Winter 2019 issue!

Be part of it!

Coping with the cold
Beating the bedbugs
Winter wordsearch

Jean and Peter at their Senior House fundraiser

Meet Blackdown's resident poet

GINA IS A WHIZZ WITH WORDS

REAL PEOPLE'S STORIES
HELPFUL HINTS & TIPS!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

OUR FREE COUNSELLING SERVICE
Don't know where to turn? We can help!

AND LOTS MORE...
Coping with the cold
Beating the bedbugs
Winter wordsearch

Don't know where to turn? We can help!
Many years ago, we had different Freephone numbers for each of our old Area offices (Central, East & West). Since we centralised our services, we have been promoting one main number for our Contact Centre – 0800 833160.

Whilst the other old numbers 0800 833161 & 0800 833163 will still connect callers to South Essex Homes, we no longer promote these numbers and plan to start using these phone lines for other services we manage. However, it has come to light that a large number of calls are still made to these old numbers by people wanting to speak to our Contact Centre - most likely by those residents who wrote down those numbers several years ago for their Area office and have never changed them over to the main number.

As the use of those old numbers will soon change – please can you check the number you have written down for South Essex Homes in your address book or saved on your phone and make sure you change it to 0800 833160? This will ensure all Contact Centre calls are received via the same number and will clear use of the other numbers for more specialised services.

Many thanks!
We were delighted that many of you told us that you liked the new design and feel of Insight, so we hope you will be equally happy with this edition. The wordsearch was an especially popular feature and that returns on page 19. If you have any other feedback or comments about the magazine, please contact me using the details at the bottom of this page.

Don’t forget that we love to hear from you, so please get in touch if you have any stories or photos you wish to share – we give away a £10 gift card for each one of your stories we print!

Best wishes
Julia

Message from Mike

Regrettably, I must start my message in this issue of Insight with some sad news. In November Traci Dixon, one of our Group Managers, lost her long battle with cancer. Traci had worked for South Essex Homes since the launch of the company in 2005 and was with the Council for several years before that. She was a stalwart member of our team and I’m sure many of you will have had dealings with her. Her loss is felt deeply by staff members and residents alike. She will never be forgotten.

On a positive note, I am pleased to advise that we have made appointments in two brand new roles of Assistant Directors here at South Essex Homes. Following an extensive recruitment process, both positions have been filled by existing members of our team; Sarah Lander will oversee our Operations while Beverley Gallacher will oversee the Commercial side of the business. You are sure to hear more from them as they develop their new roles.

We continue to progress with discussions regarding the new partnership agreement between Southend Borough Council and South Essex Homes, which will set out our role as the Council’s partner over coming years and detail how we can contribute to their ‘Southend 2050’ strategic objectives.

I hope 2019 will be a happy and healthy year for you and your loved ones.

Best wishes
Mike
Mike Gatrell, Chief Executive of South Essex Homes

For general correspondence write to us at: Insight Magazine, South Essex Homes, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6FY
Email: juliapack@seh.southend.gov.uk

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GET IN TOUCH!

For all telephone enquiries freephone 0800 833 160
For general information about our services, please visit our website at www.southessexhomes.co.uk

Contact us via Facebook during office hours – simply search for ‘South Essex Homes’ to find and like our page!
2018 was a year of extreme weather – with a long hot summer and the ‘Beast from the East’ paying us all a visit – here are some ways to cope in cold weather just in case snow decides to visit Essex once again!

**The low down**
Keep your heating on at a low temperature when you go out (rather than turning it off completely), which will keep your home warmer for longer.

**Up the garden path**
Paths outside sheltered schemes and tower blocks will be gritted but paths in your own garden and outside your property will be your responsibility – so take care out there!

**Keep it covered**
Cover up your outside tap with an old towel to prevent it freezing.

**Ice and advice**
Check out the winter pages of Southend Borough Council’s website that has lots of advice including school closures, delayed waste collections, and transport services. [www.southend.gov.uk/winter](http://www.southend.gov.uk/winter)

**Snow business**
Consider becoming a ‘snow warden’ – You will be given a free pack including salt grit, snow shovels and high-visibility jacket in return for taking responsibility for clearing the snow and ice in the area surrounding your home and nearby public paths. Please visit [www.southend.gov.uk/winter](http://www.southend.gov.uk/winter) for details.

**Everybody needs good neighbours**
Check on your neighbours to make sure they are ok and please share this advice with them if they need help.

**Close at hand**
Make sure your car is prepared too – with a blanket, torch and ice scraper all accessible in case you need them.

**Stock it up!**
Stock up your cupboards with provisions and your medicine cabinet with supplies just in case you can’t get out.
As with all public services, we haven’t got a bottomless pot of money to spend on resources. It’s therefore important that we ensure we use our resources wisely and fairly.

