

Open Door



Learning new skills with
Computers in Communities

Newsletter for all Southern Housing Group residents

**Spring
2011**

In this issue:

**Better local service
standards**

- Resident Service Panels
- Calls Direct come to Thames Gateway
- Will you still benefit?
- Improve your IT skills
- Your page

Big changes for social housing

“Social housing is facing the most radical change of programme since the introduction of private finance in 1988.”

says Chief Executive Tom Dacey

Bengali Turkish

The coalition government is determined to reduce the nation’s financial deficit and improve the economy, and amongst the many measures that are emerging is a thorough overhaul of social housing provision alongside the reform of the welfare state.

In terms of the provision of new homes essentially there will be very little, if any, public subsidy for our work in future, instead we are expected to replace the public subsidy with loan debt financed by the freedom to charge up to 80 per cent of local market rents on a proportion of void properties and all new lettings beyond autumn 2011. This new form of tenure, called ‘affordable rent’ is to be let to our existing client group, nominated by local authorities.

This flexibility on rent is also extended to length of tenancy, with the housing association able to offer fixed-term tenancies as short as the minimum of two years.

Running parallel with these measures are the government’s plans for welfare reform, with proposals to reduce the Housing Benefit bill and incentivise entry into employment. Most relevant for landlords is the introduction of caps to the amount of Housing Benefit payable, which will impact upon the association’s ability to charge up to 80 per cent of market rent in the high value areas of London and the South East.

There is also a range of benefit changes that may affect our existing residents, depending upon individual circumstances and as a result we have produced a leaflet “Did you know?” which you should have received in the post. Please see page 8. You can also log on to www.shgroup.org.uk/benefitchanges which should offer reassurance, answer some common questions, and point you in the right direction for further advice.

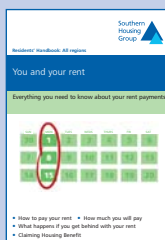
We have a number of concerns about the government’s proposals for new housing, but we recognise that the economy cannot sustain the public



subsidy we have received in the past, particularly when elsewhere public services are being reduced or withdrawn. Consequently we will proceed cautiously with the proposals for ‘affordable rent’ and undertake regular impact assessments as the programme progresses.

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News update

News

Residents' Handbook under review

The Residents' Handbook is given to all new residents when they sign a tenancy with the Group. It contains a summary of some of the Group's main policies and other information they may need to know during their tenancy.

The handbook is quite large and costly to print, information in it can go out of date quite quickly and many residents find other ways of getting up-to-date information from the Group easier, for example by calling the Service Centre or visiting the Group's website.



We have asked residents from a number of the Group's panels and forums what they think and they feel that this is a good time to look at

how we can provide this information in a more cost effective way.

We have therefore started a project to review the Residents' Handbook and have consulted with residents on our e-panel and with residents who are interested in being involved with consultation. We also phoned a number of new residents who had been given the handbook recently to gain their views.

We are reviewing the feedback from staff and residents and will let you know in the next edition of Open Door about changes we're making.

News

Group drops Ground 8

The Group has decided to stop using what is known as 'Ground 8' in legal action for rent arrears involving residents with an assured tenancy.

When a landlord takes court action against a resident, the court decides what order will be made. However, if a landlord requests that Ground 8 is used the court must grant possession to the landlord. This is known as a mandatory order. The court cannot refuse the landlord's request.

Paul Smith, Group Operations Director explained: "Ground 8 is a very powerful measure, which landlords have been able to use in high arrears cases for some tenants. It has attracted some concern within the housing sector.

"The Group has always been very careful about how and when we have used Ground 8 and we have only had to use it on a very limited number of occasions in recent years. We always aim to work with residents when resolving issues, so it seemed like an appropriate time to officially stop using it.

"We are committed to improving our service and are always looking to ensure we act in fair and responsible way, even when we are taking legal action."

In keeping with the decision all reference to Ground 8 has been removed from new assured tenancy agreements issued after 1 January 2011. This decision also means that it will not be used in any action against

existing residents, even if reference is made to it in their tenancy agreement.

If you would like to know any more information, or how this decision might affect you, please contact the Group's Customer Service Centre on 0300 303 1771.

Pictured: Paul Smith, Group Operations Director, explains why the Group will not be using Ground 8 in arrears cases in future.





Residents at George Downing Estate London taking part in an estate inspection.

Better local service standards

In the winter edition of Open Door we told you about work we have been carrying out to improve our Service Standards. The Service Standards, launched in 2009, outline our commitment to you as residents and support the aims and values in our Corporate Plan.

Some standards describe how you can access services; others describe how and when we deliver services and others how we will ensure we are getting it right.

Two years on we are enhancing our commitments through our new 'local offers' – focusing on property management, repair and maintenance services and resident involvement. The local offers compliment our service standards with further development work to be carried out during the year on other key standards.

