

Grapevine

Autumn/Winter 2020



Money Matters

- Your tenancy is safe
- Direct debit?
- Protecting livelihoods

Neighbourhood & Community

- Supporting communities & recovery
- Facebook & social media

SHAL

- Complaints & compliments
- Our Maintenance team

Together with Tenants

- Engagement barriers
- Tenants interview consultants online

House & Home

- Helping you look after your home
- New asbestos experts
- Mutual exchanges
- Day to day & planned maintenance

Health & Wellbeing

- Help & support for care leavers
- Unsung heroes
- Stay in, work out
- Mental health

Social Housing

- 28 new homes for rent & 2 for shared ownership



“We will rise up
stronger.”

Moving forward together



Grapevine Spring/Summer 2020

Thank you to everyone who sent in pictures and stories for the last newsletter. We had some fantastic feedback and everyone in the SHAL community loved seeing and reading it!

Our priorities over the past 6 months – and the immediate future

Like many people we've sometimes felt we've had to run just to keep still over the last few months. The restrictions on our ways of working (and living) have been tough but our team of 18 are focused on these priorities:

1. **Keeping people safe**
2. **Protecting income and livelihoods**
3. **Sustaining critical services**
4. **Supporting communities and recovery**

We're here to help



01278 444344



07984 355553
(text only)



07889 537164
(out of hours)



2 King Square
Bridgwater, TA6 3DG



information@shal.org



www.shal.org
www.mytenancy.co.uk



Jonny Warren

We're devastated by the sudden death of Johnny Warren at the end of August.

We worked closely with him over the last 12 months installing kitchens in our homes. He'd become a much loved and trusted member of the SHAL family and he'll be greatly missed.

Our thoughts are with his family and close friends.

ASB (plus a message) to report anti-social behaviour;
BAL to get your latest balance;
CARD to order a new PayPoint card;
DD to set up or amend a direct debit;
PAY to find out how you can pay your rent;
REF to get your Payment Reference Number for allpay;
RENTS (plus a message) to talk to your Housing Officer;
REPAIR (plus a message) to report a repair;
UC to get all the information you need to claim Universal Credit (UC)

What lies ahead?

COVID-19 isn't going away anytime soon and the future looks uncertain. We never thought we'd have to work the way we did this year and we've had to make lots of changes. We want to know if we got it right. Please feel free to email Lee@shal.org and share your feedback about what worked – and, more importantly, what didn't work.

If we have to go through the same thing again what should we do differently?

44%

of you have now claimed UC
(85 of you have claimed
since 23 March).

Money

“In lockdown things were crazy but with determination we paid off our rent arrears. For us it was a big achievement.”

Your tenancy is safe

Renters affected by COVID-19 will continue to be protected after the government extended the ban on evictions.

The government also intends to give tenants greater protection from eviction over the winter by requiring landlords to provide tenants with 6 months' notice in all bar those cases raising other serious issues such as ASB and illegal activity, until at least the end of March 2021.

We've continued to take legal action against serious ASB & tenancy fraud and we're working with those tenants who are struggling. We work with you to help you keep your tenancy – we've not evicted a tenant for rent arrears since October 2017.

Are you paying by direct debit?

We always recommend tenants pay their rent by direct debit as it's the easiest and most secure method of payment.

Many tenants who pay by direct debit were able build up a credit balance while the rent was decreasing in previous years. This meant they had a credit balance when the rents increased in April or when times were harder this year.

If you'd like to set up a direct debit you can **text DD to 07984355553**. We can then contact you to confirm what you need to pay before the next rent change.

Donna

Protecting income and livelihoods

Over 10% of you have claimed Universal Credit for the first time since the end of March 2020.

We set up a fund to support people who needed help and, in addition, we've helped people claim almost £32,000 in a variety of funding from a variety of organisations.

Our Maintenance team volunteered at the local hospital and we were able to deliver vital food and medicine to people who needed it.

If you have to claim UC you can **text UC to 07984355553** and get all the information and links you need.

House & Home

Supporting people maintain their homes themselves

The restrictions put in place to deal with the pandemic meant we couldn't visit people in their homes, unless it was an emergency. However, we were able to support people in different ways.

- Our Maintenance team called tenants back (including video calls) to talk through repairs they reported
- We delivered materials to people so they could carry out their own repairs
- We contacted tenants to find out if they had any repairs so we could plan ahead

We've completed
656 day to day
repairs (including
130 emergencies)
since 1 April 2020.

