

Grapevine

Spring/Summer 2021



Money Matters

- The rent increase
- What does SHAL do with its money?

Neighbourhood & Community

- Co-creating our community
- Your Housing Officer
- The impact of "County Lines"
- EU Settlement Scheme

SHAL

- Co-creating our commitments

Together with Tenants

- What have we been up to?
- Co-creating our "new normal"
- Helping each other transition back to "normal"

House & Home

- Flood risk
- Keeping calm & carrying on
- Improving energy efficiency & "fabric first"
- Reviewing our repairs & maintenance service

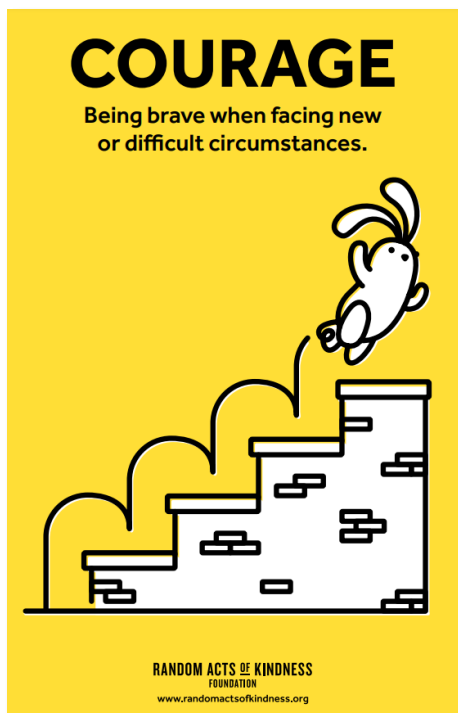
Health & Wellbeing

- Are you happy?
- The Rusty Road 2 Recovery

Co-creating our "new normal"

Whatever the future brings we'll
be here for each other

Thanks for
this amazing
cover photo,
Donna!



What will “normal” look like when we get back to it?

I’m sure all of us are looking forward to the day when things get back to normal. However, we’re wondering what “normal” will look like – and how we’ll feel when we get back there.

We’re here to help and support each other.

We’re sharing more online

Our Facebook page and group are growing. We’re sharing more content and videos. We’re not worried about getting lots of “likes” and “followers” but we’d like to know if we’re providing useful (and important) information.

We know social media and Facebook isn’t for everyone but we’d like more people to take a look and see what they think.

All Videos



Help our online community to grow

3 days ago · 15 views



Your rent will change in April

4 weeks ago · 44 views



Help us create our community

4 weeks ago · 34 views



The EU Settlement Scheme

4 weeks ago · 17 views



Co-creating our commitments

5 weeks ago · 30 views



Overcoming the challenges of 2020/21

5 weeks ago · 80 views



[@shalhousing](https://www.facebook.com/shalhousing)

www.shal.org

Your rent changes on 5 April

From 5 April your weekly rent will increase by 1.5%.

For example, if your weekly rent is £100 you'll need to pay an extra £1.50 per week. Last year's rent increase was the first after 4 years of decreases.

You can find out more in our Money section.

We can help if you're struggling to make ends meet

Our Board knows times are tough and how the measures taken to control the Coronavirus pandemic haven't made life easier for many people. Last year alone we successfully claimed around £35,000 in funds and grants to help tenants reduce debt and rent arrears.

We have a Housing Management Support Fund (and we created an additional Rainbow Fund as a result of the pandemic) to help tenants who are struggling.

If you think you need help managing debts or need money advice there are organisations that can help. If you're not sure where to start you can text **RENTS (plus your message)** to 07984355553 and your Housing Officer will come back to you.

How has my rent changed over the years?

These are the average weekly social rents over the last few years by size of home. The average weekly social rent for 2021 is the same as 2015.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1 bed	£72	£72	£71	£70	£70	£71	£73
2 bed	£87	£86	£86	£85	£84	£86	£87
3 bed	£95	£94	£93	£92	£91	£94	£95
4 bed	£108	£107	£106	£105	£104	£106	£108

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



[@shalhousing](https://www.facebook.com/shalhousing)

House & Home

Keeping Calm & Carrying on

We're one of the few housing associations to continue providing a response repairs service and a property investment programme when it was safe to do so.

In 2020/21 we replaced 8 bathrooms and 18 kitchens.

