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Cover Photo: Alicia Bayliss joined the Council Housing Service earlier this year as part of our apprenticeship scheme. We will be recruiting again soon - turn to page 11 to find out more.

Welcome



Welcome to the Spring 2015 edition of InTouch customer magazine. My name is Stewart Holmes and I am Chair of Abbeydale Tenants and Residents Association (TARA).

Our members have been working hard with local people to create a new outdoor community space.

Called Abbeydale Wildlife Wood, it was previously a neglected and unused woodland – stretching from Dalton Court community centre through to Sellars Street - that has been cleared of rubbish and turned into a natural haven.

Bird houses and insect hotels built and decorated by local children are helping to attract animals and wildlife to the area.

Now we are asking youngsters in the area to design signage for the wood, with the winner officially opening the site.

I hope that by getting the younger generation involved, they are more likely to look after the environment here.

We have also recently won Going Local funding to provide sensory security lights at the back of OAP bungalows in the area so people feel safer at night.

We also hope to secure funding soon to provide more chair-aerobics sessions which, as well as providing health benefits, get people out of their homes and mixing socially with others.

Like most TARAs, we are always looking for new members. If you are interested or would like more information about the signage competition, please email abbeydaletara@virginmedia.com

Stewart Holmes
Abbeydale TARA

Cleaning up our estates and communities

A successful campaign run by the housing service is helping to clean up fly-tipping hotspots in the city. Love Where You Live (LWYL) is an educational scheme about waste disposal that has already helped reduce the amount of rubbish dumped on council estates in the East of Sheffield.



During 2012/13 around 125,400 rubbish bags were removed from communal areas of flats and maisonettes, which not only takes up a huge amount of staff time but also leads to bad smells, vermin and an increased risk of arson attacks.

Since last summer, teams have targeted Burngreave, Flower, Firshill and Castledine estates with promotional campaigns, estate walkabouts, home visits to residents and events.

'Spring Clean' days have helped tenants clear out large unwanted household items and more events like these are taking place over the coming months. Last month LWYL helpers took part in a litter pick at Fir Vale School and the surrounding area in partnership with Streets Ahead.

Due to the success of the campaign, four Waste Support Officers have been recruited to continue to educate customers about how to correctly dispose of household waste and take enforcement action against repeat offenders.

The campaign will now be rolled out to other estates in the East, including Verdon, Central areas of Sheffield, starting with Lansdowne, and Longley Farm estate in the North of the city.

Recycling facilities

for flats and maisonettes

Work is underway to provide suitable recycling facilities for blocks of flats and maisonettes so residents can easily recycle their waste.

In many areas this will mean that bins are stored in safer locations, keeping estates tidier whilst also reducing the impact of waste on the environment.

Many blocks have an existing internal bin room or suitable place outside for recycling bins to be stored safely but at others there is nowhere suitable.

At these blocks, surveys will be carried out to find the best solution, which might include installing hard standing or fencing.

For more information, please contact the Estate and Environmental Services Team on **293 0000** or **205 3333**.



Repairs service transfers back to Council

The council housing repairs and maintenance service currently provided by Kier will transfer back to the Council in 2017.

A report went to Cabinet in March outlining three options for the future service. These were:

- Extend the current Kier contract for up to a further two years
- Have a new external contractor deliver the service
- Bring the service in-house to be directly delivered by the Council

Cabinet accepted the report's recommendation to bring the service in-house.

This brings a host of benefits, including:

- More control, flexibility and accountability for the Council in managing the service
- Expected year-on-year savings, so more money can be reinvested in frontline housing services
- Tenants and leaseholders to more easily have a direct influence on how the service is shaped and delivered in the future
- The service working more closely in partnership with other relevant key council services to achieve better outcomes for customers

Over the next two years work will take place to transfer the service into the Council once the current Kier contract ends on 31st March 2017.

This will include:

- Effective communication and consultation with tenants and leaseholders
- Consultation with the staff involved and their Trade Union representatives
- Buying the necessary goods, services and materials, such as vehicles, tools, accommodation and computer systems

Tenants and leaseholders will be involved in designing the new service, and we will continue to keep you up-to-date on the progress of the project through future articles in InTouch. We will also provide regular updates at Local Area Housing Forums.

If you have any comments or questions, please contact us on **0114 293 0000** or **0114 205 3333**. You can also visit any area housing office or get in touch online at www.sheffield.gov.uk/contacthousing

NEW ALLOCATIONS POLICY

In Spring 2016, we'll see the full implementation of the Council's Allocations Policy. This will replace the current Lettings Policy, which sets down the rules and criteria for allocating social housing.

The Allocations Policy introduces a number of changes for anyone who wants to access social housing. We know change can be difficult and we are committed to providing assistance and support to anyone who needs it to help them through these changes.

