

News



For tenants and leaseholders of Solihull Community Housing

Autumn Edition 2016

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Working together

There's so much in it...



Halls for hire

We have three centres for you to choose from... [Page 4](#)



Annual Report

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Do you need a garage?

We have lots of newly refurbished garages available to rent... [Page 10](#)

Scrutiny Spotlight with Janet



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A message from Fiona

The SCH Board has just undergone a number of significant changes.

Dave Dixon, for many years our vice chairman, Wendy Blackburn and Cliff Horrocks have all stepped down after many years of dedicated service.

We said goodbye to Dave, Wendy and Cliff on September 5, presenting each with a small token of our gratitude.

At the same time SCH welcomes three new Board members and I would like to extend a warm welcome to Louise Tubbs (tenant), Jenny Fletcher (leaseholder) and Fay Shanahan (independent).

There is now a new cabinet member with responsibility for housing in Solihull, including

oversight of SCH, Ken Hawkins. Ken is well known to many of you as a former mayor of the borough.

I look forward to working closely with Ken in the months ahead and look forward to welcoming him to our offices on 30 September, when he will be dropping in to learn more about our work.

Finally, I hope many of you are enjoying the regular digital updates now being emailed to tenants. SCH Insight enables us to keep in touch with you more often.

If you're not yet receiving it simply let the Contact Centre know your email address and we will add you to the list of subscribers.



Fiona Hughes
Chief of Operations

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



- Emergency Response • Peace of Mind •
- Home Visits • Pendant Alarms • Welfare Checks •
- Supporting Carers • Assistive Technology •

Come and join us at Wellbeing Open Day

SCH Wellbeing is staging an Open Day next month and we'd love to see you all there! The Open Day takes place at the Better Living Centre on Elmdon Industrial Estate on Thursday 20 October (10am-2.30pm).

Our Wellbeing service is about enabling older or disabled people to lead fulfilling lives in their own homes for as long as possible.

You can learn just what SCH Wellbeing has to offer at the Open Day, including:

- Welfare Checks
- Home Visits
- Pendant Alarms
- Assistive Technology
- Dementia workshop
- Wellbeing assessment

You will be able to take a tour of the Better Living Centre too and there will be refreshments for all our guests

We hope to welcome you to the Open Day on Thursday 20 October (10am-2.30pm) at Unit 4, Elmdon Trading Estate, Bickenhill Lane, Solihull B37 7HE

■ For further details please call 0121 717 1515.

Change in hours at Housing Options

We have recently reduced the opening hours of the Housing Options service at Coppice Way.

The new hours for the Housing Options service are:

- Monday 10am – 4pm
- Tuesday 10am – 4pm
- Wednesday Closed
- Thursday 10am – 4pm
- Friday 10am – 4pm

Please note the Coppice Way cash office will remain open from:

- Monday 9am – 4.30pm
- Tuesday 9am – 4.30pm
- Wednesday 10am – 4.30pm
- Thursday 9am – 4.30pm
- Friday 9am – 4pm

So while the Coppice Way building will be open as usual, our Housing Options team will only be operating a frontline service at the times and dates listed above.

The Housing Options office at Coppice Way covers the following services:

- Homelessness appointments
- Money Advice
- Cash payments

The Solihull Connect office in the Bluebell Centre provides all other housing services. You can make cash payments here too.

■ If anyone becomes homeless on a Wednesday and need our support they will need to make an emergency call to us on 0121 717 1515.



Estate Assistants 'out on the patch'

We have recently changed the way in which we look after the estates. This has been done to provide an even better service.



We now have a team of 10 Estate Assistants each responsible for their own patch within the borough.

Each Estate Assistant has their own vehicle to enable them to carry out all the duties they need, including collecting items of bulky waste.

To help deliver an even more efficient service each Estate Assistant has been provided with a new hand held device. This means they can record information 'out on the patch' rather than having to return to the office or phone in.

They can use their devices to:

- raise repairs instantly
- record feedback after estate inspections
- record fire safety check information
- record high rise and low rise cleaning checks.

