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Have Your Say

In order to get a better understanding of our customers and their needs, South Anglia Housing decided this year to repeat the "Have Your Say" consultation that we last did in 2006.



The questionnaire was sent to all our owned and managed properties and we offered customers a £10 love to shop voucher as an incentive to complete and return the form. 1,316 questionnaires (21% of our properties) were sent back giving us the highest response rate to

any consultation. We now have a clear insight into the needs and priorities of our customers.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those that responded for the feedback that you have given us.

What is clear from this year's

survey is that South Anglia has increased customer satisfaction. There has been noticeable improvement in all service areas that were last surveyed in 2006. The highest improvement is a 12% leap in satisfaction with the way that South Anglia communicates from 41% to 53% satisfied.

This year, customer's also identified that their top priority is customer services - it received 33% of the overall votes, followed closely by rents at 32% and property at 18%.

South Anglia is creating action plans to help us improve further as a result of

your feedback. We'll update you through Home Matters, the website and various leaflets on what we plan to do, in coming months.

See page seven for more information about how you can get involved with South Anglia. ■

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Paperless Home Matters is here!

We want to save money and help the environment.

To help us do this we are now producing a paperless Home Matters, available by email - all the same articles and information but straight to your inbox rather than your letterbox!

If you want to opt out of receiving your Home Matters by post, please register by emailing us at resident.communications@circleanglia.org, sending us your full name and postal address.

 Home Matters, the cover sheet and poly wrap are all bio-degradable.

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Dear Home Matters Editor



Welcome to your autumn issue of Home Matters.

We had a good response to our call in the last issue for people to register for paperless Home Matters. By opting for an email version of your resident newspaper you are helping us to save money and reduce our carbon footprint. If you would like to receive paperless Home Matter, simply email your request to;

Resident.Communications@circleanglia.org

If you have any other comments or suggestions about content, do write to us at the following address;

**The Editor
Home Matters
6 Central Avenue
St Andrews Business Park
Thorpe St Andrew
Norwich
NR7 0HR**

Remember, Home Matters is made from sustainable paper and can be recycled so do put it in your recycling bin when you have finished with it. ■

Welcome from Chris Ellison



The last few months have really highlighted the strength of resident involvement at South Anglia, the level of feedback that customers are willing to give, and how

keen they are to be involved in shaping the way that services are delivered.

To receive over 1,300 responses to the Have Your Say questionnaire was fantastic. I'd like to say a very big thank you to everyone. This information is so valuable.

There was a great atmosphere at the Tenants' Conference and I was really pleased to see so many people enjoying the event and getting something from it. I particularly enjoyed my surgery with

customers. Having read the nominations for the Community Spirit Awards, I am reminded again of how much our tenants give to their communities and how important this is for building safe and active neighbourhoods.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to formally welcome all the Middleleak residents who have recently joined South Anglia.

Chris Ellison
MD South Anglia Housing

Helping residents have their say

I've been involved in resident associations since I first became a tenant of South Anglia two years ago. But it is more important to have your say now than it has ever been before – particularly for Sheltered Scheme residents.

The changes in funding will affect all of us and many people are and some plans certainly don't meet with residents' approval. For example, many residents have asked me to report back to South Anglia that they don't want to move to a system of mobile wardens. The more elderly and less mobile residents in particular need the continuity of a warden on site five days a week.

Many of us are also worried that Government plans to place the funding for services in the hands of residents will make us vulnerable. The system

could be open to abuse, whilst the current system of paying money directly to the Sheltered Scheme makes us feel more secure.

If you disagree with some of the plans, or if you're worried about the changes, please do speak to residents such as myself on the Sheltered Housing Advisory Panel. We can put your views forward and are always available to help and explain. ■

Mike Tilly,
resident of Oaklands Lodge,
Bishops Stortford

Mike, who lived for many years in South Africa, is a member of the Sheltered Housing Advisory Panel and the Policy Forum.

South Anglia is very conscious of how changes in funding streams around care and support may be impacting on and

concerning our residents. Sometimes there is a tension between what services we are commissioned by a Local Authority to provide and what our residents want. We have expressed our concerns about how these changes may affect vulnerable people at the highest Government levels.

We are working hard to ensure that the views and concerns of people we care for are taken into account and that these concerns are put forward to the relevant Local Authorities.