We think one of the things which will help to reduce the impact is for us to introduce some of the changes gradually over the next few months, so that's what we plan to do.

We will continue to provide regular updates through In Touch to keep you informed of our progress and understand what it means for you. You can also find more information and a set of Frequently Asked Questions on our website at www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing

We've outlined below some of the early changes which will happen in the next few months and which will help us provide a better service for our customers, encourage stable communities and to better manage the housing register.

What are the changes?

- ▶ If you would like to join the housing register you will need to provide two forms of identification for you and any other member of your household over 16 years of age. For any household members aged less than 16 years old we will only require one form of identification.
 - ▶ If you are 25 years old and over you can only be registered once with Sheffield City Council. This means you won't be able to be part of a household on any other housing application. Customers who currently appear on more than one housing registration will need to decide which one they would like to stay on.
 - ▶ If you are an approved foster carer or adopter and have written confirmation of this we may be able to consider you for a larger property.
 - ▶ If you would like further information about the policy changes please visit our website.
- Alternatively you may contact your local area housing office or contact the call centre for further help and advice.
- Customers that are aged between 16 and 25 can appear on more than one housing registration provided they meet the criteria to do so.



Work is underway on a five-year investment plan that will see £300 million spent on improving council homes in Sheffield.

The Council's ambitious programme of work aims to protect buildings for the future, reduce the number and cost of repairs, and improve the energy efficiency of homes.

Key elements include:

- Roof renewal/roofline and roof repair work to around 30,000 homes
- Adaptations to around 300 homes per year
- New energy efficient gas central heating to a further 12,000 homes
- Improved communal areas in 10,000 low rise flats

- Kitchen and bathroom renewal work, double glazing and new external doors to homes that do not meet the Sheffield Standard
- Door entry and security works
- Fire safety work to all low rise flats
- Buying and building new council homes

Roofing project

Roofing work started in autumn 2014, using materials chosen by the Tenant Roofing Project Group. Despite the winter weather hampering progress, flat roof work is underway at Batemoor and Gleadless where 10 blocks of maisonettes have been completed.

In the North, North West and South West of Sheffield, 143 homes have been improved under the pitched roofing project.

Between 2015 and 2017 we will replace flat roofs at 1,723 homes, and between 2015 and 2019 we will replace 9,315 pitched roofs and replace soffits and fascias to a

further 10,546 addresses.

Fire safety sprinkler project

In October 2014 we started a 12-month scheme to retrofit domestic sprinklers into the city's 540 ranch style properties, the first project of its kind in the region.

Work is now complete in properties at Heeley, Gleadless and Netherthorpe, with others soon to follow in Westfield and Stannington.

It complements fire safety work being carried out to the city's 17,000 low rise blocks of flats and maisonettes.

What happens next?

Before any improvement work takes place, customers will get a letter explaining what is happening and who to contact for more information.

On our website at www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing we now have an address search facility to help you find out what work is planned for your home and when it starts.

For general enquiries contact us on HomesInvestment@sheffield.gov.uk



News from Kier

YOU SAID...

The handy person service, which started in 2013, has been highly praised by tenants who use the service. It provides help to vulnerable customers with jobs around the home that they can't manage themselves.

Could customers go out with a handy person on a ride-out like they can with the responsive repairs service?

WE DID ...

Ride-outs (where a customer spends half a day on the front line with a Kier employee to see how the service operates and provide feedback on areas for improvement) is now being extended to the handy person service.

If anyone is interested, please contact Kier on 0114 2736164.

YOU SAID...

Can appointments be made available after the peak-time working hours (9am-5pm)?

WE DID ...

We provide appointments from 8am and continue to review our system to further improve it for tenants. **We have recently extended appointment slots for the gas servicing and repairs**



service to 8pm. Customers should always check the Community Technicians' ID when answering the door and, if in doubt, call the number on the back of their ID card before letting them in.

Ensure your boiler performs at its best

Kier services and maintains gas appliances in tenants' homes across the city all year round, however boilers are used most in the winter. It is important that tenants confirm their gas service appointment, which we send out via letter.

If the appointment date is suitable and someone will be in the property to let us in, then we need confirmation so we can attend

the appointment. If the appointment isn't suitable then please also let us know so we can arrange an alternative date. If we don't hear from you, then we can't check your boiler to ensure it is performing at its best and keeping you warm during the cold months.

All tenants who complete their gas service appointment on the first visit are entered into a prize draw to win £100 of gift vouchers.



Keep in touch online

- ▶ We have launched a **free email alert** service, Sheffield Info, to help keep you in touch with what matters to you
- ▶ From gritting and bin collections to school closures and community news, Sheffield Info allows you to **sign up to updates** that you are interested in
- ▶ Topics include **Council Housing, libraries, Activity Sheffield** and much more
- ▶ Tenants and leaseholders who sign up to the Council Housing topic will get **useful information and updates**, including the latest on Housing+ and new services

Simply go to
www.sheffield.gov.uk/register-for-alerts
 and sign up today!