The Estate Assistants will be happy to talk with you about any issues you may wish to raise, including:

- our bulky waste collection service
- disposal of domestic rubbish and recycling
- low level ASB matters (for example; fly tipping and animal fouling in communal areas).

If there are issues on the estates that our team cannot sort by themselves then they will report back to their Estate Management Officer who will then seek to solve them.

If you live in a high rise, look out for our posters on the noticeboard, introducing your Estate Assistant for your building.

Scrutiny Spotlight

With Janet Jackson
Chair of the
Scrutiny Committee



Hi everyone,

Scrutiny Committee have had a busy few months! We've looked at the SCH cleaning contract and how we repair and re-let empty properties (known as voids).

We asked Customer Engagement Officers to arrange Hot Topic forums to get views on the communal cleaning and voids. We received feedback from a wide range of tenants and leaseholders.

Two members of Scrutiny went out with Estate Management Officers to look at the quality of the cleaning in high rises and low rises. Scrutiny members went armed with a list of questions for Estate Officers. The answers will now be sent back to the Scrutiny Committee for discussion.

Scrutiny also prepared questions for the staff responsible for voids, such as:

- how are properties inspected when they become empty?
- what happens to get a void ready for tenants?
- how quickly does this happen?
- what condition are properties left in by outgoing tenants?
- what condition are properties in when re-let to new tenants?

The quicker a property is prepared, the quicker we can help someone on our waiting list. Once we're happy that we have all of the information we need, we will make recommendations to the Board to improve the way the service works and make things better for you.

- What's coming up? We'll soon be looking at fly-tipping. Look out for the details of the next Hot Topic forum. The Scrutiny Committee would love to hear your views.

Rent payments hotline

Do you pay your rent by phone?

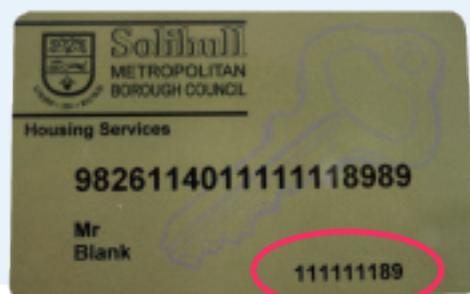
If so, the Contact Centre now has a new automated phone line to enable you to pay your rent, faster than ever before.

No more waiting around! Just call the new **0300 4560 502** number and you will be guided through the quick and easy steps to make your payment.

All you need is your account number at the ready – you can find it in

the bottom right hand corner of your gold swipe card.

- For more information please email info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk



Help us keep you safe

It's a legal requirement that we carry out an annual heating inspection in your home. Without it, your appliances could become unsafe, putting your life and the lives of other members of your household at risk.

During this inspection our contractor will check for Carbon Monoxide (CO). Breathing it in can make you unwell and can kill you if you're exposed to high levels.

Symptoms of CO poisoning include tiredness, headaches, giddiness and nausea. If anyone in your household has these symptoms and you think it may be connected to CO, please get urgent medical advice.

If you suspect a CO leak within your home you should:

- **switch off the appliance and don't reuse until it's been checked, repaired or replaced**
- **open all doors and windows to ventilate the room – do not sleep in it**
- **stay calm but leave the property immediately**
- **call the gas emergency number on 0800 111 999**
- **visit a GP immediately and tell them your symptoms may be related to CO poisoning.**



■ Wendy receives her gift voucher.

Please respond quickly when we contact you about arranging a service. Wendy did and ended up winning £50 in our prize draw. Everyone who has their appliances serviced when we ask is automatically entered into the prize draw.

Common causes of carbon monoxide leaks include:

- poorly installed and maintained appliances
- appliances not working properly
- not enough fresh air in the room (e.g. air bricks or grills air blocked)
- chimney or flue gets blocked up
- allowing engineers not registered with Gas Safe or HETAS to install or maintain your appliances
- covering appliances or restricting air into appliances (for example drying towels on boilers).

