves.

Go to [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) and in the Search Box, Type - Southend Tenants and Residents Federation - click on Support this cause - Register (Very safe to do so and no scams or contacts will be made through this site) and there you go, you are now supporting your Crafting Club.



## The GOLD AWARDS

The Gold Awards have all been presented now and those of you who had one presented to you should feel very proud that your fellow residents nominated you for one of these. We presented 56 of these awards to both residents and staff and they are well deserved.



Kestrel House residents Helen Rogers & Finolar Palmer receiving their awards along with their SHO, Teresa Kelly

# EVENTS

In June the Queen's Platinum Jubilee will be celebrated across the city with many events taking place. Please keep an eye on our Facebook page STRF-2020 and also our website [strf.org.uk](http://strf.org.uk) – under 'Future Events' to see where and when these will be.

Kestrel House is the first of what I hope will be many schemes. They have arranged theirs for the 1st June at 3.30pm. They have many attractions being held and among them are: The Federation's Barbeque (Burgers & Sausages in a roll) for a donation, Face Painter (50p charge), Stall selling items handmade by the Crafting Club for a donation, Shoeburyness Fire Brigade, Music, Fancy Dress (50s Style) with a trophy for 1st, 2nd & 3rd place, The Mayor will be attending, plus many more to be arranged before the day. They will be putting out invitations to attend and are working hard at Kestrel House to make it a great day for all. Keep a look out on our sites as above for more information.

We would also like to hear from anyone who would like to put on an event in their area to see if the Federation can help in anyway. Get in touch at [events@strf.org.uk](mailto:events@strf.org.uk)

The Federation are in talks with residents in Cluny Square to put on an event during the Summer (August seems to be the best time) and hope you will be involved; we can only put on what you the residents want, so need your input. Again, we can be contacted at [events@strf.org.uk](mailto:events@strf.org.uk) or via our website Contact Us



## CHRISTMAS 2022

Now, I know it's some way off, but we are having the Children's Christmas Party at Kids Kingdom again this year. It was such a great success last year that I know it will be very popular this year.

So, saying that we have decided to open the booking up from now, so that you can secure your child's/ children's free place. At the moment we have two dates booked Monday 19th and Tuesday 20th December at 6.15 to 8.15pm. We have been able to book Santa again for this year, even though he is busy he has agreed to attend both days and of course will have a present for every child. So, to book call **01702 309064** – email [events@strf.org.uk](mailto:events@strf.org.uk) or write in to our usual address - STRF, 154 Gainsborough Drive, Westcliff-on-Sea. SS0 0SN and once again it will be on a first come booking system.

Lastly, we wish you all a very great year ahead and remember the Federation is yours not ours.

*Keith Ducker*  
STRF Chair



## GENERAL NEEDS RESIDENTS

We are attempting to get more general needs residents involved with events and being a Resident Representative in your area. If you know of a place that a notice board can be placed to help us and SEH, get information to residents, please let us know at [info@strf.org.uk](mailto:info@strf.org.uk)

**AaronServices**   
Part of the Sureserve Group

The Federation was very pleased to hear that our present Gas contractor, Aaron Services won the contract to continue providing their great service to our residents for the next 5 years with an option to extend a further 5 years.





# CECIL COURT SPRINKLERS

**South Essex Homes is working in partnership with contractors Mulalley on a pilot scheme to install a new sprinkler system at Cecil Court tower block in Jones Close, Southend.**

The project involves the installation of a brand new system which is linked to sprinkler units in the communal areas and inside every flat within the 11-storey residential block.

These wall-mounted units are fitted in separate rooms of each flat and communal area where there may be a fire risk and they are individually sensitive to high heat caused by fire. When they sense a temperature of 70°C, the sprinklers pop out from their boxing and spray water over the area.

The works at Cecil Court are expected to be complete in the early summer and South Essex Homes will then spend some time assessing the full cost and overall success of the pilot scheme, through ongoing discussions with colleagues at Southend-on-Sea City Council.

