

Grapevine



Spring/Summer 2022

House & Home

- Thinking of moving?
- How we let our homes
- Changing MXs

Health & Wellbeing

- Brian in Hand
- Get Outside in Somerset
- CREATE YOU
- The Anatomy of Kindness

Warmer Homes

- Up-date

Rent

- Rent increase

Check out the links

when you see these!

Money

- Contents insurance
- Making ends meet
- Rising costs
- Social Housing
Decarbonisation Fund

Neighbourhood & Community

- Community Chats
- Resident Voice Index

SHAL

- New office
- Storm damage

Together with Tenants

- Tenant Satisfaction Measures
- Improving how we
communicate

We're planning a better
future together

We're weathering the storm(s) & meeting
the challenges of 2022 head on



Neighbourhood & Community



What have we chatted about?

We've chatted about a variety of things including:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Energy efficiency
- Rusty Road 2 Recovery*
- How we let our homes
- Help & support with disabilities and benefits*
- Rent increase and cost of living
- Communication

* These chats were led by tenants. If you'd like to lead a chat on a particular theme please get in touch. **We want these to be as interactive and interesting as possible.** We're planning to meet on:

29 March	25 August
28 April	27 September
31 May	27 October
30 June	29 November
26 July	

All these are Events on our Facebook page. Check there for the latest information.



Seen this?

If you're looking at this online you can click on this icon throughout Grapevine to view the videos online and on Facebook!

Community Chats

We're always pleased to see new faces at our Community Chats. We hold them every month on alternate Tuesdays and Thursdays.

We know lots of you have many different demands on your time so it's not always easy to come along. If you can't make it we always share the information afterwards online and by email.

We try and keep it current and agree a "theme" as we approach the date. If you've got topics for discussion please let us know and we'll pull something together.

"You're being really honest about the challenges and how much everything costs."

"It's been eye opening."



Together with Tenants

Our commitments

Our most recent Community Chat focused on communication. Rather than talk about the different methods of communication we talked about communication generally.

Poor communication can lead to misunderstandings, mistrust and conflict – and can be one of the main reasons why someone makes a complaint.

We want to explore how we can improve how we communicate to prevent misunderstandings, conflicts and complaints.

We re-visited the Commitments we agreed last year and these will form the foundation of our Community Chats going forward. We focused on the three that relate to communication:

2: build strong relationships

We will treat each other with respect and be open and honest with each other. Our relationships will be:

- Polite, friendly and mutually respectful
- Understanding of differences
- Honest, positive and helpful
- Between people and not “positions”

4: include, listen and understand

We will seek and value opinions to help improve what we do and how we do it. We will:

- Ensure everyone has a voice and is listened to without fear or judgement
- Provide clear, accessible and timely information
- Provide different ways and opportunities to communicate and be involved so everyone feels comfortable
- Involve our community in decision making

5: be transparent and accountable

be transparent and accountable

We will be open and transparent and work together to develop our understanding. We will:

- Be fair in our approach and help people understand our decisions
- Share how we’re performing, including when things go wrong
- Ask each other how we can develop and improve what we do
- Learn from our mistakes and resolve differences by listening to each other

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) is creating a new system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services.

Among other things, the system will involve a set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) that social housing landlords must report on.

People will be able to use these measures to understand how well landlords are doing.

How can we improve our communications?

The proposals

The Regulator of Social Housing wants the changes they're making to:

- Make a meaningful difference to tenants
- Be possible for landlords to carry out
- Be something they can regulate

To help achieve this, they think that as far as possible, all the Tenant Satisfaction Measures should be:

- Relevant
- Accurate
- Responsive
- Deliverable
- Linked to their objectives

They're proposing 22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (see over).

In addition to the 21 listed there's an additional measure of satisfaction overall.

Relevant

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures should provide relevant information. This means:

- Letting tenants see how their landlord is performing
- Telling the Regulator of Social Housing about how well landlords are meeting relevant standards

Accurate

The measures should be well defined and it should be possible to double-check the results. They should make it possible to compare different landlords, and should make it difficult for landlords to make themselves look better than they really are.

