A good rating for Isle of Wight care services
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60 second interview

Paul Norman is our Head of Home Repairs.

He’s responsible for making sure our repairs service is the best it can be, and appointing the right contractors to work with us. We sat down with Paul to find out a bit more about his role.

How long have you been with the Group?

I’ve been here for about nine months. It’s a really exciting and busy time as we’re in the middle of a huge programme to improve our customer service, and how we handle repairs and gas is a big part of that.

What have you been doing so far?

We launched a new repairs strategy in October 2016. It sets out our vision for delivering an excellent repairs service. It also seeks to support our new Contracts Managers, who will be monitoring the service providers and making sure they provide excellent services.

We’ve got some new contractors starting soon?

Yes, our contract with Breyer for the service in London came to an end in March. We’ve now got two new service providers; Wates Living Space and DW Support Services. We think they’ll really help us improve the service to our customers.

What’s planned for the future?

We’ve appointed a new service provider for the repairs services in our South region. This contract will begin later in the year. We’re in the process of tendering for our gas repairs and servicing contracts, so lots of potential changes. Watch this space.

For more information about the new repairs contracts in London see page 6

For more on the role of Contract Managers see page 10
Making it easy to get in touch

Did you know you can contact us through social media as well as online and on the phone?

Our Facebook and Twitter accounts are monitored by our Customer Service Team from 8am-8pm, Monday to Friday.

So if you’re out and about and want to get in touch with us it couldn’t be simpler. Just tweet us @SHGCustomers or message us on facebook.com/southernhousing/

If you need a repair outside of these hours you should call your local number (see back page) to report it.

@tessagillett: ‘When we had an estate-wide water issue, the Southern Housing Group social media service was brilliant. The staff responded politely and kept me regularly updated, as well as keeping me posted privately on Twitter to make sure I’d seen every update. They answered my questions clearly and with lots of detail. Fantastic customer support.’

@hadidae1: ‘Southern Housing Group’s social media is great, helpful and useful’
Jamie goes multi-trade

As part of our social value programme we ask the companies we work with to provide extra benefits for our customers.

These can range from financial support for community schemes to work placements. Jamie Watkins spent four weeks on a traineeship with Breyer Group and is now applying for a full time job with them.

Here’s what he had to say about the experience:

“It’s been really useful learning in a multi-trade environment. I’d never done roofing before, which was probably the trickiest part because there’s a lot of health and safety involved. I once had to get onto four story high scaffolding - I felt a bit shaky at first, but it definitely improved my fear of heights!

“I really enjoyed my role because I like moving around a lot, being in different environments, and doing different things. One day I plan to own my own house, so being able to fix things myself will come in really handy.

“I’d advise people to take any traineeship opportunities they can get. Most places are looking for experienced candidates and they want you to be able to show that you’re committed, and my time with Breyer has definitely helped me with that."

Paula Arkell-Waller, Community Investment and Development Officer for Breyer Group, said:

“Working with Southern Housing Group on its social value programme offers a lot of opportunity for cross-working with other organisations. It’s good to give people experience and help them get a job on their own.”

Watch our social value video at www.bit.ly/SHGSocialValue
New repairs contracts

We’ve appointed two new repairs contractors in London so customers may notice some familiar faces in new uniforms and vehicles.

Our contract with Breyer ended on 1 April 2017 so we went through a tender process to find the best company to take on the delivery of the repairs service to our customers.

In Hackney and Haringey the new contractor is DW Support Services, and Wates Living Space will be working in all other London boroughs previously served by Breyer.

We already work with DW Support Services in the west, and on the Isle of Wight and know they can deliver a great service to our customers in London.

Both contractors put forward a great offer and we are confident they can provide an excellent service.

Paul Wenham, Property Maintenance & Investment Director, said:

“We believe the new contracts with DW Support Services and Wates will provide our customers with outstanding service.”

If you live in London and need to report a repair you can still contact us on 0300 303 1061. Once you’ve selected the repairs option you’ll be asked to select option 1 if you live in Hackney or Haringey, or option 2 for all other boroughs.
The inspection rated the service on five key standards: responsiveness, effectiveness, safety, caring, and leadership.

The report found that:

People felt safe, and trusted the staff from Southern Housing Group who supported them in their homes.

A relative said “I feel [my loved one] is very safe with them”

The service had received written thanks from relatives and people which praised the care that had been received.

One written compliment from a person said:

“Thank you for helping me get my life back together.”

Care staff told us, “I love my job and love the people” and “I will always treat people how I would want to be treated.”

A good rating for Isle of Wight care services

Our Domiciliary Care Agency, which provides care and support to customers in their own homes, has been rated ‘good’ by the Quality Care Commission.