This pilot scheme is the latest addition to a series of actions taken by South Essex Homes to ensure that tower blocks are as safe as possible in the event of a fire:

- Since 2018 all high-rise blocks have had fire-retardant paint in common areas and fire rated GERDA doors that are routinely serviced.
- Since the mid-nineties, all high-rise blocks have had annually serviced mains powered smoke alarms.
- South Essex Homes employs a full-time Fire Safety Manager, who carries out fire risk assessments at buildings across the borough and carries out joint inspections of on-site firefighting equipment with Essex County Fire & Rescue Service (ECFRS).
- All bin storage areas within high rise blocks have a fully automatic sprinkler system already installed and linked to a 24/7 call centre.

- All lifts have fire detection equipment and are linked to a 24/7 call centre. It is also possible for ECFRS to control them in the event of an emergency.

Kevin Hazlewood, Assistant Director (Property) at South Essex Homes, said: "We take the safety of our residents very seriously, and this is an exciting development which demonstrates our commitment to further improving fire safety at the buildings we manage on behalf of the Council.

"We would also like to express our thanks to ECFRS for their grant funding of £50,000 to support our fire safety efforts."

Cllr Anne Jones, cabinet member for housing and communities, said: "We have been working very closely with South Essex Homes to make all our buildings, but especially our high rise buildings,

as safe as possible. This pilot scheme is another example of how the safety of residents is the number one priority. I look forward to hearing about the results of this scheme."





# NEW FOOD WASTE BINS *for* NESTUDA HOUSE

On Thursday 17th March our Estate Services Team visited Nestuda House to introduce a new pilot scheme of food waste bins for the residents. Veolia also attended to provide the residents with some information about the importance of food waste bins, and how to make the most of them.

Residents were excited to be able to take their own food waste caddies and liners back to their flats, and to start being able to recycle their food waste. They were happy to hear that their black general waste bins wouldn't get as dirty without food waste being added to them, meaning that they won't need to empty their bins as often.

Cllr Terry, cabinet member for public protection for Southend-on-Sea City Council, also attended to explain the importance of recycling our food waste: "Every piece of food that is not recycled properly goes to landfill. Preventing this will most importantly benefit the environment, but will also allow us to focus our resources on more important areas such as buying new library books. It's great to see some community spirit, and it is such a positive thing to be involved in."

Using a food waste bin will have significant environmental benefits, by increasing recycling rates and reducing CO2 emissions. The food waste can then be turned into a valuable resource and can create green energy. If the pilot scheme proves to be successful, then it is hoped that other sheltered schemes in the borough will be able to benefit from their own food waste bins as well.

Here are some of Veolia's tips for recycling your food waste and preventing it from going to landfill:

- ✓ Fruit and veg
- ✓ Tea bags and coffee granules
- ✓ Bread, pasta, and rice
- ✓ Eggs and dairy products
- ✓ Meat, fish, and bones
- ✗ Liquids
- ✗ Carrier bags
- ✗ Packaging



Most of the packaging that comes with your food can be recycled in your pink recycling sack. This includes some plastics, tins and cans, glass, and cardboard and paper. The only packaging that cannot be recycled and must go into your black bin bag are non-recyclable plastics and polystyrene.

## TOP TIP

A great alternative to a food waste bin if you have a garden is creating your own compost.

Compost is great for the environment as it will improve all types of soil and will help your plants to grow much healthier! You can add a variety of vegetable peelings or fruit scraps, as well as tea bags and coffee grounds. In addition, you can add old flowers and garden scraps to your compost, such as weeds or grass cuttings.





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

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) in your neighbourhood can make life miserable. It is unacceptable behaviour that comes in many forms – such as noise, abusive behaviour, littering, or illegal drug taking – and we always want it to stop.

But sometimes it isn't easy to know who can help. That's because many local organisations – including the police, local authorities, and social housing landlords – have different powers, roles and responsibilities to help and support victims.