Further details of changes in care and support will be featured in the next issue. If you want to discuss these changes or changes associated with the Government's Personalisation agenda and Individual Budgets please let your Scheme Manager know that you have a query.

New door security

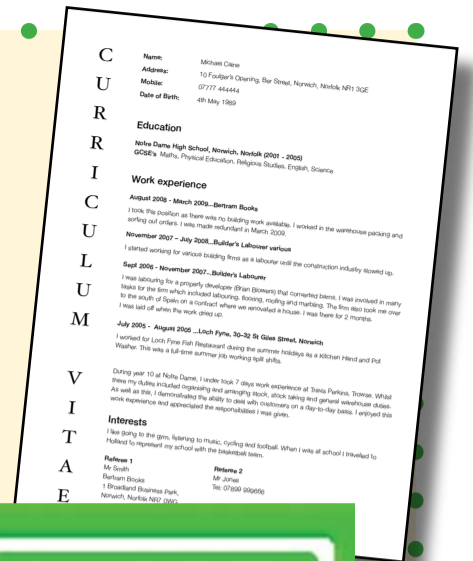
South Anglia's Property Services has extended the choice of door security measures installed as part of our programmes. We have added the security door bar as an alternative option to the door chain as requested by customers at the Tenants Conference held in August. ■





Looking for work?

If you want to brush up on your CV, get new skills, or just get some advice about how to improve your job prospects, we are here to help.



Things to remember when writing your CV:

- Keep sentences short, recruiters won't have long to read it
- Use standard typefaces such as Arial
- Be honest and factual
- Keep it to two pages

- Lead with achievements, use positive words like determined, created, devised, motivated
- Dates and employment should be easily found and consistent
- Follow up all claims with examples
- Include awards or recognition received for good work, together with professional memberships and relevant training

- Put content that is relevant to the job you are applying for near the top
- Include figures where you can like number of staff or the budget you managed
- Check and re-check spelling
- Always send your CV with a covering letter ideally to a named individual

For more tips on putting together your CV and why you need to have one, visit www.cvtips.com. The Job Centre Plus website also has lots of tips and guidance on getting ready to find a job at www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Customers/outofworkhelplookingforwork/Getting_job_ready

Once you have your CV prepared, you are ready to look for work. But how do you go about this?

1. Think about the skills and work experience you already have and what jobs you might like to do. Visit the JobCentre Plus www.backtowork.direct.gov.uk/find-work to get more tips on planning your job hunting.
2. Once you have decided on what you may like to do, there are many places you can find work:
 - You can also search for jobs using your mobile phone – just text JOBS to 83377 – or on your TV (if you're a Sky or Virgin Media customer). Visit www.backtowork.direct.gov.uk/find-work for more information.
 - Local newspapers can tell you whether companies are moving into your local area or expanding. They also advertise local jobs both in print and usually online too.

- Jobcentre Plus can help you can search for vacancies. Call 0845 6060 234 (textphone 0845 6055 255). Lines are open from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm Saturday.
 - Companies do not always advertise available jobs, so it is a good idea to contact them to find out if they have any vacancies.
 - Ask friends and people you know. They may know of a suitable vacancy for you or think of you when they hear of vacancies in the future.
 - Register with recruitment agencies.
 - Self-employment is another option. You can find more information on how to get started by visiting www.backtowork.direct.gov.uk/find-work
3. Keep track of your progress to help you to remember who you have approached, and what responses you have received. If you are

receiving Jobseeker's Allowance, you can use your records as evidence when Jobcentre Plus advisers ask you to prove that you are actively seeking work.

Useful links

- www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk
- www.jobseekers.direct.gov.uk
- www.ukonlinecentres.com



Making a Fresh Start

South Anglia is keen to support residents in as many different ways as possible. In this current climate we have developed two initiatives that can provide help and guidance to customers looking to get back into work.

Our Fresh Start project was first run in 2006. The project was aimed at Lone Parents, who were keen to get back into work. During the four weeks that participants were on the course they had access to a life coach to help them gain confidence, practice their interview techniques and complete CV's. Undertook two weeks work experience with local employers

in the Basildon District and had sessions with the Citizens Advice Bureau, Job Centre and Adult Community College.

We hope to roll the project out again later this year across the whole of South Anglia, but this time the project will be aimed at all residents who are currently out of work and are interested in getting back into the work place. And the emphasis will be on the current job market and possibility of retraining.