"You said you wanted us to support
people who wanted to **maintain and
improve their homes themselves.**

"What does that mean to you and how
can we do that?"

Simon



New asbestos experts

We've appointed Somerset Scientific Services as our expert asbestos consultants from 1 October. They provide expert asbestos testing in the heart of the South West to Local Authorities, public bodies, schools, businesses and the general public. They are a traded service of Somerset County Council.

Homes built before 2000 are likely to contain asbestos. We have 545 homes, and they're re-inspected every 5 years. Those of you who live in one of these homes will now be contacted by Somerset Scientific Services when your re-inspection is due.

Asbestos does not pose a threat to your health providing it is not disturbed. Please make sure you know where it is located and contact us immediately if you think it has been disturbed or damaged and your health is at risk.

A guide to renting your home

This information pack is now available online and gives you an overview of renting your home from SHAL including:

- The tenancy and rent
- SHAL's repairs service, including day to day repairs and planned investment
- The approach we take to letting our homes



Picking up from where we left off

We're one of the few Housing Associations to re-start our planned investment programme.

So far we've replaced **3 bathrooms** and **3 kitchens** and we'll continue the programme for as long as we can do so safely.

"We've just had our kitchen installed and the maintenance crew have done a spectacular job."

Tony

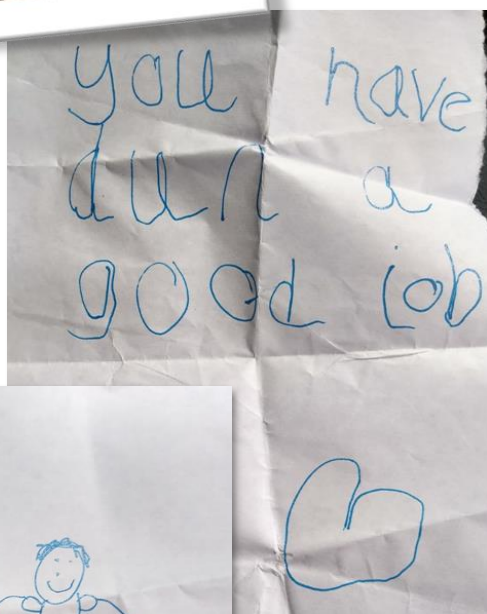
Mutual exchanges

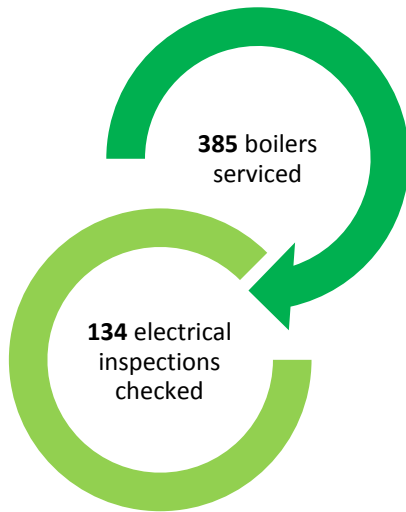
We're accepting new applications from 1 September. We've changed the way we process them (as have other landlords). We'll deal with your application as quickly and as safely as possible and co-operate with all applicants and their landlord(s).

Since last year, SHAL's outgoing tenant is required to pay a **£25 non-refundable application fee** as well as for the safety checks (Electric: £75; Gas: £75; Oil: £75; Solid Fuel: £50).

You can find the information and application pack online at www.shal.org.

We all loved this little note left by a tenant's daughter for Dawid and Jacek. We're proud to do a good job!





Letting us service your boiler keeps you and your loved ones safe

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that has no smell or taste. Breathing it in can make you unwell, and it can kill if you're exposed to high levels.

Every year there are around 60 deaths from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning in England and Wales.

Allowing us to check your gas, oil and solid fuel appliances annually ensures they're safe.



PIP GARAGE SERVICES

The PIP garage is a new service offering people in receipt of PIP DLA or state pensions an alternative to keep their car safe reliable and on the road for less. Our hourly charge is just **£18.50** per hour saving you in most cases 50% or more. This service is also extended to carers in return for all the hard work they put in helping the people of Sedgemoor

LET US TAKE THE STRESS AND WORRY OUT OF YOUR CAR REPAIRS. NO HIDDEN EXTRAS OR UNEXPECTED BILLS. FREE ESTIMATES WITH NO OBLIGATIONS



Tel : 0737 6014007 01278 431864 Unit 23f, Axe Road, Colleylane
 Email : info@rustyroad2recovery.co.uk Industrial Estate, Bridgwater
www.rustyroad2recovery.co.uk TA6 5LN



Neighbourhood & Community



Supporting communities and recovery

We initiated the Local Pantry in Sydenham with FareShare and Sedgemoor District Council. They take food that's good to eat but can't be sold in shops and redistribute it to charities UK-wide.