### What is ASB?

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) includes a range of nuisance and criminal behaviours which are causing distress to others. Whether someone's actions can be classed as anti-social behaviour relies heavily on the impact it has on other people.

Behaviour that is more frequent or persistent is more likely to be considered as anti-social behaviour. The type and intensity of the behaviour also matters.

#### Examples of anti-social behaviour can include:

- noisy and/or abusive behaviour
- vandalism
- graffiti
- intimidation
- public drunkenness
- littering
- fly tipping
- illegal drug use
- excessively barking dogs

#### Some behaviour, even though it may cause nuisance to individuals, may not be regarded as ASB. For example, this can include:

- one-off parties and barbecues
- infrequent and occasional noise or disturbances
- children's play
- occasional dog barking
- minor vehicle repairs
- excessive noise from domestic appliances (e.g. washing machines, vacuum cleaners)
- gossip
- escalated disputes

It's important to remember that these lists are not exhaustive, though.

### Reporting ASB

#### Your first steps when faced with nuisance or disturbance

If you are made to feel uncomfortable or inconvenienced by other people's behaviour around your home, **where it is safe to do so**, you should first try to approach the other party involved to explain to them how their actions are affecting you and ask them to change their behaviour. Sometimes, other people may not be aware that their behaviour is causing distress or nuisance and letting them know may help.

If you feel threatened, intimidated, or witness a crime, you should **always contact the police first**. You can contact the police by calling 999 to report emergencies or by calling 101 for non-emergencies.

Useful advice about how to deal with a problem neighbour can be found on the Citizens Advice website or by visiting [www.asbhelp.co.uk](http://www.asbhelp.co.uk).



### Reporting anti-social behaviour

If you are experiencing ASB and haven't been able to resolve the situation, call South Essex Homes for further help and advice.

If the individual causing the ASB is a tenant you will speak with the Tenancy Services Officer, if they are a Leaseholder you will speak with a member of the Leasehold Services team.

Depending on the type and intensity of the ASB you may be asked to also report the incident to the police or Southend-on-Sea City Council.

We may also need to involve and work with other partners to help you and provide you with the most appropriate help and support.

It is helpful to keep a record of the type of behaviour involved, and its frequency. This could include a written list of dates and descriptions. South Essex Homes can supply diary sheets to help with this recording.

People's safety must always be the priority. **If threatened, or if you believe your or others' safety is being put at risk by someone's behaviour, contact the police first. You should also notify South Essex Homes who may also be able to take action or help you.**

# SOCIAL HOUSING

# MANAGEMENT *is changing*

The National Federation of ALMOs (NFA) and Councils with ALMOs Group (CWAG) have worked together to produce an easily digestible document to help you to keep up to date.

The document covers the new Social Housing White Paper from 2020 and also focuses on upcoming changes to social housing management and building and fire safety laws. It also encourages tenants to get involved and ask their ALMO (Arms Length Management Organisation) questions.

If you would like to read the document then you can download a PDF version from our website – [www.southessexhomes.co.uk](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk). Simply type 'white paper' into the search bar to find the relevant news story.



# GONE *but not* FORGOTTEN

## Have you heard of the Former Tenancy Team at South Essex Homes?

There is a small team within the Specialist Income Management team at South Essex Homes that devotes its time solely to tenancies that have ended. Work here is mainly around the former tenancy account. It is a rarity that after a tenant has left the accommodation that the account has a zero balance to enable it to be closed off.

Rent and charges continue up until the last Sunday of the tenancy. Even after the tenancy has ended, adjustments may still need to be applied to the account such as Housing Benefit claiming back an overpayment. This is where the Former Tenancy Officer's work begins.

It is a Former Tenancy Officer's (FTO's) responsibility to monitor accounts after the tenancy has been terminated. If there is an outstanding balance, they will contact the former tenant. This could be for money that is owed, but in many cases, there is a credit balance left on the account that needs to be reunited with the tenant.