We wanted to do many more but weren't able to do so safely – and we didn't want to risk leaving someone with a half-finished bathroom or kitchen if they suddenly needed to self-isolate/shield.

Keeping you & your loved ones safe at home

Despite the restrictions in place we've maintained 100% compliance with our electric and gas safety checks. **This is more than just a visual tick box exercise and ensures you and your loved ones are safe at home.**

Flood risk

We've written to all tenants who live in a home with more than 1% chance of surface water flooding annually. We want to raise all tenants' awareness of the risks posed by the increase in surface water "flash" flooding. This type of flooding:

- happens when heavy rain cannot drain away
- is difficult to predict as it depends on rainfall volume and location
- can happen up hills and away from rivers and other bodies of water
- is more widespread in areas with harder surfaces like concrete

As the climate changes and urban populations grow, the number of people at risk of flash flooding increases and for many people, even if their home or business is not at risk, there's a good chance the roads or railway lines they use are. Also, if you live in a second floor flat the ground floor area or your utilities could be affected, for example.

Have you thought about a personal flood plan?

Similar to the plan you'll have in place if there is a fire in your home you may want to consider what you'd need to do if there was a flash flood. For example:

1. Does my contents insurance cover me for all types of floods?
2. Are all my important documents kept somewhere safe (e.g. not ground floor level)
3. Do I know where (and how) to switch off the electric and gas?
4. What important things would I need to take with me (e.g. medication, phone, charger)?
5. Where could I go?
6. Who could I call for help? Who might need my help?

There's no need to panic but if you're worried please contact your Housing Officer. They can reassure you and help you create a personal flood plan.

www.shal.org/resident-area/flood-risk



“Fabric first”

We’re taking a “fabric first” approach to improving our least efficient homes.

That means we’re insulating our most inefficient homes as well as replacing ineffective and expensive heating systems. We’re also installing photovoltaic (PV) panels.

We’ve expanded and trained our Maintenance team to fit internal wall insulation in our least efficient homes. This will ensure the heating generated isn’t lost through the walls of the home.

We’ve been able to improve one property’s energy efficiency rating from D to B.

Matilda’s Blanket

Matilda’s Blanket is a certified internal wall insulation system that transforms a property’s performance characteristics quickly and efficiently. The system is designed to be fitted internally and on the external facing walls.

If you live in one of these homes we will meet with you to discuss the work involved. Each home will take about 2 weeks to complete.

Unlike traditional internal wall insulation solutions, the Matilda’s Blanket system is designed specifically for the property’s needs and doesn’t adopt the one size fits all approach.

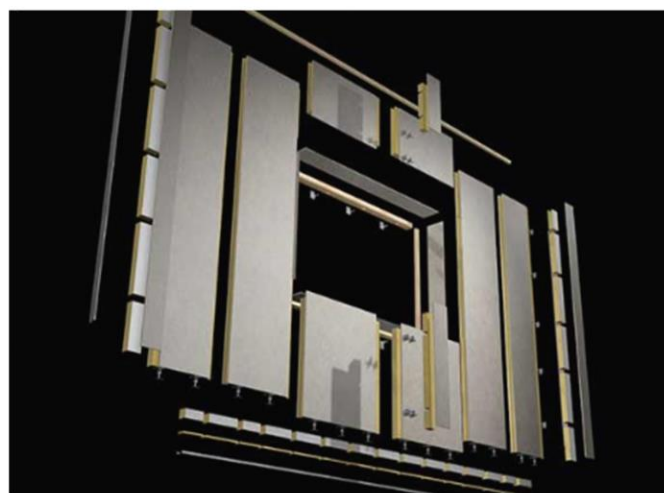
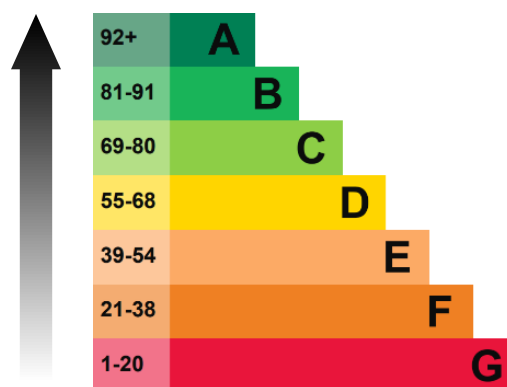
Rather than delivering raw materials to site for a physical build, Matilda’s Blanket is supplied fully engineered and boxed, with all components and instructions included for simple installation by one of our team.

