

News



For tenants and leaseholders of Solihull Community Housing

Autumn Edition 2018

There's so much in it...



Introducing Richard
Read the views from our new Board chair... [Page 3](#)



Free heating scheme
We've great news if you rely on storage heaters... [Page 4](#)



Annual Report
Take a look at our latest facts and figures... [Page 5-8](#)



Councillors Karen Grinsell and Tony Diccio with our Chief Executive Fiona Hughes and Jenny Wood, Director of Adult Care and Support at Solihull Council, at our new Saxon Court development.
[More pictures Page 9](#)

Visit our Apprenticeship Open Evening on 19 September - See Page 2

A message from Fiona

I would like to begin this column by announcing the new Chair of our Board, Richard Hyde. Richard has tremendous knowledge of the housing sector built up through a variety of roles over the past 25 years.

He has also served on a number of boards previously – including the Homes and Communities Agency and Icenii Homes – so has a terrific vision on how a Board needs to support the organisation it is there to represent and challenge.

I look forward to working closely with Richard in the future. He in turn is looking forward to getting to know his new Board colleagues, our staff and of course you our tenants and leaseholders.

The relationship we have with our customers is of vital importance to us. We know there is room for us to improve in this area and this is something we will be working hard to do over the next few months.

Please come and talk to us and tell us where you think we could improve. It's the big SCH conversation and we want you all to be a part of it. See the story across on the next page to find out how you can get involved.

Finally I know many of you have been following the progress of our new extra care housing scheme, Saxon Court, for people aged over 55. Well now you can take a look for yourselves! The superb show flat has recently opened its doors. Please call us to book an appointment and see what it has to offer. It could provide you with the home you've been looking for!

Best wishes
Fiona Hughes
Chief Executive

■ You can email Fiona at newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk



Open Evening invite for new apprentices



We are staging an Open Evening soon to promote our brand new apprenticeship scheme. This is a fantastic opportunity for young people to learn wide-ranging skills that will make them a valuable asset in a competitive work environment for years to come.

We want to help younger people get a first foot on the employment ladder through our comprehensive apprenticeship programme. We hope to create five new apprentices and one trainee project officer position.

We have always supported the local community through offering work experience to local schoolchildren through to our successful DIY training days for our customers.



Open Evening
Sept 19

“SCH is committed to working with the local community and creating employment prospects for young people. It is something we all feel passionate about.”

“Our new apprenticeships will offer a number of young people the chance to gain valuable work skills and experience. They will hopefully become key members of our workforce in the future although the training they receive from us will also open a wide variety of career doors to them throughout their working life.”

Fiona Hughes, Chief Executive

The apprentice Open Evening is open to people of all ages.

■ If you want to find out more about the apprentice programme please join us at our Open Evening on Wednesday 19 September (4.30pm-7.30pm) at our Head Office, Endeavour House, Meriden Drive, Solihull B37 6BX.

Come and join the SCH conversation!

Over the next few months you will be seeing a lot more of SCH in your local area. We would love to meet you and talk about how you think we're doing. We want your feedback – good and bad. We listen carefully to the feedback we receive from customers, such as through Share Your Views, but we know some of you feel we could do more. So we want to put that right, with your help.

Your feedback will help us to make changes that will improve our services for you and other tenants.

So please come and 'Join the Conversation' with us. In the run up to Christmas our staff will be out and about meeting you. We're planning a series of events where you can talk directly to us and tell us the things that concern you... along with things that you are happy with.

We appreciate people have busy lives and don't always have time to visit us in our offices. So we're coming to see you instead. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter to find out when we're in your area. In our high rises we'll have posters up letting you know when we're coming.

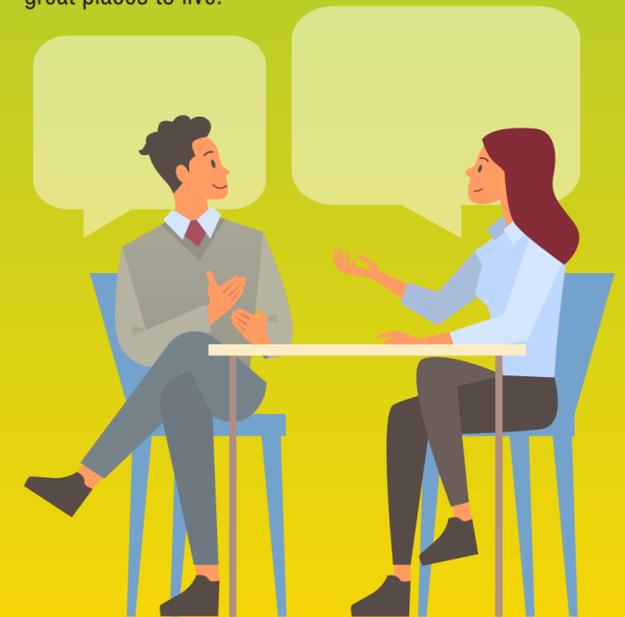
We will also invite residents to 'Join the Conversation' with us when they visit our payments office in Chelmsley Wood. So look out for us and come and have a chat.