Don't forget that we post our latest news and information on

facebook & **twitter**

Our **Twitter** page gives **instant updates** about what we are doing. Join today and follow **@HousingSCC**. We also have a **Facebook** page - just **search for Sheffield's Council Housing Service**



Sheffield City Council

Need help with computers and the internet?

Why not try a free computer course?

You can be a complete beginner or just be looking to develop your skills. Whatever your interest computers and the internet can open up a whole new world!

Why should I get online?

The internet can help you:

- ▶ Save money
- ▶ Stay healthy
- ▶ Keep in touch with friends and family
- ▶ Look for work and claim benefits
- ▶ Access housing
- ▶ Improve your skills, training opportunities and education
- ▶ Access cheaper goods and services
- ▶ Find out hobbies and interests



LET'S GET ONLINE

Getting online can also help you get ready for Universal Credit

Benefits will be combined into one single monthly payment which will need to be claimed online. It's important you are able to use the internet by then.

To book a session or find out more about what's happening in your area contact Maxine Bowler:

0114 250 0613

maxine.b@heeleydevtrust.com

www.sheffieldonline.net

There are no start or end dates, just ongoing support and advice tailored to individual needs.

If you **don't have time** to attend a training session why not **learn online**? Visit **www.learnmyway.com**

The site also helps you improve your computer skills.

To use this service you will need code 3456141

Refresh for Going Local scheme

For several years the housing service has run an initiative called Going Local.

Under the scheme, customers help us prioritise where we allocate investment so it's spent on things that matter to them where they live.

We have reviewed Going Local to improve value for money and efficiency, and consulted with tenants on the proposals.

This has led to some changes but at the heart of the process customers are still making recommendations about where money is spent.

The majority of Going Local funding has been spent on improving communal areas in blocks of flats and maisonettes. Therefore the £200,000 allocated for this has been included in the investment programme, so the work will be effectively co-ordinated to avoid unnecessary costs and delays.

Local Area Housing Forums can prioritise additional improvements to blocks or carry out work to communal areas.

By the end of 2018/19 we aim to have LED lighting, double glazed windows, flooring and secure entrance doors in each low rise block (flats less than three storeys high).

The funding could also be used for painting communal areas, CCTV, additional handrails, signage or front doors.

Improvements

A budget of £70,000 will be used across the six area teams, sheltered housing and supported housing for improvements such as footpath and wall repairs, small scale painting, replacement glazing, additional security (like window and door locks) and fencing repairs – but only where these would not be carried out as responsive 'day to day' repairs.

It will help Housing+ Officers identify and deal with local repair issues, with spending decisions signed off by the Area Manager and information shared with local Tenants and Residents Associations (TARAs).

Community initiatives

A £170,000 Community Fund will be used to fund items and services that local people have asked for, such as hiring skips, waste management and community digital inclusion projects.

Housing staff will contact TARAs for suggestions on how and where money should be spent and area teams will work with Local Area Housing Forums to prioritise these initiatives.

Going Local

Unlock your potential

with a career in

housing

Sheffield's Council Housing Service is looking to take on 20 new apprentices each year. Apprenticeships are a great way to learn, get experience and a qualification whilst getting paid.

We recruit apprentices across our service, in rents, repairs, re-letting empty homes, estate services and management, anti-social behaviour, supported housing and leaseholder services.

We have also expanded the range and level of qualifications on offer including NVQ Levels 2 and 3 in General Housing, Customer Care, Business Admin, Housing Maintenance, Horticulture, Homelessness and Surveying.

Like all Council employees, apprentices have good working conditions and benefits, including flexible working, training and development. We particularly welcome applications from young people who live in council housing, as we want our workforce to represent the customers we serve.

Current and past apprentices are a great asset to us and help us continue to be one of the best housing services in the country. After recruiting 15 new apprentices last year we are seeking more enthusiastic, customer-focused people so look out for more posts being advertised very soon.

**APPRENTICES
ASSEMBLE!**

**LOOKING TO THE FUTURE OR
YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE?**

**NOT SURE WHAT TO DO WHEN
YOU LEAVE SCHOOL?**

www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing

[twitter](#) @HousingSCC

[facebook](#) search for Sheffield's Council Housing Service

Call **0114 293 0000**

Customer Service Excellence

Sheffield's Council Housing Service has retained its Customer Service Excellence accreditation.

As with all previous inspections, the service was judged to be 100% compliant and in some areas exceeded the standard expected.

Assessor Matthew Watson said staff from

senior management level through to the frontline showed a deep understanding of and commitment to customer service excellence.

He was particularly impressed with development and testing of the Housing+ model, partnership working with Kier and South Yorkshire Police, and work to support vulnerable people.