Improving energy efficiency

We know 10% of our tenants can’t afford to heat their home and 15% can’t heat it adequately (34% for tenants who don’t have a connection to mains gas).

Around 1 in 3 of our homes have an energy efficiency rating of D or lower. All rented homes will need to have a rating of C or higher from 2030.

We’ve been working hard over the past year to secure grant funding that will support us to improve the energy efficiency of these homes.



Reviewing our repairs & maintenance service

Part of our Together with Tenants work will focus on our repairs and maintenance services. When we met on 2 February, I gave an overview of the services we provide and the work involved behind the scenes.

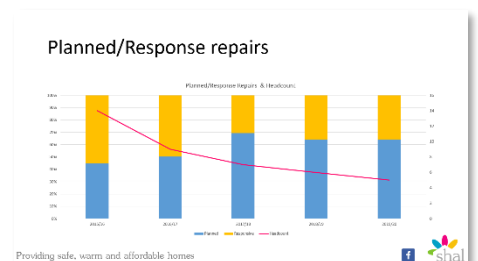
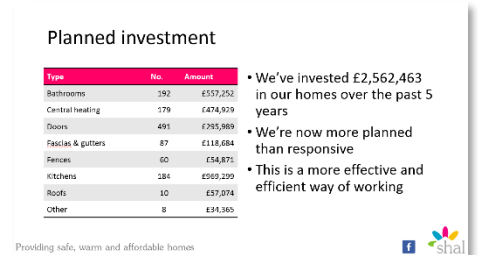
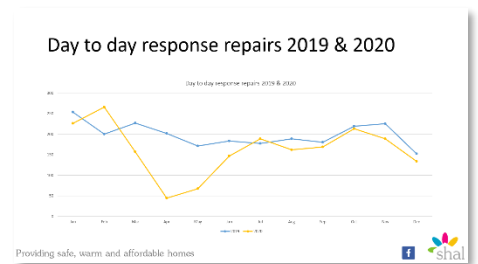
I'm keen to work closer with tenants on a project and look into how we:

- Can be more proactive and more planned than responsive
- Set and review budgets
- Check you're happy with repairs (especially "big jobs" like replacing bathrooms and kitchens or emergency repairs)
- Can support people maintain and improve their homes themselves

If you'd like to get involved in this project please email

Lee@shal.org or call him on 07849090632 and we'll keep you in the loop about what's happening when.

Simon



Money

What does SHAL do with its money?

SHAL doesn't make a "profit" as every penny is put back into building new homes, investing in existing ones and providing our services. It's also used to fund long-term projects (e.g. energy efficiency improvements). This surplus is also used to help us apply for funds, grants and investments from other organisations.

We're only able to provide our services, invest in your home and build new homes because you pay rent.

Our services include housing and neighbourhood management, community investment and what you told us were your priorities in our most recent survey.

We haven't changed our plans, we've just had to put some of them on hold.

Any investment we've not been able to make this year will be carried forward into next year (i.e. after 31 March 2021).

As a not for profit housing association any surplus we make is put back into building new homes, investing in existing ones and providing our services.

Neighbourhood & Community

County Lines

Sadly not everyone's community is the safe place they'd like it to be. County Line activity is having a devastating impact on people's lives and communities across the country, including in Bridgwater.

County Lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more areas, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line".

They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

It is estimated that phone lines associated to drug deals has almost tripled in the past year.

What's being done about it?

Tackling county lines, and the supply gangs responsible for high levels of violence, exploitation and abuse of vulnerable adults and children, is a priority for UK law enforcement.

In addition to helping the National Crime Agency and policing partners, a multi-agency county lines coordination centre will assist the development of a whole-system, multi-agency approach.

This is vital to ensuring that vulnerable people are identified and safeguarded, understanding factors behind demand for drugs, and recovering proceeds of crime.

What are the signs?

Some signs to look out for include:

- New faces or an increase in visitors and cars to a home
- Change in resident's mood or demeanour (e.g. withdrawn or aggressive etc)
- Changes in the way young people you might know dress (e.g. brands and styles etc)
- Unexplained, sometimes unaffordable new things (e.g. clothes, watches, bikes and phones etc)
- Young people being driven around by different unidentified adults
- Young people seeming unfamiliar with your community and their surroundings
- Truancy, exclusion, disengagement from school
- An increase in anti-social behaviour in the community
- Unexplained injuries

The Children's Society

Children as young as six are being forced to carry and sell drugs far away from their homes. They are made to skip school, sleep in drug dens, keep secrets from their loved ones.