Responsive

The measures should only measure things the landlord is actually responsible for. They should not accidentally encourage landlords to do anything that makes things worse for their tenants.

Deliverable

The measures should not be too expensive or complicated to put into practice, either for the Regulator of Social Housing or for landlords.

Linked to their objectives

There should be a clear link between the measures and the objectives the Regulator of Social Housing is trying to achieve. The data they ask landlords to provide should help them meet those objectives.

How would you like to be involved in measuring how we're doing and sharing it with everyone?

Lee



Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

- **Keeping properties in good repair**
 - Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard
 - Repairs completed within target timescale
 - Satisfaction with repairs
 - Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair
- **Maintaining building safety**
 - Gas safety checks
 - Fire safety checks
 - Asbestos safety checks
 - Water safety checks
 - Lift safety checks
 - Electrical safety checks
 - Satisfaction that the home is well maintained and safe to live in
- **Respectful and helpful engagement**
 - that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them
 - Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them
 - Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect
- **Responsible neighbourhood management**
 - Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord
 - Percentage of communal areas meeting the required standard
 - Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean, safe and well maintained
 - Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods
 - Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of anti-social behaviour by doing tenant perception surveys
- **Effective handling of complaints**
 - Complaints relative to the size of the landlord
 - Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales

Health & Wellbeing

Have you heard of brain in hand?

Using Brain in Hand can help you increase your confidence and independence. It makes it easier to solve problems and do the things that matter to you. It starts with an online Specialist coach who will help you get set up and stay motivated.

You'll have tools to manage your time and break down tasks or problems into smaller steps. Reflect on what's going well, and where you might need extra help.

If you live in Somerset and are over 18, you could be eligible for free digital support.

Brain in Hand has teamed up with the Somerset County Council to provide help to people managing anxiety.

braininhand

Are you eligible?



Must be 18 or over and permanently reside in Somerset



Have access to a laptop or PC connected to the Internet



Have access to a smartphone connected to the Internet



Once you have submitted your application:

1. You will be invited by email (within 2 working days of applying) to create an account and download Brain in Hand to your phone
2. A Brain in Hand Specialist will contact you via email (within 2 working days after creating your account) to set up your first session at a time that works for you.
3. You can now begin to use your Brain in Hand to manage your day.

www.braininhand.co.uk/somerset-digital-support



Do you get outside in Somerset?

Get Outside in Somerset is helping our community to get outdoors and move in more ways that suit you.

Founded by Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership in partnership with Somerset County Council, Community Council for Somerset, Spark Somerset and Somerset Wildlife Trust, they empower people to get outside more often and enjoy our beautiful county.

www.getoutsideinsomerset.co.uk



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

Creative Community

Have you heard of CREATE YOU in Highbridge?

They run regular workshops and art and craft groups for mental well-being. It's aimed at helping you to de stress, increase confidence and self awareness, utilising all the therapeutic benefits of creativity.

Regular groups include:

- [Creative Kids](#)
- [Young Artists](#)
- [Art For All Adults](#)
- [Home Ed Art Group](#)
- [Men Only](#)



The Anatomy of Kindness

Although the world might not feel like a very kind place at the moment, this might be just the time when acts of kindness matter the most. Back in August 2021 the BBC launched The Kindness Test on BBC Radio 4. It was an online study created by a team at the University of Sussex led by psychologist Professor Robin Banerjee.

People could choose whether to take part, and as more than 60,000 did, this is now the world's largest in-depth study on kindness. Here are some of the things they learned:

- Kind acts are very common
- The most common kind act is to help people when they ask
- Two thirds of the people think the pandemic has made us kinder
- There's a link between kindness and well-being
- Extroverts tend to give and receive more kindness (on average)
- People see more acts of kindness at home than anywhere else
- Women carry out slightly more kind acts (on average) and so do people who are religious
- We worry about our offers of kindness being misinterpreted
- People who talk to strangers see and receive more kindness
- Income makes little difference to how kind people are

"The study also found that people who carry out more kind acts or even just notice that other people are carrying out kind acts also have higher levels of well-being on average."