Our Chief Executive, Fiona Hughes, will also be supporting the activities of our street and block champions while they are out and about. We'll let you know when these take place

■ We also always welcome your feedback on social media or Share Your Views.

so you can discuss any issues you may have. If you see Fiona, please be sure to 'Join the Conversation' with her. And if you miss her then look out for some online 'Talk to Fiona' sessions that we will be holding over the next few months.

We really do want to hear your views so we hope that you can spare a little time to talk to us. If you 'Join the Conversation' it gives us the chance to respond to your concerns and do all that we can to make our communities great places to live.



Meet our new Board Chair, Richard

It was a real privilege to be asked to Chair the Solihull Community Housing Board.

Providing great housing services and community support at a time when we see the impact that a shortage of suitable housing is having is hugely important.

I was born in Solihull and have run a business here for over 25 years.

My Grandfather, Bertie Hyde, was a well-known Solihull Councillor and Friend of the Hospital.

I know he would have been thrilled that I had been asked to play a small part in such a vital organisation.

I look forward to meeting customers, staff and councillors to hear how I can build on the good work that is already being done.

I am particularly interested in learning more about how we engage with our customers, in particular by providing digital access to our services.

Also I will be looking at how SCH compares with similar housing organisations.

I look forward to playing a role in the future success of SCH.



Are you eligible for free central heating?

Most of our tenants now have modern central heating systems. But there are still some who depend on old storage heaters to heat their homes.

These are expensive to run and provide only limited heat.

The good news is that National Grid is investing £150million across the UK through the Warm Homes Fund. The focus will be on areas where fuel poverty remains a concern.

If you use an old storage heater then you may qualify for new gas central heating.

We are looking to help 125 of our tenants and leaseholders.

Get in touch now if you use a storage heater and live in a house, bungalow or low rise flat.

- Simply email advice@actonenergy.org.uk or call freephone 0800 988 2881 to find out more.



Get insured for peace of mind



1,700 tenants and leaseholders are already on our home contents insurance scheme. Are you?

The contents of your home are your responsibility.

The insurance we offer protects your home contents and belongings against fire, theft, storm, flood and much more.

The cover has so many benefits!

- No administration or cancellation fees
- No minimum home security requirements
- Tenants can pay weekly alongside their rent. Leaseholders can pay quarterly with their service charge.
- No excess
- Extended accidental damage is included
- It's quick and easy to apply



- To apply, fill in the application form on our website and email it to us. Or call us on 0121 717 1515 and we can post a form out to you.

My SCH Account to be launched soon

We have some exciting news! 'My SCH Account' is now in the final stage of development and will be launched in the next few weeks.

'My SCH Account' will be available for all of our tenants and leaseholders. It will give you online access to your information.

Once you have registered for your own individual account, you will be able to:

- Update your details
- Log repairs and book an appointment
- View your rent balance
- Use your My SCH Account anytime, using a smart phone, tablet or laptop

- Keep an eye on Facebook, Twitter and our website for the launch date of 'My SCH Account' and instructions of how you can register.



SOLIHULL SWITCH 'N' SAVE

Solihull Council can help you make savings on your gas and electricity bills.

Simply register for free by Tuesday 9 October 2018 and we'll let you know whether you can get a cheaper deal.

There's absolutely no obligation to switch but it's all about saving money for you.

Visit www.solihull.gov.uk/switching to register or call 0121 704 6000 for further information.