Housing+

Supporting you, your home and your community

Here's a reminder about the key elements of Housing+

A 'Patch based' service with named Officers working with all households on their patch

-  We aim to offer all tenants an annual visit, where we can complete a Household Annual Plan
-  The Housing+ Officer will be supported by core teams providing specialist advice, city-wide policies and operational services
-  More effective 'joining-up' between council housing teams and other Council services
-  Working with other local providers to help strengthen communities.



Update on the South East test phase

The South East test phase has been running since June 2014. We have received positive feedback from customers so far, and performance has been maintained. Over the last twelve months rent arrears have reduced in the South East, which reflects all the hard work between South East staff and the Income Management Unit. We are also building links with other agencies to create a more joined up service.

Here's one tenant's experience of Housing+

Dawn Thompson, Housing+ Officer, writes:

I originally visited Mr Taylor as I received a complaint from his neighbour about his overgrown garden. I contacted local organisations to get the garden tidied up.

Shortly after, I contacted Mr Taylor for an Annual Visit as part of the Housing+ service, where we completed a Household Plan. As part of this visit I could see he was struggling to get up the stairs and he was only living in one room of his house.

I supported Mr Taylor in getting rehoused into a sheltered property. Because of Mr Taylor's age and health issues I referred him to Age UK for them to assist in clearing his house and packing his belongings.

I arranged for the 'man with a van' service to help with the move. This Council run service is to assist vulnerable tenants who are downsizing to smaller properties.

I kept in touch with Mr Taylor regularly and supported him throughout the process. We helped Mr Taylor get the most suitable property for him, therefore helping him to stay independent.

Mr Taylor was pleased with the service he had received and said:

"I wanted to move house and when Dawn visited me we discussed this. Until she came I didn't know how to go about moving or who to contact.

"She filled in the forms and helped me bid on the flat I wanted. When I got the flat she arranged for someone to help me pack and help me move.

"I couldn't have done this without her help. I am very happy in my new home."



Next steps

We are hoping to roll out the Housing+ approach wider than the South East later this year.

We will continue regular updates through In Touch, The Bridge, Future of Council Housing newsletter, Local Area Housing Forums and City Wide Forum in the meantime.

Contact Us

To find out more contact:

visit www.sheffield.gov.uk/planningthefuture

call 0114 293 0000

email planningthefuture@sheffield.gov.uk



Rent statements are changing

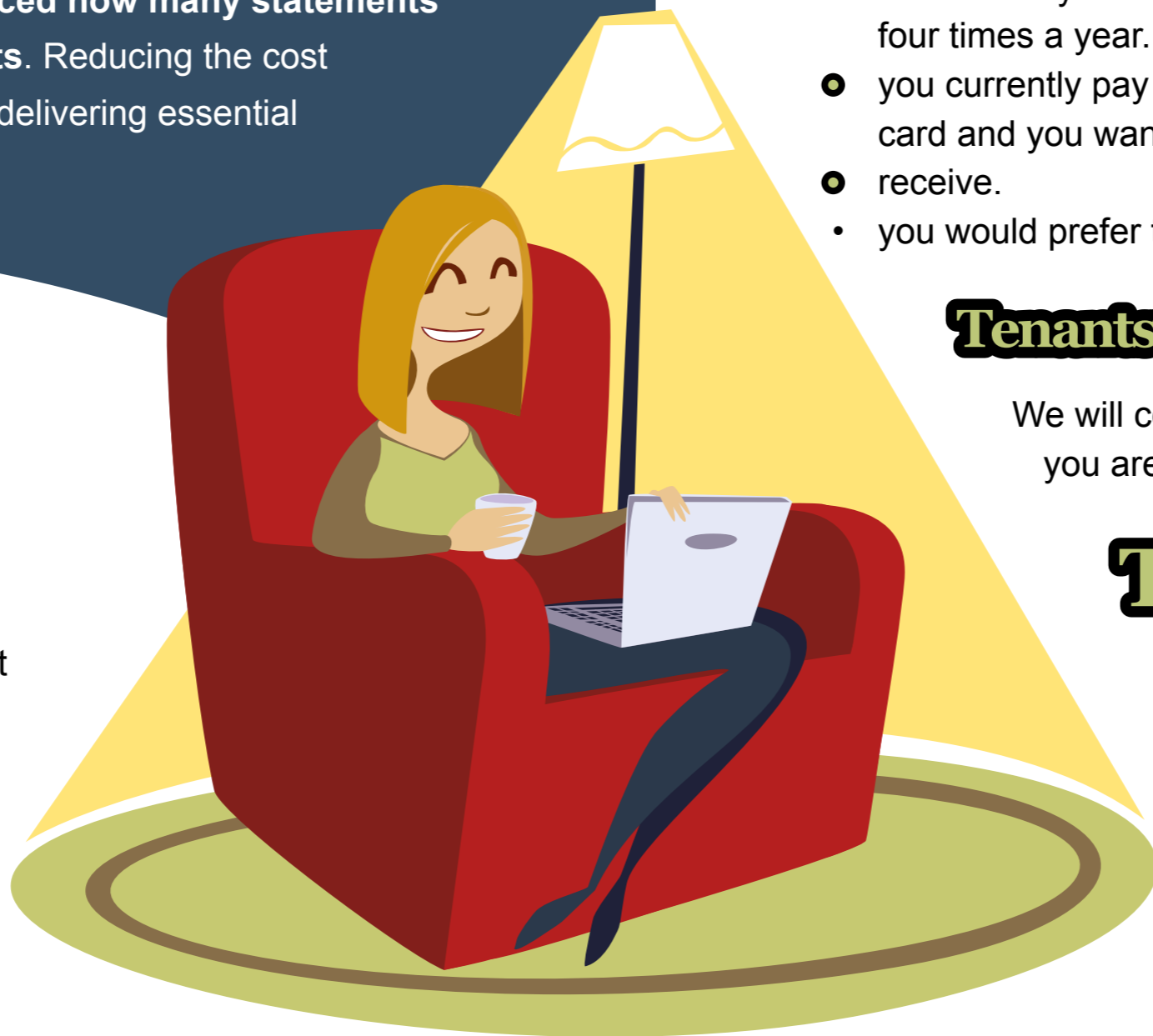
Currently all Sheffield City Council tenants get a rent statement through the post every 13 weeks (4 times a year).