This team look after many accounts where tenants have left and there is still money sitting in the account that cannot be refunded. Therefore, it is important that when your tenancy is over, the team have a forwarding address to be able to contact you about this.

If you have money owing when you leave, the team will take many steps to recover the money owed. If you are unable to pay the money back in full, they can accept offers to repay in instalments, and unlike other debts interest will not be added. The amount owed is what you pay.



As you can imagine, some people who owe money may not be forthcoming with a forwarding address. The team utilise various searches to track people and encourage them to enter a repayment programme to clear the debt. In very few cases where an arrangement is not made, they will employ debt recovery companies to recover the debt on behalf of South Essex Homes. If this fails, they will ultimately seek action in the small claims court.

A small claims court action could end up in a judgement which can affect a person's ability to gain credit. In days past this would affect applying for loans, however, more and more companies are using credit reference agencies to do a credit search when you want to do things such as buying a mobile phone or renting a new property. If there is a judgement against you, you will struggle to do these things.

**If you are leaving your accommodation and would like to speak to someone in the Former Tenancy Team, please call 0800 833 160.**

# Your **RIGHT** to **BUY**



## Have you thought about buying your home?

### You could be eligible for a Right to Buy discount if:

- ✓ You are a council tenant
- ✓ You have been a public sector tenant for at least 3 years (it does not have to be 3 years in a row)
- ✓ You don't live in sheltered housing or housing particularly suitable for disabled people
- ✓ You don't have any legal problems with debt
- ✓ You don't have any outstanding possession orders

### You don't have to do it alone

If you're eligible, you might be able to buy your home with:

- ✓ Someone who shares your tenancy
- ✓ Your spouse or civil partner
- ✓ Up to 3 family members who've lived with you for the past 12 months

### What discount could you get?

The longer you have been a tenant, the bigger discount you get off the market value of your home, up to a maximum discount of £87,200 or 70% of the property value.

A Right to Buy Calculator is available at [www.righttobuy.gov.uk](http://www.righttobuy.gov.uk)

**HOUSE** For houses discounts start at 35% for 3 years tenancy and remain at 35% until you have held a tenancy for 5 years. For every year after 5 years you will receive an extra 1% up to a maximum of 70% or £87,200, whichever is lower (e.g. 10 years tenancy = 40%, 20 years = 50%)

### Buying a house example

Current house value	£300,000
Years as a tenant	10 years
Eligible discount	40%
(35% + 1% for each year over 5 years)	
Discount value	£87,200
(40% discount in this example is £92,000, which is above the cash maximum of £77,900)	
Price you pay for the house	£212,800

**FLAT** For flats discounts start at 50% for 3 years tenancy and remain at 50% until you have held a tenancy for 5 years. For every year after 5 years you will receive an extra 2% up to a maximum of 70% or £87,200, whichever is lower (e.g. 10 years tenancy = 60%, 15 years = 70%)

### Buying a flat example

Current flat value	£120,000
Years as a tenant	10 years
Eligible discount	60%
(50% + 2% for each year over 5 years)	
Discount value	£72,000
Price you pay for the flat	£48,000

### Can you afford it? Mortgage or loan?

You may need a loan or mortgage to finance the purchase of your home, which you would pay back with interest, usually in monthly payments.

### How much can you borrow?

This depends on your personal circumstances such as your income, outgoings and whether you are purchasing with someone else. You agree with the lender how long you need the mortgage for and whether you can afford the monthly repayments. The type of property you live in can affect whether you can get a mortgage, for example, some lenders won't lend money on a high-rise property.

### Finding the best option

Shop around, compare deals and get impartial advice before making up your mind. The Money Advice Service is a good place to start and you could take a look at comparison sites and online calculators to get an idea of costs.

### One-off costs

**Mortgage advice** - you may choose to get advice from a financial adviser or

mortgage broker the cost of which varies.

**Survey** - you may want to get an independent survey done to highlight any problems (such as repairs) you'll need to know about before you buy.