Sign up now to save with no obligations!
For more information call 0121 704 6000

REGISTER NOW

SCH Annual Report 2017/18

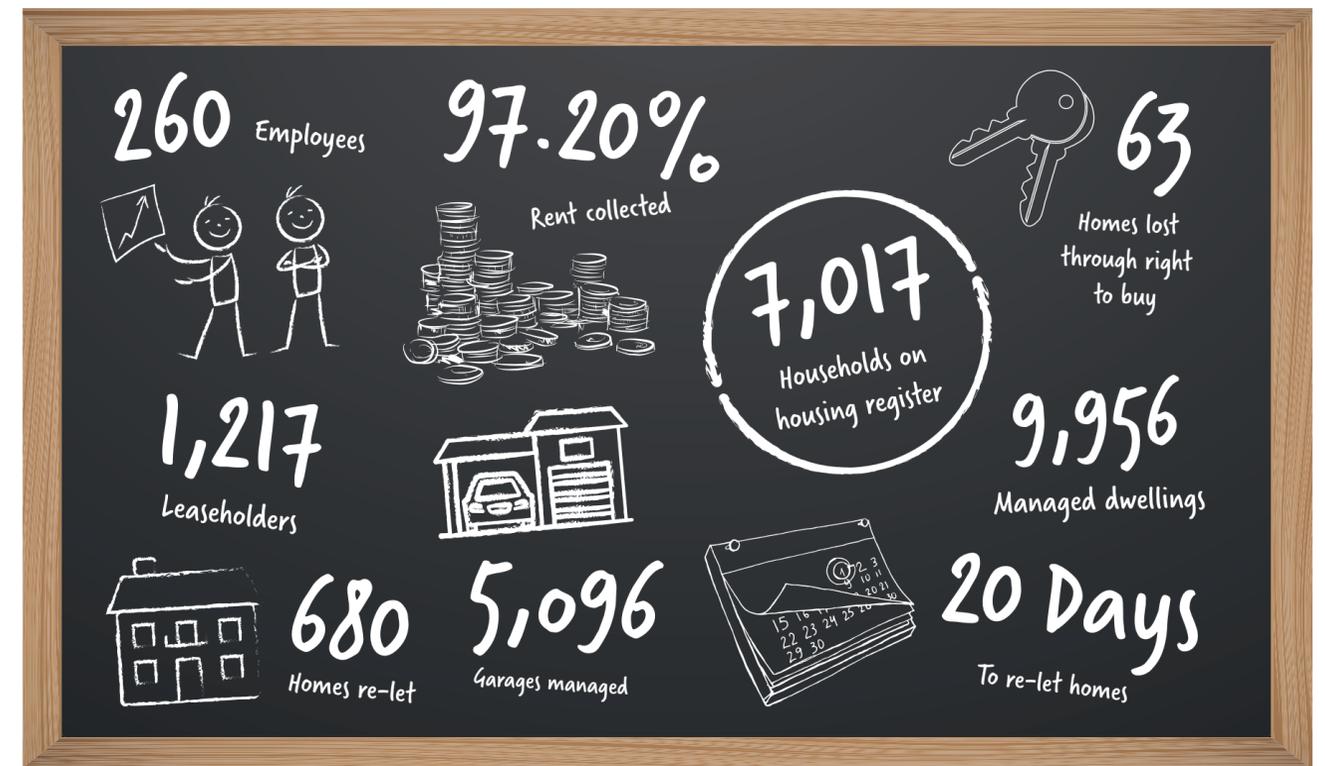


This report looks at the performance of SCH during the year April 2017 to March 2018. It highlights the services SCH provides to around 9,950 tenants and 1,200 leaseholders on behalf of Solihull Council.

Demand for housing continues to be high with just over 7,000 households on the housing register. Last year we were able to let 680 homes.

The amount of money available to SCH to provide services continues to be reduced following the Government's decision to impose rent reductions. SCH has managed to maintain service levels through a combination of efficiency restructuring and generating additional income through commercial activities.

Following the tragic event at Grenfell Tower; to ensure the safety of all our tenants and residents SCH has, alongside West Midland Fire Service, undertaken extensive fire safety checks and consulted over 1,900 residents of high rise blocks.



Providing homes



Solihull Council's allocations policy uses fixed term tenancies and regular tenancy reviews as a way of ensuring that homes are occupied by people in genuine housing need.

687 homeless preventions

404 homeless acceptances

2 property acquisitions

2 new homes through building conversion

17 new build shared ownership homes and 21 temporary accommodation units built

Managing your homes

2017 saw the roll out of full service universal credit which has caused problems for tenants switching to this form of benefit. SCH continues to work closely with affected tenants to help them manage the transition and retain their homes.