In the distant past, our Caretakers visited buildings daily and carried out work just because that’s what they’d always done – for example they may have mopped a floor even though there were no signs of it being dirty, just because that’s something they did every day.

A few years ago, we identified that this was not a good use of our resources and following consultation with residents, we moved to a responsive service whereby, using the above example, we now only mop a floor when it gets dirty.

This isn’t to say that Caretakers don’t visit properties regularly though. They have a schedule that ensures they attend buildings at differing intervals according to the needs of each particular place. Therefore we still visit tower blocks on a daily basis due to their heavy footfall and the high density of population, but lower rise blocks and other estates are instead checked weekly or perhaps a few times a week depending on our previous experience of the workload usually generated at each block or area.

This approach is tailor-made for each building to ensure they are all maintained to agreed standards, but we do appreciate that there may be times in between those visits where, for example, rubbish builds up, a light bulb fails in a communal landing or an area gets dirty quicker than usual. This is where you come in!

We aim to achieve a consistent minimum ‘Level B standard’ across all areas, however at times between cleans or when there are problems the area may go below our desired standards.

**Level A Excellent**

**Level B Agreed level of service**

**Level C In need of attention, additional visit required**

**Level D Requires urgent attention**

For further information on our service standards please visit the “Estate Services” section of our website: www.southessexhomes.co.uk

You can report issues by calling 0800 833160 and our Estate Services Team can arrange for the matter to be attended to ahead of the next scheduled visit. If it becomes clear that there are ongoing issues or recurring problems in a particular block or area, then we may revise our schedule so more regular visits are carried out, and the Tenancy Services Officer for that area may be asked to get involved too if those issues are as a result of actions by a resident.

The number of visits we make to each block are used when we calculate service charges. Therefore if, for example, one resident keeps dumping their rubbish in communal areas so Caretakers need to come out to clear it, then this may lead to an increase in everyone’s Service Charge who lives in that block. If something like this is happening in your area and you know which residents are responsible for the extra call-outs, please let us know so we can take steps to recharge them directly instead.

Since mid-January, our Caretakers have been using a brand new mobile phone App as they go about their duties. Amongst several useful functions, this App includes a detailed checklist to ensure they inspect each block thoroughly and it allows them to record details of the work they carry out and take photos to evidence the condition they find and leave properties in. Not only does this provide a thorough audit trail but it also helps us to identify patterns in the issues they face that may require a different approach from us.
Gina Whittle, who lives in Blackdown tower block in North Road, regularly expresses herself through poetry on a local Facebook group. Julia went to visit Gina to find out more about her life and her love of poetry.

Gina explains: “I was born and raised in London by my parents along with my twin brother and sister, David and Pearl, who were 8 years my junior. My mother died when I was 11 and, as my dad was too ill with Parkinson’s disease to look after us, my aunts and uncles took on the young twins but David was taken to Wales and Pearl to Coventry so I didn’t get to see them for quite some time. I wasn’t quite so easy to re-home though, so I was sent to Westonbirt boarding school in Gloucestershire. “Being schooled alongside Ladies and even Princesses was an unexpected experience for a cockney girl and they weren’t quite sure what to make of me! It was extremely strict there – I can remember the red line inside the bathtubs limiting the water level to 5 inches – but all my friends were there and it was home, so I loved it.”

At 17, Gina left the school and studied as an Orthopedic Nurse at the Royal National Orthopedic Hospital in Stanmore and it was there that she met her first husband, who was a patient being treated for polio. When they married, they moved into a house that had been bought by Rothschilds, her husband’s employer. They went on to have four sons together; Robert (now 60), Stephen (58), Timothy (55) and Christopher (52). When the couple later separated, she was not eligible for any money from the house and, being unable to afford a home of her own, was unable to obtain custody of the boys which led to a nervous breakdown.

She said: “The stress of it all meant I was forced to leave and start again on my own in a horrible flat in Hartington Road with little more than a camp bed, some blankets and a suitcase of clothes to my name and there began a period of time when I was unable to see my sons. During that time I met and married my second husband and we had another son called David, who is now 46. “I missed the boys every minute and would send cards and letters regularly but never knew if they received them. I would sometimes sit in my van outside their house to catch glimpses of them – it was a very difficult time.

“After the failure of my second marriage, I moved into my flat in Blackdown in 1982 and a year later I had a phone call out of the blue from Stephen. I couldn’t believe that the deep voice on the end of the phone was that of my second son, who I hadn’t seen since he was a boy. He wanted to sort out some finances that required my signature and it all led to us meeting in Chalkwell Park. It was wonderful – he told me that he was married and their first child was on its way, he’d even brought photos of the wedding to show me. That meeting ended with a hug and really broke the ice, as it led to a further meeting at Stephen’s home in Benfleet when at last I was reunited with my four sons, 12 years since we’d last been together. A couple of months later, David met his older brothers and after that we both met up with them regularly.”