Talks are currently under way to enable our residents to get the best possible training in easy reach of where they live by enlisting help from various venues and putting on training events to help them with CV writing, job applications and letter writing. If you're

interested in the course and would like more information please contact **Viv Dewey** on **01268 220836**.

We are also looking for a volunteer in Basildon who is interested in becoming more involved in their local community. We are working in partnership with Basildon Citizens Advice Bureau to provide an advice service from our office in Vange and are looking for residents who would be interested in being trained by the CAB to deliver this service.

If you'd like to learn more about welfare and benefits advice and feel that you can make a weekly commitment to this project, why not put your name forward and speak to **Viv Dewey** on **01268 220836** for further details. ■

If CO enters your body, it stops the blood from bringing oxygen to cells, tissues, and organs, which can eventually lead to death.

The silent killer

– can you spot the signs?



What is carbon monoxide and why is it dangerous?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a poisonous gas. You can't see it and you can't smell it but CO can kill quickly without warning.

Where does it come from?

When fuel such as gas, oil, wood and coal does not burn properly it produces CO. It can be caused by gas appliances and flues that are not properly installed, maintained or that are poorly ventilated.

What does it do to you?

If CO enters your body, it stops the blood from bringing oxygen to cells, tissues, and organs, which can eventually lead to death. Levels that don't kill can cause you serious harm if breathed in over a long period. In extreme cases paralysis and brain damage can be caused as a result of prolonged exposure to CO.

What are the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning?

Symptoms to look out for include:

- Tiredness
- Drowsiness
- Headaches
- Giddiness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Pains in the chest
- Breathlessness
- Stomach pains
- Erratic behavior
- Visual problems

How common is the problem?

Hundreds of people die every year from carbon monoxide poisoning. Just a small amount of carbon monoxide in your home

can cause health problems over time.

What can I do to protect myself?

By being aware of the risks of CO poisoning and taking precautions you can dramatically reduce the risk in your home.

It is essential that you allow us access to your home to carry out checks on your gas boiler and appliances.

Top tips on detecting carbon monoxide

- Get yourself a carbon monoxide detector from your local DIY store
- Read the instructions carefully and make sure CO detectors are put in the recommended place in your home
- Carbon monoxide detectors do NOT work as smoke detectors
- Smoke detectors do NOT work as carbon monoxide detectors
- Test CO detectors at least once a month, following the manufacturer's instructions
- Replace CO detectors and batteries according to the manufacturer's instructions (usually every five years)
- If there are any signs that there may be excess CO in your home, get it checked out by a professional immediately. Evacuate everyone from your home, leaving the door open for ventilation on your way out. Notify the fire service.

For more tips on detecting on carbon monoxide in your home and links to other useful websites including helpful video clips, visit our website (www.circleanglia.org/south-anglia/resident-info/carbon-monoxide). ■

South Anglia is proud to introduce TSG as our specialist gas engineer. TSG took over the gas servicing and breakdowns from R G Francis in July so some of you will be familiar with the company already.

Under present legislation South Anglia must ensure that all gas, oil, and solid fuel appliances within your home have an annual service and a landlord's inspection carried out.

South Anglia has the responsibility to ensure that all inspections of appliances and their associated flues are carried out on an annual basis (within 12 months of each anniversary). As a tenant you have a legal obligation to allow us access to carry out these safety tests. So far 99.4% of South Anglia's properties have had their boilers checked.

If for any reason an appointment is missed TSG, will do their best to re-visit at a re-arranged time and date. If we are continually unable to gain access this will be seen as a breach of your tenancy agreement and may result in legal proceedings.

All TSG operatives carry identity badges that include a picture, licence number, company name and date the licence is valid to be used on the front. On the rear is a list of equipment that the operative is authorised to work on.

If you ever wish to check the validity of the engineer then call GAS SAFE on 08004085500. ■



Ask the expert...

David Richardson provides answers to your gas boiler questions;

Why should I have my boiler serviced each year?

A service will make sure your boiler is working safely and economically. We are obliged to ensure that boilers are serviced each year each by an engineer registered with the 'Gas Safety Register'. You are obliged to allow access to our engineers.