97.20% rent collected

1,526 tenants switched to universal credit

£1,668,330 in additional benefit awarded following money advice team intervention

50 evictions for rent arrears

1,409 ASB cases reported

84.34% satisfaction with ASB case handling

680 homes re-let

20 days to re-let homes



Looking after your homes

36,631 response repairs completed

98.33% completed within timescale

15,883 appointments made

95.44% appointments kept

8,429 gas service completions

214 new heating systems fitted

1,480 electrical checks

54 communal envelope works completed

85.18% satisfaction with response repairs service

Support services

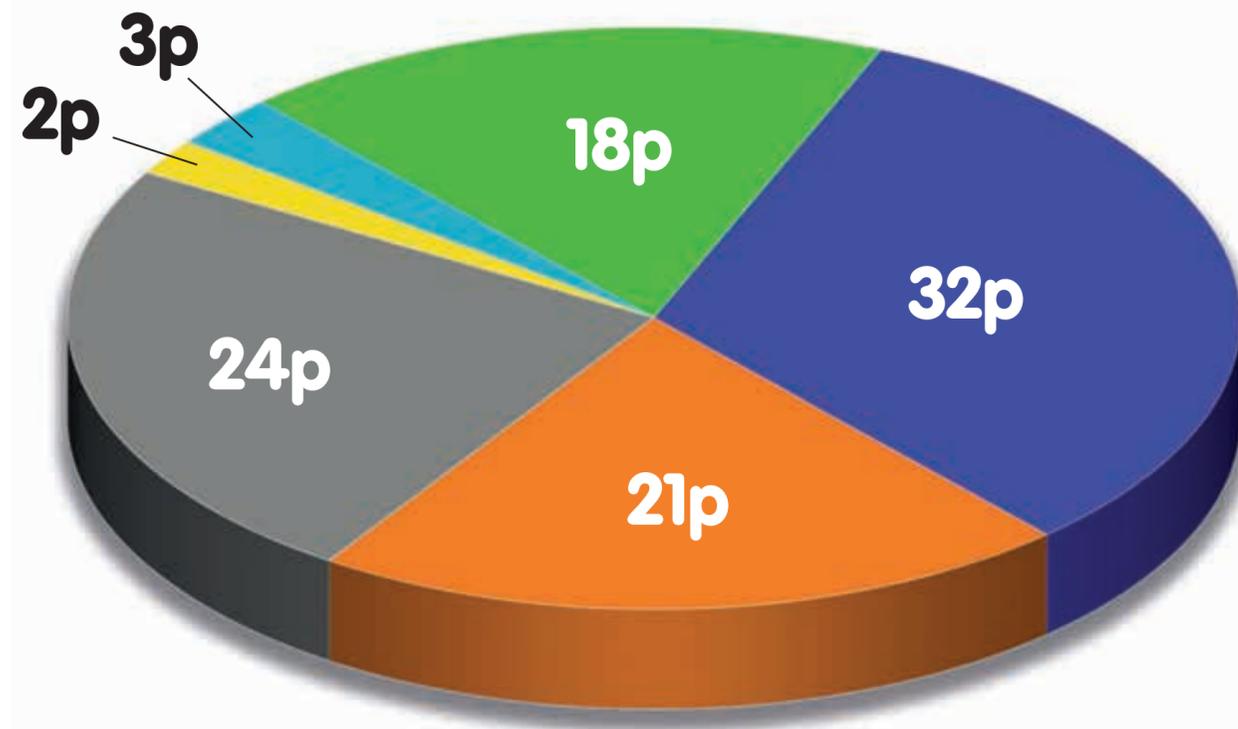
More people are living longer and want to remain independent and in their own homes. SCH want to help people achieve this so we provide an adaptations service which makes minor changes to homes and provide an alarm system which allows older and vulnerable people call for assistance in an emergency.

1,958 minor adaptations completed

152 major adaptations completed

2,296 Wellbeing Service users

Where does the money go?



Total spend = £45,296,000

We hope that you have found your Annual Report interesting and welcome your feedback on the report and any of the services we deliver.



Keeping in touch



This year SCH launched an online reporting tool "Share Your Views" which allows all tenants and service users to provide real time feedback on the service they have received.

A range of service specific surveys are available to answer. 298 people completed the overall satisfaction survey with 74% satisfied with the service they received. We have used the comments of those who were not satisfied to influence service improvements.

409 compliments received

297 complaints received

96.94% complaints resolved at stage 1

159,244 telephone calls received

92.86% of calls answered

Annual report to Tenants 2018 – Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee is a group of tenants and leaseholders who review our performance on a regular basis. They report directly to the Board that manages Solihull Community Housing.