Gina has had a variety of jobs since she moved to the area – starting at Tower House nursery in Leigh and including stints as a dental nurse and night nurse, through to cleaning at Ekco plastics and working at a launderette and 'Love & Kisses' card shop in Hamlet Court Road. She worked there up until her retirement at the age of 68, after a couple of health scares.

To date, Gina has six grandchildren and one great grandchild. In 2017 her youngest son, David, married his wife Sharon, who had been a childhood friend of his. She has now lived in Blackdown for 36 years.

“I wouldn’t move, I love my flat!”, she said, “My views are incredible and I’ve been very happy here.”
In around 2013, Gina met some online friends through a Facebook page and, having discovered some shared interests, a group of them broke away to create a new Facebook group called ‘Chat Inn’ – later renamed to ‘ChattInn’ - whereby members regularly share poems and jokes.

“I’ve been writing poetry since my mother died”, Gina explained, “but a few years ago when ChattInn was started, I began writing a daily ditty to share on the site.

“However nowadays I share one poem a week every Sunday and other members post poems on set days too, it’s a lovely way to pass the time and I look forward to seeing what the other members have to say. My friends on the site recently created a folder for me containing all the poems I have posted on there, which was very kind of them and is a lovely record of over a thousand poems!

“I think I will always write poems – I find myself thinking in rhymes as I go about my everyday life, I can’t help it! Anything that evokes an emotion in me can inspire a ditty. I’ve lived a full life and expressing feelings through poetry is a great way to make sense of the world.”

To the right you will find two examples of Gina’s poetry.

**Had a Senior Moment this morning**

It’s becoming a regular event!
I put my pen down on the table,
And then, within seconds it “went”!
I searched for it all round that area,
‘Cos of pens I only have one.
I need it for writing my ditty...
The ditty MUST be done!

In the end I decided on breakfast...
Got the cereal box from the shelf...
And there, right beside it, the pen was!
Well, it must have walked there by itself!
I’m ok if nothing distracts me...
I know where I’m going, and what for...
But before now,
I’ve found that some strange things
Have ended up by my front door!

When the bell rings, and I go to answer it,
What I’m carrying goes with me too...
Gets put down, while I find out who’s calling...
And then I might pop to the loo!
My iPad, the iron, or my glasses,
Have all been “mislaid” for a while!
But eventually I manage to remember
Where I left them... and it makes me smile!
I find it quite funny, to be honest,
And I laugh at myself all the time!
No-one suffers through my Senior Moments,
Except ME... I don’t mind... and I’m fine!

**High-rise life**

Home is the place I love to be,
But some people feel quite sorry for me.
“How can you live in a high-rise?” they say,
But it’s pretty GOOD, and I’m going to stay!
I love my flat on the eleventh floor...
I feel so safe when I close my door.
In summer my windows are open wide,
For I know no burglars can get inside!
From my kitchen window, the airport I see.
From my lounge, Canvey Island and the Estuary.
At night, lights twinkle on every street,
And on the water...that’s hard to beat
The sunsets really ARE the best,
As a huge red sun sinks in the west.
Thunderstorms are an amazing sight...
Especially in the dark of night.
The caretaker’s usually helpful I find.
My neighbours are quiet, friendly, and kind.
I’ve had plenty of laughs, and very few tears
Whilst living here for 36 years.
Bedbugs are small blood-sucking insects that live in cracks and crevices in and around beds. They crawl out at night and bite exposed skin to feed on blood.

Bedbugs aren’t a sign of bad hygiene so are nothing to be ashamed of – but it is a good idea to deal with the issue as soon as possible if you become aware of them inside your home.

In this article we will tell you more about these creepy critters and what to do if you discover them!

### What do bedbugs look like?

Adult bedbugs are oval-shaped, flat and up to 5mm long – similar to an apple seed.

Their colour varies between dark yellow, red or brown.

Bedbugs aren’t dangerous and don’t spread any diseases, but some people experience a reaction to their bites and they can be stressful to live with.

### Signs of a bedbug infestation

- small bugs or tiny white eggs in the crevices and joints of your mattress and furniture – use a bright torch to check for these
- bites on your skin
- tiny black spots on your mattress – this could be their dried poo
- mottled bedbug shells – bedbugs shed their skin as they grow
- blood spots on your sheets – these can occur if you squash a bug after it has fed
- an unpleasant, musty scent in your bedroom

Bedbugs tend to prefer fabric or wood over plastic and metal, and often hide near to where you sleep – for example, under the mattress or along the headboard.

But they can be found away from the bed in other furniture, along the edges of carpets and even behind mirrors or inside smoke alarms.