"This fits in with lots of previous research showing that acting kindly makes us feel good."



5 pillars of resilience

Resilience is made up of five pillars:

1. Self-awareness
2. Mindfulness
3. Self-care
4. Positive relationships
5. Purpose

By strengthening these pillars, we in turn, become more resilient

Instead of experiencing an overwhelming downward spiral when we encounter stress in our lives, these five pillars work together to lift us up out of the chaos we are feeling.

1. Self-awareness

Self-awareness allows you to understand other people, how they perceive you, your attitude and your responses to them in the moment.

2. Mindfulness

When you're mindful, you observe your thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them.

3. Self-care

In its simplest form, the term refers to our ability as human beings to function effectively in the world while meeting the multiple challenges of daily life with a sense of energy, vitality, and confidence.

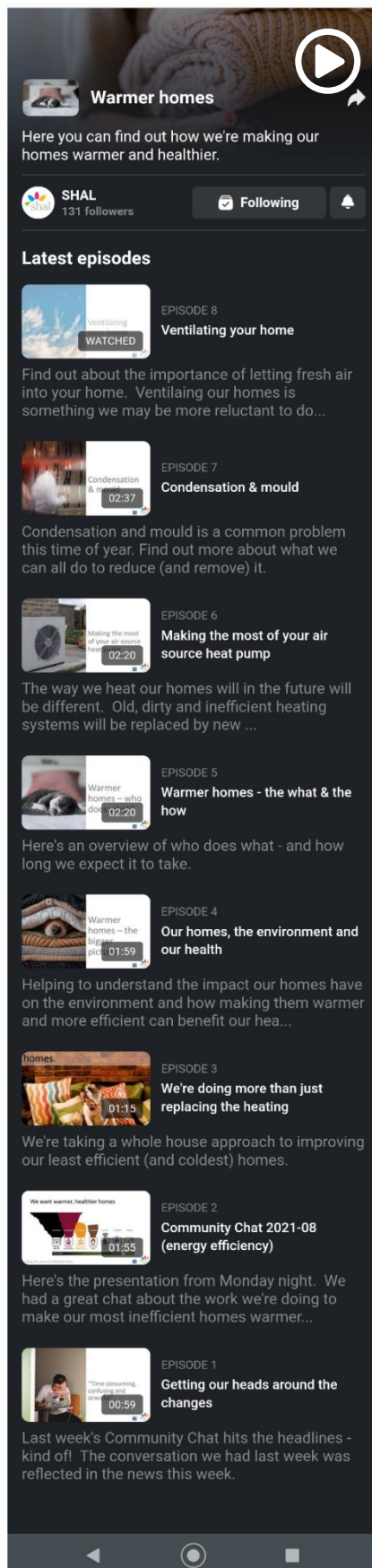
4. Positive relationships

Positive Relationships are the people who support and care for us — and we care for them. One of the most profound experiences we can have in our lives is the connection we have with other human beings.

5. Purpose

Purpose is a recognition that we belong to and serve something bigger than ourselves. Our purpose helps to shape the mindset and attitude we have toward others and the events we experience. We can find purpose in our faith, family, a political party, being green, or being a part of an organisation or community.