Registered Service Manager, Tina Stuart, who is in charge of the service, said:

“The report reflects the hard work and commitment of the whole team and demonstrates what we do well. It shows that we go above and beyond to ensure the needs of people we care for are met.”

Naomi Keyte, Head of Sheltered and Care Services, said:

“This rating is fantastic. I’d like to say a big thank you to the customers and colleagues who are part of our DCA service, especially Tina Stuart.”
Southern Housing Group joined forces with a number of other housing associations to get funding from the European Social Fund.

**Employment and skills support**

Our Employment Skills Officers give customers one to one information, advice and guidance, help with confidence and motivation building, help with CVs and interview techniques, and job searching skills. We also help customers learn how to browse the internet, create an email address, and connect them to organisations offering training and employment opportunities. Our aftercare service helps customers settle in to their new job and address any concerns they may have.

**Meet the team**

**Matthew McLean** is the Love London Working Project Lead. He also manages the Financial Skills Team in the North region and has worked for the Group for five years.

**Minaz Uddin** is a Senior Employment Skills Officer who manages the Love London Working delivery team.

**Marie Cooper, Rachel Dolan and Sam Johnson** are Employment and Skills Officers. They will be working with customers to help them into work. The three have a range of experience and skills making them perfectly suited to the role.

**Leah Compass** is the Programme Support Officer. She has been with the Group for six months.

**The story so far...**

Since November, the team has worked with more than 200 Southern Housing Group customers. Many were supported into employment in various fields including hospitality, catering, construction, administration, retail, hair and beauty.

In December, Minaz got a record breaking 30 customers into employment! In January, the team generated 70 referrals for new customers by holding coffee mornings and attending jobs fairs.

**Get in touch**

We help customers both in and outside of London to find work or training.

If you want to know more, call 01403 220 434, email community.investment@shgroup.org.uk or visit shgroup.org.uk/southernworks
Case study: Jan Luca’s story

“I was finding it hard to find a full time job. I had tried everywhere and been on a number of interviews but with no luck. Minaz helped me realise how much I was underselling myself.

“Minaz regularly sent me jobs to apply for and I was soon getting interviews. At this point I assumed I would be left to my own devices but Minaz gave me constant support right until I signed the contract for my new job.”
In this issue we’ll meet the Area Service Managers and Contracts Managers who are responsible for delivering great services in our North region.

Area Service Managers Shum Patel, Anna Vachou, Brenda Harris and Keira Curran, and Contracts Managers Bayo Omosan, James Davies and Jon Dowell all joined the Group recently.

We sat down with Jon, Shum, James and Keira to discuss their new roles and the successes and challenges they’ve faced so far.

What’s your job title and what do you do?

Shum: I’m an Area Service Manager like Keira, Anna and Brenda. We each manage a team of Home Services Managers. Our role is to make sure our teams are providing great customer service.

Jon: As Contracts Managers, James, Bayo and I manage the Surveyors and Customer Care Co-ordinators. We help make sure the repairs service is delivering a great customer experience.

How long have you been working with the Group?

Keira: Shum and I have only been here a few months. Anna and Brenda have been here longer but they’re still both new to the role.

James: Bayo, Jon and I are all relatively new to the Group. We’ve all been here less than three months.

What’s going well, have you had any early successes?

Keira: We managed to get a rent review for a property in Hackney which meant a young family were able to afford it. They were so happy.

We’re also tackling anti-social behaviour, and recently got a court order against a resident who was running a business in the car-park of their scheme. It’s made a real difference to everyone living there.

Jon: It’s early days at the moment but I’m making some changes to the way our Surveyors and Customer Care Co-ordinators work that should help make the team more effective and really improve customer service.

Shum: We’re seeing success every day. A few days ago we helped a woman with a temporary move so we could do some work there.

Have you faced any challenges in your new role?

Jon: On my second day we had an issue with a water shortage affecting 500 homes so I was in at the deep end. I was really impressed with how everyone pulled together and how committed everyone was to sorting things out for our customers.

Keira: With a team spread out over such a wide area it can be challenging to keep in touch. We’re using the latest technology to help us work on the move, while we’re out and about visiting our customers.
We’re committed to giving you the best possible customer service.

Our Area Services Managers each manage a team of Home Services Managers, responsible for the day-to-day management of patches covering about 450 homes. Home Services Managers can help with local issues like estate services, gardening anti-social behaviour, to changes to your tenancy.

Our Contracts Managers oversee the work of our Surveyors and Customer Care Co-ordinators. Between them, they make sure that the companies who carry out our repairs deliver a service we can be proud of.

If you need to talk to our team about any issues in your home, your first call should be to our Customer Service Centre on your local number (see back page).