The Scrutiny Committee meets every three months to review our performance and to ask managers to explain how services are delivered.

They then make recommendations for improving our service. In the last year the Scrutiny Committee have reviewed the following areas assisting with the following changes and outcomes:

- **Contact Centre** – change in opening hours.
- **Cleaning Contract** – Scrutiny found the service is now being delivered to a reasonable standard and represents good value for money.
- **Void process** – during the review the void turnaround time reduced greatly and Scrutiny brought back tenants inspectors.

- **Fly tipping** – Scrutiny have been reviewing this service and a report is due to Full Board with their findings.

This year the Scrutiny Committee are reviewing the following areas:

- Communication during repairs
- Complaints Policy
- If you would like to find out how to join the Scrutiny Committee please call 0121 717 1515.



Having your say this year

I would like to thank our Scrutiny Committee for their help with this annual report. I know they have worked on the layout to make sure it is user friendly and reports the information customers want to see.

We would like to encourage you to get involved and share your first hand experiences and views with us to help us improve the way we deliver housing services.

Whether you can spare five minutes online to complete a survey or perhaps you would prefer to join a meeting – we will find a way that works for you.

I look forward to receiving your feedback. Please send your comments to:



Fiona Hughes, Chief Executive, Solihull Community Housing, Endeavour House, Meriden Drive, Solihull B37 6BX or email info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk



Contact us via our Facebook page, or complete a form on our website.

Fiona Hughes, Chief Executive, Solihull Community Housing



Come and take a look at what Saxon Court has to offer you



Our show flat at our stunning new Saxon Court housing development is now open to view!

Based at Marlene Croft in Chelmsley Wood, with easy access to shops and buses, Saxon Court will have 51 units, with a mix of one and two-bed apartments.

Designed for people over the age of 55 with a care and support need, each apartment has a:

- Fully-fitted kitchen • Gas central heating
- Wi-Fi • Wet room • Fully carpeted

The new state of the art housing scheme will also have a large open ground floor with facilities to include:

- Ground floor lounge • Wellbeing suite
- Hair salon • Beauty room • Café • Gardens

Saxon Court will have CCTV and a Court Manager will be based there during the day to help and support residents.

- If you would like to book an appointment to view the show flat please call 0121 717 1515.



Keeping you Safe and Sound

Would you like peace of mind knowing help is at hand at the push of a button?

SCH Wellbeing is a trusted service used by many people in Solihull. The Safe and Sound plan offers a pendant alarm service which helps you to live a happy and independent life in your own home. Prices start from just £3.21 per week. Our specially trained staff are available to help no matter what the hour!

We also offer:

- Sensors and detectors which alert the emergency services when triggered including smoke and CO2 detectors, bed, chair and door sensors
- Handyperson service to carry out small jobs around the home
- Free Home Hazard Assessments to check your home is safe
- Gadgets designed to make living easier
- Key safe door security

- If you are interested in our services please visit our website www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk and click on 'Wellbeing'. Or call 0121 717 1515.



Don't throw any rubbish from a high rise window

Fly-tipping is an ongoing issue in Solihull.

We all play a part in keeping our community clean and tidy.

Our estate assistants are often called to high rises to clear mess thrown from windows. This is not acceptable.

The following are an example of some of the things that our estates assistants have had to clear away



■ If you have any information about anyone doing this please call us in confidence on 0121 717 1515 or email info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

after tenants have thrown them out of windows:

- Nappies
- Cigarettes
- Takeaway food
- Rubbish
- Dog mess

This is a serious health and safety hazard to you, your neighbours and the environment. It is also a fire risk and can attract vermin such as rats.

Help us keep the community safe by disposing of your rubbish correctly. Do not throw anything out of your windows or leave rubbish bags outside your flat. All rubbish should be put down the chute.

We will take very strong action if we find anyone doing this - **you may even be putting your tenancy at risk.**

Gas service pays off for Robert

Congratulations to Robert Shaw, the latest winner of our gas service quarterly prize draw.

Robert of Smiths Wood, received a nice surprise when Jackie from Dodd Group dropped in to present him with £50 of Love to Shop vouchers.



All tenants who have their gas appliances serviced at the first time of asking are automatically entered into our prize draw.

Gas servicing is about keeping you safe, so please don't cancel a gas safety appointment.

■ So when Dodd Group write to you about servicing your gas appliances please respond and the next time you could be the lucky winner of £50 in Love To Shop vouchers.