"We continued to work with the Together Teams to support communities in whatever way it was needed most."

Angela

New Community Project Worker for Puriton and Woolavington

We're pleased to welcome Mary Cullen as our new Community Project Worker, working in Puriton and Woolavington.

Big Local has given an exciting opportunity for those people living in **Woolavington and Puriton** to use at least £1 million to make a massive and lasting positive difference to the community. The concept brings together local talent, ambitions, skills and energy from individuals, groups and organisations who want to make the area an even better place to live.

We're the Locally Trusted Organisation appointed by Big Local. A Locally Trusted Organisation is chosen to administer and account for the distribution of your funding, and/or deliver activities or services on behalf of the Big Local partnership.

www.purwool.org.uk

Local Trust | Big Local



Facebook and social media

During lockdown we launched our Facebook page and our private tenant Group called "SHAL Community".

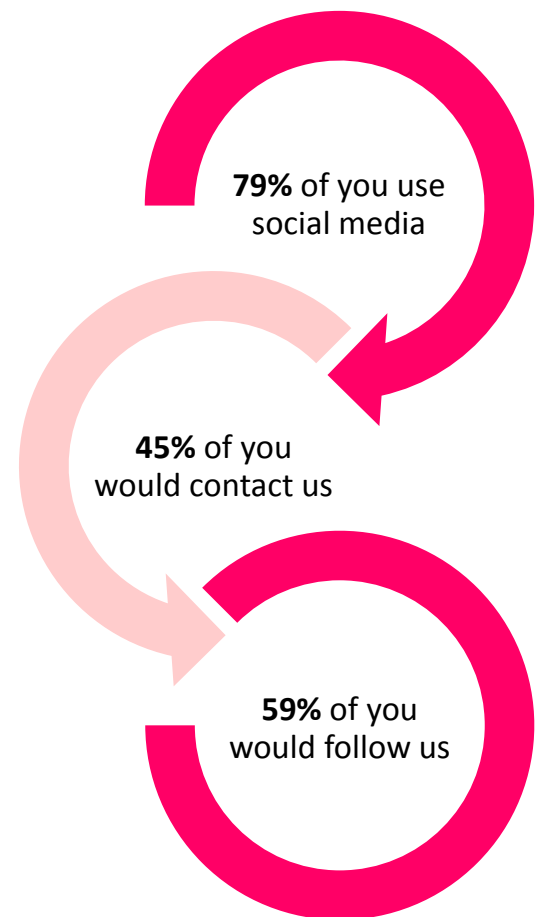
5% of you have already joined the Group, which is fantastic! You just have to be a current tenant and agree to:

1. Always follow the rules
2. Be respectful and kind
3. Take responsibility & respect privacy
4. Respect people's differences
5. Don't make it personal



We're also using it as part of our Together with Tenants work too. Take a look and see what you think. We're not chasing people to just "Like" and "Follow" us; we're asking people to get involved and help make it a success and a good thing to be part of.

If you've got any ideas about how we can make our Facebook page and Group more engaging please send us a Message or email Lee@shal.org.



New homes for shared ownership

Back in July we started advertising homes for shared ownership too! At the moment we have two in Wellington and a third will become available in early 2021. They're on a much larger development called Longforth View on which we'll also have 7 homes for rent.

Help people get onto the property ladder (e.g. shared ownership) was identified as a priority in last year's survey. This is our first step to making that happen.

You can find out more online at www.shal.org. You can also email sharedownership@shal.org for an information and application pack.



Our homes for shared ownership are being offered with a 40% share for £76,000.

New homes for Bridgwater

We're pleased to say the 28 new homes in Bridgwater have all been let.

They were finished later than planned because of the lockdown and despite the restrictions in place we were able to sign up the new tenants quickly.

We'd like to say a big thank you to Summerfield Homes for working hard to complete the development as quickly and as safely as possible.