Managing where you live – shaping your local estate services

Following last year's discussions with Customer Involvement Panel members, we introduced a new offer which sets out three ways you can get involved in shaping and monitoring the local management services we provide.

1. We will offer you the chance to work with us through estate inspections, setting a standard for common area cleaning, gardening and repairs and ensuring this is met where possible.

2. From now on, where there is a desire from residents, we will offer the opportunity to develop a local 'Managing where you live' plan, focused on issues of local concern. This will be developed alongside our existing 'Managing where you live' service standard commitment.

3. Working in partnership with local residents, we will offer the opportunity to establish a 'Managing where

you live' estate or scheme agreement. The agreement provides further chances to set local service standards and improve monitoring opportunities for residents.

These three offers provide a framework you can use to shape your local estate service. If you think there's an opportunity to develop an offer where you live please contact the Service Centre.

Repairs and maintenance - greater choice, new services

We have been working with residents and contractors, to implement new offers around repair and maintenance services.

The new offers include:

- **Evening or Saturday repair and gas servicing appointments** Later this year we will be introducing the choice of evening and Saturday appointments for repairs and gas servicing. We are working with our contractors to establish a timetable for this.
- **A 'handyperson' service** We will be offering tenants and homeowners access to a new handyperson service. The service will focus on providing repairs for jobs that are the resident's responsibility. Residents will be able to access the service, with costs set at a reasonable hourly rate plus materials. This is a great solution for fixing the numerous small jobs that can build up over time in the home. Further details of the service will be outlined in future editions of



Open Door.

- **Tailoring the service to individual needs** Residents who need greater support to maintain their homes could qualify for an individually tailored service. This may involve reviewing our repair responsibilities and considering the support of aids or adaptations within the home. We are working with contractors and residents to agree a timetable for this offer.

A flexible resident involvement menu

We have expanded on the ways residents can get involved in our work. We want our resident involvement menu to support the continuous improvement of our services. It guarantees that we remain an accountable and customer-focused landlord.

Involvement opportunities include:

- **Resident Service Panels** We have Resident Service Panels in each of the Group's five regions. The panels allow residents to scrutinise the delivery of our service offers and provide feedback on ways these could be improved.
- **Customer Involvement Panels** These resident-based panels are used when we are working to improve particular key services. The panels play an essential role in designing offers across our services.
- **Customer service monitors** check services are up to standard. They monitor a range of services including gardening,

repairs and major works.

- **Readers' Panel & ePanel** Three or four times a year we ask Readers' Panel and ePanel members to review key information or proposals. Our ePanel members use the internet to work with us.
- **Contract reviewers** We hold regular meetings with contractors to ensure they are providing the standards we expect. There is a resident contract reviewer on each panel to provide a customer voice.
- **Regional resident events** We hold regional resident events every year which focus on local priorities.
- **'What matters to residents' customer surveys** Each year we offer residents the opportunity to take part in our programme of surveys. The surveys measure satisfaction with our key services.
- **Resident estate inspectors** Residents are regularly invited to join our scheme inspections. Resident estate inspectors work with their local Resident Services teams to bring about practical changes on their estate.
- **Supporting local groups** We support estate and community groups at many schemes and estates, both those already developed and new groups.
- **Service review involvement** We constantly review our services and involve residents in workshops and focus groups.

You can find out more about the Group's resident involvement offer on our website or request a copy from the Customer Service Centre.

Resident Service Panels

Good feedback as the panels start work



5

Number of Resident Service Panels - one for each region

60

Maximum number of residents who can take part

Resident Service Panel members take part in an induction day in Horsham.

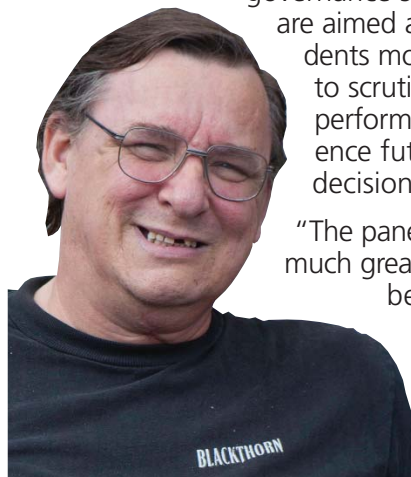
We had positive feedback from the first round of Resident Service Panel meetings, with good attendance from members.

The five Resident Service Panels, representing the Group's regions, initially met in December to receive reports and presentations from managers and undergo training on the Appeals Panel process.

A second collective induction day was held on 17 March in London, where members met with Group Chief Executive Tom Dacey and Board members, and other senior managers.

London panel member Ray Francis said the induction day had been "useful", allowing him to meet fellow residents and participate in practical workshops.

The newly formed panels are made up of up to 12 residents and are part of the Group's formal governance structure. They are aimed at giving residents more opportunity to scrutinise the Group's performance and influence future service decisions.



"The panel allows for a much greater cohesion between Southern Housing and its tenants," said Mr Francis. "It

doesn't feel so much like they're the landlord and we're the tenants - it feels more like a partnership."