One of our trained team will see if they can help resolve the problem there and then. If the problem needs a more in-depth response, they’ll pass your details on to the best person to help you.
Taste maker

Cheat’s chicken satay and noodles (serves four)

**Ingredients:**
6 chicken thigh fillets  
2 tbsp curry paste  
½ block of creamed coconut  
2 tbsp crunchy peanut butter  
2 tbsp soy sauce  
1 pack medium egg noodles  
4 tbsp soy sauce  
3 tbsp sesame oil (olive oil will do)  
½ lime juice  
1 bunch of spring onions  
2 cloves garlic  
1 fresh red chilli

**Method**

1. Mix the curry paste, peanut butter and soy sauce together. Grate the coconut block in and add a small amount of boiling water mix until you have a loose paste.

2. Cut the chicken into strips and thread on to skewers. Coat the chicken in the paste and place under the grill for 10-15 minutes, turning until cooked through.

3. While the chicken is cooking boil the noodles as per the instructions. Once cooked, drain the noodles and then run them under the cold tap to stop them cooking further.

4. Finely slice the spring onions and red chilli (remove seeds if you don’t like it too hot), and mince the garlic. Heat one tbsp of oil in a wok or large frying pan and fry the onion, chilli and garlic for 3 minutes.

5. Mix the remaining oil, soy sauce and lime juice. Add the cold noodles to the pan and stir fry with the vegetables for a few minutes until the noodles are warm and the veg is mixed through. Dress the noodles with the soy sauce mixture and serve along with the chicken.
Easter activities
Some great ideas to entertain the family over the Easter break.

Free guides and activities
Brighton and Hove Museums
Throughout the school holidays
Make the museums your basecamp during the holidays. Plenty to see and do with free guides and activities to help you make the best of your time.
brightonmuseums.org.uk/discover/events/event/museum-basecamp/

Easter Eggsplorer
Didcot
Throughout the school holidays
Explore the local woodlands and learn about the egg-laying animals that live there. Trails and craft activities are aimed at kids up to 11. Booking essential.
bbowt.org.uk/events/2017/04/13/family-fun-easter-eggsplorers?instance=0

Tall ships festival
London
13 – 16 April
A regatta of sailing ships in London as they prepare to set sail for Canada. Music, food and fireworks along Deptford and Greenwich’s historic waterfront.
www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/tallships2017

Robin Hill Mad Easter Egg Dash
Isle of Wight
16 – 17 April
A fun Easter egg dash for children of all ages. Prizes for everyone at Robin Hill County Park.
www.robin-hill.com/
Are you eligible for the Warm Home Discount?

The Home Energy Advice Team has been helping customers apply for the Warm Home Discount scheme, which offers a £140 discount on winter fuel costs.

A third of eligible people miss out on this important financial support every year by not submitting an application, so the Home Energy Advice Team ran a project to promote the discount to our customers. This winter, the team helped 194 customers claim the Warm Home Discount, and has also saved them additional money on their energy bills through offering energy efficiency advice and installing energy/water saving measures.

The Warm Home Discount scheme has been extended until 2020/21, so for the next four years, the Home Energy Advice Team will be running this project to ensure our customers get the support they need to heat their homes through the winter months.

For any queries regarding energy and water costs, or how to use your heating system, please contact your local Home Energy Advisor or email energy@shgroup.org.uk
Case study

Nick Gissing, a Home Energy Advisor on the Isle of Wight, visited Mr and Mrs McDonough, a couple who were struggling to use their storage heaters and to adequately heat their home.

Nick showed the couple how to use their heaters and gave them a manual for the system. He also made an application to SSE Energy for the £140 Warm Home Discount, applied to Southern Water for a 20% discount on the water bill and contacted DW to repair a broken immersion heater switch.

Back in the office, Nick contacted our Community Investment Team to get help with completing Mr and Mrs McDonough’s housing and council tax benefit application and sent a request to the Property and Estates Management Team to have longer lever taps fitted in the kitchen so Mrs McDonough could use them.
Becoming expert patients

Fourteen customers took part in the Expert Patients Programme to help them manage their long term health condition.

The programme was delivered by AnnMarie Nelson, one of our Community Partnerships Officers, alongside Open Age, a charity that promotes active lifestyles for those over 50.

The customers from Vanston Place and nearby John Knight Lodge and Stocken Court learnt how to manage conditions such as epilepsy, heart disease, chronic pain, multiple sclerosis and depression.

Topics covered included dealing with pain, extreme tiredness, relaxation techniques, exercise, healthy eating, and communicating with friends, family and healthcare professionals.

Those who took part were presented with certificates at the end of the course. The Expert Patients Programme was launched by the NHS in 2002-4 and the majority of their courses are delivered by trained tutors who have personal experience of living with a long-term health condition.