They are treated as criminals when they often feel trapped in a hopeless situation. Enough is enough. County Lines and child exploitation must stop.

www.childrenssociety.org.uk

The Children's Society work hard to end this type of abuse and give those who have been exploited a chance for a better future.

www.crimestoppers-uk.org/keeping-safe/community-family/county-lines

What do I do if I have concerns?

The best advice is to trust your instincts. Even if someone isn't involved in county lines drug dealing, they may be being exploited in some other way, so it's always worth speaking out.

You can speak to your local police by dialling 101, or in an emergency 999. If you would rather remain anonymous, you can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

If you are a young person who is worried about your involvement, or a friend's involvement in county lines, a good option is to speak to an adult you trust and talk to them about your concerns.

You can also call Childline on 0800 1111. Childline is private and confidential service where you can talk to specially trained counsellors about anything that is worrying you.

You can also report suspected criminal activity online.



www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/forms/isc

Our Community



EU Settlement Scheme

We're reminding everyone affected to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) before the deadline on 30 June 2021.

Failing to apply will mean you and your family won't be able to live and work in the UK after this date.

www.settled.org.uk

Our Facebook group

We have a Facebook group for tenants to meet and share things in a safe and supportive online environment. **Take a look.**

4%

of all people who rent
their homes are from
the EU

*Source: The English
Housing Survey
2017/18*

Your Housing Officer

A number of tenants have come to us recently asking who their Housing Officer is. Back in 2017 we decided to create patches meaning tenants had one Housing Officer and one point of contact for everything related to their tenancy. Somerset is split into South West/North East areas (see map).

Over 50% of our home are in Bridgwater so we also created patches in Bridgwater itself meaning each Housing Officer has the same number of homes (see below).

Allie

Email AllieM@shal.org

Adscombe Avenue	Kidsbury Road
Avalon Road	Longstone Avenue
Bath Road	Manor Road
Berrydale Avenue	Mendip Road
Bincombe Road	Moorland Road
Blackdown Road	Osborne Road
Brendon Road	Parkway
Bristol Road	Raleigh Close
Butleigh Close	Saltlands
Charlton Close	Saltlands Avenue
Chatham Avenue	Saxon Road
Chilton Street ¹	Shervage Court
Coleridge Road	Somerton Close
Coleridge Square	Squibbs House
Courtway Avenue	Thorncombe Crescent
Fairfax Close	Trevor Road
Fairfax Road	Warren Close
Feversham Avenue	Weacombe Road
Halsway	Wessex Close
Kendale Road	Wordsworth Avenue

¹ North of the junction with Kendale Road

Colette

Email Colette@shal.org

Acorn House	Penlea Avenue
Ashford Close	Queens Road
Athlone Road	Rhode Lane
Castle Moat	St Matthews Field
Chilton Street ²	Slocombes Close
Cromwell Road	Spillers Close
Daws Close	Sunnybank Road
Edinburgh Road	Sunnymead
Follett Close	Taunton Road
Friarn Avenue	West Street
Furlongs Avenue	Westfield Close
Gloucester Road	Witches Walk
Hamp Brook Way	York Road
Kent Avenue	
King George Avenue	
Marlborough Avenue	
Middlestream Close	
Monmouth Street	
Old Taunton Road	
Parkstone Avenue	

² South of the junction with Kendale Road

Who ya gonna call?

These patches apply to the Housing Officers only. Lee Martin-Scull manages the Housing team, Simon White manages the Maintenance team and together they manage the Customer Service team.