### How to get rid of bedbugs

If you live in a sheltered housing scheme or temporary accommodation (hostels) and discover bedbugs in your flat then please inform a member of staff as soon as possible. This way they can take steps to discover the full extent of the problem and can help to oversee the treatment of the issue to ensure it is eradicated.

As stated in your Conditions of Tenancy, you are responsible for preventing and treating any pest infestation in your property, including bedbugs.

Bedbugs can be very difficult to get rid of. Your best chance of successfully treating an infestation is to get professional help.

Contact a pest control firm that’s a member of the British Pest Control Association or National Pest Technicians Association.

A technician will carry out an inspection to confirm an infestation. They can then use special treatments such as insecticide, a steamer or rapid freeze system to get rid of the bugs.

They may also advise about things you can do to help, such as:

- wash infested clothes or bed linen at 60°C, or put them in a dryer on a hot setting for 30 minutes
- use a vacuum cleaner with a hose to suck up any bugs you can see – dispose of the contents of the vacuum cleaner in a sealed bag
- consider throwing away any mattress or furniture that’s heavily infested
- use plastic mattress covers that encase the entire mattress – this will stop any bedbugs getting in or out

### Preventing bedbug infestations

It can be difficult to avoid bedbugs, as they can be transported easily in luggage, clothing and furniture.

Once in your home, they can quickly spread from room to room. They don’t jump or fly, but can crawl long distances.

It can help to:

- inspect your mattress and bed regularly for signs of an infestation and get professional advice if you think you have bedbugs
- avoid buying second-hand mattresses and carefully inspect second-hand furniture before bringing it into your home
- keep your bedroom tidy and remove clutter

Bedbugs aren't attracted to dirt, so they're not a sign of an unclean home...

...but clearing up any clutter will reduce the number of places they can hide.
After the big splurge of buying Christmas presents and all the food and drink that goes with the festivities, the start of a New Year can be a financial struggle. Here are some top tips on how you can save money this winter – because, as they say, when you take care of the pennies, the pounds will take care of themselves!

**Eat well for less**

Plan your meals in advance and only buy the food you need. If you have the time look up recipes for meals that you can ‘batch cook’, make a shopping list and then make the meals in advance and freeze extra portions.

Certain fruit and vegetables are cheaper when they are in harvest so it is always worth doing your research and comparing costs online or buy frozen, that way you can use only what you need.

**Never miss a payment again – Pay your rent by Direct Debit**

It ensures that your rent is paid automatically and is simple to set up! You might not save money but you will save a lot of worry if you keep forgetting to make payments.

You can pay your rent by Direct Debit if you have a bank account, either weekly (on a Monday), fortnightly (on a Monday), or monthly (on the 1st, 15th or 23rd of the Month). You can set up a Direct Debit over the telephone by contacting the Specialist Income Management Team on 0800 023 4057. You will need to have your bank account details ready when you call them. The Specialist Income Management Team will arrange payments to be debited from your bank account.

Once they have received your instructions they will calculate the payments due and send a letter to you to confirm how much will be claimed and on what dates. All you then need to do is ensure that there are sufficient funds in your account to meet the payment when it is due.

**Plan ahead**

There are lots of good budgeting Apps out there that can help you with your personal finances and the lookout for the latest shopping deals. Check out your App store for the latest Apps and download a free one to get started.

**A move in the right direction**

Why not walk instead of getting the bus? Or if you have a bike, ride instead of getting the train? You will be saving money as well as losing a few pounds. If you do need to use public transport ask the ticket office if you would save money with a weekly or monthly ticket or rather than pay to park in public car parks, have a look online if there are any driveways for rent in your area.

**Stop smoking**

We all know the long and short term health benefits of quitting smoking but the cost is also a another reason to stub it out for good! Ask your local pharmacy for advice or see page 15 for our article on this very topic.

**A penny saved is a penny earnt**

We all know it is good to save for a rainy day but it can be hard with bills to pay and looking after a family. Consider a money box that has to be smashed before it is opened – keep filling it up until it feels full, then crack it open. This avoids the temptation of sneaking the loose change out of an open one.
WE NEED YOUR HELP!

We have five Resident Focus Groups who are looking for Residents and Leaseholders to help them make decisions on a number of things that affect their lives, properties and the future of South Essex Homes. Below you will find information on what these groups do and when they meet.

If you would like to be involved in a group, please contact us on 0800 833 160 and ask to speak to the contact person or team named. They will ensure that you are sent details of the next meeting. All meetings normally take place at the Civic Centre, with the exception of the Sheltered Housing group.

Responsive Repairs, Voids & Gas Servicing Focus Group

This group works with the Responsive Repairs & Voids contractor alongside South Essex Homes managers. They meet to help South Essex Homes and their contractors work better with residents on the day to day repairs. Residents monitor the KPI’s (key performance indicators) that are set for each of the contractors.