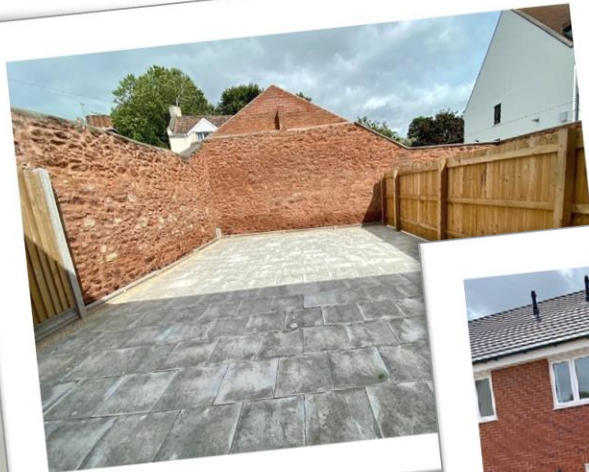
We'd also like to thank all the new tenants for their patience!

"Before and after" photo courtesy of Summerfield Homes.



**SUMMERFIELD
HOMES**





We worked with our partners to make sure we had homes ready for people who were homeless and in housing need.

13 homes re-let

28 new homes built and let

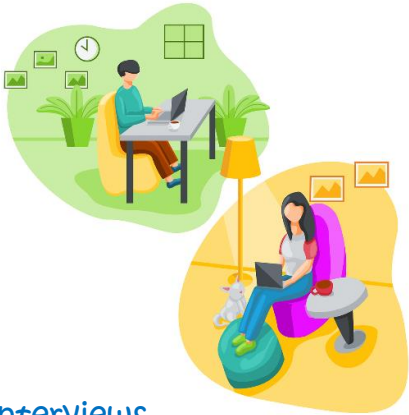
2 homes for shared ownership for sale

“Sending text messages to all tenants was a great comfort – just to know you’re there made everyone feel secure.

“Just keep up the fantastic work you all do – you’re extremely lucky if you’re a tenant of SHAL.”

Amy

Together with Tenants



We're cracking on!

Back in April the National Housing Federation (NHF) announced a temporary pause to their Together with Tenants work.

However, we decided to crack on with it and we've continued to engage with tenants about the project – and we're glad we did!

Online interviews

Back in July we held interviews with 3 consultants:

1. The Housing Quality Network (HQN)
2. Phil Sweet
3. Tpas (formerly known as the Tenants Participation Advisory Service)



The HQN have a **Residents' Network** that tenants and staff can access for free. It supports residents and landlords, making co-regulation work.

The online interviews were a new way of doing things and we were a bit nervous about it but they were attended by tenants, Board members and staff and were a success.

All consultants made a presentation to everyone and then met with staff and tenants separately (so tenants felt able to speak freely). We collected all the feedback before choosing who to work with. We had some fantastic feedback from a wide range of tenants about all their proposals (including the documents we sent out at the beginning of the year).

What is the Housing Quality Network (HQN)?

The HQN was originally set up in 1997. Over the years they have responded to the changing needs within the housing sector. They provide training, hold events and workshops and have set up specialist networks on subjects including health and safety, equality and diversity and finance.

What now?

We've met with the HQN regularly since we started working with them and they're now in the process of interviewing tenants, staff, Board members and people from other organisations we work with. We've engaged with a wide range of tenants including those who have been with SHAL since 1994 and those who moved into our new homes in Bridgwater just a few months ago. The more who get involved the better.

The level of your engagement is entirely down to you and fit around other things. It can range from answering a question by text now and then or taking part in video calls to reviewing policies or joining the Board. All forms and levels of engagement are as important and as valued each other.

www.hqnetwork.co.uk/residents-latest-resources



What are the barriers to engagement?

We want as many tenants to feel they can get engaged – and do so in a way that works for them.

The world's a very busy place at the moment and we've all got lots on our plate but if you're willing to give us your valuable time we'll try and find ways to **overcome the barriers** you feel are getting in the way – whether it's time, technology, Wi-Fi, mobile credit/data or just a lack of confidence.

Unsung heroes

"We've had a very strange few months. My mum died from COVID-19 right at the beginning of lockdown and my son, Andrew, has been home from school so everything has been turned on its head. If I was doing a shout out it would be for Andrew. He's only just turned 14 and has had to cope with the loss of his nan, school life and contact with all his friends. He also found himself stuck indoors when the rest of us were still going out as we are all keyworkers.