Members are selected on a three-year term of office and could remain in post for up to three terms. The panels will meet up to four times a year with members being sent reports and information to review and discuss.

Geraldine Clements has been an active resident of Southern Housing Group since 1989, participating in resident involvement panels and estate inspections.



She believes the Resident Service Panels will be beneficial for all the Group's tenants. "We can put our ideas forward and hopefully make things better for everyone," she said.

An invitation to apply for the position of chair of each Resident Service Panel was open to all members at the initial meetings, with all five regions receiving at least one application. Training for the selected chairs took place on 9 May, so chairs were in place for the next round of meetings the following week. Panel chairs will also be members of the Customer Service Committee which will next meet on 16 June.

Resident Service Panel members Ray Francis (left) and Geraldine Clements (right).

News

Better communal meter readings

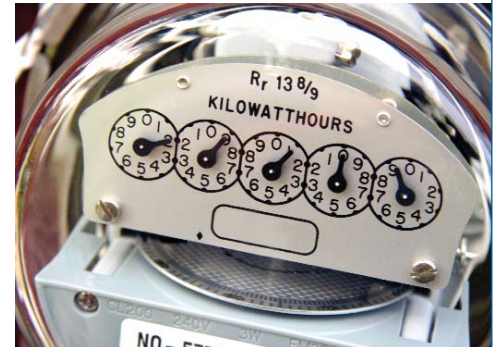
We recently reviewed the way we handle the communal electricity, gas and water meters at your schemes.

One of the recommendations from this review, which was led by our Continuous Improvement team, was a Group-wide audit of all communal meters.

To achieve this, we are in the process of agreeing a contract with an independent company, who will visit all our communal areas, collect meter information and take readings.

In future, we will routinely take more frequent readings, to make sure that we do not receive estimated energy bills from our suppliers and that your service charges accurately reflect energy use.

Please be aware that you may see a representative from a meter reading company visiting your estate over the next few months. They do not require access to your home and, under no circumstances, should you allow anyone into your home unless they can provide full identification. All repre-



sentatives from the meter reading company will be in uniform and will be able to supply formal ID.

News

'Calls Direct' comes to Thames Gateway

Residents in Thames Gateway are the latest to be able to call our contractors direct, rather than phoning the Service Centre.

Residents in Kent, London and on the Isle of Wight already make direct calls and we will be bringing this service to the South (West) and West regions later in the year.

Our Calls Direct Project involves us integrating our IT systems with each contractor, then running training for our contractors' call handling staff, so they meet our service standards.

Residents receive a postcard and fridge magnet with details of the new number to report their repairs.

Maintenance Director Kevan Allaway, who has been leading the project, says: "We're making this change because it means residents can make an appointment when they phone. It also lets our contractors control their own work sched-

ules. We believe it will increase the number of repairs that are 'right first time' fixes."

Mrs Gevaux in Canning Town has used the new system and was really pleased with the service she received. "Ringing the contractors direct made the whole process much quicker. It means you don't have to talk to lots of different people and removes any confusion. I was really happy with the work that was carried out. The contractor did a great job."

The project includes some other improvements:

- **New repair targets** No more 'routine' or 'urgent' repairs – instead, contractors arrange to carry out a repair at the best time for you, so you get a better experience.
- **Keeping you better informed** The new call handlers will be able

to tell you exactly what to expect and when. For example, if it's a water leak, you may need a plumber, then a plasterer, then a painter and decorator.

- **Better quality control** We will regularly assess the call handlers and use mystery shopping, random sampling and improvement plans to ensure you are receiving the best service.

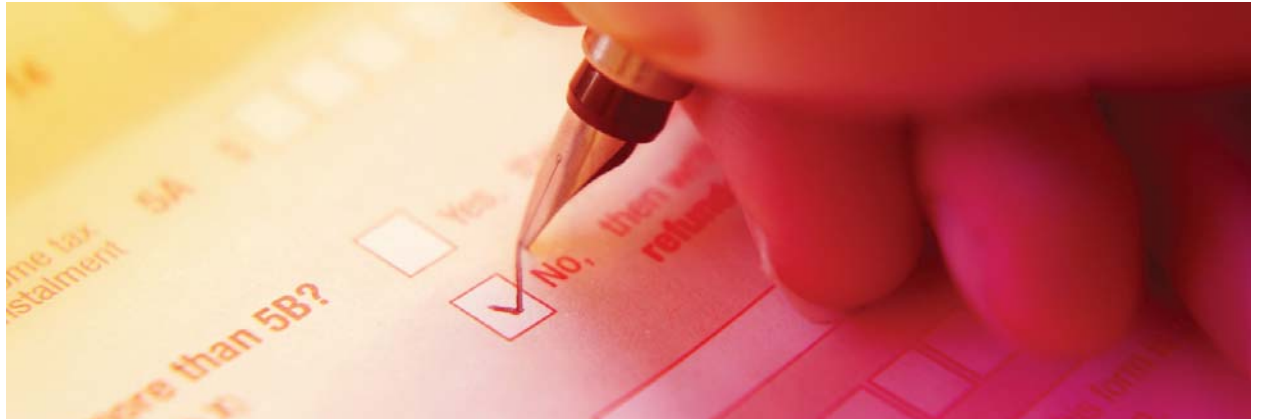
Other improvements planned for the future include offering specific two-hour appointment time slots instead of am or pm.