If you let our engineers in at the first appointment we can be sure to service the boiler in time and keep you safe. At the moment only just over a third of tenants allow access on the first visit and 300 to 400 tenants are faced with legal action each year. So when you receive the appointment

letter please either keep the appointment or call immediately to rearrange. We can offer evening and weekend appointments if needed.

My boiler looks to be working well, why do I need a service?

To provide you with hot water and heating, your boiler burns gas. It is essential that all the things that are needed to ensure this is done safely are working properly. Your boiler may seem to be working fine but it may in fact not be working in a safe condition.

Is it true that they put that smell in gas so you'll know if it leaks?

This is true. However, if a boiler is leaking carbon monoxide you won't be able to smell it because it is odourless.

How long does a service take?

It usually takes up to an hour depending on the type of boiler.

Can I not just check my boiler is safe myself?

No, you must have it checked by an engineer registered with the



'Gas Safety Register'. We wouldn't recommend you try and repair your boiler yourself, but a few basic checks could help you avoid calling out an engineer if you find there is only a minor problem you could sort out yourself.

We have put together a handy video guide to heating and boiler maintenance on our website. This short video will show you how to monitor for CO leaks, how to spot problems and also how you can bleed your radiators to make sure they are working at their best. Visit (insert correct web address) to see the video and access more information about gas safety. ■



Community Spirits Awards Update



We had a record number of nominations for this year's Community Spirit Awards. A big thank you to all residents that took the time to send us details of the people in your local areas that have been making a difference.

The awards ceremony took place on Thursday 22nd October at Boreham House in Chelmsford. All shortlisted residents were treated to a three course sit down meal.

"Once again we have had so many people come forward with inspiring stories of community spirit" said Carla Wood, South Anglia's Resident Involvement Officer and organiser of the awards. "We were delighted to meet all the people we have read about in the nomination forms. It was a great night." ■



Pictures from the Community Spirit Awards 2008

Tenant conference round up

South Anglia Housing successfully hosted its second annual Tenants' Conference on Friday 21st August 2009 in Harlow with more than 100 individuals in attendance on the day. Several partner agencies were also represented, including the police, the fire service and local credit unions.

A free BBQ was organised, guests were entertained by a local DJ and younger residents enjoyed face painting, balloon modeling and a play area. Residents were invited to take part in a prize draw and the lucky winners were Mr & Mrs Martin from Bishop's Stortford who won £50 of shopping vouchers.

Residents were offered a choice of different seminars which included Financial Inclusion, Neighbourhood Services and Minor repairs in the home. The team also invited people to 'meet the Managing Director' in private sessions, where Managing Director, Chris Ellison was available to answer questions and listen to what really matters to residents.



Our resident consultation on the day showed that 99% of the attending residents are satisfied with our services, which is something we are very proud of.

David from Brentwood said: "I found it very interesting and learnt quite a bit about things that I did not know with regards to South Anglia Housing operating policies, etc. I hope this year was successful enough to warrant one again next year."

Gilly Gibson from Burnham on Crouch added: "Thank you for doing the Harlow seminar, my family and I enjoyed ourselves and we learnt a lot." ■

Doorstep Challenge timetable



October 28th 2009
Lockside Marina/ Upper Chase/
Hunts Drive, Chelmsford/Writtle

January 27th 2010
Buntingford/ Cottered and
surround

November 25th 2009
Bullfields/Crofters Estates,
Sawbridgeworth

February 24th 2010
Woodhall Farm, Hemel
Hempstead

December 16th 2009
Sawyers Grove/Rollason Way,
Brentwood

March 31st 2010
Parkhouse Court/Middlefield,
Hatfield

Meet the team - Community Development

Caroline Kaldani has been with South Anglia Housing for eight years and has been the head of community development for two years.

"I am responsible for community development and resident involvement across the whole of South Anglia. I manage a team of six employees, three community development managers, two community development officers and one resident involvement officer.



My role is fairly strategic and involves me having to analyse statistical information and consultation results about the areas where we own properties and identifying key issues and trends. I then work with partner agencies to look at different initiatives that can be implemented to meet these needs."

Caroline is based in Braintree and can be contacted on: 07977 285257.

Carla Wood is our Resident Involvement Officer and has been in post for one year, covering the whole of South Anglia, prior to this Carla was a Neighbourhood Officer for five years.

