

Read all about it!



Spring 2017

House & Home

Your top priority

When we asked all our tenants in 2015 “Which of the following do you think should be priorities for SHAL?” top of the list (by a long shot) was **“Invest in maintaining & improving the standard of existing homes”**

We’re proud to say we’re now responding to your top priority

We’re investing in our homes

Since we started our planned property investment programme in November 2016 we have started to replace bathrooms, boilers, doors, fascias, gutters and kitchens

This is the first phase of many investments we have planned to do

How many people live in your home?

Have we got our facts right?

Just visit www.shal.org and click on ‘My Tenancy online’ to check and up-date your details

As one door closes...

Since 1 April 2016 we’ve re-let 36 homes and completed 24 mutual exchanges

All of our available properties are advertised on Homefinder Somerset and you will need to register with them to apply

Mould & Condensation

It's a common problem this time of the year when we close the windows, turn the heating up and are forced to dry the washing indoors. Leaving some windows in your home open slightly helps ventilate the rooms and removes the warm wet air

The condensation you see on your windows every morning can build up on your walls too and this causes the mould. You can get things like 'drip strips' to put on your window sill (£2.50/6m, Wilko) to soak up condensation and prevent mould growth. You always need to make sure you remove mould regularly using specialist products and continue to clean the area to prevent it coming back. These products include things like Fungicidal Spray (£3.95/500ml, Wilko) or Mould & Mildew Remover 750ml (£0.75/750ml, Wilko)

Living with a disability in a cold home

Research by Scope has found that many disabled people are struggling with energy costs. A third of disabled people have cut their energy consumption over the last year to afford their bills, disability charity Scope has said. A survey of working-age disabled people also found 29% had struggled on costs, and nearly a quarter turned off heating even though the home was cold

Campaign

Turn2us is a charity leading a campaign against fuel poverty. The numbers are worrying:

- 46% had cut back on heating their home because of the cost
- 17% cut back on food to pay their energy bills
- 14% had used credit cards to pay their energy bills
- 8% had used payday loans

The research also found that people over the age of 55, and those living with a disability were more likely to have cut back on heating in order to save on heating costs. You can find out more and how to get support by visiting them at www.turn2us.org.uk

Money Matters

Housing Benefit & Universal Credit

18% of our tenants claim partial HB and 19% claim full HB. 11% of tenants now claim UC

If you have to claim UC all the other benefits it replaces stop **immediately** and you'll have to pay up to 6 weeks' rent before you receive your first UC payment

Also, the DWP do not 'back date' your UC payment

Rent

The amount of rent you pay will change on 3 April 2017.

If you claim Universal Credit you will need to notify the DWP your rent is changing via your journal – you should get a notification (“To Do”) from them. However, if you claim Housing Benefit we can still notify your Local Authority on your behalf

All tenants

Around 60% of our tenants are either up-to-date or in credit with their rent

Money owed

However, at the beginning of March we're still owed over £120,000 in unpaid rent

To put that into perspective that's equivalent to over 30 new bathrooms or almost 30 new kitchens in our new planned property investment programme

Your situation

Find welfare benefits and grants information that is relevant to you

Search by your situation or use the A-Z of benefits if you know the name of the benefit you want to find out about. Visit www.turn2us.org.uk/Your-Situation

No more Family Element

The Family Element (in Child Tax Credits) and the Eldest Child Element (in Universal Credit) are being removed for new claims. This affects people who are pregnant now and will have their first baby on or after 6 April 2017. Families who already receive the Family Element or the Eldest Child Element will continue to receive it.

Two Child Limit

The Child Element will only be included for the first two children (unless an exception applies). If you have a third or subsequent child added to your claim on or after 6 April 2017, you will not receive the Child Element for them (unless an exception applies).

Housing Benefit

If you are claiming Housing Benefit, your entitlement is reduced by any income which exceeds the 'applicable amount'. The applicable amount will not be increased for any third or subsequent child born on or after 6 April 2017 (unless an exception applies).

Your account

We add your rent to your account every Monday. You need to pay regularly and in advance. If you're up-to-date that's great. If you're in advance even better! However, if you have arrears you need to pay an additional amount to reduce them – if you're already doing that, thanks

It is your responsibility to make sure all your rent is paid and that includes making sure your Housing Benefit claim is correct, up-to-date and being paid to SHAL

Remember you can always check rent account online