**Legal fees** - you will need to hire a solicitor or other license conveyance for the legal aspects of your purchase (searches, land registry fees, deeds, etc.)

**Stamp duty** - this is a one-off tax you pay when you buy a property.

### Ongoing costs

**Maintenance and repairs** - As a homeowner, South Essex Homes will no longer organise repairs to your home. You will need to organise and pay for these yourself.

**Service charges when buying a flat or leasehold house** - Flats (and some houses) are leasehold properties. When you buy a leasehold property South Essex Homes will still be responsible for maintaining the building and surrounding area (communal areas). As a leaseholder you will pay your share of these costs - known as the 'service charge'. When major repairs and maintenance are needed in your block or estate, you'll have to pay a share of the costs too.

**Insurance** - You may already have insurance for the contents of your home. As a homeowner you will also need to insure the building. You may also want to get income protection or life insurance.

### Other considerations

As a homeowner you will not be eligible for housing benefit or Universal Credit and are likely to need to make regular payments for: Council Tax, Water, Sewage, Gas, Electricity and other utility services.

Your home could be at risk if you aren't able to keep up your mortgage or loan payments.



## Right to buy - step by step

### 1. Check eligibility, work out the costs and get advice

The Government's Right to Buy Agent service offers free and impartial advice: **0300 123 0913**  
[www.communities.gov.uk/righttobuy](http://www.communities.gov.uk/righttobuy)

### 2. Fill in an application form (RTB1)

Call South Essex Homes on **0800 833 160** to ask for an application pack or download an application form from our website [www.southessexhomes.co.uk](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk). The Right To Buy Agent service (details above) can provide help completing the form.

### 3. Receive confirmation of eligibility (RTB2)

South Essex Homes has 4 weeks to reply confirming whether you have the Right to Buy (8 weeks if you have been a tenant with us for less than 3 years).

### 4. Receive an offer (S125 notice)

South Essex Homes has 8 weeks for a house or 12 weeks for a flat to send an offer notice.

If you do not hear from South Essex Homes within the set timescales above you should complete an 'Initial notice of delay' form (RTB6). Find out more information at <https://righttobuy.gov.uk/apply/delays/>

### 5. Mortgage, survey and advice

You have 12 weeks to accept the offer. During this time you'll need to arrange a mortgage or loan, get a survey and hire a solicitor.

### 6. Complete the purchase and become a homeowner!

During this time you will pay your stamp duty, finalise paperwork and sign the contract.

## BALMORAL ART PROJECT

Over the Easter holidays, children from the Balmoral estate, SECH Youth Club and 'Get the Kids Out' worked together on a new art project.

Houghton Building are currently working on the estate and in partnership with SEH, children were asked to design four of the site hoardings. Local painter John Bulley helped them turn their work into attractive murals.

Over the 2 weeks, approximately 20 children contributed by designing, planning and painting the hoardings

which expressed their ideas about climate change. As you can see from the photographs, they are bright, colourful and display their artistic skills. This was such a fun and exciting activity as they were able to experiment with paint, mixing colours and drawing with their imagination.

The project ended with the children visiting the site to see their paintings on display, meeting some of the contractors and being presented with Easter eggs.



## Vacancy for a... TENANT BOARD MEMBER

South Essex Homes manages and maintains homes in Southend-on-Sea on behalf of Southend-On-Sea City Council; whilst continuing to improve services, involve our customers and build strong communities.

We have a high calibre Board made up of 10 other non-executive Directors and are looking to recruit a tenant of Southend-On-Sea City Council, as a Board member with the ability to build effective relationships internally and externally and a strong commitment to best practice in governance.

We are particularly interested in people with skills or knowledge relating to business acumen, financial awareness or housing experience - which will help us to evolve and ensure our organisation continues to

develop and improve in a changing environment.

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

This vacancy is a paid voluntary position, which would actively enhance any job opportunities for the successful candidates in the future.