This group meets on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 10am to 11am.

To join this group you would need a keen interest in building and home repairs within social housing. The current members appoint new members to this focus group.

Contact Person: Sue Rickard

Planned Maintenance Focus Group

This group works alongside the South Essex Homes managers on Planned Maintenance work that will be going on around the borough in the current financial year. This could include lift refurbishment to window replacement or even roof replacements.

This group meet on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 11am to 12 noon.

To join this group you would need a keen interest in building repairs and how improvement works are planned within social housing. The current members appoint new members to this focus group.

Contact Person: Sue Rickard

Income Management Focus Group

The purpose of this group is to discuss ways in which residents can be helped to avoid getting into arrears with their rent and how South Essex Homes can assist residents in maintaining their tenancies and paying their rent – before suggesting their proposals to the Income Management Team/Tenancy Services Team.

The group also brings suggestions and problems from residents to the meetings, and they take away information to pass onto other residents in their own areas about all income/rent related matters.

To join the group you would ideally need an understanding of income related matters and be a good communicator.

This group meets on the last Friday, every 3 months at 10.00am.

Contact Team: Income Management Team

Resident & Staff Involvement Focus Group

This group, with the help of the officers, looks at the following areas within South Essex Homes: Anti-Social Behaviour, Caretaking, Communications, Community Development, Customer Care, Estate Services, Resident Involvement, Tenancy Services and also auditing the Resident Involvement Budget.

This group meets on the 3rd Wednesday of every other month (Feb, Apr, June, Aug, Oct, Dec) and is open to all residents and Leaseholders who wish to attend and give their opinions on any aspects of South Essex Homes.

Contact Person: Sue Rickard

Leaseholders Focus Group

South Essex Homes holds quarterly meetings with leaseholders at which a variety of matters are discussed. These are matters relevant to your leases, the estates in which your properties are situated, and Service Charges.

All leaseholders are welcome, and the group is always pleased to see new faces. It may be that a problem you thought only affected you is brought up in the meetings and, by discussing it, it is possible a better approach can be found to deal with it together.

Contact Team: Leaseholder Services

Disability & Carers Action Group

This group is independent of South Essex Homes and is made up of residents of all ages who are disabled, a carer or parent of a disabled person and are interested in helping disabled people and their carers. They help raise the profile of people with disabilities, promote independence and reduce isolation. Their aims are to help others and support people to get access to services. So join this group and have your say on how to best support disabled people in our community.

Contact Person: Sue Rickard

Sheltered Housing Focus Group

This group consists of residents who live in the sheltered housing schemes around the borough, who meet to discuss any issues that they may have within their sheltered units. They also meet to arrange coffee/tea mornings/afternoons, days out, lunch days, games days/ nights and many more entertaining ideas.

Members are provided with quite a lot of information at these meetings, and South Essex Homes Officers or a guest speaker also usually attend.

The meetings take place in a different sheltered scheme each time they meet, so that there is a good representation of residents.

Contact Person: Sue Rickard
Most people are trying their best to recycle but it can sometimes be tricky to put the right thing in the right bag, box or bin. In Southend-on-Sea, your pink sack will happily receive food and drink cans, household plastic packaging (including film, but please no polystyrene or pet food sachets - these can’t be recycled), as well as glass bottles and jars (no other glass can be accepted). Please ensure your recycling is clean and dry.

If you live in a flat with communal collections but don’t have the full range of recycling bins in your shared bin area, please contact Veolia on 0203 567 6955 and they will check the recycling services at your location. Where space allows a full range of bins will be provided, as we would like residents to recycle as much as possible.

If you are passionate about recycling and would like to see improvements locally, become a Recycling Champion and spread the word in your flat block or area! For any information, please contact Veolia on 0203 567 6955 or uk.southend-recycling@veolia.com

All food waste should be recycled in the food waste bin - so it can be turned into green energy and fertiliser for crops.

As long as you follow these general rules and keep up the good work all year round, you can tick “recycling” off your New Year’s resolution list!

Thanks to everyone who came along to the Kids Christmas party in December – we hope you all enjoyed yourselves!

We’ll be promoting our events for the coming years online and in future issues of Insight...so watch this space! Best wishes

Shirley O’Reilly
The Chair of the STRF, 75 Southchurch Avenue, Southend on Sea, Essex SS1 2R5
Or e-mail: shirley.oreilly@strf.org.uk
Mobile: 07876 116552
HOW ARE WE DOING
Our performance for 2017-18

97.7% of homes meet the decent homes standard

99% Satisfaction with the outcome of ASB complaints

98.6% Responsive repairs completed within target times

29 evictions due to rent arrears

99.5% of rent successfully collected
95% of residents in sheltered accommodation are satisfied with their homes.