From April this year we have reduced how many statements we send each year to some tenants. Reducing the cost means we can target the savings at delivering essential services to tenants.

Using the Internet

However you can now view your rent account online anytime by visiting www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing

As more tenants use this service, we think it makes sense to send out less rent statements. It means less paper for you and we save money.



Statements once a year

Since April this year we will only be sending you a statement **once a year** (instead of 4 times a year) if you:

- pay rent by **Direct Debit**
- pay rent by **salary stoppage**
- you tell us you **want statements less often**
- you use the **internet service** we provide

Please contact the Income Management Team on **0114 293 0000** if:

- this affects you and you want to continue receiving statements four times a year.
- you currently pay by another method, for example payment card and you want to reduce the number of statements you receive.
- you would prefer to receive your statements electronically.

Tenants in arrears

We will continue to send statements every 13 weeks if you are repaying arrears.

Tell us what you think

We are interested to know how you use your rent statement and how often you use it.

Please contact Income Management on **0114 293 0000** or **0114 205 3333** if you have any comments or would like to change how many statements you receive a year.



Sheffield Council provides a special home contents insurance scheme just for you.

We can now let both existing and new scheme members insure up to £40,000 of contents.

It is paid for weekly, as part of the rent, and it doesn't matter where you live or if you claim more than once in any year, your premium will be fixed for several years to come.

The policy has too many plus points to list; it is Aviva's best "Platinum" cover and even includes accidental damage free.

Many lower sums are still available at a very small weekly cost if your contents are not quite so valuable.

To find out more, contact us on **0114 293 0000** or **0114 205 3333**.

How much are these worth?

They may add up to more than you think.



VISA Debit Card

Many members of Sheffield Credit Union already know the benefits of having a prepaid CredEcard Visa Debit Card to use with their Credit Union account.

- Transfers to the card are easy
- Withdraw cash with your card
- Buy goods on the internet and most shops
- You can't go overdrawn, so no unexpected charges
- Low charges - 75p to use a cash machine and £2 per month for as many loads to the card as you like.

Cash Back

The card is flexible and it's easy to cover the cost of the monthly fee if you use the card to do your shopping at a wide number of places.

Visit www.credecard.com/credecardplus-partners/rewards to find out where and how the cash back from these outlets works.

Manage your bills with your card

The card lets you set a budget with bills going out on certain days, leaving you with only the money that's not needed for bills showing as your balance to withdraw. There are full instructions about this on the website below or the Credit Union can provide a copy.

Want a card?

Contact Sheffield Credit Union on admin@sheffieldcreditunion.com or call **0114 276 0787**. Find out more about the card at www.credecard.com

SHARING LIVES

SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT LIVING FOR ADULTS

Some adults are more vulnerable than others, and they need a little extra help and support to lead a happy and fulfilling life. The Sharing Lives service, from Sheffield City Council, provides carers who help adults live independent lives. Our carers offer the social interaction needed and help prevent people becoming socially isolated and withdrawn - they really make a difference to people's lives.

Sharing Lives carers receive payment, and choose the amount of work they do, from just 12 hours per week. They also get to choose the type of care and support they offer - from the Befriending service, which offers support out and about in the community, helping people to do the things they like to do such as shopping, or going for a walk; through to long term respite care, where someone lives with them in their home. Read Dianne and Andrew's story.