Harry's handy hints



We are proud to be supporting Gas Safety Week 2018 on 17 – 23 September. We will be raising awareness of gas safety and the importance of taking care of your gas appliances. Taking care of your appliances means you are taking care of your home and loved ones.



Follow these simple gas safety tips to help keep your home safe:

- 1. Annual gas safety check** – it is the law to allow us access to your home to check your gas appliances. It is important to communicate with us and always try to stick to appointment times given to you.
- 2. Look out for warning signs that a gas appliance isn't working properly** – this could be: lazy yellow flames, excessive condensation and black marks or stains. However, gas appliances can be unsafe without displaying these symptoms so it is important to have them checked every year.
- 3. Stay aware of the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning** – the six main symptoms are headaches, dizziness, nausea, breathlessness, collapse and loss of consciousness.

- 4. Install a carbon monoxide alarm and test it regularly** – an alarm can help protect you from carbon monoxide poisoning.
- 5. Use gas appliances for their intended purposes only** – for example, don't use a cooker to heat a room.
- 6. Provide enough ventilation for gas appliances to burn correctly** – make sure vents or chimneys are not blocked.



Scrutiny Spotlight

Hi everyone,

I would like to begin my latest column by welcoming Richard Hyde to the SCH Board. I wish him every success in the important role of Chair and very much look forward to working with him in the future.

As for the Scrutiny Committee, we continue to be kept very busy with our work as Void Inspectors. Earlier in the year a Hot Topic forum was held to explain the role of Void Inspectors and encourage other residents to get involved. We were delighted that this generated a number of new volunteers and I hope they too have found the work both interesting and rewarding.

We always visit a property just before the keys are handed over to a new tenant. Sometimes we spot one or two small things that can be improved upon. We note this on

the checklist which we hand in after the visit. The team are then able to 'make good' before the tenant moves in.

It's really important that properties are inspected by other tenants. We can act as the eyes and ears to help ensure properties are as good as they possibly can be before a new tenant moves in. Get in touch if you would like to find out how you can become a Tenant Void Inspector.

The Scrutiny Committee will soon be turning our attention to repairs in a bid to make the service as efficient and cost-effective as possible. We're keen to develop and improve communication levels between SCH and residents. It's a two-way process with SCH confirming appointment

With Janet Jackson
Chair of the
Scrutiny Committee



times, and perhaps saying they're on the way. Equally, residents must make sure they are at home at the agreed time. Otherwise this costs SCH both time and money and stops them being able to see other tenants who could have had the appointment.

We're continuing to develop the Customer Promise. The three key themes of this are Listening, Caring and Doing. We will share more news of this with you in the months ahead.

■ If you would like to find out more about becoming a Tenant Void Inspector please get in touch on 0121 717 1515.

Share Your Views and enter our prize draw!

Share Your Views gives you the chance to leave us feedback at the click of a button.

It's the easy way for you to tell us what you think of our services – brilliant, room for improvement or just ok. We really do want to know!

All you need to do is visit Share Your Views on our website and complete an easy to follow survey. Your feedback will help shape how we provide our services.

We share your feedback with staff during regular team sessions. Staff then use this feedback to make improvements.

Staff also receive feedback on what you think we do well.

We also share feedback with contractors about the services they provide on our behalf. Our contractors use this information to make sure that they are providing the service that you would like.

As a thank you to customers who leave feedback, their names are entered in to a monthly prize draw. Pictured here are our latest lucky winners Gemma Dumigan from Solihull and Kirsty Evans from Chelmsley Wood. Both were presented with a £50 voucher for sharing their thoughts on Share Your Views.

■ For your chance to win £50, visit our website www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk and give us your feedback.





Send us your photos

This month we're introducing a new feature for the newsletter, **Star Photo!**

In each newsletter we will print a picture that captures the spirit of Solihull at its very best.

Thank you to local photographer Darren Smith for starting us off with this wonderful image of the lake at Babbs Mill in Kingshurst.

We hope to print one photo in each newsletter in the future and if yours is selected you will win a **£25 gift voucher**.



The photos can be taken with a camera or phone and can be taken anywhere in Solihull.

We're after some great images that show what a wonderful place this is to live.

Please email your photos to info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

Winners from the last issue
Many congratulations.

Winners

Find the bug competition winner

- Mrs P Swann from Chelmsley Wood

Kids spot the difference winners

- Alicia Lucas from Chelmsley Wood
- Kyle Moore from Kingshurst
- Ronnie Genc from Chelmsley Wood
- Elicia Maxwell from Chelmsley Wood

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