South Essex Homes in partnership with Southend Tenants & Residents Federation welcomes applications regardless of race, sex, age, disability or marital status.

For an informal discussion, please contact Simon Putt on 01702 212624.

The application pack is available on the South Essex Homes website or can be requested by email to [carolcooper@seh.southend.gov.uk](mailto:carolcooper@seh.southend.gov.uk).

Closing date: end of May 2022.

**Please note:** subject to the responses received, the Coronavirus situation and the ability to hold interviews, candidates will be advised of the subsequent interview process and time in due course.



## GET THE KIDS OUT!

Local community group, Get the Kids Out, is run by South Essex Homes' resident Alexandra Waite and over the Easter break they ran two holiday clubs, funded by Southend Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) scheme. The clubs were held at St Mary's school on Boston Avenue and All Saints church on Sutton Road and were attended by 80 children across both sites.

Activities included arts and crafts, sports, planting, movie day, baking, cheerleading, gymnastics, games and inflatables.

A parent emailed Alexandra soon after the last day to say: "We have really appreciated this group for the boys this week, they have had a great time and it was a brilliant way to end the week. Thank you to everyone that helped and for the boys' Easter eggs."



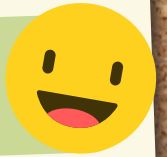
On an ongoing basis Get the Kids Out also offers the following activities at All Saints Church, which is at the start of Sutton Road, opposite the Queensway tower blocks:

- Free weekly coffee morning sessions for parents on Tuesdays from 11.30-1.30pm – all are welcome and refreshments are provided. These sessions also offer free fitness classes!
- Friday sports fitness sessions for children and young people

These after school sessions give children and young people a chance to take part in boxing and multisport activities free of charge, with dinner provided after every session.



For more info please contact Alexandra on [facebook.com/getthekidsout](https://facebook.com/getthekidsout) or via email to [getthekidsout@hotmail.com](mailto:getthekidsout@hotmail.com)



## What's been happening in our Sheltered Schemes?

Everyone Health has been visiting Kestrel and Scott House for a free 36-week course that focuses on strength and balance exercises to prevent falling over. It is then followed up with a coffee morning, where residents are provided with information regarding what they can do at home to also reduce the risk of a fall.



8-14 residents attend the course at Kestrel House and 5-7 residents attend at Scott House, they are all thoroughly enjoying these sessions and have

said that they look forward to them every week. It is a great opportunity for them to get active and socialise at the same time!

By doing these exercises residents can build stronger muscles and can become more flexible, as well as improving balance, mobility, and stability. Not only are there huge benefits to the physical health of residents, but exercising improves mental health by reducing anxiety, depression, negative moods and improves self-esteem, cognitive function, and sleep which increases energy levels.

All of these factors will help to reduce the risk of residents falling and will be especially useful to build up strength in preparation for next winter, when the risk of falling outside is much higher.

As well as this, Yoga 4 All has visited and provided an hour session of seated yoga at Great Mead, Nayland House, The Jordans, and Furzefield. Between 3-8 residents have attended at the schemes and have enjoyed the sessions each week.



The course is 5 weeks long and involves a variety of different stretches which help with mobility, increase of flexibility, whilst improving core strength and balance. Yoga also helps to promote better breathing technique and increases oxygen intake which of course helps with mental health and improves positive feelings.



**'I had serious breathing problems and attending Yoga 4 All has been a medical miracle, I can breathe a lot better. It's made me come out of my flat and be more sociable.'**

**'Exercise like yoga gets your endorphins going, calms you down and you can go out in a completely different mood, it's built my confidence.'**

## Nestuda House Potting Day



In March we held a potting day for residents at one of our sheltered schemes, Nestuda House. The Mayor of Southend joined us and, in between getting to know some of the residents, potted her own plant to take home.