We're also planning to send residents with mobile phones a text message to confirm the date and time of their repair. We can then text on the day.

We will report further developments in future issues of Open Door.

Will you still benefit?

How changes to the welfare system could affect you



The benefits you can claim are changing.

As you probably know, the coalition government has made changes to the welfare benefit system, with changes to come in the future. The first reforms came into force in April 2011.

If you live in one of our rented properties you should have received a copy of our 'Did you know?' leaflet, explaining some of the changes (pictured below). If you haven't received a copy and would like one please log on to www.shgroup.org.uk/benefitchanges for an online version, or call the Service Centre (see back page).

You can call the Service Centre if you have any concerns regarding the changes.

The Group has also arranged for **Money Advice Plus** to provide free advice to residents with any concerns over these welfare benefit changes. The

service is confidential and will help you with benefit checks, any debt or money management problems and advice on benefit changes. It is a telephone-based service and, if you're worried about the cost of phone calls, a representative will ring back.

Phone Money Advice plus on 01323 635999 (Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm, Friday 9am to 4pm).

Other useful contacts

The Consumer Credit Counselling Service provide a telephone-based service, offering advice on Debt Management Plans. You can call them for free on 0800 138 1111.

For queries about new claims for Jobseekers' Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support, phone **Jobcentre Plus** on 0800 055 6688 (Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm).

Existing claimants with specific queries or concerns can also call this number to obtain contact details for the office handling their claim. (You will need to give them your post code so they can pass you on to the right office.)

Phone the **Tax Credits Helpline** on 0845 300 3900 (8am to 8pm, seven days a week).

Phone the **Child Benefit Helpline** on 0845 302 1444 (Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm, Saturday 8am to 4pm).

Benefits and tenancy changes - how will they affect me?

Q. My kids are adults but still live with me. Will this affect my Housing Benefit?

A. Yes. From April the amount deducted for non dependents is going up, so you may need to pay more of your rent yourself.

Q. Where can I go for more information?

A. Our Service Centre is happy to help with general queries, but for more specific advice you should speak to your benefit provider. There is also a lot of information available online at www.direct.gov.uk

Q. I'm on Incapacity Benefit or Income Support due to disability. What will happen to me?

A. Everybody on these benefits will be moved onto Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) over the next 3 years. Your benefit provider will write to you when you are due to be assessed.

Q. I'm worried all these changes will mean I won't be able to pay my bills

A. Call our Service Centre. The Income Recovery team can help you sort out any rent problems you have and will help you find advice if you have other debts or money worries. Alternatively, call one of the useful contacts shown on the right.

If you need help managing debts you could contact

www.paysplan.com - 0800 280 2816
www.cccs.co.uk - 0800 138 1111
www.citizensadvice.org.uk - 0300 3300 850

Q. I've heard that tenancies are no longer going to be 'Ten Year'. Am I going to lose my home?

A. At the moment the government is saying that they will protect the rights of existing tenants and it is only new tenants in the future who are likely to have fixed term tenancies. We will keep you informed through Open Door.

REMEMBER - If you claim Housing Benefit (or any other means-tested benefit) you should notify the benefit provider of any changes to your income or circumstances. We believe this information is accurate at the time we put this leaflet together on 28/2/11, but the government will be continuing to make announcements about changes to tenure and welfare reform, so situations may change overtime.



Apply now for a grant

If you rent any of our social housing properties, you can apply for:

- a Sir Ashley Bramall grant of up to £500 towards your study costs
- a Sports Fund grant of up to £500 towards your active sports costs
- a small grant of up to £2,000 towards resident events or outings, com-

munity activities or school holiday programmes

- a Working Opportunities Fund grant of up to £500 towards the costs of getting back to work. Please contact tim.lovett@shgroup.org.uk or call 020 7324 1253.

Phone 020 7324 1292, email grants@shgroup.org.uk, or go to www.shgroup.org.uk for details (restrictions apply).

Grant news

Grant for green garden project

Edward Mews residents in Islington will have plenty of fresh produce this summer after their garden project received a small grant.

We awarded the grant to a project team of six residents and their families, towards the purchase of a storage shed and gardening tools.

The residents decided to start a communal garden, with individual plots, after we asked how they would like to use a former play area on the estate.

Deborah Noble visits her plot daily to water, weed or plant. "It's lovely to get out there," she said. "Being able to grow your

vegetables and put them in with your cooking is so satisfying."