99% complaints responded to within 10 days.

Unable to collect 1.43% of rent arrears.

17 Days turnaround to get an empty home ready to let.

100% gas safety checks completed.
Hello and welcome to the Winter Edition of Leasehold Matters,

the articles in Insight devoted to Leaseholders. On behalf of everyone at South Essex Homes, I would like to wish you all the very best for 2019. Thank you to all who completed last year’s Focus Group Survey. December’s Meeting was, as a result, incredibly useful for our members and a number of actions were agreed. Due to the success of July’s event, South Essex Homes will continue to host events for leaseholders and details are below. In addition, stakeholders wished for further leasehold representation in contract meetings and we will be working with resident Board Members to discuss options available to raise feedback. Lastly, James Williams has prepared an article on Gas Safety and I hope you find this useful.

Best Wishes Jan

Leasehold Focus Group Meeting and July’s Leasehold Event

Below are the times for next year’s meetings. Please feel free to attend or contact the Leasehold Team to raise an agenda item. As with the drop-in events, all meetings are held at the Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6FY

<table>
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<td>5.30-7.30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>23rd April 2019</td>
<td>2-4pm</td>
<td>Committee Room 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th June 2019</td>
<td>5.30-7.30pm</td>
<td>Committee Room 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23rd July 2019</td>
<td>5pm-8pm</td>
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<td>15th October 2019</td>
<td>2pm-4pm</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd December 2019</td>
<td>2pm-4pm</td>
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Drop in Events

Due to the success of July’s Leasehold Event members of the Focus Group requested drop-in sessions to be held throughout the year. A member of the Leasehold Team will be available to discuss issues face to face on the dates below. As always we are available throughout the year and can be contacted on 0800 833 160 or email LeaseholderServices@seh.southend.gov.uk

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<td>10th Dec 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>11th Dec 2019</td>
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Leaseholders – Gas Safety Certificates

We have a duty of care to ensure that premises that we manage are as safe as possible. This includes insisting that Leaseholders ensure that gas appliances in their properties are safe.

All leases contain a clause stating that the Leaseholder should do nothing that might invalidate our insurance. Hence we ask leaseholders to show a gas safety certificate.

A basic certificate can be obtained for between £35 - £75 and browsing the internet or trade directories will provide details of a Gas Engineer who could provide a Safety Certificate. Or visit www.gassaferegister.co.uk which includes a register of Gas Safe Engineers and a search facility for engineers in your area.

Some Leaseholders choose to rent to tenants or take in a lodger and in this case they become a Landlord bound by the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 and legally they MUST have a Gas Safety Certificate that complies with the regulations.

An example of such a certificate:

The penalties for Landlords that do not have a Gas Safety Certificate include fines of around £6000 per offence and/or up to 6 months imprisonment. In the worst case they could face manslaughter charges.

From April 2018, landlords can get their annual Gas Safety Check up to two months early but retain the existing expiry date.

If you need help or advice with this issue just contact your Leasehold Services Team by calling 0800 833 160 or by email to leaseholderservices.seh.southend.gov.uk

These before and after photos show the devastating consequences of a gas explosion at a house which sadly involved loss of life.
ARE YOU READY TO GO SMOKE-FREE?

South Essex Homes is working with local community Stop Smoking Service to create healthy, safe, smoke-free homes.

Risks to Children

In the UK, up to 2 million children live with at least one adult who smokes in the home.

Southend-on-Sea residents are being encouraged to seek the financial and health benefits they will gain from stopping smoking. Having a smoke-free home reduces the risk and therefore reduces the harm.

Children & Pets - Second & Third-hand smoke

Children & babies exposed to second-hand smoke are twice as likely to suffer asthma attacks and are at greater risk of ear, nose & throat infections.

Like children, pets have small lungs - they breathe quicker, taking in the second-hand smoke at a higher rate.

Third-hand smoke consists of tobacco residue left behind after smoking. Children can ingest this residue by putting their hands in their mouths after touching contaminated surfaces. In pets, the residue settles on their fur and is also digested.

Benefits of stopping smoking

• Financial gain – from money saved when you stop buying cigarettes through to other benefits including cheaper home contents insurance
• Fewer trips to the doctors and fewer hospital admissions
• Fewer trips to the vets as pets will be less likely to develop breathing problems or cancer.
• Lower risk of a house fire
• Your home, clothes and possessions will no longer carry the unpleasant and lingering smell of cigarettes.

With the average price of a pack of 20 cigarettes now at a whopping £10.40*, someone with a 20-a-day habit stands to save almost £3800 a year if they give up completely!

Where can you get advice & support in Southend?