Each resident was invited to plant their own dwarf green bean seeds to then take back to put on their windowsills and look after. Gavin Wilson, from Southend-On-Sea City Council and founder of Productive Plots Southend, provided advice and guidance to make sure residents can give their plants the very best care. The seeds grow quite quickly, so it wasn't long before residents would have had the opportunity to taste their own hard work!

From a sustainability point of view, there is a great environmental benefit from encouraging people to nurture plants and grow their own food. However, this project also hopes to have a personal impact on residents. Gavin Wilson said "45%

of the UK's food is imported which contributes significantly to climate change, and modern society has led to many experiencing social isolation, mental health issues, food poverty, and malnutrition. This project aims to address these problems through encouraging people to grow their own food."

It is expected to be a therapeutic process for each resident to care for their plant and watch it grow, we hope that they enjoyed the growing process and the mental stimulation that comes out of waking up each morning to see progress. The residents will also feel a great sense of achievement when it comes to finally eating their green beans, something they have put their own time and effort into!

One of the residents said that she was going to put her plant on her windowsill and a friend was going to help her to take care of it, alongside other plants. Gavin added that the project promotes

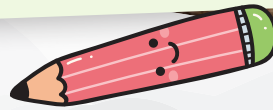


"mixing and building bonds between neighbours, encouraging exercise, working together, and provides local, nutritious, pesticide free food, without the need for packaging, refrigeration, and unnecessary carbon being emitted during transport."

Our sheltered housing officers are looking forward to opportunities in the future to carry out more projects similar to this one, so that more of our residents can become involved and reap the rewards of growing their own vegetables.

## Keats Art Sessions

By Neve Barr



The Art Ministry have been providing Keats House with an art and crafts session every Thursday morning for a couple of hours since 2018, which has been funded by the resident engagement budget.

Residents have been drawing, painting, cutting, sticking and clay making - bringing their imagination to life. The art pieces they produce are around topics, seasons, events and more. Recently the residents produced a collage on what they like in Southend, they also create artwork around the Christmas and Easter holidays.

They use the lounge facility but when the weather is nice and warm, the residents sit in the garden enjoying the art lessons and the sunshine. In the next couple of weeks, Art Ministry and residents of Keats House will be creating a lovely mural in their scheme and have been collating ideas together the past few weeks of what they can incorporate into that piece of art.

The sessions provide great benefits to residents - it aids relaxation, reduces stress, builds confidence, boosts memory, enhances creativity and improves social skills.

The class would like to encourage more residents to come along and join in with the fun, so if you wish to join, please contact Neve Barr in our Support Services team on 01702 534657.

## Xmas day in March!

By Pat Butcher

Back at Christmas, the real one, several residents of The Jordans were 'brassed off' at having to miss out on their communal Christmas meal. The turkey breast crown was left in a freezer, to be retrieved for a Christmas lunch at a later date. That date came in March, when residents very much enjoyed a tasty Christmas dinner, albeit a few months late!





# Meadows Home Care

A personal approach to caring



## Thrive at home with Meadows Home Care

**At Meadows Home Care, we support people in Southend to live happily and safely within their own homes.**

Meadows Home Care can support anyone who needs help to stay independent in their own home. We help people who have a broad range of needs, from daily support with routine tasks to more comprehensive support with medication, personal care or night services for people who live with long-term disabilities or early stages of dementia.

Maybe all you need is someone to check on you and share a cup of tea while you talk about your day – companionship makes up a large part of what we do as home carers.

Our local team is ready to take your call, so please do get in touch on [01702 212198](tel:01702212198) or email us at [homecare@brookmeadows.org.uk](mailto:homecare@brookmeadows.org.uk)

Meadows Home Care, Burr Hill Chase, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6PE



### Health & wellbeing

Staying active and reablement support, such as when leaving hospital.



### Medication

Collecting prescriptions, or reminding you when to take medication.



### Respite breaks

A break for family or carers, from an hour a week to a set number of days.



### Personal care

Bathing, getting dressed, hair washing, shaving, footcare.



### Day and night services

Services to support you throughout the day and overnight.



For more information please scan me!