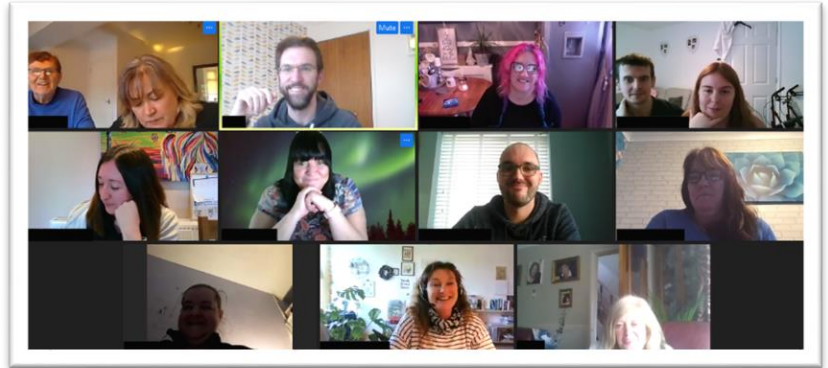
For general enquires please call 01278 444344 and either: press 1 to pay your rent over the phone; press 2 to report/follow up a repair; press 3 to talk about your safety checks; hold for any other tenancy-related enquiry.

Together with Tenants

Co-Creating our community

We've had to do things very differently over the past year, one of which is to create an online community.

It's been a great way for people to meet and have a chat about what's important while remaining safe and sound at home.



We're exploring how we can co-create a SHAL Community where people can come together online – and then face to face as restrictions are eased.

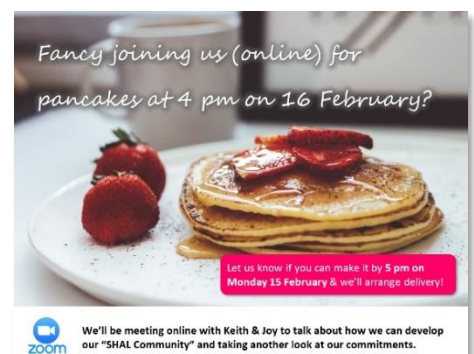
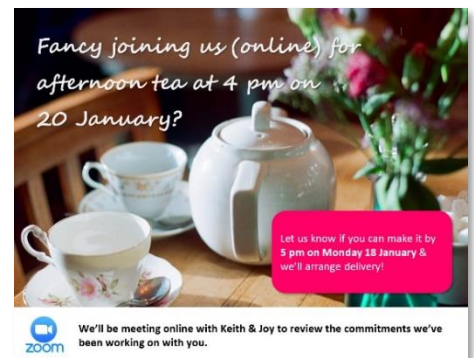
How can we help each other make the transition back to normal life – whatever “normal life” will look like?

“Thank you for inviting us to join the zoom calls. We were nervous to start with but they are very helpful and informative.

“It's been great to be able to have a say in how SHAL and tenants can work together.

“We'd like to say to anyone who doesn't think they could join it's all relaxed so why not give it a go!”

Angeline



What are we talking about?

We've talked about a few different things during our get togethers including:

1. Our response repairs and planned maintenance services
2. Communication (good and bad)
3. How we can create our community
4. What we're looking forward to when we return to "normal"

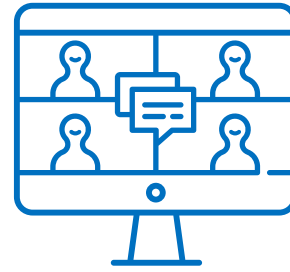
We're also talking about how we can help each other make the transition back to "normal" as restrictions are eased.

Agreeing our commitments

We're also co-creating our commitments based on the Together with Tenants Charter. Have you seen them? What do you think?

1. Create a strong community
2. Build strong relationships
3. Provide quality homes and services
4. Include, listen and understand
5. Be transparent and accountable

We want these commitments to form the basis of our ways of working – including with each other, our partner organisations, contractors and internally at SHAL.



Something for everyone

Meeting online has been successful – and encouraged some people to get involved who may have been reluctant previously.

We know not everyone is able to join meetings online – and we all have lots of different demands on our time.

Meeting online will not replace meeting face to face, which we look forward to resuming when we're able. Likewise, we don't plan to stop them when we go back to meeting face to face.

We're looking into different ways and opportunities everyone can get involved and feel included in the community we co-create.

You're welcome to come along to all the meetings or just the odd one here and there. It's completely up to you.

Even if you don't want to turn on your camera or microphone and just "listen in" that's fine too!



“How will we know we're getting it right? How can we demonstrate the positive changes we make as a result of working together?”

Lee

Health & Wellbeing

Have you heard of happiful?

Your health and wellbeing should always come first. Happiful provide professional opinions, advice and techniques.

They're on a mission to create a healthier, happier, more sustainable society. Their aim is to provide informative, inspiring and topical stories about mental health and wellbeing.

