

OpenDoor



Taking part in the
inter-estate sporting
challenge

Newsletter for all Southern Housing Group residents

Summer 2010

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Families from across the capital took part in the final heat of our inter-estate sports contest at Newham Leisure Centre on 17 July.

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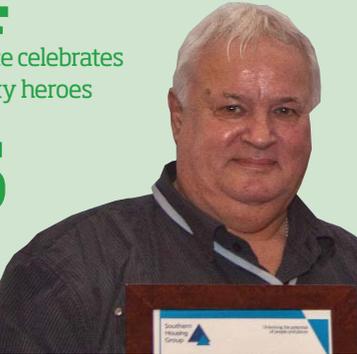
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Our performance



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

Amalgamation: a step nearer

“We believe these changes will spell real and positive changes for the organisation as a whole, so we are delighted to have your support.”

says Chief Executive Tom Dacey

Bengali Turkish

As you are aware, we have been reviewing the way Southern Housing Group is structured, to make sure we continue to deliver the best services possible to you.

Since the last edition of Open Door, we have consulted with residents, alongside our staff, to gather your opinions on the amalgamation.

Over the six-week consultation period from 7 April to 21 May 2010, we wrote to all residents about the proposed changes, as well as posting information on our website. In total, we received 511 responses from residents from across the organisation.

Of those who responded, 72% of you agreed with our proposals to amalgamate the Group into one single landlord. Only 9% of you disagreed with this approach.

In addition, 136 residents requested more information or asked a specific question. All enquiries were followed up with either a phone call, a letter or a visit from a member of staff.

To make sure our information was clear and accessible, we also made it available in large print, Turkish and Bengali, and in any other language on request.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond to the consultation. Your views are very important to us and have helped us to make an informed decision on the way forward.

Once the consultation had been completed, the boards of each of the three landlords considered in detail the responses we received. Taking into account these responses and the benefits this change will bring to the Group, the boards each agreed to proceed with the amalgamation and recommended to the shareholders of each organisation that they support the proposals. We held meetings with the shareholders during June and July, and they each voted in favour of amalgamation.

Since then, our proposals have been considered by our regulator, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), and it went on to give us its consent at the beginning of August.

As a result, the amalgamation will go ahead from 1 October 2010.

Closer to the date, we will write to you again about the changes and make sure all our staff are fully informed so that we minimise any disruption to our services.

We believe these changes will spell real and positive change for the organisation as a whole, so we are delighted to have your support. As well as ensuring our internal processes are easier and simpler, you will also get the chance to be more involved in how we are run and the decisions we make. You can read more about the Resident Service Panels we are creating in each of the regions, and how you can be part of them, on pages 4-5.



Some of your questions answered

Will amalgamation change how much rent I pay?

No. Our plans won't affect the way your rent is calculated. We will still have to follow government rules.

Will I pay my rent differently?

No. You will pay as you do now.

Who will my landlord be?

Southern Housing Group Limited – a charitable housing association and a

non-profit-making Industrial and Provident Society, that does not pay dividends to its shareholding members. The Tenant Services Authority, which has been overseeing the changes, will continue to regulate us.

Is Southern Housing Group Limited taking over James Butcher and South Wight HAs?

No. This is a coming together of all three landlords to create a stronger and more efficient organisation.

How will the new organisation be divided up?

There will be five regions: Isle of Wight, London, South, Thames Gateway and West.

There is more information explaining the changes on our website at: www.shgroup.org.uk/consultation

Or you are welcome to call our Service Centre on 0300 303 1771 for more information.

Wanted: Residents to work with us in our regions

Bengali Turkish

We're offering residents the chance to make a real difference to local services, as part of our regional Resident Service Panels.



We're looking for residents like you for our new panels. Pictured are former members of the Thames Gateway Regional Forum.

60

The number of residents we need for our new Resident Service Panels

3

Your term of office as a panel member is three years

Our new Resident Service Panels are replacing the regional customer forums and the James Butcher HA Residents' Consultative Panel to give residents an even stronger voice at the heart of our work in your regions.

Each of our five panels (which cover London, Thames Gateway and South regions, and the new West and Isle of Wight regions) will consist of up to 12 residents, who will work with senior regional managers to scrutinise our performance and improve local services.

As a member, we would ask you to come to up to four meetings a year – one of which might be your region's resident conference. We would also send you reports and information to review and comment on.

Above all, we would want to hear what you think about our plans, our services and our performance in your region. We would also welcome your suggestions for improvements.

Your term of office would be three years and you could remain a member for up to three terms.



Residents discussing the issues at the most

Feedback



“As a resident, you have a perspective that is unique because you experience the services”

Dennis Katungi from Beckton

“We offer alternative views. If you're staff closeted behind a desk, you don't necessarily know what's going on”

Iris Hunt from Reading

Why get involved?

Residents who get involved in working with us often say how rewarding they find it. As a Resident Service Panel member, you would have the chance to influence the regional work of a large social rented landlord, bringing your experiences as our resident firmly into the picture.

To help you in this role, we would offer you training to improve your confidence, knowledge and skills. We also pay any reasonable expenses for care or travel, so that you are not out of pocket.

Who can apply?

You can apply to join your Resident Service Panel if you live in our rented or sheltered accommodation, or if you are one of our leaseholders or home owners.

We are including an 'expression of interest' form with this edition of Open Door so that you can tell us about the skills you have to offer, if you are interested in joining. Please return this to us by 24 September.

We will then invite the people we shortlist to come to an interview with their regional director.



recent residents' conference.



Contact us

If you would like to talk to someone about joining a panel, please phone the Resident Involvement team, via the Service Centre, on 0300 303 1771. Or email resident.involvement@shgroup.org.uk

We can also send you our 'Becoming a Resident Service Panel member' booklet.

What you told us

The results of our latest three-year survey

Bengali Turkish

78%

Satisfied with us as a landlord

76%

Satisfied with our repairs service

65%

Satisfied that we take your views into account



Satisfaction with our repairs service has risen to 76%.

We carry out regular surveys so that we can track trends in your views and use your feedback to improve our services. We also periodically undertake more comprehensive opinion surveys known as STATUS surveys.

For our recent STATUS survey, we asked independent market research company Kwest Research to contact residents from all three of our landlords.

Between November 2009 and February 2010, the company phoned around 2,500 JBHA and SWHA residents, and sent postal surveys to around 3,500 residents of Southern Housing Group Ltd. More than 2,000 residents completed the survey – one in four of them home owners.

How did we do?

Compared to our last major survey in 2006:

- we were really pleased to see that across the Group overall satisfaction with us as a landlord was up 6% (to 78%) – but it dropped slightly for SWHA residents (down 1% to 81%) and stayed steady at 53% for home owners
- there has been a big overall increase in repairs satisfaction – up from 68% to 76%. This was really noticeable with JBHA residents, who now benefit from the same repairs system as the rest of the Group.

In other areas, satisfaction had risen on:

- value for money for your rent and service charges (up to 82% and 64%) – it stayed steady on 30% for home owners
- how easy you find it to contact us (up to 70%)
- whether your problem was fixed first time (up 12% to 45% – and we are working hard to raise this still further)
- how you felt about your neighbourhood (it stayed the same on the Isle of Wight).

For the first time, our survey asked whether you think we take your views into account. Of those who had an opinion, 80% said yes – 65% overall were satisfied.

Satisfaction had dipped on:

- the condition of your homes – we were surprised, given the amount of Decent Homes work we have done, but we will be working to find out why
- the communal repairs service we give our home owners – more home owners were dissatisfied (45%) than satisfied (31%) – a drop of 6% on 2006. Your feedback particularly suggests we need to communicate better.

In line with national social housing surveys, you are most likely to want us to improve our repairs service. You also tell us that the main problems

in your neighbourhood are litter and rubbish dumping, disruptive young people and noisy neighbours.

Overall, 60% are happy with how we handle anti-social behaviour, but this drops to 40% for the 16% of you who reported a case last year. We know residents are often disappointed that we can't solve their problem as quickly as they would like, but this is an important finding, which we will look into closely.

Most of you (78%) think we are good at keeping you informed about things that might affect you.

More of you than in our last STATUS survey (46% overall, three out of four if you are under 45, or nine out of 10 if you are a home owner) now have access to the internet and would like more services from our website (23% of renting residents and 40% of home owners told us this).

In future, we will track changes in your views more closely by holding annual STATUS-type surveys instead of three-yearly ones. We think this will help us to respond more quickly if things need improving.

We would like to thank everyone who took part this time for their valuable feedback on our work.

News **Bengali Turkish**

Why we need to know more about you



Over the past few months, we have been phoning residents to complete and check the information we hold on you.

We ask about:

- who you are (age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, faith or religion and whether you have a disability), and
- how you would like access to our services (whether you need translations or have other preferences about how we communicate with you, for example).

This information is really important to us, because it helps us to improve our services to meet your needs. It also means we can check that we are providing services fairly for everyone. We take your confidentiality seriously and store the information we collect in line with data protection law. You have a right to see this information.

Most residents are happy to give us answers to all our questions. However, we will understand if you are not happy to answer a question and we will not press you.

To find out more about our data protection policies, phone the Service Centre.

News

Our Residents' Handbook is now available in Easy Read



There are 5 information leaflets for people who rent our homes.

They tell you about things like:



- your rights as our tenant



- how to get a repair done



- who can live in your home with you



- how you can pay your rent



- how you can get involved in your neighbourhood.



Phone the Service Centre on 0300 303 1771 to ask for your copies.

Diversity matters

Southern Housing Group's Equality and Diversity Strategy Board has drawn up a new strategy and action plan for the whole Group for the next three years.

Our equality and diversity work is about making sure we provide services responsively and fairly. So we looked at what residents and staff had told us and what we know about the different communities we provide services for, and checked we are keeping to the law.

Our finalised strategy prioritises:

- showing we're committed to understanding difference
- promoting opportunities in your communities
- building homes and communities that reflect resident needs both now and in the future, and
- continuing to develop services that are effective, responsive and easy for all to access.

Our action plan includes:

- continuing to collect resident information, so that we know, for example, when people need large print, or are hard of hearing
- checking your responses to our

latest major survey to see if they were affected by factors like your age, gender, race and whether you are disabled – so that we can improve any services that aren't working as well for all groups

- assessing our key service areas over the next year to make sure our equality and diversity strategy is having a positive effect
- as we renew our contracts, reviewing the rules we set our contractors, to make sure they provide good and fair services to all our residents and treat their own staff well
- reviewing the design standards we set for our developers and consultants when building new homes, to make sure we build the best homes and take your feedback into account
- acting on some of the simple suggestions we have had from residents and staff – so our most important resident publications will now have Easy Read versions and we are replacing ordinary taps with lever taps in the homes of people over 60.

Open Door will carry regular progress updates. To ask us to cover an issue, email policy.services@shgroup.org.uk

“Our equality and diversity work is about making sure we provide services responsively and fairly”

It's a winner!

News

Award for Southern Quarter

We are pleased to report that our Southern Quarter development in Ryde on the Isle of Wight was commended in the Best Social Housing Development category, at the Local Authority Building Control's (LABC) South East Building Excellence Awards in June.

LABC exists to promote the design and construction of safe, accessible and environmentally efficient buildings.

In developing Southern Quarter, which has 149 homes for social and intermediate rent, shared ownership and private sale, we successfully worked with PCKO Architects and Stoneham Construction Ltd to achieve an 'urban village' feel.

The homes fit in well with their surroundings, meet modern environmental standards and they are already popular with residents.



News

Calls direct for a better repair service

We're bringing in a change to our repairs service – with the aim of improving it.

Three-way communication between you, our Service Centre and our contractors hasn't always worked well. So, last year, we asked residents in Kent to report their repairs directly to MHS Commercial Services instead.

Our pilot went so well that we made the change permanent. Residents say they like being able to make a firm appointment directly with the contractor. MHS Commercial Services can also diagnose the repair better, making sure the right contractor, with the right tools, turns up to do the job.

In our recent major survey, we found that resident satisfaction with repairs was 10% higher in Kent than in the rest of South region. It is also higher on the Isle of Wight, where residents have been reporting repairs directly for quite some time.

To extend this to the rest of our residents, we began by asking our new London region contractor, the Breyer Group, to take calls directly from the start of their contract.

We will be phasing in calls direct to our other regions over the coming year, with go-live dates between now and July 2011.

We will give you the new phone numbers in plenty of time – and they will all be '0300' numbers, so that you won't pay any more than when you call the Service Centre.



News

Bengali Turkish

Unlawful subletters – beware!

We now have a tougher strategy when it comes to tackling the problem of residents who leave their homes but rent them out.

Subletting is a problem because it stops us letting our homes to the people who most need them and it costs us time and money to sort out. It can also involve fraudulent use of public money.

If we think someone is renting out their home, we will always investigate and aim to take back the property.

To tackle unlawful subletting more effectively, we are:

- improving how we handle cases
- retraining our staff

- carrying out checks on estates where we think there is a problem – without giving any warning first
- putting up posters on estates where we think there is a problem
- collecting photos from residents at sign-up, so that at a later date we can check who people are.

We have also employed a new staff member to tackle unlawful subletting.

If you suspect subletting, you can report it on 0300 303 1774 and we will investigate. You don't need to give your name if you prefer not to.

For a summary of our strategy, go to our website or call the Service Centre.

I think the people living at this address are subletting unlawfully:

Address of property

Please tell us why you think this home is being unlawfully sublet:

Please tell us the name/s of anyone living at the property, if you can:

Can we contact you about this? Yes No*

If you answered yes, please give us your contact details:

Name

Address

Phone number

Email address

*If you answered no, that's fine. We understand if you prefer to remain anonymous.

Please send this form to: Service Centre, Southern Housing Group, PO Box 643, Horsham RH12 1XJ. Thanks for your help.



Mortgage rescue scheme



1,000

Home owners in Hackney, Islington and Greenwich now have an additional safety net

Southern Housing Group is working with HomeBuy agents London & Quadrant Group and Metropolitan Home Ownership, to provide a mortgage rescue service for home owners in danger of losing their homes.

Our part of the scheme is focused on Hackney, Islington and Greenwich, where we have more than 1,000 home owners. We may also help the leaseholders of other landlords.

Under the scheme, we can help home owners by buying back their properties. They then become our tenants, paying a rent that is 80 per cent of the going market rate for similar properties locally.

Rescued residents have the option of buying back their home at a later date if their situation improves.

To find out more about our mortgage rescue scheme, call the Service Centre.

Advice



Good advice for home owners

CHAS CL, the company that provided financial advice for our home owners, has now closed down. While we look for a new service, the organisations below can provide good free debt and money advice:

Shelter Homeowner Helpline, phone 0300 3300 515 (8am to 8pm weekdays and 8am to 5pm at weekends) or go to www.shelter.org.uk

Consumer Credit Counselling Service, phone 0800 138 1111 (8am to 8pm weekdays) or go to www.cccs.co.uk

Payplan, phone 0800 280 2816 (8am to 9pm weekdays and 9am to 3pm on Saturdays) or go to www.payplan.com

Insolvency Helpline, phone 0800 074 6918 (8.30am to 6.30pm weekdays) or go to www.insolvencyhelpline.co.uk

National Debtline, phone 0808 808 4000 (9am to 9pm weekdays, 9.30am to 1pm on Saturdays) or go to www.nationaldebtline.co.uk



Advice

Gas servicing Stay safe



Make sure your boiler gets its annual MOT, or it could cost you dearly.

Your gas boiler is like a car, needing regular checks to keep it running safely, efficiently and economically.

A faulty boiler can be very dangerous, because gas that is not burning properly can produce a highly poisonous gas called carbon monoxide, which can kill or cause brain damage. Carbon monoxide has no smell and cannot be seen.

So make sure your boiler is checked and serviced every year. And if you rent your home remember we arrange this check free of charge – provided you let our contractor in. We are now taking residents to court for consistently denying us access, which means they can end up paying £450 in costs.

Information



Not everyone finds it easy to assemble flat-pack furniture.

Small jobs service comes in handy

Because not everyone is great at DIY, we've launched a pilot handy-person service for residents living in some of our Kent sheltered schemes.

For just £5 an hour, residents can call on some of the skilled tradespeople employed by MHS, our contractor in the area, to help them with a wide range of small jobs, such as:

- putting up curtain rails
- fitting shelves
- assembling flat-packed furniture, and
- hanging pictures.

Jobs are completed on one day each month and residents can pre-book their slot by calling the Service Centre at any time.

We are trying out this idea because focus groups tell us that some of you struggle with small jobs around the house. If the pilot goes well, we're hoping to extend it to cover other areas.

This service would be in addition to the Group-wide chargeable repairs service we introduced in 2008 – where for a fixed price, paid in advance, our contractors carry out small repairs to your home that are normally your responsibility.

Advice

Bengali Turkish

Help for some of our struggling families

Are you struggling to keep your children under control and your family on track? If you live in Tower Hamlets or Greenwich, we may be able to help.

Thanks to new government funding and match funding from the Group, we now have a Family Intervention Project worker. Carly Jones will work with some of our families when they are experiencing tenancy or domestic problems, have been reported for

anti-social behaviour, or are finding it hard to manage their children.

Carly is also planning two 13-week 'Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities' courses. The course in



Tower Hamlets will run in September. In Greenwich it will run in January.

Each three-hour session will aim to help parents who are having problems with their children – allowing you to share your parenting skills and learn new ones. We will provide breakfast or lunch and a crèche if needed.

If you could use Carly's support, or would like to go on the course, call the Service Centre to speak either to Carly or your resident services team.

Stephanie & Wale graduate from SSE



Stephanie Thomas (left) and Wale Yusuff (right) with their graduation certificates. Also pictured: Marcia Asare from SSE.

“I would advise anyone to do the course. It’s very, very beneficial. You gain a lot of knowledge”

SSE graduate Wale Yusuff

Wale Yusuff from Islington and Stephanie Thomas from Clapton graduated from the School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) in March after attending their year-long part-time course, with our financial backing.

Wale has spent the year building Drivers Edge UK, a project to educate young people about driving safely, while Stephanie’s Elav8 My Style business is including homeless and disadvantaged people in a project to make and sell items for a market stall.

Last year, Stephanie won government funding through a programme that is tackling homelessness, while Wale was invited to No. 10 Downing Street on Social Enterprise Day in November.

Since graduating, Wale has completed a pilot programme of youth club sessions, taking in clubs as far afield as Northamptonshire and Cornwall. In July, he held a launch reception in central London attended by Robert Gifford, Executive Director of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety. Wale is now setting up a quarterly newsletter and a website complete with a chatroom for young drivers. He is also taking on the tough challenge of finding sponsorship in an era of government funding cuts.

To find out more about courses with SSE, phone Larissa Litchfield on 020 8981 0300 or email her at larissa.litchfield@sse.org.uk

Feedback

Bengali Turkish

Community advisory panel

£428k

What we spent on community activities in the year to September 2009

£1.2m

Additional money we brought in from outside funders

Our Social and Economic Regeneration staff are looking for residents to act as an advisory panel for their work in your communities.

As a member of the Community Advisory Panel, you would give us a valuable resident’s-eye-view on how we can make a difference in your neighbourhoods and help us to shape our policies and plans.

We currently prioritise:

- providing residents with employment and training support

- financial inclusion projects – that provide people on low incomes with access to loans and saving schemes
- developing young people
- supporting older people
- improving the external environment
- maximising residents’ opportunities around the 2012 Olympics.

To find out more, phone Earl Newman on 020 7324 1272 or email earl.newman@shgroup.org.uk

News

How our grants made a difference

The following are just some of the residents given grants since our last issue.

Toni Gillam from Hayling Island in Hampshire got a grant from the Sir Ashley Bramall Fund that paid for 11 study books and £100 of her course fees. Toni is in the second year of a part-time Foundation Degree in Working with Children, at Southampton University. "I've worked in schools as a teaching assistant for the past eight years and in the long term I'd like to go into teaching," she told Open Door.

Margarita Mensah from Stamford Hill in London used a Sir Ashley Bramall

grant towards the cost of a 10-week course in childcare at Islington College. She told Open Door: "I wanted to have better experience of looking after other people's children, because I have grandchildren and sometimes my neighbours drop off their kids."

Brothers **Matthew** (6) and **Mark** (5) **Kosgei** from Fieldgate Mansions in Whitechapel got grants from our Sports Fund towards the cost of swimming lessons. When we spoke to Dad William, he told us: "They started on Monday and they liked it so much!"

Residents at **Lisgar Terrace** in West

Kensington got a small grant of £1,290 towards the cost of holding a neighbours' day on 26 June. "We got a really good response and it was a great day – more than 100 people came," **Lisa Baker** told us.

"We had a bouncy castle, face painting, a clown and a DJ. We bought juices and everyone brought their own food so that we could have a big lunch together. We also held raffles and our oldest resident, Cliff, called out the winners.

"It was good to see people come down to the hall who don't go out much. The last party held here was for the Jubilee!"

News

Aged 13-24? Help us spend £20,000!

We're looking for volunteers aged 13-24, to join our new Youth Grant Forum.

We have a pot of £20,000 to spend on youth projects, but we want young people to decide which we should support. So, from September, we will be asking the forum to look at applications that meet our rules and tell us which to approve.

We have asked the Leaders in the

Community Consultancy to recruit our forum members, because it is run by

and for young people. So for more information call Rahul Alam on 020 7987 8796 or 07903 404072, or email him at r.alam@licconsultancy.co.uk



Apply now for a grant

If you rent a home from Southern Housing Group Ltd, you can apply (but restrictions 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 Foundation small grant of up to £2,000 towards resident events or outings, community activities or school holiday programmes.

If you rent your home from South Wight HA, you can apply for:

- a study or sports grant of up to £500.

Renting residents of all the Group's landlords can apply for:

- a Working Opportunities Fund grant of up to £500 towards the costs of getting you back to work.

Email grants@shgroup.org.uk, phone 020 7324 1292, or go to www.shgroup.org.uk for more details.

News

Social and economic regeneration

You may have noticed that our community team recently changed its name from 'Southern Housing Foundation' to the 'Social and Economic Regeneration Department'.

Apart from the name change, it is business as usual for our staff, who still run the same grants programme and continue to work on estates with your resident services teams.



Left and right: Taking part in our May conference for residents of Southern Housing Group Ltd.

Conference celebrates community heroes

“The event was a great way to meet other residents and have a say in the way services are delivered”

Award-winning resident Roy Mitchell

Our latest residents’ conference, held on 22 May, brought 110 residents from London, South and Thames Gateway regions together to share their views with us.

The highlight of the event, which was held at the Hotel Russell in central London, was an awards ceremony to recognise some of our most actively involved residents.

Reg Burbidge from Islington, Granville Cosier from Aylesham and Emily Shepherd from Bethnal Green were all presented with awards for their contribution to Southern Housing Group’s work over the years, while

Roy Mitchell from Ashford was given the overall award for 10 years of voluntary service – firstly on the South East Regional Committee and more recently on the Group-wide Customer Services Committee.

The awards were presented by former Olympic athlete Sally Gunnell, who also gave a speech about overcoming challenges to achieve success.

Residents at the conference gave us lots of useful feedback, which we will use to help us make service improvements.



Sally Gunnell (in red) is pictured left to right with award winners Roy Mitchell, Emily Shepherd, Reg Burbidge and Granville Cosier.

News

Advice Hub for Havens

Residents in the Havens area of East Sussex have a new advice service, which we have supported with a grant of £3,000.

The Advice Hub, which opened in March, provides a base for the Citizens Advice Bureau and Brighton Housing Trust to offer housing, benefits and debt advice. Further services will be added later.

To make an appointment, phone 01273 612 360 (weekdays), or drop in to Summerhayes in Marshall Lane in Newhaven.

News

Turkish

Food on vacant lots

On 24 June, residents at Amhurst Park in Hackney celebrated the launch of a food growing scheme for their estate.

The Vacant Lot project is part of a scheme led by Groundwork London that has won £300,000 from the Big Lottery. Their gardeners will work with design consultancy What if: projects Ltd to create 20 new gardens for the residents of five social housing landlords.

The project will involve five of our Hackney and Islington schemes.

News

Green Doctor cuts bills

'Green Doctor' Peter Shoult now visits residents in West Sussex, thanks to a project launched by Groundwork and supported by us and two other landlords.

The project aims to help people cut their fuel bills and carbon emissions, so Peter can advise on how to save energy and help you install basic energy-saving devices.

For more details, call the Service Centre and ask for Donal O'Sullivan, or email donal.o'sullivan@shgroup.org.uk

News



Hackney YEP group check their website.

Young residents say YEP we can!

Young residents from our New Kingshold Estate in Hackney can now post their news and views on a website for the borough's young people.

The Youth Engagement Project (YEP) website at www.rising-tide.co.uk/yep, also includes a page for the Chatvic youth committee, which covers four estates including New Kingshold.

The YEP project is provided by Rising Tide, an education and development charity, and is supported by Hackney Homes, Southern Housing Group and three other housing associations.

News



Left: James Rogers outside some of the new homes. Right: Kidbrooke's sports day.

A new community in Greenwich

From August, residents from Greenwich Council's Ferrier Estate in Kidbrooke will begin moving in to newly built Southern Housing Group homes.

Over a 15-year period, the old estate will make way for 4,000 homes, as well as shops, offices, a new school, healthcare and sports facilities. The first phase will include 229 homes for rent and sale with Southern Housing Group – 80 of them family sized homes for existing residents.

Since September, our Senior Community Regeneration Officer James Rogers has been working with

local people and agencies to start building the new community. As a result, residents have access to greater support with employment, training and education. There are also opportunities to start working on the construction of the new estate.

James is now helping residents find ways to develop their skills and ideas for their new community, and get access to grants.

In June, we held a special sports day at the estate, as part of our Activate London inter-estate sporting challenge. Activate London is funded by the Big Lottery Fund and led by Peabody Trust.

£1.3s.5d

Average weekly wage at Liverpool Road in 1910 (£66.81 in today's money)

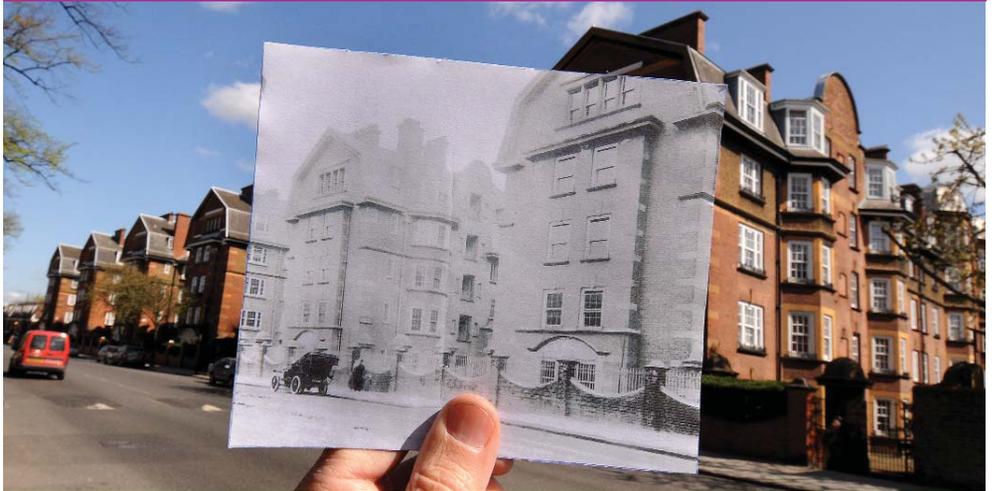
5/-

Average weekly rent at Liverpool Road in 1910 (£14.27 in today's money)

"I recently needed to call them on two consecutive days. On both occasions I received an excellent service"

London Resident Ray Francis is pleased with our new contractors

News



Liverpool Road Estate then and now. The estate opened on 4 April 1910.

Liverpool Road celebrates 100 years

Residents at Liverpool Road in Islington will be celebrating the 100th birthday of their estate with a month-long arts project and an event on 5 September.

Liverpool Road was the first scheme of sanitary 'dwellings for the poor' to be built using the sizeable legacy left by the Victorian financier Samuel Lewis. The Samuel Lewis Housing Trust later grew and merged with other landlords to become Southern Housing Group.

In 1910, it cost £101,000 to build the estate (£9 million in today's money). It originally included 323 flats, each complete with a bath under a wooden table top in the kitchen, a coal bunker and Venetian blinds. The rent included chimney sweeping.

Today's Liverpool Road Estate has 270 remodelled homes, following major modernisation over the past 40 years. The estate now has Grade II listed building status.

Longstanding estate resident Reg Burbidge told us: "I've been here for 62 years now, so Liverpool Road holds many memories for me. My family grew up here, and moved into homes on the estate themselves. The affordable rents here enabled them to save money and move on to private homes – but my wife and I have never wanted to leave Liverpool Road.

"Housing associations in 1910 and in 2010 are an invaluable source of housing and support."

News

Breyer Group get to work in London

In May, our new repairs contractor for London region, Breyer Group plc, got off to a great start with residents when they hosted a Ways into Construction event at the community hall on the George Downing Estate in Hackney.

The event was a huge success, with plenty of information about training schemes and apprenticeships, and the chance to get hands-on experience of working in construction. More than 50 residents signed up to be kept informed of opportunities. The Breyer Group promises to hold more events in future.

We picked Breyer from six companies invited to tender for the contract, putting them through a four-stage selection process that included panel interviews and site visits by staff and residents. The contract will run for up to seven years.

Event

Bengali



Staff, residents and guests at the launch of the park at Cyprus Street.

New play park at **Cyprus Street**

In March, we opened a natural park for children at our Cyprus Street scheme in Bethnal Green in east London.

The park provides a fun, safe space for parents to spend time with their children, with areas of grass and turf, a shrubbery, a log causeway, stepping stones and painted markers to encourage creative play.

Residents from the Cyprus Area Project Panel were consulted about the park's design and worked with Play Association Tower Hamlets (PATH) to achieve it. Karen Pannell and Emily Shepherd told us: "We are delighted with the new play space. The children are very happy and are enjoying the logs, boulders and hills to play on. We look forward to seeing the planting mature through the seasons."

The project was made possible thanks to £32,500 in funding from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and £10,000 from Southern Housing Group.

News

Bengali

Stepney FC hosts football tournament

Stepney Football Club, which includes our residents, co-hosted the seventh annual Safer Neighbourhood Tournament in April, with £1,000 in funding from Southern Housing Group.

Taking part were 40 amateur teams from Tower Hamlets estates, the local

police and fire service, and the Canary Wharf business community.

Stepney FC's under-16s team made it to the semi-finals before losing 2:1 to Soul Youth. In the event, the Vallance team won the under-16s contest, while London Tigers won the full adult tournament.

News

Bengali

Mural art for estates

Young residents at Atkinson House on the Isle of Wight, Fieldgate Mansions in Whitechapel and Warner Road in Camberwell have produced wonderful new murals.

At Atkinson House, young residents worked with artist Hannah Ray to produce a mural for their garden on the theme of 'It's not what you've been in the past, but what you could be in the future'.

At Fieldgate Mansions, young residents worked with Groundwork London to produce a mural in English and Bengali, celebrating the way people from different backgrounds get along at the estate.

At Warner Road, Groundwork London brought in Signal Arts to work with our young people on the design and painting of their mural.

Top to bottom: The murals at Fieldgate Mansions (Shayma Zaman is pictured), Atkinson House and Warner Road.



Event

Bengali



Left to right: Anisa Khatum and Tanzila Alom at the flora and fauna fun day.

Flora and fauna fun at Timber Wharves

On 12 June, Timber Wharves residents on the Isle of Dogs enjoyed a flora and fauna fun day.

We ran the green-themed event to get residents to talk to us about the possibility of setting up a garden project.

We have recently been awarded funding from Tower Hamlets Council's Health Town Change for Life programme, which means we can start a community food growing scheme on the estate. Community gardening is a great way to help families grow healthy fruit and vegetables, as well as encouraging community spirit between neighbours. It works very well in other areas.

At the fun day, there were gardening, and health and well-being stalls to promote our theme, as well as face painting and a children's entertainer.

Event

Turkish



Haroon Khan and son Izaan check out the Hub with staff member Tim Lovett.

A Hub for the IT crowd

The IT crowd were out in force on 26 May to celebrate the official opening of the Hub at Stamford Hill Estate in Hackney.

The Hub is a new employment and training centre – set up because residents told us they could use some help to improve their work and life skills. People using the centre get access to computers and one-to-one support, and can take part in courses.

Resident Haroon Khan told us: "I look after my two-year-old son for most of the day, so searching for work can be difficult. Now I can pop in to the Hub to search for jobs, take Izaan to the park and come back again later in the day. It's ideal."

Event

Northbourne youngsters lead the way

Young residents at our estate in Northbourne in Godalming got together in May for the first meeting of their new youth group.

This is the latest project to be launched by the Northbourne Action Group.

The young people, who are all under 16, drew up a wish list of future activities, with fundraising for a football pitch, a netball court and trips for all ages high on the agenda.

The group are also keen to play their part in community life at Northbourne and to give other local children the

chance to share their views and volunteer. They recently took part in an estate clean-up and now want to hold a clean-up of the council-owned river and woods that run beside the estate.

In June, the youngsters worked with the Action

Group on costumes for Godalming Carnival – where their float won best overall and largest costume.

Pictured are members of the youth group panel.



News



Explaining Eaga's work.

Solar power for residents

Around 160 residents on the Isle of Wight are getting free solar energy thanks to green energy provider Eaga.

Solar panels installed at their homes are expected to save our residents up to £200 a year on fuel bills and cut their annual carbon emissions by around 1.2 tonnes.

The panels will generate excess energy that Eaga can sell back to the grid, providing a return for the private investors who pay for the programme. Eaga will install 3,000 solar panels in UK homes this year.

In Chale Green, Eaga is working with the Chale Community Project – a partnership between the people of Chale, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, South Wight HA, the Footprint Trust and Island 2000. Its aim is to reduce carbon use and end local fuel poverty.

Event



Tolu Atewogboye, Edward Ehikhamhen and Daniel Owusu quizzed our experts.

Hackney young people grill the experts

Young residents from Stamford Hill and Myddleton Grange estates in Hackney took part in a unique question time on 24 June.

The session at our Clerkenwell head office gave the young people the chance to ask a panel of experts for their views on attitudes to young people, knife and gang crime, making communities stronger and helping young black people to tackle obstacles to education.

The panel included lecturer and youth crime expert Suzella Palmer, from the University of Bedfordshire, consultant and author of 'The Art of Youth Work' Kerry Young and Professor Gus John, who is a fellow of the Institute of Education.

Tolu Atewogboye (16) said: "It was good to have people actually listening to what we have to say and explaining what we can do to change things and make life better where we live."

News

Growing their own

Residents in Lake on the Isle of Wight are growing vegetables in shared areas, after we agreed their request.

Lea Road residents wanted to garden an area between two houses, so we got Growing Ideas to set up four raised beds and run a first planting session. We may later add further raised beds to the drying area at nearby Lea Court.

News

Monday Group launch newsletter

Learning disabled people in Ryde on the Isle of Wight have started a lively newsletter, with support from staff at South Wight Housing Association.

The Monday Group Newsletter has news and views from residents living at our supported schemes, as well as from other learning disabled people who live locally.

Recent group activities have included going to a boxing tournament, where members met Gladiators star Atlas, a trip to a local garden centre to try out their hot tubs, a Valentine's Day social and a resident-led session in Makaton (a pictorial writing system).

The group have also been lobbying the council and government over planned cuts to the budget that pays for their support workers.

Your pages

We want to hear from you! Send us a letter, a photo or an email to tell us what's going on in your area or your views on anything you read in Open Door. Write to the Editor via the Service Centre or email opendoor@shgroup.org.uk

10 disposable cameras on offer

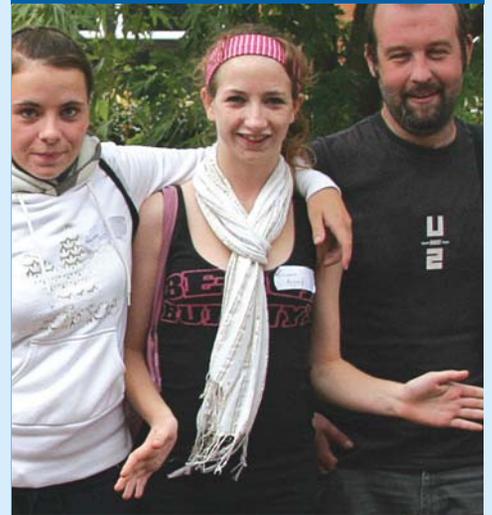


We have 10 disposable cameras to give out to residents who want to share what's going on in their neighbourhood.

You could take pictures of your tenant outings and activities, or show us day-to-day life on your estate. Whatever you decide, when you send back the cameras, we will get them developed and include the best pictures in the next issue of Open Door.

To ask for a camera, send your name and address to the Editor of Open Door via the Service Centre, or by sending an email to opendoor@shgroup.org.uk

Gemma Bignell Newport, Isle of Wight



In March, Isle of Wight resident Gemma Bignell (pictured centre) was presented with a prestigious Youth Achievement Award by the Island's former High Sheriff, Gay Edwards.

Gemma, who lives at our Fairlee Road scheme for young people in Newport, won the award for her work in the community, as well as her academic achievements.

Gemma has volunteered at, and raised funds for, several local charities over the past year. For example, at the end of March, she raised several hundred pounds for the Haylands Farm charity in Ryde, by running around the Isle of Wight - a 60-mile trip that took two days.

Gemma is a regular volunteer at Haylands Farm, which provides training, education and work experience for people with learning disabilities. The funding she has raised will help to pay for a sensory garden for the farm that she has designed herself.

Gemma is currently awaiting her A level results and we wish her all the best.

Gwen Denness Newport, Isle of Wight



Gwen Denness from Furze Brake in Newport, on the Isle of Wight, celebrated her 100th birthday on 15 April - with actor Geoffrey Hughes (pictured with Gwen) on hand to help the party go with a swing. Geoffrey will be better known to readers as Onslow in 'Keeping up Appearances' and 'Coronation Street' bin man Eddie Yeats.

Gwen also received a birthday card from gardener and TV presenter Alan Titchmarsh, who also lives on the island.

Malcolm Garbutt Hayling Island



Malcolm Garbutt from Reading House on Hayling Island has delighted fellow residents by transforming their shared grounds into the blooming garden pictured above.

Despite having a disability, Malcolm's hard work has included clearing weeds, brambles and two rock gardens, tidying up the greenhouse, and planting new shrubs, bulbs and a herb garden. The fences and summer house have also been repainted. He tells us this has all been possible thanks to the generosity and enthusiasm of fellow residents.

Before coming to Reading House, Malcolm spent 10 years on the gardens at Trafalgar Court in Southsea, where his wife Sue was manager. "I won so many awards that the housing association had a very large cabinet built to house them!" he says.

Malcolm sees his work at Reading House as just the start and hopes to win awards for the gardens in years to come.

Phyllis Bond Hackney



We are sad to report that our longest-standing female resident, Phyllis Bond of Charles Utton Court, died on 2 May aged 93.

Phyllis was born in 1916 at Liverpool Road Estate in Islington and, apart from two years during the war, when she was stationed out of London as a sergeant in the ATS, she was our tenant for the rest of her life.

In 1932, on Phyllis's 16th birthday, the family moved from their rather crowded two bedroom flat (William and Harriet Bond had eight children) to a three bedroom flat on the old Amhurst Road Estate in Hackney. William was a porter at both estates, who worked for us for 37 years.

Phyllis was a keen gymnast and represented England at the Swedish Gymniad in 1939, where she won two medals. In the ATS, she was a PT instructor.

Over the years, Phyllis moved to three flats at Amhurst Road, before opting for sheltered housing at next-door Charles Utton Court in 1989.

Phyllis's niece, Beverley Monk, tells us that family and friends plan to put a bench in her memory in the Court's gardens. She was, Beverley tells us: "a well-loved aunt... a lovely lady and a friend to everyone."

Pictured above: **1.** Phyllis Bond in her ATS days. **2.** Phyllis in 2001 when we celebrated her long tenancy as part of our centenary year. **3.** Phyllis at a family get-together in March, with her friend and carer Jean Straker.

Betty Hazel Portsmouth Town Court



Betty Hazel from Portsmouth Town Court celebrated her 102nd birthday on 6 March.

Betty puts her long life down to working hard and being happy, and still goes to Southsea's Salvation Army Centre three times a week. She is pictured with her daughter Elizabeth. Picture courtesy of The News, Portsmouth.

Waltham Court Goring-on-Thames



Residents at Waltham Court in Goring-on-Thames held a lively fundraising tea on 22 July, when they took part in Marie Curie Cancer Care's Blooming Great Tea Party. Residents enjoyed a singer, entertainer and raffle, raising around £100. Pictured left to right are Joan Davies, Eileen Freeman and Philip Overbury.

Margaret Marks Gurnard, Isle of Wight

Margaret Marks from Bucklers View in Gurnard on the Isle of Wight raised £110 for the Isle of Wight Hospice on 15 May, when she took part in their annual Walk the Wight event.

Margaret opted for a walk of 8.5 miles from Sandown High School to Thompson's Trees in Shide, Newport. The walk ran mainly along flat cycle-tracks on a former railway line. She finished in an impressive two hours to collect a medal of achievement and the charity's thanks.

Grace Fleary Islington



Sixteen-year-old Grace Fleary from Edward Mews in Highbury has something to sing about after winning the under-17s category in the first-ever Islington's Got Talent competition in December.

Grace wowed the judges with her version of the Leona Lewis hit 'Run', beating the other finalists in front of an audience of 900 people at the Rock Tower in Holloway to win a trophy and a cash prize of £100.

Grace is no stranger to public performance, because she sang for Michelle Obama in April 2010, when the US President's wife made a surprise visit to the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Language College, where Grace was a pupil.

Grace also sang for 40 of her neighbours at the opening of the Edward Mews communal gardens in June. Her younger sister Miriam is one of eight residents who have signed up to start gardening in an unused spot on the estate that was formerly a derelict play area.

Photo by courtesy of Dieter Perry.

Eileen Robertson Gosport



Eileen Robertson from Gosport saw the publication of her first comedy crime novel, *Miss Maguire is Missing*, at the end of July.

Eileen is a former lecturer in German and creative writing, who worked first at Highbury College and then at Portsmouth University. She became a carer in 2002, when her husband William suffered a stroke. Eileen's plays have been performed at The Portsmouth Arts Centre, but this is her first novel.

Miss Maguire is Missing tells the story of how reluctant hero, Ben Hammond, follows up on the mysterious disappearance of his former maths teacher from a pensioners' coach tour. Along the way, he unearths dark secrets and meets suspicious characters, while at a nearby nursing home elderly people keep disappearing.

For Eileen, life as a carer has not always been easy, but it has given her the opportunity to focus on a life-long interest. She is currently working on two similar novels.

Ron and Sybil Marks Hackney



Myrna Shaw from Amhurst Park in Stamford Hill has asked us to include a tribute in this issue to her former neighbours Ron and Sybil Marks, who moved from the estate in April to be nearer their daughter in Edgware.

Ron and Sybil had been our tenants for many years, as Ron's family first moved in to the old Dalston Lane Estate in Hackney (since rebuilt) in 1934. Sybil's family lived on the estate too.

The couple rented several flats at Dalston Lane before moving to Amhurst Park in 1981. They shared their memories as part of the oral history project we ran in 2001 to celebrate the centenary of the Samuel Lewis Housing Trust, which later became Southern Housing Group.

Ron will be missed because, over the years, he was active in tenants' associations on both estates and also chaired Southern Housing Group's Tenants' Federation.

He was the first tenant representative on the Samuel Lewis housing management committee and served on the London Regional Committee from its beginnings in 1996 until the end of 2002.

At the age of 87, Ron is still on several committees in the community, particularly as a representative of older people.

Ron is pictured with an award from Southern Housing Group for his years of support for our work. We wish the couple well for the future.

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 (written in blue) because our regulator expects us to report on them.

Performance changes

The figures show that we are getting better at completing your repairs on the first visit (we call these 'first-time fixes'). This is something we have been concentrating on because we know it is important to you.

We carried out more repair quality checks than usual during April to June to catch up on previous performance that wasn't as good as it should have been.

Performance has improved on the time we take to relet empty homes. Staff now have better performance information to manage this area of our service and we carefully check our data to make sure the figures we report are completely accurate.

We are now reporting differently on our response to emails – weighting the records of the Service Centre and the findings of our mystery shoppers equally. Our mystery shoppers carry out only a few tests, so their findings can have a significant effect on the figures.

Note

1. No figure is available for this service standard because only a very small number of mystery shopping tests were carried out in this period. In future, we will introduce new ways to check this standard, in addition to mystery shopping.

Customer care 1 January to 30 June 2010

	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun
1 If you write to us, we will respond within 10 working days	67%	68%
2 If you email us, we will respond within five working days	92%	71%
3 We will answer 80% of phone calls to the Service Centre within 20 seconds	77%	74.3%
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	80%	80%

Managing where you live 1 January to 30 June 2010

	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun
5 We will inspect where you live as often as we agree with you (monthly, or every three or six months)	96%	89%
6 We will get rid of offensive graffiti within one working day of being told about it	89%	91%
7 If you report an incident of anti-social behaviour that we think is high risk, we will contact you within 24 hours	50%	58%

Paying rent & service charges 1 January to 30 June 2010

	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun
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)	100%	See note ¹
9 We will keep the amount of overdue rent as low as possible (total on last days of March and June)	4.2%	4%

Letting homes 1 January to 30 June 2010

	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun
10 Within six weeks of you moving in, we will visit you, to see how you are settling in	73%	76.2%
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 March and June)	41 days	34 days

Repairs and maintenance 1 January to 30 June 2010

	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun
12 We will visit you to carry out quality checks (at least 10% of all repairs each month)	9%	17%
13 We will offer you an appointment to carry out your repair	74%	75%
14 We will try to get repairs completed in one visit	75%	81%
15 We will get a valid gas safety certificate for all our homes every year (totals on last days of March and June)	99%	99.3%

Diary dates

- 18-19 Sept** Open House event [Garland Court, Southwark](#)

- 25 Sept** Talent show run by our Social and Economic Regeneration Department [Earl's Court, London](#) Details to follow

- 30 Sept** The next clear rent account prize draw
Make sure you are up to date with your rent and service charge payments and you could win £200

- 1 October** All Group landlords amalgamate

- 25-29 October** Isle of Wight region – open days
Staff will be calling at nine locations to talk about the new-look Group, benefit changes and local issues.

- 1 December** Isle of Wight region – Supported Involvement Day
Details to follow.



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 are the new resident groups that will replace the regional customer forums called?
- 2 Give one of the actions set out in our new equality and diversity strategy.
- 3 What is the new name for Southern Housing Foundation?

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 29 October 2010**.

Winners from last issue: Ms A Dalton from Dover, Sue Warrington from Hayling Island in Hampshire, Christine Buckley from Essex.

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COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS: Instructions on how to enter form part of the Terms & Conditions, and entry into the competition is deemed to be an acceptance of the Terms & Conditions. Entry is open to all Group residents. Employees of Southern Housing Group, promoters, their families and associated companies are ineligible to enter. The winners will be the first eligible entry drawn and will be notified by phone or mail. All draws will take place at the Group's head office. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. The Promoter accepts no responsibility for any variation in the prize value. Prizes are not exchangeable. Entries will close 5pm on Friday 29 October 2010.

Contributors

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Writing & production Carol Saunders

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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 October 2010.

Southern Housing Group



James Butcher Housing Association



South Wight Housing Association



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
service_centre@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 (Southern Housing Group Ltd) or 08456 013 225 (James Butcher HA)

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