"I actually did more hours as I helped deliver PPE to the Somerset Marie Curie team by day while still working with patients at night. Steve, my husband, works for Argos and although they were closed they assisted Sainsbury's with their deliveries to ensure food made it to the shelves. With both of us working nights we had to sleep during the day so Andrew spent a lot of time on his own.

"Everyone celebrated the keyworkers but it was the families behind the scenes obeying the rules, despite the dramatic changes in their lives, that kept all the keyworkers going.

"He has been great managing his schoolwork and taking it day by day without complaint. He is our hero."

"It's been like a war – keep calm and carry on! People making do... kids being hungry... food boxes hospitals full... scared to go out... the future unknown.

"But after the darkness comes light! We will rise up stronger."

Amy

Tracey

www.sasp.co.uk/be-active-at-home



Stay in, work out

You can find tips, advice and guidance on how to keep or get active in and around your home. Join the Movement and share how you're getting active during this time.

www.sportengland.org/jointhemovement

Are you a care leaver – or do you know someone who is?

Family Action is there to listen. They have open ears, open minds and they're open late. If you're a care leaver aged 18-27, they're there for you. All evening. Every evening.

So whether you've got something on your mind or you just fancy a friendly chat, they'd love to hear from you. You can call, text or start a web chat – whatever kind of listening works for you.

Their trained volunteers can offer you:

- Someone to talk to – a listening ear, a friendly voice
- A chance to talk openly about whatever's on your mind
- Time and space to think things through without pressure
- Signposting to useful resources if any specific problems come up
- Information about other support out there and how to get it

One of their team of trained volunteers is looking forward to answering your call, text or web chat between 6pm and 12 midnight, every day.

If you call during these hours and the line is busy, that's only because all their volunteers are already talking to someone, so just leave us a message and they'll get back to you in a flash.

Telephone: 0808 802 0222
Text: 07860 065169

[Live web chat](#) [Live chat](#)

They're open from 6 pm – midnight, 7 days a week but you can actually call them any time and leave a message on their voicemail, asking for a call back when they're open again.



“We called everyone 70 and over and those we knew were vulnerable to find out if there was anything we could do to help.”

Angela

“We must all know people that would appreciate a quick call to make sure if they are OK.

“Check up on your elderly neighbours, they may need a bottle of milk or a loaf of bread.”

Lisa

“We’ve all achieved things beyond our own expectations.

“We’ve learnt a lot including appreciation of family values, acceptance, being kind and less greedy.”

Amy

The screenshot shows the NHS website's 'Mental health and wellbeing' page. At the top is the NHS logo and a search bar. Below the navigation bar, there's a yellow banner for 'Coronavirus (COVID-19)' with a link to 'Get the latest advice about coronavirus'. The main heading is 'Mental health and wellbeing'. Below it, a paragraph states: 'If you're feeling stressed, anxious or depressed, or just want to feel happier, we're here to help.' Another paragraph mentions separate information on 'where to get urgent help for mental health'. There are two white boxes with blue links: 'Mood self-assessment' and 'Mental wellbeing audio guides'. The 'Mood self-assessment' box describes a quiz to help understand feelings. The 'Mental wellbeing audio guides' box describes guides for low mood, anxiety, sleep problems, low confidence, and unhelpful thinking.

NHS

Search

Health A-Z Live Well Care and support Health news Services near you

Coronavirus (COVID-19)
[Get the latest advice about coronavirus](#)

[Home](#) > [Health A to Z](#)

Mental health and wellbeing

If you're feeling stressed, anxious or depressed, or just want to feel happier, we're here to help.

There's separate information on [where to get urgent help for mental health](#).

[Mood self-assessment](#)

Our mood self-assessment quiz can help you understand how you've been feeling recently and what you can do

[Mental wellbeing audio guides](#)

These audio guides can help with low mood, anxiety, problems sleeping, low confidence and unhelpful thinking

Audio guides

The NHS have a range of audio guides available on their website.

You can listen to them privately, in your own time, to help you through feelings such as:

- Low mood, sadness and depression
- Anxiety control training
- Overcoming sleep problems
- Low confidence and assertiveness
- Unhelpful thinking

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/moodzone-mental-wellbeing-audio-guides

The screenshot shows a FutureLearn collection page. The header includes the FutureLearn logo and navigation links for 'Subjects', 'Courses', and 'Using FutureLearn'. The main visual is a banner with two stylized figures in red and blue. The title 'Support Your Mental Health In Lockdown' is prominently displayed. Below the title, a paragraph explains that these courses are designed to help manage mental health during the coronavirus lockdown, offering support for both individuals and others.