Anyone over 18 can apply to become a carer. Apply today and you could make someone's life better.

For more information contact the Sharing Lives team, details below.

SHARING LIVES – LONG TERM CARE DIANNE AND ANDREW'S STORY

Dianne and Andrew have known each other over 15 years. Andrew needs a little extra care and support to enjoy his life, so he lives with Dianne and her family in her home on a long-term basis. They are both part of Sharing Lives, a Sheffield City Council service, which helps support independent living for adults in the city.

When Dianne first heard about Sharing Lives, she thought she wouldn't be able to fit it in her life, but the lady she spoke to explained how it could work for her.

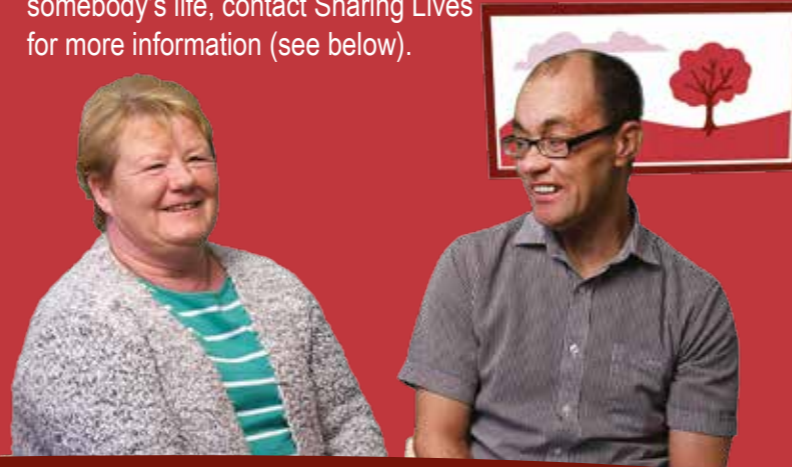
"I was busy at work and didn't want to lose my job to become a carer but that's not the case," said Dianne. "You can have people living with you and you don't have to stay in 24/7. They look at what people need, and what you need, and they bring people together. Along came Andrew and fifteen years on, he's still with me".

Andrew said "When I first came to live with Dianne I was a bit nervous, but I've changed a bit now. I like being with Dianne because I feel safe. I'd do anything for her, she just makes me happy."

Dianne adds: "To me Andrew is like a son, he's part of the family and all the family love him. I'd say to anyone thinking of joining Sharing Lives that it's worked very well for us."

There are many more adults across Sheffield who need a little extra help to lead a happy and fulfilling life. All Sharing Lives carers receive payment for the support they offer.

If you want to find out whether you could make a difference to somebody's life, contact Sharing Lives for more information (see below).



PHONE: 0114 273 5275

EMAIL: sharinglives@sheffield.gov.uk

VISIT: www.sheffield.gov.uk/sharinglives



Community comes together to open **new advice service**

Volunteers in Stradbroke have been working hard to get a new advice service up and running.

Helpers, including local people, Councillors, council staff and charity workers, descended on The Link community hub, on Stradbroke Drive, to spruce up the last room in the building.

This will be used to provide free advice drop-in sessions every Thursday from 1-3pm dealing with housing repairs, rehousing, financial advice, benefits and welfare, drugs and alcohol advice, and help with form-filling.

The room will also be used as a Councillors' Surgery and to provide adult learning programmes.

Helen Eadon runs The Link, along with Nicola Quibell, and is also Chairperson of Stradbroke Tenants

and Community Association.

"The community hub has really took off since we launched it last May and this was the last room to refurbish," said Helen.

"It's a real partnership effort, where people will be able to source a lot of information in one place, from talking to a Housing+ Officer to help filling in an application form.

"Our building is used by everyone from the Council and Police to training providers and support groups. "It's a great example of everyone working together to provide a much-needed resource for the local community."

Councillor Tony Damms, then Cabinet Assistant for Homes and Neighbourhoods, said: *"The Link already serves its*



community brilliantly and the new drop-in advice sessions will be a valuable addition to the services available.

"I have every confidence the new venture will be a huge success and one that will benefit many people for years to come."

Kim Gervis, Manager of Manor Training & Resource Centre, said: *"This is a fantastic opportunity for people to access a wide range of services in one place. We are looking forward to working with the hub to offer a range of training and coaching opportunities."*

Girls get moving in Sheffield



If you want to wiggle, jiggle, move and prove that you can exercise more and play a new sport, find out more about the #SheffieldGirlsCan campaign.

On the back of the national 'This Girl Can' campaign, Sheffield is promoting sporting opportunities locally for girls and women. www.movemoresheffield.com

has all the details, so if you want to get moving, check it out and don't let anything stop you. There's basketball, boxing, climbing, cycling, health and fitness sessions, netball and swimming.