• You can call the Southend Stop Smoking Service on 01702 212000
• Book an appointment with the Practice Nurse at your GP surgery.
• Some pharmacies in your area will offer a Stop Smoking programme
• Some vape shops can also offer support

*SOURCE: The Sun website 12th April 2018
**Wash and Go**
To reduce the time spent getting the creases out of shirts, always hang them up after washing and iron whilst still a little damp.

**On the scent**
If you want your house to smell nice without the splashing out on expensive diffusers, fill a water spray bottle with 1 part fabric softener and 2 parts water, spray on top of the radiators and it gives off a lovely smell that fills the house.

**Egg-cellent idea**
A tried and tested way to make sure your eggs are still fresh is to submerge them in water – Bad eggs will float whilst fresh eggs will sink and lay on their side or slope upright.

**Stock up your freezer**
Did you know you can freeze bread, cheese, milk and some fruit and vegetables? Check out lovefoodhatewaste.com for more information and recipes.

**Kicking up a stink**
If cutting up onions makes your eyes water, try peeling off the skin and submerging in water for 15 minutes first. The water brings out the sulfuric compounds of the vegetable.

*Always be careful when carrying out household hacks for the first time!*

**WE NEED YOU!**
Please send in your own household tips!
Each printed hack will receive a £10 voucher – send in your photos to us (all photos must be your own)

Via our Facebook page – search ‘South Essex Homes’
By text or WhatsApp: 07785631966
By post: FREEPOST South Essex Homes
By email: communications@seh.southend.gov.uk
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council are offering local residents a completely FREE OF CHARGE service called LEAP (Local Energy Advice Partnership). LEAP can help you to save money and keep your home warm and cosy.

**SHARON:** “I was able to make an annual saving of £606 by switching energy provider. I’m also grateful for the easy measures that Andy installed for me. My new LED bulbs are giving off the same brightness, but using much less energy. Their IncomeMax service is now helping me to check if I’m entitled to receive the Affordable Warmth discount, and further benefits that I’m not currently receiving.”

**MR & MRS M:** (overall annual increase in income £14,996): “We used to constantly worry about money, and now with all the extra income our lives have changed so much. I cannot thank you enough.”

**Twitter: @LeapService**

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?
You may be eligible for the LEAP service if one of the following apply to you:

- You have a low income
- You receive tax credits
- You receive Housing Benefit
- You receive an income or disability related benefit
- You have a long term illness or disability.

Call now on 0800 060 7567* (Freephone) to book your free home visit, or apply online: www.applyforleap.org.uk *(from 8:45am – 7:00pm Monday to Friday, and 9am-12pm on Saturdays)*
Dear Julia

Here at Insight we love hearing from our residents and Julia, our editor, is always happy to research answers to any queries you may have. If you have a comment you’d like to make, or a question you’d like an answer to, please drop us a line using any of the contact methods found on page 3. If your letter is printed we will send you a £10 voucher to say thanks for getting in touch.

Please specify if you would like us to print your name and the area you live in (we will never print full addresses though) otherwise all letters will be printed anonymously.

Our Editor Julia answers your questions

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Dear Julia

We would like to give a shout out to Senior House residents Jean and Peter, who towards the end of last year arranged a get together with cake sale and raffle for the ‘Wear It Pink’ campaign, to raise money for breast cancer awareness...and raised over £340!

The couple put a lot of time and effort into the event to raise funds and awareness of Breast Cancer; they are key members of the lovely community that is Senior House.

Angela Lloyd & Cheryl Say
Sheltered Housing Officers

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Dear Julia

I really want to say thank you to Vanessa Frood for the superb tea she recently laid on for us at Kestrel House. She is very busy covering four schemes so to take the time to bake such lovely cakes for us was really very kind.

Many thanks
Barbara Lambert

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Dear Julia

Dotty Adlington, who lives with her husband in Nayland House, likes to keep herself busy. When another resident mentioned a few years ago that she had been trying to complete an embroidered blanket for 16 years without success, Dotty jumped at the chance to finish it off for her by hand, much to the delight of the lady who’d started it off all those years ago.

That project gave Dotty the bug for embroidery so she set about making her own handmade embroidered quilt and two years later, she is now delighted to have completed her labour of love (pictured).

Well done Dotty, what a fantastic example of perseverance!

Have you got a creation you’d like to share with other residents? If so, please get in touch with us!

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Our first respondent is Alan Hart (pictured), who told us:

“In brief, that would be acting as snow warden clearing paths in my complex in Leigh of the white stuff, being open to any neighbour who needs support (be that cat sitting or just a chat) and trying to improve local parking for those unable to carry shopping over too great a distance.

The ‘why’ is obvious - that is what neighbours do for each other and that sets up a community.

Sometimes all that means taking on big business or authority where injustice exists.”
Hi there,

My name is Hollie and I am the Counselling Administrator for South Essex Homes.

Do you ever feel like you need help or advice, but don’t know who to turn to?