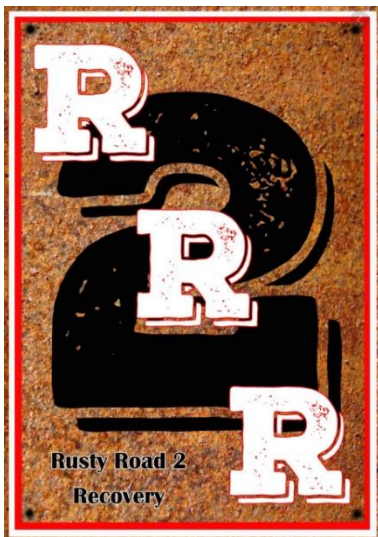
They want to break the stigma of mental health in our society, and to shine a light on the positivity and support that should be available for everyone, no matter their situation.



“With spring around the corner, I am hoping it will be a big boast for everyone.”

Lorraine

“Do more to help people with disabilities get the support they need” and “Help people improve their mental health & wellbeing” are in our top 5 priorities.



On the Rusty Road 2 Recovery (RR2R)

They are a social enterprise company in the Bridgwater and surrounding area. Social enterprises reinvest the money they make back into their business or the local community. This allows them to tackle social problems, improve people's life chances, support communities and help the environment. So when a social enterprise profits society profits.

Their purpose is to provide recovery based services for people of all ages and sexes, who suffer from mental health problems.

Older people who suffer from isolation and loneliness which can become a complex and serious condition. Also younger people, who have been rejected, require guidance and opportunities to gain qualifications which have not been possible for them to gain through the normal educational services.

www.rustyroad2recovery.co.uk

Our doors may be closed but we're still open & here to help

Bouncing in and out of lockdowns over the past 12 months has been both confusing and worrying for many people.

Our message throughout has been that although our doors may be closed we're still here to help and support you.

We've also changed the way we work so we can continue to provide our services in a safe way, including response repairs and property investment.

“Our priorities haven't changed, we've just had to put some things on hold.”

Simon

We will all:

1. Create a strong community
2. Build strong relationships
3. Provide quality homes & services
4. Include, listen & understand
5. Be transparent & accountable

Our Board are very excited!

We met with the Board at the end of February. They are very excited about the work we've been doing - and about our community and commitments. They asked a very important question (well a couple). How can we (i.e. tenants, SHAL and the Board) demonstrate:

1. The difference we're making to our community and celebrate our successes?
2. The positive changes we make to our homes and services from listening and working together?

We want everyone to know we're taking all this seriously and we're not just having a chat and "ticking a box" for the sake of it. What do you think? Any ideas?

Meeting our contractors and suppliers

We met with our suppliers and contractors in February and celebrated the work we've been able to achieve together over the past year.

We want to do as much as we can "in house" but we do work with specialist contractors for things like asbestos, electric and gas. We also work closely with suppliers. We always ensure we get good quality AND value for money when we're investing in our homes.

Our contractors and suppliers are part of our community too and we're proud to work together to provide safe, warm and affordable homes.



“I must say as a housing association you guys rock!”

Lianne



Competition time! Win £50 vouchers!



1. How much will the rent increase be in April 2021?

- A: 0.5%
- B: 1.5%
- C: 2.5%



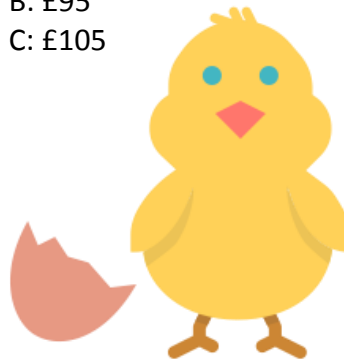
2. How many commitments have we co-created together?

- A: 2
- B: 3
- C: 5



3. What's the average weekly rent for a 3 bed home with SHAL in 2021/22?

- A: £85
- B: £95
- C: £105



Happy Easter!

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, TA6 3DG

Text: 07984 355553

Deadline: 12 April 2021

The lucky winner of the competition in our last issue was John from Bridgwater. The answers were: 1A (7), 2A (18), 3A (HQN).

Competitions in this newsletter are not open to members of staff, shareholders of SHAL or their relatives. By entering this competition, you agree that the collection of any prize will be photographed and SHAL Housing Limited is given the competitor's consent to publication of such photographs in any form. Where entries are made by children their parents/legal guardians must give such consent.