■ For more information on gas safety please call 0121 717 1515.

Hire a hall

We have three community halls available to hire.

- Auckland Hall, Smith's Wood B36 9JR
- Whar Hall, Solihull B92 0PG
- Crabtree Hall, Chelmsley Wood B37 5BU

They can be hired for a range of activities and events, such as:

- special occasions - birthdays and anniversaries
- corporate events - training seminars and meetings
- religious events - multi faith celebrations, religious services, tuition classes
- health and sporting activities - karate, keep fit, yoga, kick boxing, slimming classes
- community and cultural - youth clubs, coffee mornings, bring and buy sales

The halls are available between 9am – 10pm and cost just £12 per hour (inc VAT). They all have a kitchen, toilet facilities, disabled access and parking.



■ For more information please email facilitiesman@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk or call 0121 717 1515.



SCH Annual Report 2015/16



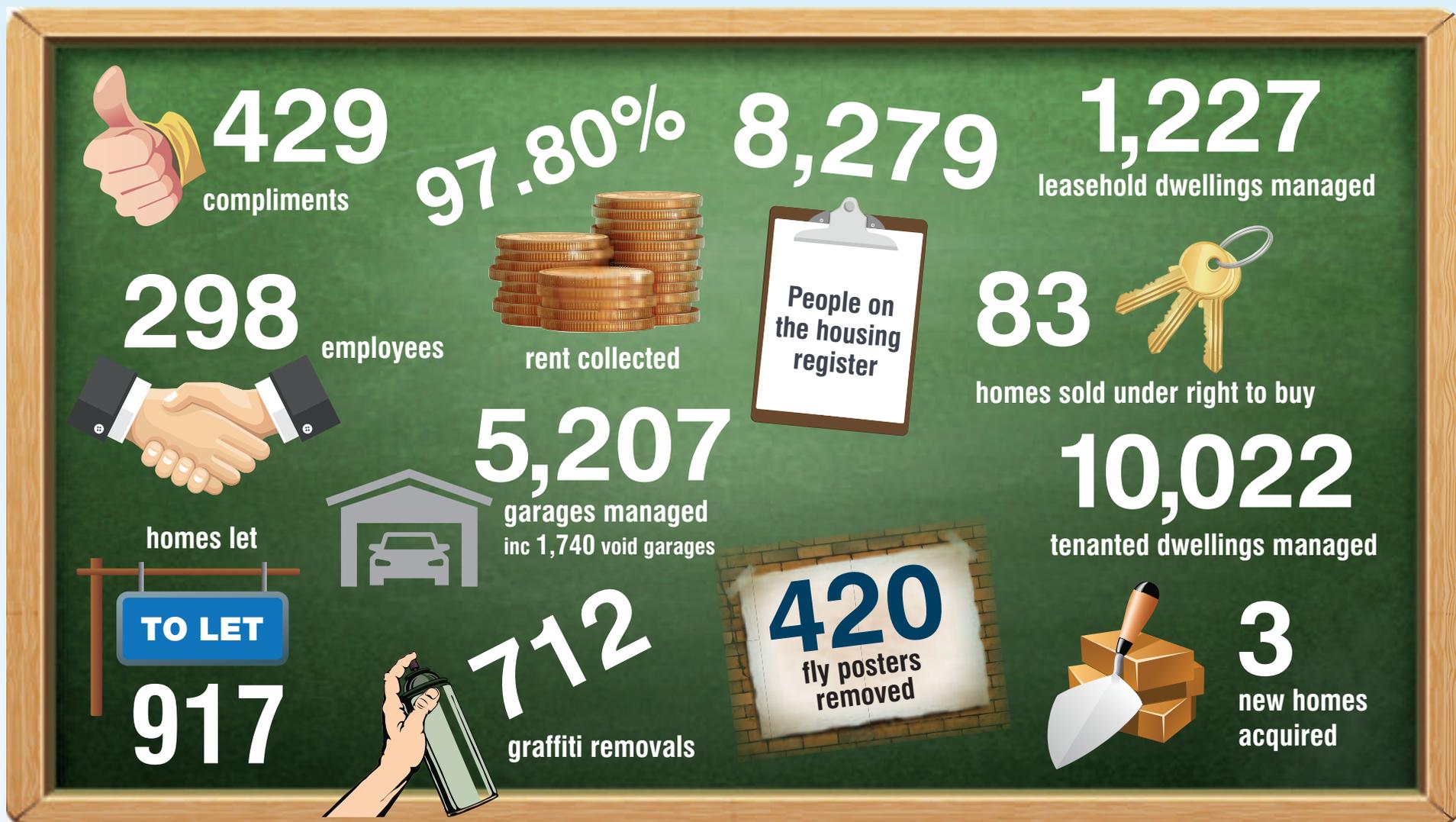
Welcome

This report looks at the key performance during the year April 2015 to March 2016. It highlights the services SCH provides to nearly 10,000 tenants and 1,200 leaseholders on behalf of Solihull Council.

Demand for housing continues to be high and although the Council introduced restrictions to who could join the housing register, limiting it to people with a local connection, there are over 8,200 households registered. Last year we were

able to let 917 homes which is a small number compared to those looking for a home.

The amount of money available to SCH to provide services is being reduced following the Government's decision to impose rent reductions. To try to offset the effects of these cuts SCH have developed a commercial division, SCH Better Places and Wellbeing Service which are now able to sell services to others and generate extra income.