"My current projects are the Tenant's Conference, Community Spirit Awards, recruitment of Mystery Shoppers, Doorstep Challenge and working on the strategic elements of Resident

Involvement. I really enjoy working closely with residents to shape the business and being creative with ideas to move Resident Involvement forward in the organisation."

Carla is based in Braintree and can be contacted on: 01376 559401.



Bryony Pallett has been a Community Development Officer for one year in the Vange area of South Anglia.

"At the moment I am involved with the running the credit union, fit and fab (a weight management group for the residents of Vange, to get fitter and improve their quality of life) and a Drop In centre for teenagers. It is the variety of projects and watching the positive outcomes impact on the resident's lives that makes this job so worth while."

Bryony can be contacted on: 07736028436

Vivien Dewey is a Community Development Officer in Vange and has been part of the team since July 2005.

"My main two projects running at the moment are Little Rainbows and the Circle Club, but I have more in the pipe line which includes Community Gardens, Health MOT and Pimp my Bike. I enjoy watching the satisfaction on the residents faces when they realise the value of engaging with us, it makes my job very fulfilling."

Viv can be contacted on 01268 220836.



Robert Barratt has been a Community Development Manager for South Anglia Housing since March 2003 and covers East Herts and Berecroft. He is currently on secondment to excellent estates but will be returning in the new year.

"My current projects are the fishing project, grow your own vegetables, diversionary activities programme, community café pilot project and careers advice projects. I really like making a difference to people lives and seeing young people create a positive attitude."

Rob can be contacted on 01376 559406

Ashuk Ahmed is Community Developments newest member of the team, he started in June 2009.

"At the moment I am working on projects like the Race for Health project, Summer play schemes and the Herts Furniture Forum. I cover Luton and the surrounding areas and love getting out and meeting new people and working in the community.

Ashuk can be contacted on 07771831091.



Philomena Johnson is a Community Development Manager and has been working for South Anglia Housing for one year, coming from Circle 33 where she had been working for five years.

"I work in Peartree and Welwyn Garden City where I am doing many different projects such as Summer holidays activities with the children, running a community café and setting up a football team for children with autism. I feel I am making a difference to people lives and helping them to build their confidence, which is very rewarding."

Philomena works from Tuesday to Thursday and can be contact on 01707 323 373



How are we doing?

These figures show South Anglia's performance to the end of September 2009. The figures represent key areas of South Anglia's services and are used to monitor our performance throughout the year.

Performance	Current month	Same period last year YTD	Period trend	Summary YTD
Emergency repairs completed in target	97.4%	86.1%	↗	☹
Urgent repairs completed in target	99.1%	7.9%	↗	☹
Routine repairs completed in target	98.4%	92.4%	↗	😊
Units with a valid gas safety certificate	99.4%	98.7%	↗	☹
Gas safety certificates serviced within 12 months or previous certificate	94.3%	92.8%	↗	😊

Get involved!

South Anglia aims to involve residents in as many different ways possible to ensure we are running your housing association the way you want it to be run.

There are many ways you can have your say and make a difference to how we are doing things, here are just a few ways;

Mystery Shopping

Mystery shopping is exactly that. Customers are asked to use our services, rate them and report back! Anyone can be a mystery shopper and you'll receive £5 per shop! South Anglia offers a comprehensive training session and on going support to any residents interested in learning more about Mystery Shopping. For more information please contact Carla Wood on 01376 559401.

South Anglia Board members

Residents that sit on Neighbourhood Boards can then be selected to sit on the South Anglia Board. The South Anglia Board governs the operation at South Anglia Housing. It monitors performance and quality, whilst also looking at policy and procedures.

Quality Action Groups

These groups are designed to look at ways for specific areas of performance. The groups consist of residents that discuss and feedback ways in which South Anglia Housing can improve the service to the customer.

Have your say

Completing surveys, satisfaction questionnaires, consultation requests through letter, telephone or email.

Who can become involved

Any resident of a property owned or managed by South Anglia Housing, or resident who receives a service from South Anglia Housing or one of its partners, can get involved with our forums, groups and boards.



Contact an existing group

Residents Groups

- Beckers Green Residents Group – For more info contact Claire Louise Turnham on 01376 559405
- Vange Resident Action Group – For more information contact Eva McIlwaine on 01268 558678 or Sara Bartleman on 01268 558723
- Star Street, Ware - For more information contact Natalie Holmes on 01279 714776
- Bullfields Estate, Sawbridgeworth - For more information contact Kate Donaldson on 01279 714775

Top tips to having a stress free, debt free festive season!