Social housing provides security and stability to millions of families.

There is an ever increasing demand for housing and, as a landlord, Sheffield City Council must make sure that homes are occupied lawfully.

There are different types of housing fraud but here we focus on unlawful subletting.

This is where a tenant lets out their council home without the knowledge or permission of their landlord. They will usually continue to pay rent to the landlord but charge the person they are subletting to a much higher rent.

This is a breach of our tenancy conditions and, since 2013, could also be a criminal offence in certain circumstances.

HELP US TACKLE TENANCY FRAUD

SUBLETTING CAN BE A CRIME

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

From April 2014 until February this year, we have dealt with 119 referrals of suspected subletting. In 19 of these cases we have recovered the property, which has then gone on to be re-let. A further 41 cases remain under investigation and the magistrates court is dealing with one case under criminal proceedings.

If you suspect that someone is subletting their property, please phone our Customer Contact Centre on 0114 293 0000 or 0114 205 3333, who will put you through to the team who deals with unlawful subletting of council tenancies.

They will take details from you and an officer will investigate further and take action where possible.

All information is treated in the strictest confidence and many reports are made anonymously.

When an investigation takes place, much of the information is confidential so we can't always feedback to customers whether subletting is or isn't taking place or the reasons for this.

However, this remains a serious issue that we really need your help to combat and ensure social housing is there for people who need it now and in years to come.

MESH

Community Cohesion Services



Solving neighbour problems through mediation

A good neighbour is a blessing, but we are not all so lucky. Neighbours can and do fall out, which sometimes leads to years of distress and worry. People may even feel that they have to move out of their home.

Sheffield's Council Housing Service provides a dedicated mediation service to help customers sort out their problems.

Provided by independent charity Mediation Sheffield (MESH), it is free to tenants and voluntary. It is often successful in resolving neighbour conflicts and finding a solution, even when the arguing has gone on for years.

MESH has helped resolve all sorts of issues around noise, shared drives, how children use gardens and problems with pets.

If you and your neighbour agree to mediation, a MESH mediator will arrange to

visit you and your neighbour at your homes separately.

They don't decide who is right or wrong but will listen to what your issues are and then, with your permission, explain these to the people you are in disagreement with. You will then have an opportunity to find out about the other people's issues.

Once grievances have been acknowledged, it can be a relief to let go of them. The emphasis is then on thinking about how you want things to work in the future and making an agreement on how you will be with each other.

A written agreement is drawn up that you can both sign up to, which may include how you will deal with each other if new problems arise.

Mediation works best when tenants are open, honest and willing to compromise. People find it makes a huge difference to being able to live comfortably in their neighbourhood.

Tenants who have used the service said:

"I feel so much better; felt miserable before. I could not have sorted things out with my neighbour without mediation"

"Since mediation, I have had no more police visits, no abuse, no foul language and no threats of violence - how much better is that?"

"For me, it could not have been better"

If you have a problem with your neighbour and think mediation may help, talk to your Housing Officer first. For more information about mediation, ring **MESH** on **0114 241 2771**.



Tenants scrutinise our vacants service

Members of our customer scrutiny panel Challenge for Change recently reviewed how we manage vacant properties and how customers go about finding somewhere to live.

The panel looked at the standard of vacant properties and visited some examples where repairs had been carried out. They also looked at how properties are advertised and some aspects of the letting process.

As part of their research

they talked to managers, staff and customers, as well as reviewing our website and other communication methods.

A report of their findings and a list of recommendations will soon be produced and presented to the Housing and Neighbourhoods Advisory Panel as well as tenants and residents and the Council's Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee.

A full copy of the report will be available at www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing

Up for a challenge? Want to see real change?

If you are a Sheffield City Council tenant, leaseholder or customer, have some free time and are up for the job of challenging, then we would love to hear from you. As a challenger, you can:

- Tell us how we can improve services for customers
- Examine how our business is run
- Ensure customers' views drive change

If you would like to become a Challenger yourself or have any ideas about what the panel should focus on next, contact our Community Engagement Team on 0114 293 0000 or 0114 205 3333.

A fresh look at how we engage with customers

A review is underway to see how we can improve community engagement with council housing tenants and leaseholders.

As part of their work, Housing and Neighbourhoods Advisory Panel (HANAP) members Terry Bawden, Sally Kilic, John Kite and Christine Lupton will:

- Review all the current community engagement meetings, both local and citywide, to find out if they are working well
- Consider what barriers prevent some people from getting involved and how to overcome them, including better use of more modern engagement channels such

as social media and other digital methods

- Agree a clear vision for community engagement and develop a strategy to deliver it
- Establish the cost of current community engagement activities and whether better value for money could be achieved
- Review the current policies for concessionary lettings, tenants' levy and expenses and ensure they are fairly and consistently applied

In all of their work, group members will be looking to make recommendations for change and improvement where needed. Supported by the Director of Housing and other managers,

the group will report to HANAP each month and consult with Local Area Housing Forums and the Leaseholder Forum.