FutureLearn

Subjects Courses Using FutureLearn

COLLECTION

Support Your Mental Health In Lockdown

Feeling anxious in lockdown or know someone who is? Coronavirus is taking a toll on both our physical and mental wellbeing. These courses will help you manage your own mental health and support others who are struggling.

Learn how to manage your mental health – and help others

The abrupt changes to our lifestyle and new challenges brought about by lockdown can be difficult to come to terms with. Whether you're feeling depressed, anxious, or lonely, it is vital to develop coping tools and strategies to improve your mindset and mental wellbeing. **While a course may not help you feel completely better, it can offer information which you can use to help yourself and others feel more in control of your mental health.**

www.futurelearn.com/courses/collections/support-mental-health-in-lockdown

Complaints

We know we don't always get it right and we welcome complaints. We take them seriously and investigate them thoroughly.

We also learn from the complaint to ensure we don't make the same mistake twice.

We've reviewed our complaints process in line with the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code.

The screenshot shows the Housing Ombudsman Service website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links: Residents, Landlords, About us, Useful tools, News, Contact us, and Search. Below this is a banner for the 'New Complaint Handling Code' with a brief description. The main section is titled 'Videos on making a complaint' and contains a series of three video thumbnails labeled '1. Reporting an issue to your landlord', '2. Making a complaint to your landlord', and '3. Escalating your complaint'. Each thumbnail shows a man speaking.

www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/useful-tools/videos-on-making-a-complaint

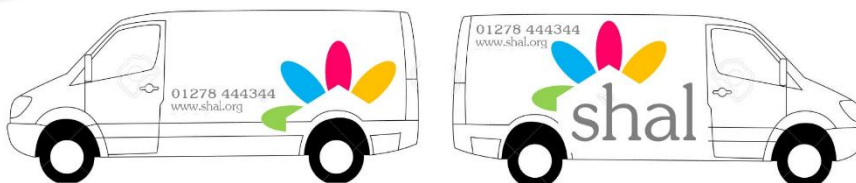


Maintenance team

As well as helping deliver food parcels and medication, our Maintenance team has continued to be available for emergency repairs during lockdown.

They began to complete day to day repairs as restriction eased and recently started to replace kitchens and bathrooms again.

There are now 6 in the team: Aaron, Dawid, Gavin, Jacek, Martin & Tony.



1 CEO

3 in Finance

4 in Housing

9 in
Maintenance

1 in Systems
& Comms

18

“Our Maintenance team volunteered at the local hospital and we were able to deliver vital food and medicine to people who needed it.”

Simon

“Thank you, you’re all little saints. The guy [Gavin] who fixed the window did a great job – he’s a great guy. Always brilliant at what he does and so friendly.”

Amy

“I've been a tenant since 1994 and can honestly say the improvement in the last few years has been exceptional.”

94%

of you are happy
with your most
recent repair

“Allie is an absolute star. I’ve had a couple of issues pop up and Allie always helps me find a solution and gives great advice and support.”

Samantha

Complaints

In 2019/20 we recorded a total of 29 complaints.

Decision	5
Delay	4
Discrimination/unfair treatment	1
Impolite treatment	7
Incorrect information/advice	1
Other	5
Standard/quality of work	6

Were you happy with your recent repair?

As well as the 29 official complaints we received in 2019/20, 36 of you said you weren’t happy with your most recent repair.

Like official complaints, these are also recorded, investigated and lessons are learnt.

Lisa



Competition time! You can win £50 vouchers!

1. How many homes for rent will SHAL have in Wellington next year?

- A: 7
- B: 10
- C: 3



2. How many people work at SHAL?

- A: 18
- B: 28
- C: 38



3. Who is helping SHAL and its tenants with the Together with Tenants work?

- A: HQN
- B: Phil Sweet
- C: Tpas



You can answer as many questions as you like – you only need to get one right!



Just send the question number and your answer (for example 1A or 1A 2C 3A) along with your name and address to:

Email: lee@shal.org
Post: 2 King Square, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA6 3DG
Text: 07984 355553

Deadline: 30 November 2020

The lucky winner of the competition in our last issue was Kevin from Bridgwater. The answers were: 1A (Blanket), 2A (27), 3B (Malbork Castle).

Competitions in Grapevine are open to current tenants of SHAL only. By entering this competition, you agree to the publication of your first name and hometown in the next newsletter (see example above).