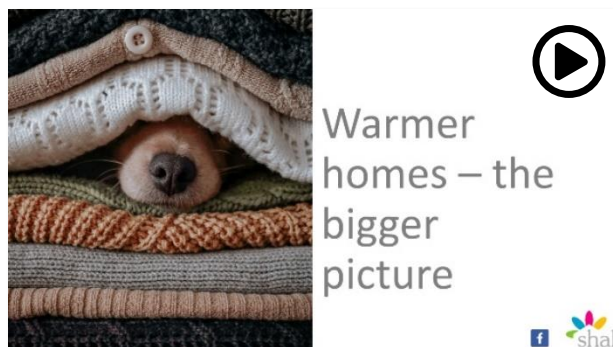
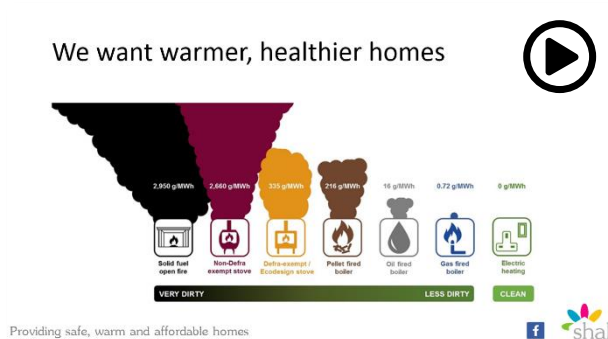


Have you checked out our videos?

Our Facebook page has a series of videos about our project to make homes warmer and healthier (see left). These videos are also on our website. In this issue you can find out about our successful bid for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (see page 15).

We're in the process of putting together a detailed up-date for the 30 homes on first year's programme.

We've renewed over 500 EPCs since the start of 2020. This is the important first step in understanding what improvements we need to make.

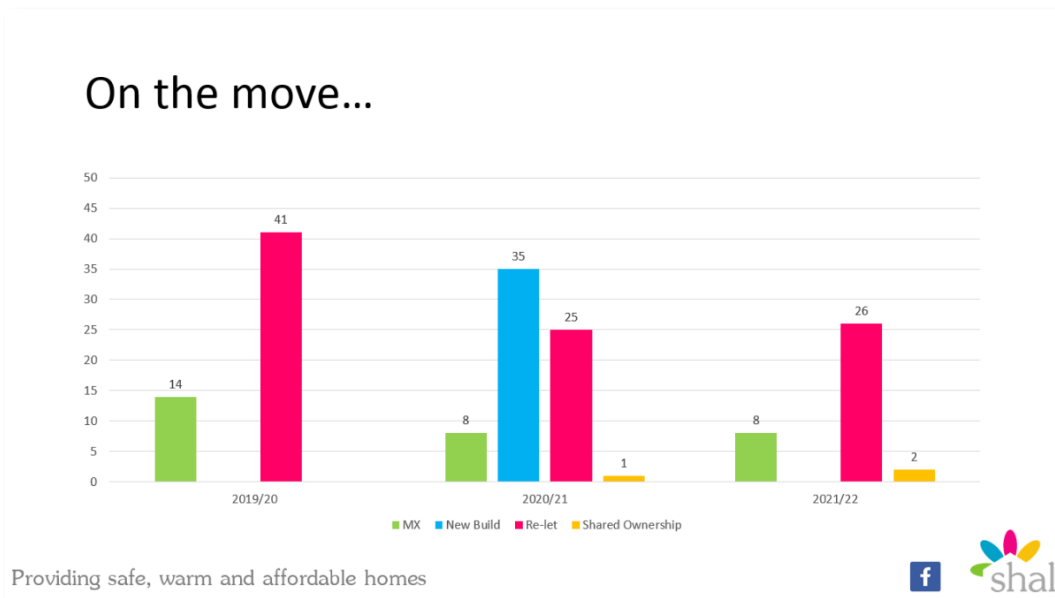


House & Home

How we re-let our homes

Back in October our Community Chat focused on how we re-let our homes. We talked about the number of homes re-let and exchanged over the last few years. The number of both reduced in 2020/21 which may have something to do with the pandemic. **In 2021/22 there were 8 mutual exchanges and 26 re-lets.**

While those numbers may seem small there's a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes, especially for a smaller organisation like SHAL. There's also a financial impact.