Or do you know someone who is in a similar situation?

Then look no further! South Essex Homes offer a FREE Counselling service that could provide the answers you are looking for.

Here’s how it works:

1. Call me on 01702 212654 or send an email to hollieweaver@seh.southend.gov.uk
2. I will then log your referral in the system and refer you on to one of our trained Student Counsellors.
3. You will receive word within 21 days (but it’s usually a lot quicker).
4. Attend your first appointment and decide from there if you would like to continue going.

Remember there are no commitments, we understand that people change their mind, but it might just work out to be something that helps you in a time when you didn’t think it would be possible.

All the best,
Hollie Weaver
## ESTATE INSPECTION SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>START POINT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>05/03/19</td>
<td>Kingfisher Close, Sandpiper Close, Eagle Way, Fraser Close, Cunningham Close</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside Kingpiper Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/03/19</td>
<td>Adams Elm House, Yantlet</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside Adams Elm House Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/03/19</td>
<td>East Street, Sutton Road, East Street Naval</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside St Mellitus Hall, Sutton Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/03/19</td>
<td>Riverstone</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside Riverstone Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/03/19</td>
<td>Mornington House</td>
<td>10:30am</td>
<td>Outside Mornington House Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/03/19</td>
<td>Blyth Avenue, Bunters Avenue, St Audreys Court</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Corner of Blyth Avenue and Delaware Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/03/19</td>
<td>John Street, George Street, Dane Street</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Corner of George Street and Dane Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/03/19</td>
<td>Hunters Lodge, Norfolk Avenue</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Hunters Lodge Car Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/03/19</td>
<td>Delaware Road, Delaware Crescent, Ness Road, Elm Road</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside Thorpedene Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/03/19</td>
<td>Anson Chase, Ashanti Close</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Corner of Anson Chase and Bulwark Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/03/19</td>
<td>Bradford Bury, Rothwell Close, Eastwood Old Road, Westwood</td>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Outside Community Hall on Bradford Bury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/03/19</td>
<td>Shelley Square, Dickens Close, Wordsworth Close</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside 5-29 Shelley Square Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/03/19</td>
<td>Beaver Tower</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside Beaver Tower Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/03/19</td>
<td>Saxon Gardens, Viking Court, Woolpack</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside Viking Court Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/03/19</td>
<td>Burr Hill Chase, Stephen McAdden House</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside Stephen McAdden House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/03/19</td>
<td>Eaton Road</td>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Corner of Eaton Road and Herschell Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/03/19</td>
<td>Mussett House, East Street Leigh</td>
<td>10:30am</td>
<td>Outside 2-8 East Street Leigh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/03/19</td>
<td>Christchurch Court, Nursery Place</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside Christchurch Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/03/19</td>
<td>Blackdown, Brecon, Grampian</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside Blackdown Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/03/19</td>
<td>Hamstel Road, Peartree Close, Lewes Road, Lornes Close</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Corner of Hamstel Road and Archer Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/03/19</td>
<td>Avon Way, West Road</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside 2-30 Avon Way Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/04/19</td>
<td>Shannon Close, Little Fretches, Wood Farm Close, Bellhouse Lane, Leighton Avenue, Eastwood North</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Shannon Close car park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/04/19</td>
<td>St Mary’s Court</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside St Mary’s Court on the corner of Victoria Avenue/ Roots Hall Football Stadium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/04/19</td>
<td>Cedar Close, Wordsworth Close, Maple Square, The Jordans</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Cedar Close Car Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/04/19</td>
<td>Sutton Court, Temple Court, Cluny House, Norwich Close</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside Sutton Court Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/04/19</td>
<td>Nestuda House</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside Nestuda House Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/04/19</td>
<td>Pursefield</td>
<td>10:30am</td>
<td>Outside Pursefield main entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/04/19</td>
<td>Southchurch Rectory Chase, Trevett House</td>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Outside 7-12 Southchurch Rectory Chase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/04/19</td>
<td>Snakes Lane</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Corner of Brendan Way and Snakes Lane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/04/19</td>
<td>Townfields</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside Townfields Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/04/19</td>
<td>Mendip Road, Mendip Crescent, The Mendips</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Outside West Office, Mendip Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/04/19</td>
<td>Bruton Avenue, Dunster Avenue</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Meet at corner of Bruton/Mendip Crescent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/04/19</td>
<td>Archer Avenue, Sherwood Way, Newington Avenue Flats</td>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Corner of Archer Avenue and Newington Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/04/19</td>
<td>Fairfax Drive, Cleveland Drive</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Corner of Fairfax Drive and Gainsborough Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/04/19</td>
<td>Martock Avenue, Cheddar Avenue, Treecot Drive</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Meet at old South Essex Homes West Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/04/19</td>
<td>Rochford Road</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Entrance to Garage Site, next to 126-148 Rochford Road</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>