Providing homes



Solihull Council updated the allocation policy and we introduced a new tenancy policy of introductory and fixed-term tenancies. The use of fixed-term tenancies and regular tenancy reviews is an effective way of ensuring homes are occupied by people in genuine housing need.

370 homeless preventions

418 homeless cases accepted

3 new homes acquired

Next year we will be increasing the amount of temporary accommodation available so that we can reduce the need to use budget hotels when families are homeless. We will continue to look for sites and funding to develop new homes.



Managing your homes

97.8% rent collected

£83.64 average weekly rent

£939,095 additional benefit claimed

56 evictions for rent arrears

2,046 new ASB cases

81% satisfied with ASB service

917 lettings

41 days to re-let homes

We deal with all reports of antisocial behaviour from our own tenants, leaseholders, owner occupiers and tenants of private landlords. We now also deal with reports about domestic noise nuisance so we are providing a seamless service for residents.



Looking after your homes

41,160 repairs completed

99.09% repairs completed on time

31,670 appointments made

97.76% appointments kept

8,439 properties received gas servicing

456 new heating systems fitted

2,019 properties electrically tested

36 communal areas received envelope scheme works

89.10% satisfied with repairs service

We have started work on a number of low rise buildings to improve the external and internal communal areas. We launched a new improved standard for empty homes and continued the external wall insulation and improvements of high rise properties.