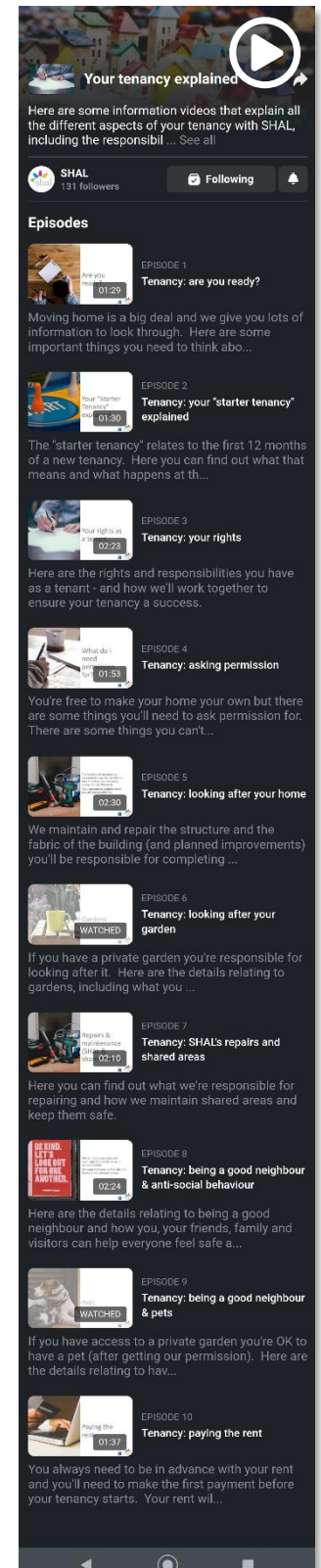


Helping everyone understand what's involved

We provide information packs to applicants at key stages of the process – most importantly at the beginning. This helps everyone understand what they need to do. We sent them out to people asking for feedback.

We recognise each and every re-let may need to be dealt with differently because each home is different and the people moving out (and in) are different too. **One size doesn't fit all and taking a more flexible approach will hopefully make it easier for everyone and ensure the tenancy ends (and starts) on the right foot.**

The mutual exchange information pack includes lots of advice for the SHAL tenant who is moving to another landlord and includes things like an inspection form.



Thinking of moving?

You'll need to:

- Give at least 4 weeks' notice
 - We'll send you a Notice to Quit pack that contains all the information you need
- Meet us at your home so we can inspect it with you and discuss what you need to do before you hand the keys back
- Pay all the rent, re-charges and costs due to the end of your tenancy
 - We'll confirm how much when we meet you
- Return the keys on the day your tenancy ends
- Leave your home in a decent condition, decorated to an acceptable standard, clean and clear of personal items

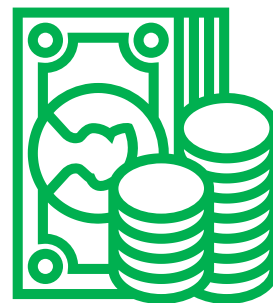
When you give notice you're agreeing to:

1. Return the keys to the property to us by 9:30 am on the day your tenancy ends
2. Leave all keys to windows and internal doors at the property
3. Clear any outstanding debts on the utility meter(s) if applicable and leave all utility meter keys/cards at the property
4. Remove from the property all electric and gas appliances you're responsible for
5. Remove all personal belongings from the loft space (if applicable)
6. Clean and tidy the property and return the property to us in a good and clean condition and in good decorative order
7. Clear both front and rear gardens (if applicable) of rubbish and personal belongings and leave it in good order
8. Complete all repairs you're responsible for

If you're thinking of moving in the future and would like to find out more please get in touch and we can send you the information pack so you know what to expect and can start planning ahead.

Re-charges

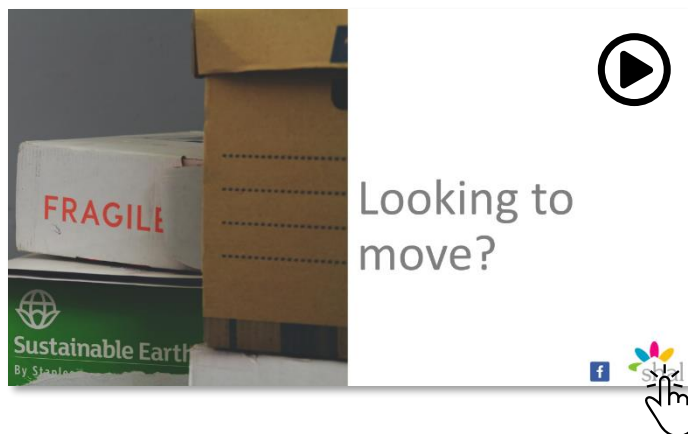
A re-charge is when we pass the cost of a repair back to a tenant if it was something they were responsible for.