Christmas can be a stressful time. Just thinking about shopping in busy shopping centres, stocking up on groceries, arranging family events is enough to make you long for summer again. And that is all before you even think about the financial side of the festive season.

Unfortunately, people tend to overspend at Christmas. Using credit cards or borrowing money has become the norm for many families at this time of year. But starting the New Year with big debts is not recommended. A lot can be done to make sure you have a great festive season and not get into debt. You just need to start planning now.

Budget

How much money do you have to spend and where do you need to spend it? First make a list of all the things you have to buy and how much it will all cost you. Don't forget festive food, drinks, decorations, cards and stamps, as well as gifts. Compare this total with the total money you have to spend. If your wish list cost comes to more than you have, you need to cut back on some things. Cross off the things that are not essential ie economise on gifts, don't buy new decorations etc.



Save



If downgrading your Christmas is not an option to you then start saving – the earlier the better. Save small amounts here and there – it soon adds up. For information about where you can save this money, see the useful tips box on this page

Loans – beware

We would never encourage people to get into debt for Christmas but if you need a loan, we want to make sure that you can get advice and access to the best rate of interest available to you.

We are working to get rid of loan sharks, who charge high interest rates on money lent. Avoid these lenders and access our Credit Union instead. This is a community owned and controlled financial cooperative which provides a wide range of practical, affordable and straightforward financial services to everyone living or working in the borough.



Saving tips

Instead of putting money into Christmas saving schemes and hamper firms, why not simply open a bank account. You will be free to spend your money on anything you like come December and won't be restricted to buying from overpriced catalogues. Your money is also far safer in a bank than with a Christmas savings club. For more information about accounts go to the Financial Services Authority's website, contacts are beside.

The Post Office has a Christmas Club card, which lets you save up to £1,000 on a prepay card valid at a range of high street stores. You can't get access to the cash until 1st November so won't be able to dip into your savings. See beside for more information.

You don't need to be Scrooge this December, just a few simple things can save a lot of money:

- Be brave and try to negotiate a discount - especially when paying cash or if you are buying more than one of the same item
- Shop online and use price comparison sites like
- Join with friends and family to buy food and drink in bulk
- Agree a limit with family on gifts or do Secret Santa so you only buy one gift for one person



- Christmas cards, decorations and artificial Christmas trees always go on sale in late December and January.
- Save used wrapping paper all through the year. This really works great for small gifts
- Make your own gift tags by cutting a small piece of matching wrapping paper or using old Christmas cards cut down
- Stock up while things are on sale

Further information

Reporting loan sharks

If you are approached by a loan shark, call the confidential national hotline; 0300 555 2222 or text "loan shark" and your message to 60003 or visit www.campaigns.direct.gov.uk/stoploansharks/



Credit Union

For more information about the local Credit Union, please contact **Gerry Dobson at Herts Saverts on 01707 269239** or **Bryony Pallet at Essex Savers on 07736028436**.

Savings and bank accounts

The Financial Services Authority has lots of leaflets that offer useful advice on opening a bank account and offer a easy to use guide on managing money. Visit www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk/publications or call the Moneymadeclear helpline on 0300 500 5000.

For more information on the Post Office Christmas Club Card and to apply, go to www.postoffice.co.uk and go to the counter services tab at the top of the home page. Christmas Club is listed as one of the options on the left hand side.

Start up an online account

If you start an online account with Circle Anglia, you can:

1. View your rent balance and statements online
2. View the repairs history of your home, and any outstanding repairs together with their due date
3. Request a repair to your home
4. Request rent information
5. Set up a Direct Debit with us
6. Pay your rent via Allpay

What else is on our website?

We've got a great 'get involved' and community section, and maps to find out what amenities and activities are going on in your area.

You can catch up on the latest news and press, watch some of our handy hint videos, and opt-out of your printed Home Matters.

You can also report anti-social behaviour, let us know what you think of our services via our compliments and complaints reporting, find out about shared ownership and all your housing options, or just find out which number you need to ring with your enquiry.

If you require this publication in large print, audio, Braille or an alternative format, or you need this document translated into a different language, please call 01603 703561 and we will do our best to help.