Support services

1,933 minor adaptations completed

26 major adaptations completed

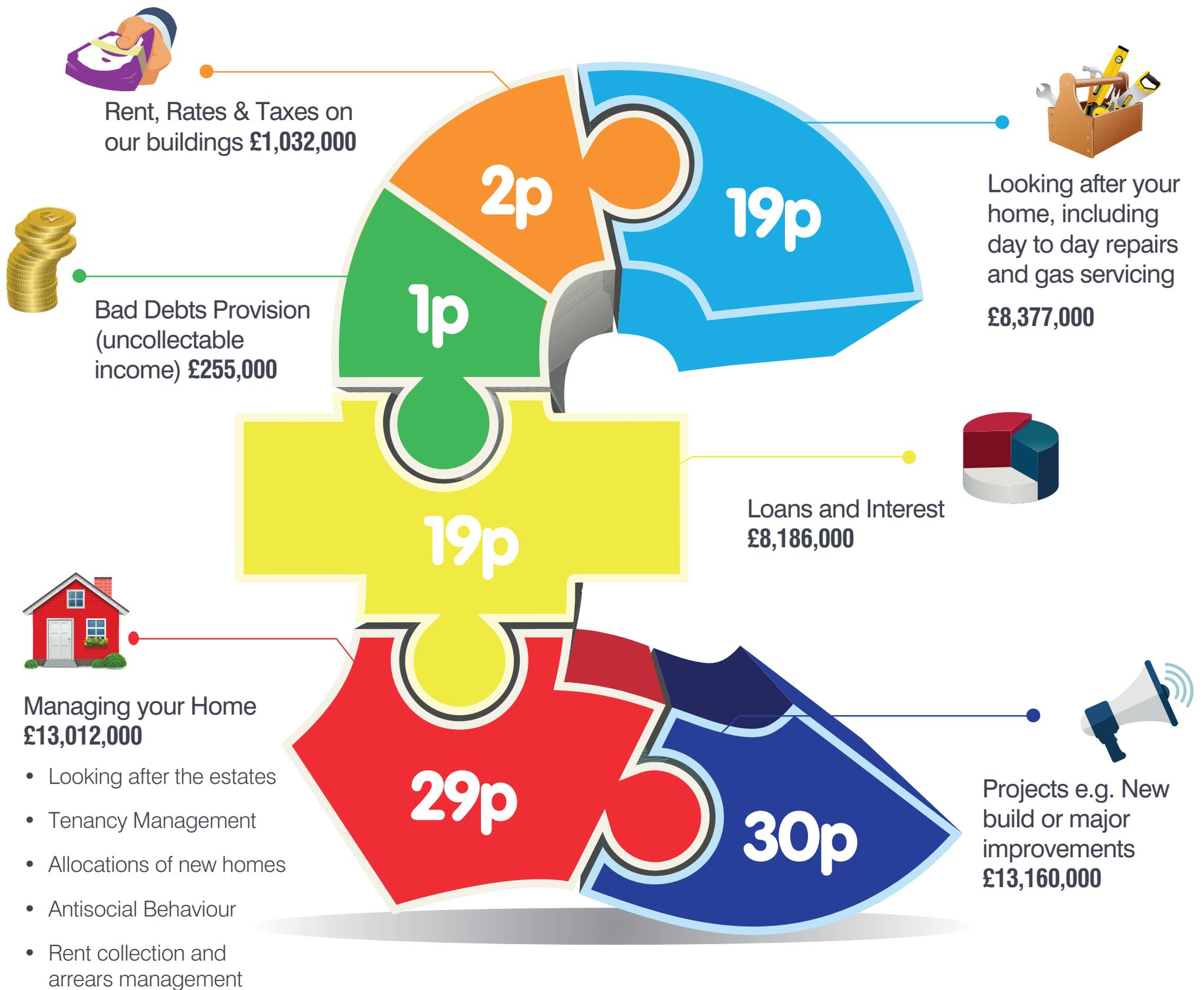
1,789 of Safe & Sound service

152 other adaptations (lifts and showers) completed

More and more people are living longer and want to remain independent and living in their own homes. We want to help our customers to do this so we provide an adaptation service which makes changes to homes such as walk in showers, grab rails, lever taps and ramps to assist people to live independently. We also offer alarm services for older or vulnerable people to allow them to call for assistance in an emergency.



Where does the money go?



Total spend = £44,022,000

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



3,203 social media followers

446 complaints dealt with

467 compliments received

338 involved customers

96% of 182,000 calls answered

Annual report to Tenants 2016 - Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee is a group of tenants and leaseholders who review our performance on a regular basis and 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 and to discuss and make recommendations for improving our services.

In the last year the Scrutiny Committee looked at the formal complaints policy and at how we can work towards completing repairs properly first time without inconveniencing customers by having to return to rectify work.

This year the Scrutiny Committee have looked at how the Contact Centre operates, the communal cleaning contract for flats and at how well we repair and relet empty properties.



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:



Dr Ashley Lane, 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.

Dr Ashley Lane, Chairman of the SCH Board.



We'll remove bulky waste



We offer a Bulky Waste collection service. It's the best way to get rid of a large item i.e. a fridge or sofa. For a small charge we can remove it for you.

We will collect the item from outside your property. If you live in a flat we can still collect from your front door. Just make sure you put the item out on the day of your collection.

We can sometimes collect it from inside your property if you are

unable to place it outside. Just make sure you sign a disclaimer first.

Our new prices are:

- £10 for any single item
- £20 for up to 5 items
- £25 for up to 10 items

* These prices come into effect on Monday 3 October 2016.

- There are some items we cannot remove. For more information please give us a call on 0121 717 1515 or pop into a Solihull Connect office.

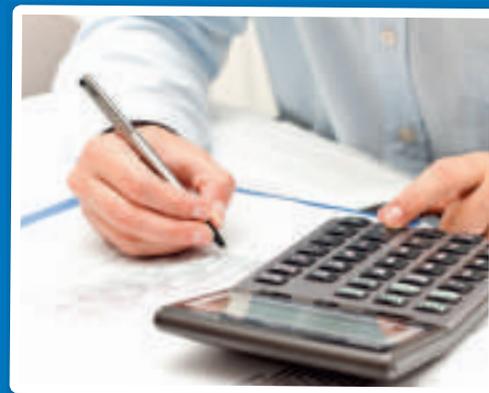
Benefit cap level reduced

The Government are set to reduce the total amount of welfare benefits a single family can receive.

For families living in Solihull (and everywhere else in the UK except London) the benefit cap will be set at £20,000.

So if your family is currently receiving more than £20,000 a year in benefits this may affect you.

- If you are affected by these changes you will be contacted by the Council over the next few weeks.



It's time to bin the side waste

We are working in partnership with the Council's Waste and Recycling team to tackle the growing issue of excessive side waste.

Side waste is when people put extra rubbish out with their usual bin collection. This can result in bags of waste being left on the street.

Our Estate Assistants are now keeping a record of the areas where this happens most often. The Waste and Recycling team can then see where any extra work needs to take place to solve the problem.

The Waste and Recycling team and our Estate Assistants will be talking to residents to provide

information and advice on the best way to dispose of your rubbish.

If you need more bin space – perhaps if you have a large family – you may be able to request a larger wheelie bin.

- To do this please visit the Rubbish and Recycling pages on the Council's website or call 0121 704 8000. www.solihull.gov.uk



Out and about in Solihull

You've probably seen our Engagement Officers, Jill and Mandy this summer. Here's an overview of just some of the things they've been up to lately.

Chelmsley Wood Community Day

Both Jill and Mandy supported the local Chelmsley Wood community day on Saturday 16 July.

With their information displays, games and giveaways they had a great day. They were able to share information with visitors about some of



our services including free dog chipping, renting a garage and hiring one of our community centres.

Thank you to all who came up and said hello!

Repairs Hot Topic

We enjoyed a lively Hot Topic forum on 23 August around the theme repairs. The group was very enthusiastic and came up with some great ideas. Thanks to everyone who attended. Keep your eyes peeled for the next Hot Topic coming up.

Hobs Moat Community Day

Jill and Mandy had a successful time supporting the Rio themed fun day. But Mandy got more than she bargained for and faced her fears. Well done Mandy on holding a tarantula! Don't think she will be doing that again.



Would you like to do a bit more?

- If you'd like to get involved a bit more let us know. You don't have to have bags of time! Call us on 0121 717 1515 and Jill and Mandy will be happy to help.



Swap and Move at the click of a button

Have you heard about Swap and Move? It's a great new service that can help if you're looking to move home.

It's very helpful if you are:

- looking for a move but are stuck on a waiting list
- looking to move to another area
- after more bedrooms or looking to downsize.

Swap and Move allows you to Mutually Exchange to another social housing property. Mutual Exchange means you swap your property with somebody else rather than waiting on a list for a property to become empty.

You can look for other available properties in Solihull or across the country. Mutual Exchange can be a

much faster way of finding a suitable home.

We are subscribers to Swap and Move which means it is free for our tenants to use.

You can now even download an app to keep up with your possible swaps. The site works by matching you to possible properties with other users of the site.

Once you have found a swap you like then simply apply to us. The Swap and Move website tells you how to do this.

■ Find out more at www.swapandmove.co.uk

swapandmove.co.uk
helping tenants swap homes

Want to move closer to work or family?
Need more bedrooms?
Downsizing?



It's easy to swap and move

- ✓ Visit www.swapandmove.co.uk or download the FREE App available on the App Store & on Google Play
- ✓ Enter details of your current home and the home you want
- ✓ See your possible swaps!



swapandmove.co.uk
helping tenants swap homes



SOLIHULL SWITCH 'N' SAVE

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

Simply register for free by Monday 10 October 2016 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.

So what are you waiting for?
Sign up now to save with no obligations!
For more information call 0121 704 6000

REGISTER NOW

New garages have bags of room

We have recently replaced some of our older garages with new, larger ones.



Each garage is approximately a foot wider than the traditional sized garages across the borough. This makes them more suitable for larger, modern vehicles.

These new, smarter garages have been built in Sheepclose Drive and Blair Grove and have proved very popular so far.

They also provide a bigger space if you are looking to rent a garage for general storage. All our garages, whether new build or traditional, are more localised than commercial self-storage units. They are also much cheaper, costing on average

a third of the price to rent per week than traditional storage units.

We are also improving our traditional garages and several sites across the borough have been spruced up. A site that has recently been improved is south of the Bosworth Drive area of Chelmsley Wood.

■ If you would like to apply to rent one of these garages in the future we would like to hear from you. You can pick up an application from a Connect office or print one from our website.



30 homes checked with Police

We work closely with Solihull Police to make sure our streets and communities are safe and pleasant places to live. We recently teamed up with Solihull Police for an All Out Day.

During this joint working exercise around 30 homes were visited by our managers and Police to check for drugs, antisocial behaviour (ASB) or tenancy issues. Work carried out included:

- two attempts to serve Acceptable Behaviour Agreements
- one warning given regarding ASB

- stairwell patrols conducted in high rises
- one hoarder identified and support offered and accepted.

All our tenants and leaseholders sign an agreement confirming that they will meet certain standards of behaviour. If they don't then we will respond.

We have recently been forced to take action against four tenants. We have had three recent injunctions in the South of the borough and one possession in the North, following a Closure Order.

The injunctions mean that any further incidents could lead to an individual losing their home.

Case #1 – South Solihull

Issues around substance and alcohol abuse, and antisocial behaviour including, foul language, verbal abuse, threatening behaviour and intimidation.

Case #2 – South Solihull

Noisy arguments, screaming, shouting, fighting and threatening behaviour. Property kept in poor condition with unkempt gardens. At court female tenant opted to vacate property.

Case #3 – South Solihull

Issues around alcohol and drugs misuse, loud music and arguments, screaming, making threats, foul language, verbal abuse, and intimidation.

Case #4 – North Solihull

Closure order granted after police found drugs in property. Additional associated nuisance from male tenant. SCH awarded possession of property and tenant evicted.

■ If there are any incidents of ASB where you live please call our confidential ASB hotline on 0121 717 1500.

How to keep mould at bay

Does your home suffer from mould and condensation? If so there are things you can do to prevent this.

Condensation can cause mould growth to form on walls, furniture and soft furnishings.

The best way to stop mould growing in the first place is to reduce levels of condensation. This is done by reducing moisture levels in the room, especially the bathroom and kitchen.

You can do this by:

- wiping down surfaces where moisture settles, such as tiles and windows sills
- making sure tumble dryers are vented to the outside
- opening windows when boiling saucepans or using the shower
- not drying clothes on a radiator.



It is important to try and keep as much ventilation in the property as possible without compromising security. Open windows and trickle vents allow air to circulate around furniture and in cupboards.

As the weather turns colder you need to try and keep your home warm. Do this by:

- maintaining a low heat when the weather is cold or wet

This is more effective than short bursts of high heat.