If you give notice and move out you could end up with re-charges.

We don't want the amount we re-charge you (if anything) to be a shock. Likewise, we don't want anyone to leave us with a debt.

Our Notice to Quit pack contains a detailed breakdown of the potential re-charges ranging from cleaning and clearing to electrical repairs as well as repairs to bathrooms and kitchens.



100%

are happy with their new home
(95% response rate)

96%

are happy with their most recent repair
(42% response rate)

What's involved in a mutual exchange?

We've changed the way we manage mutual exchanges, taking a similar approach as re-lets. Mutual exchanges can be difficult and tenants have occasionally been left in a very difficult (and sometimes potentially dangerous) situation. We want to stop this happening.

Swapping homes with someone is never straight forward. There are often disputes between tenants after the exchange has gone ahead. You need to be absolutely clear with each other about what's happening as we're not able to intervene and resolve these personal disputes.

People have good reasons for wanting to exchange with each other. However, disputes between tenants (and the time, money and work involved in moving into a home in the condition the other tenant leaves it) can mean it's more trouble than it's worth. Also, either tenant can change their mind and not go ahead with the exchange up to and including the agreed date.

Think carefully before agreeing to go ahead with an exchange. If you have any questions or concerns please speak to your Housing Officer.



Application fees

If you have a tenancy with SHAL you will need to pay an administration fee of £25.00 when you submit your application. **This fee is non-refundable.** You'll also need to pay for safety checks and a lock change. You'll need to pay these when you apply but they will be refunded if it doesn't go ahead.

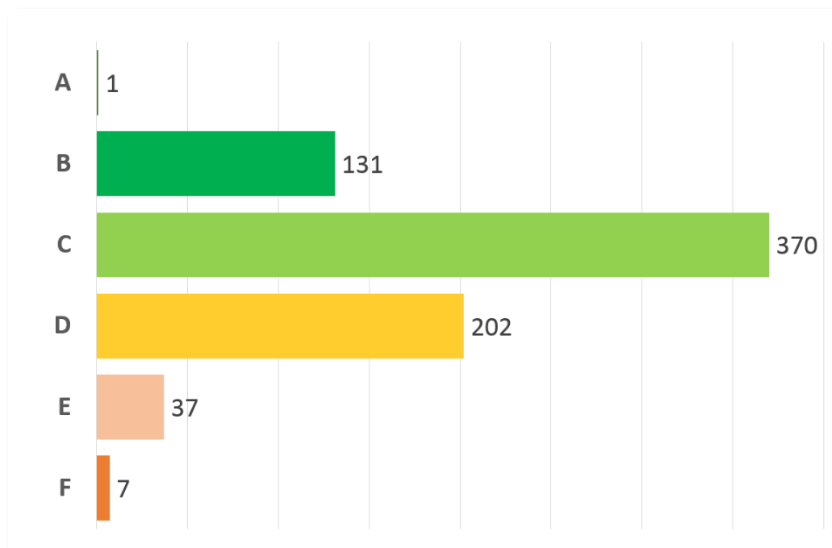
Lock change:	£65.00
Electric:	£75.00
Gas:	£75.00
Oil:	£75.00
Solid fuel:	£50.00

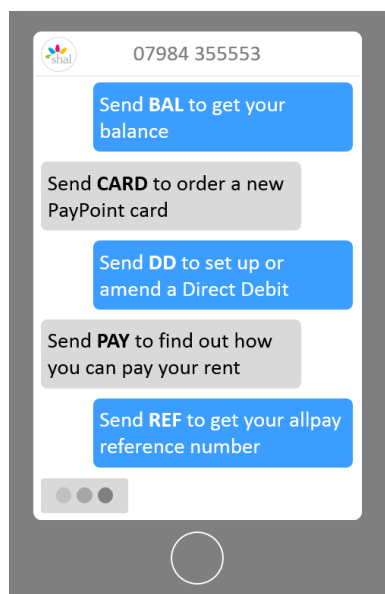
The energy efficiency of our homes

Every home has an energy performance certificate and an energy rating ranging from 'A' (good) to 'G' (bad).