They will provide updates to tenants, leaseholders and staff through citywide forum and publications including InTouch, The Bridge and the Leaseholder Newsletter.

The group is due to make their final recommendations to the HANAP meeting in December this year and once approved by the Cabinet Member, any changes will be implemented by March 2016.

If you have any questions or want to comment about the Community Engagement Review, please email us at getinvolved@sheffield.gov.uk or phone 0114 293 0000.

Getting in touch with Sheffield City Council

General Council Housing enquiries

For most enquiries about your home and your estate – except for day-to-day repairs – just call us on 293 0000 or 205 3333 (8am - 5.30pm Mon-Fri)

Repairs

Reporting day-to-day repairs (8am-6pm) **273 5555**

Emergency repairs, evenings weekends and bank holidays **273 5555**

Gas leaks **0800 111 999**

Council Services

For all Sheffield City Council services, including Veolia, Streetforce, Council Tax and benefits, and Homelessness, please call **273 4567**

Non-emergency crime and anti-social behaviour **101**

Other useful numbers

Debit & Credit Card rent payments **273 5249**

Contact us in person

We've got housing offices across the city. Please see the map on our website - www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing

Contact us in writing

Please write to:
Council Housing Service,
PO Box 483,
M33 0DH

Contact us online

Council Housing Service
Web: www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing
Enquiries: www.sheffield.gov.uk/contacthousing

Sheffield Property Shop
www.sheffieldpropertyshop.org.uk
propertyshop@sheffield.gov.uk

Council Services
www.sheffield.gov.uk

Accessible or Adapted Homes
www.accessible-property.org.uk

Follow us on facebook & twitter

Social networking is a great way to keep in touch.

We have a **Twitter** page, giving instant updates about what we are doing.

Join today and follow @ **HousingSCC**.

We also have a **Facebook** page – just search for **Sheffield's Council Housing Service**.

Join and you could win prizes

We also have an online consultation group called "e:Talk", where you can provide feedback wherever and whenever you like!

To join visit www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing and register with e:Talk.

We want to hear from you!

We always welcome feedback from our customers, whether it is a suggestion, complaint or praise. To do this you can:

- Fill in our online form at www.sheffield.gov.uk/contacthousing
- Call us on **0114 293 0000** or **0114 205 3333**
- Fill in the form attached to our **Complaints, Praise and Suggestions leaflet** (available at any Housing Office or online)
- Visit any of our offices or reception points

To get this information in... your preferred language

We can provide information in your language. Please contact us on **0114 293 0000 / 0114 205 3333**, use our online enquiry form at www.sheffield.gov.uk/contacthousing, or you can write to us at Council Housing Service, PO Box 483, M33 0DH.

Farsi

We can provide information in your language. Please contact us on **0114 293 0000** or **0114 205 3333** or email us at councilhousing@sheffield.gov.uk. You can write to us at **Council Housing Service, PO Box 483, M33 0DH**.

ما میتوانیم اطلاعاتی به زبان شما ارائه کنیم. لطفاً با شماره تلفن **0114 293 0000** یا **0114 205 3333** با ما تماس بگیرید، یا به آدرس councilhousing@sheffield.gov.uk به ما ایمیل بفرستید. همچنین میتوانید با Council Housing Service, PO Box 483, M33 0DH نشانی دفتر اسکان شهرداری با ما مکاتبه کنید

Somali

We can provide information in your language. Please contact us on 0114 293 0000 or 0114 205 3333 or email us at councilhousing@sheffield.gov.uk. You can write to us at Council Housing Service, PO Box 483, M33 0DH.

Waxaan macluumaad ku bixin karnaa luqaddaada. Fadlan nagala soo xiriir **0114 293 0000** ama **0114 205 3333** ama email u soo dir councilhousing@sheffield.gov.uk. Waxaad xittaa warqad u soo qori kartaa Council Housing Service, PO Box 483, M33 0DH.

Arabic

We can provide information in your language. Please contact us on **0114 293 0000** or **0114 205 3333** or email us at councilhousing@sheffield.gov.uk. You can write to us at Council Housing Service, PO Box 483, M33 0DH.

بإمكاننا توفير المعلومات بلغتك. برجاء الاتصال بنا على **0114 293 0000** أو **0114 205 3333** أو يمكنك إرسال بريدًا إلكترونيًا

على councilhousing@sheffield.gov.uk. كما يمكنك مراسلتنا بريديًا على العنوان Council Housing Service, PO Box 483, M33 0DH.

This document can be supplied in alternative formats, please contact:

Sheffield City Council • Council Housing Service

Tel: 0114 293 0000 or 205 3333

www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing