Community Development
South Essex Homes runs a number of Community Development Projects across Southend with a variety of different aims: from helping residents to sustain their tenancies or encouraging a good ‘community spirit’, through to encouraging them to improve their own knowledge and understanding in specific areas.

In this booklet, we introduce our Community Development Projects to you.

There is something for everyone – regardless of what your interests or personal circumstances are or how much available time you have.

To register your interest in any of these projects, please cut out the back page of this booklet, complete the short form, fold it in half and seal it, then pop it in a postbox – you don’t even need to attach a stamp!

Someone from our friendly team will be in touch to discuss this with you very soon.

We hope you enjoy finding out more about what we do and we look forward to hearing from you!

Best wishes from

The Community Development Team

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Contents

360° Resident Support 4
Healthy Living 5
Food Culture Project 6-7
Digital Inclusion 8-9
Apprenticeships and work placements 10
Youth involvement 11
STRF 12
Southend Residents’ Forum 12
Community Groups / Southend Community Event 13
Residents’ Associations 14
Sounding Board 14
Block/Street Voices & Tenants Voice Association 15
Action Groups 15
Focus Groups 16
Resident Peer Mentors 17
Resident Scrutiny Forum 18
Mystery Shopping 19
Resident Inspectors & Co-ordinators 20
Resident Led Projects 21
Training 22
Tear off and return form – no stamp required! 23-24
360° Resident Support is our ‘all round’ support package for residents.

We speak to each resident at the beginning of their tenancy to try to gauge an overview of any support needs they may have. This may include help with money management, vulnerability issues, welfare benefits advice, energy advice, computer training and healthy living – to name but a few.

We then offer the resident help and support depending on their individual needs, by referring them on to one or more of our established projects that you will read about in this booklet. Also, we can refer them for help from other services we are aware of, offered by partner agencies in the local area.

360° Resident Support is not limited to new residents as we are happy to accept referrals from existing residents, either for themselves or for a friend or neighbour, if they feel they could benefit from these services.
Healthy Living

We are involved in several ongoing projects which have been developed to encourage the health and wellbeing of Southend residents.

Some of these projects include:

- **Cook 4 Life**
  The Cook 4 Life programme is a free four-week course run by South Essex Homes in partnership with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, which aims to teach local people how to prepare healthy food on a budget.

  This course offers tips on savvy supermarket shopping and understanding nutrition and it is delivered by an experienced professional chef.

- **Tennis Activators**
  Our Tennis Activators train for their Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) qualification so they are then able to deliver sports sessions in their communities.

  All you need is a keen interest in sport and the enthusiasm and motivation to lead fun tennis sessions.

- **Healthy Living Courses**
  We offer 6-week courses in partnership with the NHS Health Trainers. The course covers a number of topics including calorie control, health checks, understanding nutritional information and how to manage on a budget.
The Southend Food Culture Project launched in 2014 to understand the eating and spending habits of local residents in order to help them to live healthier lifestyles without increasing their shopping bill.

Under this project, we are continually looking for residents to become ‘Food Champions’ and help us to deliver key messages to other people in the local community.

Food Champions are given training, mentoring, help with promotion and, in some cases, a small budget. They are in control of the kinds of activities they lead on with residents and they refine this as they develop their confidence and knowledge of what people respond to best.

The Food Champions gain new skills and confidence while making new social contacts. They can get a reference and are able to get closer to work and new skills opportunities.
Some of the activities or issues that Food Champions might focus on or develop include:

- Informal advice on healthy eating, cooking and shopping locally.
- Reading and understanding food labels, fats and sugar information on packaging.
- Practical cooking sessions.
- Dispelling myths and misconceptions on nutritional messages.
- Signposting to other food related activity such as community growing, co-operatives etc.
- Hosting and organising community meals (share cooking knowledge, cook together to create a mutual support network).
- Feedback to the Southend Food Culture Project team on new ideas, opportunities and issues.
South Essex Homes runs a successful ‘Go Digital’ project, which aims to increase the number of our residents who have access to the internet.

Since we received Government funding to help Southend residents to ‘get online’ in 2013, we have developed several strands of the project, which all have the overall aim to encourage digital inclusion. We want to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities to access the world wide web, by providing our residents with the equipment and the skills they need. One of the most successful strands of this project is the ‘digital leads’.

**Digital Leads**

Digital leads are just ordinary people, with little or no prior computer experience, who are now sharing their new-found knowledge with the wider community; helping others share and find out for themselves the wonders the internet has to offer.
The digital leads now have their own network and support one another to help others understand how to use common internet tools. They are very busy networking within their own community in the following ways:

- Hosting drop-in sessions across the borough, offering one-to-one support and supervision.
- Attending numerous sheltered schemes delivering presentations and offering support.
- Offering advice and support to residents in their own homes.
- Installing new communal PCs in shared spaces for the benefit of all residents.
As part of their investment in the communities in which they work, our contractors are committed to creating opportunities for residents.

These opportunities are focused on increasing employability and include training and work experience placements. They give young people the opportunity to gain that all-important first job with a selection of apprenticeships.

**Painting and Decorating Master Classes**

You can also learn how to give your home a professional makeover with our Painting and Decorating Master Classes, which will teach you the basic skills needed to transform your home. Lasting 2.5 hours, sessions are organised when there are sufficient numbers to fill a session.
We host regular activities for young people including:

- **Art workshops**
  Using a local Professional Artist, we run art sessions where local young people are learning about, and creating, urban art. Our aims for the project are to build confidence and increase aspirations by giving young people the opportunity to experience art and express themselves.

- **Youth Groups**
  Working with the Youth Service, we fund sessions that provide activities for young people so they can get involved with various projects and meet new friends.

- **Sports Activities**
  We joined up with other local agencies back in 2011 to set up ‘Community United’, in response to residents’ concerns that young people were causing a nuisance in Shoebury.

Since its launch, this scheme has grown in popularity and now around thirty youngsters regularly attend the football training sessions at Shoebury Youth Centre, which take place from 4.30pm on Thursdays for kids aged 7-11 and between 5-6pm on Wednesdays for 12-16 year olds.
The Southend Tenants & Residents Federation (STRF) is an umbrella group for all resident representatives and gives residents the opportunity to seek support from dedicated members of the Southend community who can share their experience and knowledge.

The STRF is in place to ensure that the services obtained by your landlord are justified by you, the residents, and that together we constantly have a valuable input into improving the community and environment that we all live in.

They welcome invited guests to meetings to give talks to on a range of topics.

All residents are invited to attend these open meetings – please see www.strf.org.uk for details.

The Southend Residents Forum is the liaison group between residents, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and South Essex Homes.

This group meets twice a year and considers issues that affect Council residents in the borough, not solely related to housing. Examples of issues the group has reviewed and are continuing to monitor are Waste Management, Grounds Maintenance and Anti-Social Behaviour.
Every year, residents volunteer to organise the Southend Community Event to bring people from across the Borough together.

It usually takes place during the school summer holidays in a Southend park.

Visitors can gain information from different departments and organisations, and there are fun activities for all ages taking place throughout the day. You can help organise this event and be a major part of the day.

We also support groups to hold community events in their own neighbourhoods to encourage an increased sense of community spirit and help to provide access to support services available in the Borough. You are able to apply for Community Event funding to help pay for such events.
There are a number of Residents' Associations across the Southend Borough. These are made up of a group of residents who wish to make a difference in their area.

They hold regular meetings with their neighbours and sometimes invite guest speakers to attend including officers from South Essex Homes and the Council.

If you would like to make a difference in your community, please contact the Community Development Team to see if there is group in your area. If not, why not get together with some of your neighbours to form your own group? We can help you achieve this.

This is a good option for residents who prefer not to be involved in more formal structures.

The Sounding Board is a database of residents who are happy to be contacted by us to gauge general public opinion on a range of issues. They may be contacted to complete short surveys by e-mail, post or telephone, or asked to voice their views on a draft document.

Anyone can become a member of the Sounding Board and can choose when and how they want to participate.
Our Street and Block Voices are responsible for communicating information to their neighbours that affects them, including any relevant information from South Essex Homes. They may do this via newsletters and/or social events such as coffee mornings.

There are regular opportunities for them to network with other Block/Street Voices through the bi-monthly Tenant Voice Association meetings, which are held to discuss Borough-wide issues.

Action Groups

These groups provide residents with a less formal way to be involved in the local community.

Residents who form an action group are supported to resolve issues on their estate for the good of the whole neighbourhood.
Focus Groups have been set up to cover every area of the service and involve residents meeting regularly with members of South Essex Homes’ staff.

Meetings for each Focus Group are usually held every 2 months and they last around 1-2 hours. The meetings give attendees a unique opportunity to make a real difference to services.