Last year she grew radishes, cucumbers, onions and herbs and has now planted carrots and potatoes.

A colourful mural is planned for the wall at the back of the site. Deborah hopes children living on the estate will get involved in the mural's creation.

Deborah she said the project would not have been possible without the help of our project manager Dirk Lampe who encouraged them to apply for the grant.

"He's been a really great support."



Grant news

Sports grant for Roanna



Roanna Simmons (left) is now focusing on coaching.

Roanna Simmons is helping young footballers shoot their way to success after receiving a Sports Fund grant from Southern Housing Group.

The 33-year-old deaf Brighton resident received £500 towards her trip to the European Deaf Women Championships in Bulgaria in June.

Roanna, who has been playing football since she was 15, is now assistant coach to the Great Britain Deaf Women Football Team.

"I am not playing, but I have an important duty to prepare the players for their matches," she said. "I truly believe the players can go far in this competition, and I am proud to be a part of this."

Roanna played for several deaf football clubs during her career, representing Britain for 10 years. She took part in the 2009 Deaflympics in Taiwan, with Group sponsorship, and still has memories of her "amazing" experience.

"I will treasure these days and will continue to tell my stories to young deaf female footballers who want to do the same or succeed further than I ever did," she said.

Since retiring as a player, Roanna has switched her focus to coaching and has achieved her Level 3 Coaching Badge (UEFA B Licence). She was named Coach of the Year at last year's Deaf Sport Personality awards and currently coaches two other teams as well as her assistant role with the national side.

She is also set to join the Hassocks Ladies Football Club's coaching team in the near future.

Roanna, who lives at Wellend Villas in Brighton, said she was "delighted" that the Group had continued to support her.

"A lot of what I do with Great Britain Deaf Women Football is all volunteering, so when Southern Housing Group supports me, I feel assured that I am doing good for young deaf female footballers."

Improve your IT skills



Above and below: Taking part in volunteer programme celebrations at Amhurst Road community hub.

Our Social and Economic Regeneration Department, with help from our IT department, has set up training centres in London to help improve your computer skills. The project has been funded by UK online centres, Get Digital and BBC First Click.

We're providing IT training for our residents, their families and local people, so they have access to the internet and email for everyday tasks such as job hunting, finding courses, shopping, banking, finding energy suppliers and getting information.

Through our links with UK online centres, we are also offering myguide courses including:

- **Online basics** – Starting off with computers: using a keyboard and mouse, setting up an email account, using the internet safely and online searching.
- **Online jobs** – Searching and applying for jobs online. How to develop and send a CV, search for advice and training opportunities.
- **Online services** – Finding information on local council and government websites, paying council tax and other bills online, applying for winter fuel payments.

To enrol yourself, a friend or family member on a training course, call in to one of the centres listed below.

- **The Hub**, Employment & Training Centre, 66 Quantock House, Stamford Hill Estate, Hackney, N16.
- **Myddleton Grange Community Centre**, 108 Colthurst Crescent, Hackney, N4.
- **Amhurst Road Community Hub**, 55 Charterhouse Road, Hackney, E8.
- **Selby Street Community Centre**, Selby Street, Whitechapel, E1.
- **Lisgar Terrace Community Hall**, Samuel Lewis Trust Estate, Lisgar Terrace, Hammersmith, W14.

Or you can also call us for details on 020 7553 6416.

We have also set up computer banks in four sheltered schemes in London and on the South coast.

- **John Knight Lodge** in Fulham.
- **Jubilee Crescent** on the Isle of Dogs
- **Mitchell House** in Seaford
- **Courtney King House** in Brighton.

Volunteering

We're looking for volunteers to help us train people. In return for your time, we can offer training, experience of helping people learn, free lunches and travelling expenses.

If you're interested, call 020 7553 6416 as soon as possible.



News

Make the most of your website

Win!
£50
in
vouchers

Help us rename the portal

The Group is renaming the resident portal and would like your ideas.

The name should be:

- short and catchy, think of examples such as MySpace or Facebook
- easy to remember
- meaningful, showing what the resident portal does.

The winner will be sent £50 in vouchers.

Send your entry by 15 July 2011 to Communications@shgroup.org.uk, or post it to: Resident Portal Competition, Communications, Southern Housing Group, Fleet House, 59-61 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1M 5LA

More than 750 residents are now registered to use the new-look resident website pages we launched in November.

For 24 hours a day, you can see your rent and service charge statements, pay your rent online, see your repairs history and report new jobs. A new graphic tool also helps identify the exact details of the work.

With a significant number of people using the residents' portal, we are looking to develop the site even further over the next few months. We picked our new IT suppliers because they could offer us more features, at the same time as reducing our costs.

We are using valuable feedback from residents who used the old resident pages. We will also speak to other housing associations with similar websites, to work out how best to meet your online needs.