The aim of all Expert Patients courses is to give people the confidence to take more responsibility and self-manage their health, while encouraging them to work collaboratively with health and social care professionals.

For more about the programme, go to www.expertpatients.co.uk
The new Southern Housing Group Fire Officers have backgrounds in fire safety, in some cases having worked for the fire service. We carry out about 1,400 fire risk assessments each year in the communal areas of the properties we manage.

We’d previously used external companies, but the new team will be able to carry out assessments and report back via our new database. This will result in lower costs for blocks of flats.

Did you know:

If you can’t make voice calls, you can still contact the 999 emergency services by text message. You’ll only be able to use this service if you’ve registered with emergency SMS. To join the service text ‘register’ to 999. You’ll get a reply with further instructions.

Improving our fire risk assessment process

We’ve brought our fire risk assessment service in house to save money and improve our service.
Creating happier communities in Hackney

The Boiler House is a community space in Hackney that works with residents, local organisations and trainers to deliver projects to create a happier community.

In 2010, two Southern Housing Group customers, Claire Ferrigi and Anna Iskander-Reynolds, launched the centre. The pair noticed that customers on the George Downing Estate weren’t using their community centre.

With the help of Southern Housing Group, the pair took over the space and now run it as a social enterprise, renting it out for community events and classes.

As interest in the centre grew, the Boiler House registered as a charity, with all proceeds reinvested to benefit the local community.

The charity also organises day trips outside of Hackney, and host a twice-weekly football club for kids.

The Boiler House now employs 14 people, including five Southern Housing Group customers, and includes two community spaces and a nursery for 2-5 year olds at the nearby Myddleton Grange Estate.

Claire said: “The Boiler House has been very successful, and definitely worthwhile, and I’m really pleased with how we’ve grown. This past year alone has been a bit crazy, but in a good way!”

If you’d like to know more, book a space, or find out what’s on at The Boiler House, go to www.n16boilerhouse.com or say hello on Twitter: @n16boilerhouse
Customer feedback

Ann Robertson from Schroder Court wrote in to thank the Gardener/Handyman from her scheme.

“I would like to commend Ben Boone, our Gardener Handyman at Schroder Court. He is one in a million and works really hard.

Ben never takes extended breaks during the day, is obliging, helpful, knowledgeable, tactful and kind, with a special understanding of and empathy with the elderly. Most of us fit in this category.

The grounds at Schroder Court are a delight to look at and walk round. This is thanks to Ben’s extremely hard work and interest in his job.”

If you’d like to contribute to a future edition of Open Door please email communications@shgroup.org.uk

A Christmas surprise for customers

Before the Christmas break we delivered hampers to 80 customers who’d had particularly difficult years.

The project was made possible by a grant from the Group, and donations from staff and some of the companies we work with. Maggie Taylor, one of our Community Partnerships Officers, led the project.

She said:

“We asked colleagues to nominate customers in need, such as those struggling financially, who lack local support, or those for whom 2016 has been an exceptionally difficult year.

“It’s great that we could let some of our customers know we care about them during what is sometimes an expensive or lonely time of year.”

Alexandra Price, Home Services Manager, delivered a hamper to a customer in Worthing who had just had chemotherapy.

“She hadn’t done any shopping and was going to spend Christmas alone. The hamper really cheered her up and it was nice to be able to brighten her day.”

Thanks to the companies who supported this project, including Durkan, who very generously contributed £1,000, Axis Europe, Penningtons Manches, and Devonshires Solicitors. Also to Durrington Children and Family Centre who contributed food via their Fairshare programme.
Contact us

If you live in:

The London boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Bromley, Croydon, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Haringey, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, or Southwark, please call 0300 303 1061.

The London boroughs of Barking & Dagenham, Bexley, Greenwich, Havering, Newham, Tower Hamlets, or Waltham Forest, or in Essex or Kent, please call 0300 303 1773.

East or West Sussex, Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Reigate, Banstead, or Tandridge, please call 0300 303 1063.

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Gloucestershire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, Runnymede, or Waverley, please call 0300 303 1064.

The Isle of Wight, please call 0300 303 1772.

Outside office hours, please call the same number and you will be diverted to the out-of-hours team.

Who do you need to speak to?

It’s important to call the correct local number so you speak to the right team. Once you’ve called your local number, you’ll have the following options:

Press 1 – for repairs and maintenance, including heating and hot water

Press 2 – for rent information, payments, and money advice

Press 3 – for housing options such as finding a new home, mutual exchange, or applying for one of our properties.

Press 4 – for all other enquiries.

Other ways to contact us

Email: service.centre@shgroup.org.uk

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

facebook.com/southernhousing
twitter.com/SHGCustomers
www.shgroup.org.uk
020 7553 6400

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