Focus Group Members are able to:

- Review the performance of each service area
- Help to plan improvements
- Develop policies and procedures
- Ensure that Tenants and Leaseholders are involved in the monitoring of South Essex Homes’ local services and standards
- Promote and raise awareness of involvement opportunities with South Essex Homes
Many of our residents have been working with us for some time and have developed their skills to the extent that they are now able to encourage other residents to become more involved in shaping our services and develop their skills.

Resident Peer Mentors are able to provide training and advice to others in areas such as; taking minutes, computer training, how to organise a community event, etc.

We can arrange for you to meet a Resident Peer Mentor or help you to share your skills with others.
The Resident Scrutiny Forum (RSF) was created to drive continuous improvement at South Essex Homes. They ensure that the views and priorities of residents are at the heart of our work.

It comprises a small group of residents who monitor our performance, carry out in-depth reviews of different services, suggest improvements and challenge us when services are not working well.

Scrutiny reports are available on our website.
We believe our customers are the best people to test our services, which is why we use mystery shoppers.

Mystery shopping is a market research technique that has been used by top businesses for over fifty years, having first started in the finance sector. It involves ‘customers’ interacting with an organisation in a made up scenario, making an accurate record of that interaction and reporting back to the company on how they felt the interaction was handled. This allows the company to assess how its staff members deal with customers and potentially make improvements to its practices.

Mystery Shoppers meet around four times a year and are supported through any ‘shops’ that they undertake.
Some of these projects include:

- **Resident inspectors** play a major role in helping us to deliver an excellent service. Resident Estate Inspectors are residents who join officers from South Essex Homes to complete estate inspections where they live, to identify any issues with regards to the buildings, communal areas and the grounds.

- **Resident Void Inspectors** are residents who have been trained to complete inspections of empty properties before they are re-let to other residents. This is completed at the same time as the surveyor’s inspection visit but is carried out independently. The Resident Void Inspector is able to provide information on the standard of the empty property, if they feel that it reaches the lettable standard and generally how improvements can be made.

- **Resident Co-ordinators** act as a point of contact between other local residents and the Programme Delivery Team during installation and refurbishment works.
Have you got an idea for a project that would benefit your community but don’t have the funding?

If so, South Essex Homes may be able to help. Residents are able to place a bid for a community project to the Resident Led Project Panel.

In the past, the projects have varied but have included requests for patio furniture for a communal garden, a mural on an estate with the artwork designed by local young people, landscaping communal garden areas, regenerating a redundant allotment area into a wildlife garden, a kitchen refurbishment in a sheltered scheme, football equipment for a youth group and equipment for community events.

The Community Development Officers are able to help and guide residents who have suggested a project and ensure that the initiative is one supported by the whole community.
We are committed to ensuring residents are supported fully by offering various training courses. We provide regular training sessions to boost people’s knowledge, skills and confidence and we also offer opportunities for them to attend relevant events and conferences.

Examples of training we provide includes:

- Being a successful Chair
- Being a successful Secretary
- Being a successful Committee Member
- Being a successful Block/Street Voice
- Writing a Newsletter
- Mystery Shopping
- Digital Inclusion
- Confidence Building
- How to include everyone in your community

However, we are always open to new ideas and to support our residents who have a keen interest in developing new skills so if you have an idea for a training course that would benefit you, please do not hesitate to discuss this with us.
Please fill in your details below:

Name: ____________________________
Address: __________________________
Phone number (daytime) ____________
Phone number (mobile) ______________
Email address _______________________
Age group: Under 18 / 18-29 / 30-45 / 46-59 / 60-75 / Over 76
Are there any children in your household? If so please tell us their name(s) and age(s) ____________________________

What projects are you interested in finding out more about? Please tick all that apply

☐ 360° Resident Support  ☐ Residents’ Associations
☐ Digital Inclusion  ☐ Sounding Board
☐ Food Culture Project  ☐ Block/Street Voices
☐ Healthy Living  ☐ Tenants Voice Association
☐ Training  ☐ Action Groups
☐ Apprenticeships and work placements  ☐ Focus Groups
☐ Youth involvement  ☐ Resident Peer Mentors
☐ STRF  ☐ Resident Scrutiny Forum
☐ Southend Residents’ Forum  ☐ Mystery Shopping
☐ Community Groups  ☐ Resident Inspectors & Co-ordinators
☐ Southend Community Event  ☐ Resident Led Projects

Moisten here...