Head of Service Development, Peter Day, said: "Organisations across the

world are putting greater emphasis on providing services through the internet. We are learning from the best out there, as we develop a cost-effective service to meet the needs of our residents."

If you have any questions, or you would like to offer any suggestions or feedback about our site, email resident.portal@shgroup.org.uk

To register with our new resident portal, go to www.shgroup.org.uk, click on the 'Residents Login' link in the menu on the right-hand side of the screen. You will find details there about how to register.

Sign up to win

Register with our resident portal today, for entry into our free, monthly, prize draw.

Every resident currently registered will have a chance to win a prize of £50 in vouchers.

Win!
£50
in
vouchers

News

Photo competition: **Picture your estate!**

We are running a competition to find photographs to use in our next Annual Report to Residents.

The Annual Report to Residents gives an update on what we've been doing over the past 12 months.

We want images that represent the diversity and different aspects of being a Southern Housing Group resident. This could be a photo of your block, scheme, community centre, play areas, shared gardens. Your photo could also feature your neighbours, local staff or contractors. You must receive permission from anyone in the photo – or a

parent or guardian if the person is under aged 18).

Please set your camera to its highest settings, so your photos are suitable for a printed publication, and switch off the date function.

All winning entries will receive a £25 voucher.

Send entries to arrive by Friday 24 June 2011. Post them to Communications, Southern Housing Group, Fleet House, 59-61 Clerkenwell Road, London, EC1M 5LA, or email them to communications@shgroup.org.uk



Terms and conditions and photo consent forms can be found at www.shgroup.org.uk/photocomp Or contact the Communications team and we can post them to you.

Win!
£25
in
vouchers

Information

It's all in a day's work for RSO (Sheltered) **Stephen Parker**

In October 2010, West Sussex was one of the first areas affected by Southern Housing Group's change in its sheltered housing provision.

I was one of the first people appointed to the newly created role of Resident Services Officer (Sheltered), which means I am responsible for housing management at several schemes.

The first few months were very busy. I had to find my way round the three schemes I cover, while making sure residents continued to get the level of service they expect. I also helped settle our new colleagues from In Touch as quickly as possible. In Touch provide the support service at the West Sussex sheltered schemes.

I split my time between the three schemes and work flexible hours, normally arriving on site at about 10am. My first hour is spent hearing from residents about any new issues that have come up – anything from problems with the building to complaints about the neighbours. I have been conscious that residents might feel anxious about the new service and have wanted to make sure I do everything I can to make them feel reassured. Making sure residents are happy and enjoy where they are living is what motivates me each day.

By 11am, I check the post, before dealing with any emails. I make sure I have received the keys for any vacated homes, check guest rooms and make sure scheme boards have the right information on them. Once a week I check rent accounts to make sure there are no problems.

During the day, repairs contractors, cleaners and gardeners visit the scheme. I make sure their work is carried out properly.

I carry out weekly building checks and water tests, and make sure all the lights are working properly. I also carry out fortnightly estate inspections with some of the scheme residents.

Now we have got through these initial few months, things are still busy, but we are getting into more of a routine. On a personal level, I am finding it rewarding that I now spend most days based at schemes, getting to know residents. It means I can be really responsive about sorting out the things that are important to them. I am enjoying the change from my previous role, where I was based at one of our regional head offices.

Residents have added to this job satisfaction by being such a happy and friendly lot.



“Residents have added to this job satisfaction by being such a happy and friendly lot.”



Left to right: Stephen Parker is RSO (Sheltered) for Charles Court, Mustchin Foundation and Pennington Court.



News

Putting Health & Safety matters first

We have a newly formed Health & Safety (H&S) team to oversee safety around the Group.

The team lead on fire, water and asbestos issues, manage our contractors on safety, investigate incidents and check construction, design and the safety management of our homes.

Our new H&S Manager Rachel Bancroft is based in Ashford, while Bradley Cooper is based in Barking and Mark Donald in Theale. This means our main regional offices now have access to H&S specialists.

All three team members have plenty of experience. Rachel previously worked for landlords in the social

and private sectors. Bradley and Mark have both advised on large and small projects – including, in Bradley’s case, the Velodrome at the Olympic site.

The team have already improved the way we handle fire risk assessments and all our blocks will be rechecked over the next 18 months. They are now reviewing whether we can improve the way we manage asbestos and check safety on our water systems.

The H&S advisors are working closely with our reinvestment teams, who organise major repairs to homes, and our technical services managers, who work on day-to-day repairs contracts.

They are also working with our contractors to make sure they work safely on site. They make site visits to advise on safety improvements.

The team are happy for you to contact them, if you need information about a safety issue. Call them via the Service Centre (see back page).



Information

Help us beat housing fraud

We are continuing to investigate cases of unauthorised occupancy, where properties are being unlawfully sublet.

We work in partnership with local authorities and also make use of UK-wide data held by the National Fraud Initiative (NFI), allowing us to share information and expertise.