The government want all homes to have an energy rating of at least C by 2030.

We currently have around 246 homes with a rating of D or lower and we're in the process of renewing the final 64 EPCs.





Rent increase

From 4 April your rent will increase by 4.1%. Rent increases are regulated and capped.

Each housing association's Board will make their own decision about what rent they charge but no housing association can put up their rent by more than 4.1%.

Our Board knows times are tough for a lot of our tenants and how the measures taken to control the Coronavirus pandemic haven't made life easier for many people.

SHAL's rents are amongst the lowest in Somerset and we believe they offer good value and are affordable even with this year's increase.

Is SHAL doing less because of the pandemic?

No. We've had to find new ways of working and it's not always been easy. We know we've not been able to provide some of our services in the way we'd like. We're continuing to change the way we work to be more effective. We remain focused on these priorities:

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

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

Any investment we've not been able to make this year will be carried forward into next year (i.e. after 31 March 2022).

Seen this?



If you're looking at this online you can click on this icon throughout Grapevine to view the videos online and on Facebook!

We're here to help



01278 444344
(including out of hours)



07984 355553
(text only)



Crypton House, Bristol
Road, Bridgwater, TA6 4SY



information@shal.org



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



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

Shortages of labour & materials (& increased costs)

Many of our suppliers are seeing their costs increase. This means both our day to day repairs and our planned investment programmes are becoming more expensive.

This is a result of both the global pandemic and leaving the European Union. **Some suppliers have increased costs by as much as 33%.**

As well as costs increasing, stock levels have also been impacted and we've seen shortages and delays to many materials and products we use.

Our door replacement programme has been impacted and we apologise for the delay.

Help & support making ends meet

Back in December we published help and support making ends meet online and by email.

While there are many places you can go to get help it can sometimes feel like there are too many and that itself is overwhelming.

Don't suffer in silence. If you're worried about making ends meet get in touch and we'll do everything we can to help.

Contents insurance

Tenants' insurance, or rental contents insurance cover, is a form of home contents for those renting a property. It protects your possessions against theft and damage due to fire, flood, storms, subsidence, burst pipes and water leaks. While contents insurance for renters varies, people who used Compare the Market found contents cover for an average of £61. **Peace of mind and protecting your possessions could be more affordable than you think.**

www.comparethemarket.com/home-insurance/rental-contents



What about the money we don't spend?

Each year we make a surplus (i.e. more money comes in than goes out).

This isn't 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).

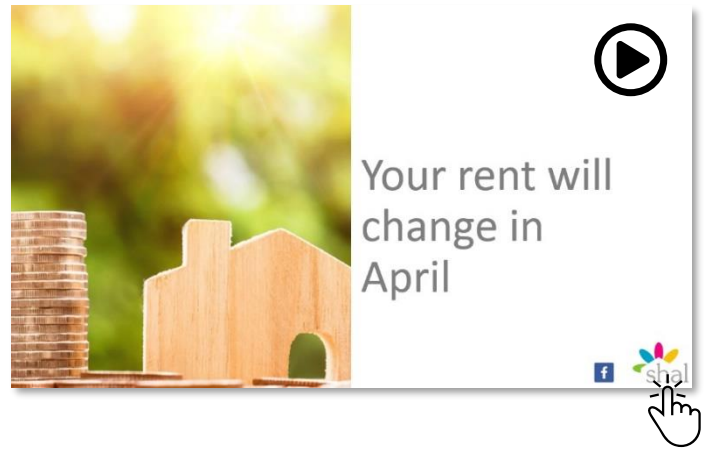
This surplus is also used to help us apply for funds, grants and investments from other organisations. We're also required to have a surplus in the bank to comply with governance and regulations.



Community Chat

Our Community Chat welcomed another new face back in January when we met to discuss the rent increase and the cost of living more generally. We also talked about the budgets we're setting for 2022/23, including our planned investment and energy efficiency improvements.

The feedback from the Community was that the rent increase was inevitable but it could have been a lot worse than 4.1% and it was better to know now so we can prepare for when the increase takes effect in April.



www.shal.org/category/community-chat

We're delivering social housing green upgrades as part of £4.8 million government funding in the South West

We're pleased to share that we have been offered £340,000 for our project to improve the energy efficiency of 30 properties, lowering energy bills and making homes warmer. Following a successful bid by South West Energy Hub, the 30 homes in Somerset will benefit from a range of measures including external and internal wall insulation and solar panels. These measures will improve the properties' overall energy performance rating to a 'C' rating or higher. A total of £4.8 million will be awarded through the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) for energy efficiency home improvements to 467 social housing properties across the wider South West region.

We'll work with South West Energy Hub to deliver these improvements across Somerset. Jon Rattenbury, Programme Director for the South West Energy Hub said: "The confirmed SHDF funding is fantastic news for the South West region. Our successful bid will ensure we can continue to support the delivery of green energy and energy efficiency measures as we look forward to tackling the climate emergency and reducing fuel poverty in the coming years."

Along with other social housing landlords we'll contribute a combined total of £3.5 million of match funding alongside the £4.8 million from Government.

"In 2021/22 we helped tenants claim over £21,000 in backdated benefits & Discretionary Housing Payments."

Lee

It was time for us to move home

We've been looking to move our offices (for several reasons) since before the first lockdown in March 2020. The pandemic has changed how we work. While King Square was in Bridgwater town centre it wasn't accessible for everyone.

The building itself dated back to the 18th century and was arranged over 5 small floors, including a basement. There were meeting rooms but these were on the second and third floors and accessible only by narrow stairs.

Our new offices at the historic Crypton House in Bridgwater are a lot more user friendly. Overall, the offices are smaller (and cheaper) and our main meeting room is now on the ground floor. There is a stair lift available making the first floor accessible too.

We agreed a budget at the start of 2021, before the new office was found. This was in addition to the other budgets set in 2021/22 (e.g. bathrooms, doors and kitchens). These budgets weren't reduced to pay for the office move.

The move was completed successfully and came in under budget. Everyone in SHAL was involved in the setting up the new office and clearing out the old one.



1,769

day to day repair orders were completed between April 2021 and February 2022.

Stormy weather

We've been battered by a number of bad storms recently. The most recent ones, Eunice and Franklin, caused lots of damage across the UK. We received over 60 roof repairs and almost 100 fence repairs. We're working with a number of different suppliers to get these repairs done. **Thanks for your patience and understanding.**



Can we still visit?

Our new office doesn't have a reception but we can still meet you there by appointment.

There's a larger room (with windows) in which we can meet you.

We're also working differently now and rather than asking you to visit us we're arranging to visit you at home and we no longer ask you to come into the office to sign paperwork, preferring to do so electronically.

There's also free parking for visitors.



Competition time! You can win £50 vouchers!



1. The Platinum Jubilee celebrates how many years of HM The Queen's reign?

- A: 60
- B: 70
- C: 75

2. How many Tenant Satisfaction Measures is the Regulator of Social Housing proposing?

- A: 10
- B: 15
- C: 22



3. When is the first day of 'astronomical' spring?

- A: 13 March
- B: 20 March
- C: 27 March

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: Crypton House, Bristol Road, Bridgwater, TA6 4SY

Text: 07984 355553

Deadline: 30 April 2022

The lucky winner of the competition in our last issue was Lou from Bridgwater. The answers were: 1B (B), 2A (2025), 3A (California Dreamin').

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.