What to do if your home already has black mould

Wipe down the affected areas with a fungicidal wash – one which carries a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) logo.

Remember

The best way to keep mould at bay permanently is to reduce the amount of condensation you are creating by using the heating more and ventilating the property effectively.

- If you would like more advice please call 0121 717 1515.



K	W	L	H	N	R	O	C	A	W	F	A	H	B	R
J	O	U	L	J	N	C	I	V	C	O	K	R	M	A
T	R	B	I	A	H	Z	Y	S	P	V	O	H	G	K
I	C	Z	O	W	F	A	Q	N	F	W	D	Q	Q	U
Y	E	T	U	N	V	I	E	H	N	G	P	S	E	Y
X	R	C	G	D	F	E	S	Q	U	I	R	R	E	L
J	A	Z	H	H	W	I	E	Z	K	A	B	D	M	I
P	C	G	E	O	F	L	R	P	V	H	E	S	Z	Z
G	S	M	L	S	O	E	U	E	T	Y	Z	X	G	F
W	K	L	T	F	M	X	N	V	F	O	N	G	C	T
O	A	E	O	E	N	G	J	A	G	L	Y	E	K	M
H	R	A	T	Q	D	U	J	F	P	I	G	J	T	G
S	L	V	O	C	R	Q	B	K	O	Q	E	Y	P	Z
C	R	E	A	X	T	K	V	P	P	K	P	I	P	H
S	C	S	M	I	P	M	J	X	P	S	J	C	Q	Y

Kids Competition: Autumn Wordsearch

Find the eight Autumn words in the grid and you could win one of four £10 gift vouchers. Once you have found all eight words cut out and send your entry, with your name and address to: Newsletter Competition, Solihull Community Housing, Endeavour House, Meriden Drive, Solihull B37 6BX or email your entry to info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk. Closing date: Monday 31 October 2016.

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Scarecrow | Acorn |
| Brown | Leaves |
| Squirrel | Fall |
| Bonfire | Halloween |



Find me and win

What page can you find me on?



Win £25 in shopping vouchers!

Find our hidden yellow fuzzy bug on one of the pages in this newsletter.

Email your answer, name and address to info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk by Monday 31 October 2016.

We will put all correct entries into a prize draw - if your entry is picked, you're the winner.

Please note we will use your email address to contact you in the future.

Winners names will be published online and in the next issue.

Winners from the last issue

Winners

Many congratulations.

Find the bug competition winner

- Bill Turrell from Solihull

Kids spot the difference winners

- Courtney Barnes from Solihull
- Katie Turner from Chelmsley Wood
- Nico Hayden from Smith's Wood
- Archie Roche from Smith's Wood

To get in touch:

✉ **Freepost RLSS-UEBA-RTUZ**
Solihull Community Housing
Endeavour House
Meriden Drive
Solihull B37 6BX

☎ **Phone: 0121 717 1515**

☎ **Typetalk: 18001 0121 717 1515**

✉ **Text: 07781 474 722**

📘 **www.facebook.com/solihullcommunityhousing**

🐦 **twitter.com/@solihullhousing**

@ **Email: info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk**

🌐 **Website: www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk**



Protecting your personal information: We promise only to use your information strictly within the Data Protection Act 1998. If you supply your email address we will use it to contact you in the future.

Farsi

اگر دوست دارید یک نسخه از این خبرنامه مستلجین را به زبان خودتان، در چاپ درست، یا به شکل صوتی آن دریافت کنید لطفاً با ما از طریق شماره تلفن 01217171515 تماس بگیرید.

French

Si vous en voulez un exemplaire de ce bulletin aux locataires dans votre langue, en gros caractères ou en format audio, contactez nous au 0121 717 1515.

Pushto

که ستاسو د کرای داز د لیوز لیتر (دخبرونود پانې) نقل پکاروی او که تاسو ددی عبارت ترجمه په خپله ژبه یا په غږو حروفو او یاد اوریډو په لیپ کی غواړئ نو زموږ سره په 0121 717 1515 نمبره رابطه وکړئ.