In one recent case, we heard that a tenant was subletting a home in Kensington & Chelsea. The council helped us make background checks and we found the original tenant living in a large property in Fulham. We served legal notices and got possession of our property.

In another case, we took back a property in Hackney, after NFI data flagged that our tenant was now living in Rochdale. We got her to give up the property and the sub-tenant was rehoused through Hackney Council.

We are now targeting some estates where we think there may be a high number of sublet homes. We are making unannounced return visits to check who is living where.

If you suspect subletting, please call our housing fraud hotline on 0300 303 1774, tell us via our website, or fill in the coupon opposite. You don’t need to give us your name if you prefer to remain anonymous.

I think this property is sublet:

I think this because:

Names of people living there:

Can we contact you? Yes No

It’s fine if you wish to remain anonymous, but it would be helpful to have your name, address, phone number and email address if possible:

Send form to: Unauthorised Occupancy Specialist, Southern Housing Group, Fleet House, 59-61 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1M 5LA.



Your page

We want to hear from you! Write to the Editor via the Service Centre or email opendoor@shgroup.org.uk

Boiler House Hackney



Residents Anna Iskander-Reynolds and Claire Ferrigi are now running the Boiler House community centre at George Downing Estate in Hackney, after setting up a not-for-profit community interest company.

Project Manager Dirk Lampe said: "As residents of the estate, Anna and Claire are well placed to ensure the facilities are used by as many local people as possible. They have the support of local residents and a strong business plan. We see this as a potential model for the management of all our centres in the long term."

Margaret Samuel Hackney



Margaret Samuel from Hackney (pictured right) is the latest Group-sponsored resident to graduate from the course run by the School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) in Bethnal Green.

Margaret opted for the course to help her develop the People of Paradise Art Carnival Club, which she founded in 2000. The club involves residents of all cultures, races and ages in arts, dance, drama and costume-making workshops, and takes part in several carnivals each year, including Notting Hill.

Monday Club Ryde, Isle of Wight



The Monday Club, based in Ryde on the Isle of Wight, will grow and sell their own vegetables at Quarr Abbey after receiving funding from the Department of Health to pay for a shed, water butts, seating and tools.

The Club will grow their vegetables on half an acre of land donated by the monks, and sell their produce in the Abbey shop, sharing the proceeds.

Club members, who are all adults with learning disabilities, will benefit physically, and learn about growing and eating healthy fresh produce.

All estates London area



Volunteers wanted: We are looking for residents over the age of 16, who would like to volunteer to help deliver Activate London's Sports Challenge Event on Saturday 2 July 2011. The Challenge is a Lottery-funded traditional sports day for residents and their families, with activities, prizes, entertainment and refreshments (last year's event pictured). To express an interest, call Dionne Johnson on 020 7324 1296 or email challenge@shgroup.org.uk

Green doctors London



We recently recruited and trained five residents to become 'Green Doctors'. They now provide energy-saving advice and services to residents in around 500 of our London properties. The project is being run for us Groundwork London and staff from Breyer Group plc, our maintenance contractor for London, attend with our Green Doctors.

Together, they have now visited 100 homes, installed 500 energy-saving devices, saved residents around £45 a year and reduced carbon emission by around 0.2 tonnes per property.

Our performance

This page tells you about our performance in recent months. The 12 key service standards were chosen by residents, and we also report on three other important measures.

Our performance

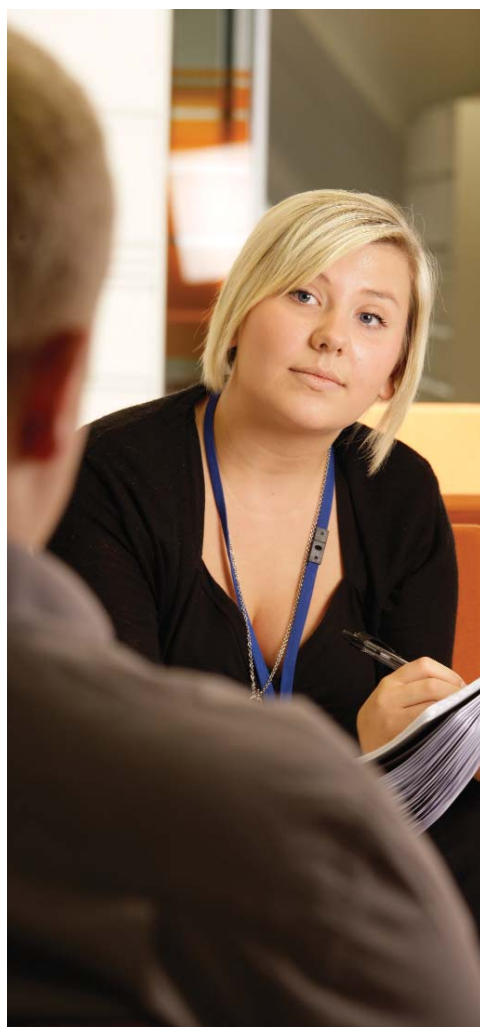
Our key standards

Our 12 key standards have been chosen by residents to reflect your priorities. We have added three others (highlighted in blue) because our regulator expects us to report on them.

Our staff are now making much greater use of these figures as they manage services – making them a real focus for improvement.

Note

- Where we have not supplied a figure, this is because only a very small number of mystery shopping tests were carried out in this period.



Customer care 1 April to 30 September 2010

	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar
1 If you write to us, we will respond within 10 working days	-	-
2 If you email us, we will respond within five working days	-	-
3 We will answer 80% of phone calls to the Service Centre within 20 seconds	72%	74%
4 If you visit our main offices, you will be met by a polite and professional member of staff wearing an identification badge with a photograph	100%	-

Managing where you live 1 April to 30 September 2010

	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar
5 We will inspect where you live as often as we agree with you (monthly, or every three or six months) ²	648	642
6 We will get rid of offensive graffiti within one working day of being told about it	90%	50%
7 If you report an incident of anti-social behaviour that we think is high risk, we will contact you within 24 hours	81%	77%

Paying rent & service charges 1 April to 30 September 2010

	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar
8 We will make sure your payment is on your rent or service charge account within two working days (if you send a cheque we must receive it first) ¹	80%	100%
9 We will keep the amount of overdue rent as low as possible (total on last days of June and September)	4.9%	3.8%

Letting homes 1 January to 1 April to 30 September 2010

	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar
10 Within six weeks of you moving in, we will visit you, to see how you are settling in	-	-
11 We will keep as low as possible the average number of days it takes us to tidy up and relet empty homes (totals on last days of June and September)	32 days	30 days

Repairs and maintenance 1 April to 30 September 2010

	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar
12 We will visit you to carry out quality checks (at least 10% of all repairs each month)	14.7%	14.5%
13 We will offer you an appointment to carry out your repair	86%	-
14 We will try to get repairs completed in one visit	8%	90%
15 We will get a valid gas safety certificate for all our homes every year (totals on last days of June and September)	99.4%	99.2%

Diary dates

- 24 June** Estate photo competition Send us photos of life on your estate for our next Annual Report to Residents and you could win £25 in vouchers
- 2 July** Oxford Road Fun Day Reading Organised by Southern Housing Group and Reading Borough Council
- 2 July** Challenge London Sports Day
- 13 July** Durrington Garden Competition Prizes to be awarded by a local official
- 15 July** Rename the residents' website portal Competition deadline – send in your entry for a chance to win £50 in vouchers

Competition

Find the answers to the questions below, in this issue of Open Door, for the chance to win one of three vouchers.

- 1 What is the name of our new Health & Safety Manager?
- 2 What year were the service standards launched?
- 3 What is Stephen Parker's job title?

Email opendoor@shgroup.org.uk or write your answers on the back of an envelope or postcard with your name, and address and post to: Open Door Competition, Southern Housing Group, Fleet House, 59-61 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1M 5LA. The closing date is **Friday 15 July 2011**.

Winners from last issue: P. Alford from Hove, P. Cooper from Ryde and M. Gee from London.

Win!
£20
in
vouchers

Contributors

Editor Maria Goodall

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You can write to the editor via the Service Centre or send an email to opendoor@shgroup.org.uk

The deadline for contributions to the next issue is Friday 29 July 2011.



Contact us

Service Centre opening hours
8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday

If you live on the UK mainland, phone 0300 303 1771

If you live on the Isle of Wight, phone 0300 303 1772 (also out-of-hours emergencies)

Email us at
servicecentre@shgroup.org.uk

Write to Service Centre
Southern Housing Group,
PO Box 643, Horsham RH12 1XJ

Out-of-hours emergencies
If you rent a home on the UK mainland, phone Homeserve on 08457 573 764 (all regions except West) or 08456 013 225 (West region)

If you own a home on the UK mainland, phone Homeserve on 08456 000 453

Translations

For help with translations, or information in Braille, large print or as an audio version, contact the Service Centre on 0300 303 1771.

Arabic

إذا كنت تريد الحصول على ترجمة لإحدى المقالات،
اتصل برقم 0300 303 1771.

Bengali

যেসব আর্টিকলে এই চিহ্ন দেয়া আছে আমরা সেগুলির
বাংলাতে সারসংক্ষেপ সরবরাহ করি। কপির জন্য
0300 303 1682 নাম্বারে ফোন করুন।

Bengali

French

Si vous souhaitez faire traduire un article,
appelez le 0300 303 1771.

Somali

Haddii aad rabtid in maqaalka lagu turjumo
wac 0300 303 1771.

Spanish

Si desea que le traduzcamos algún artículo,
llame al 0300 303 1771.

Turkish

Üzerinde bu işaret bulunan yazıların Türkçe
özetini verebiliriz. Bir kopya edinmek isterseniz
0300 303 1683'ü arayın.

Turkish