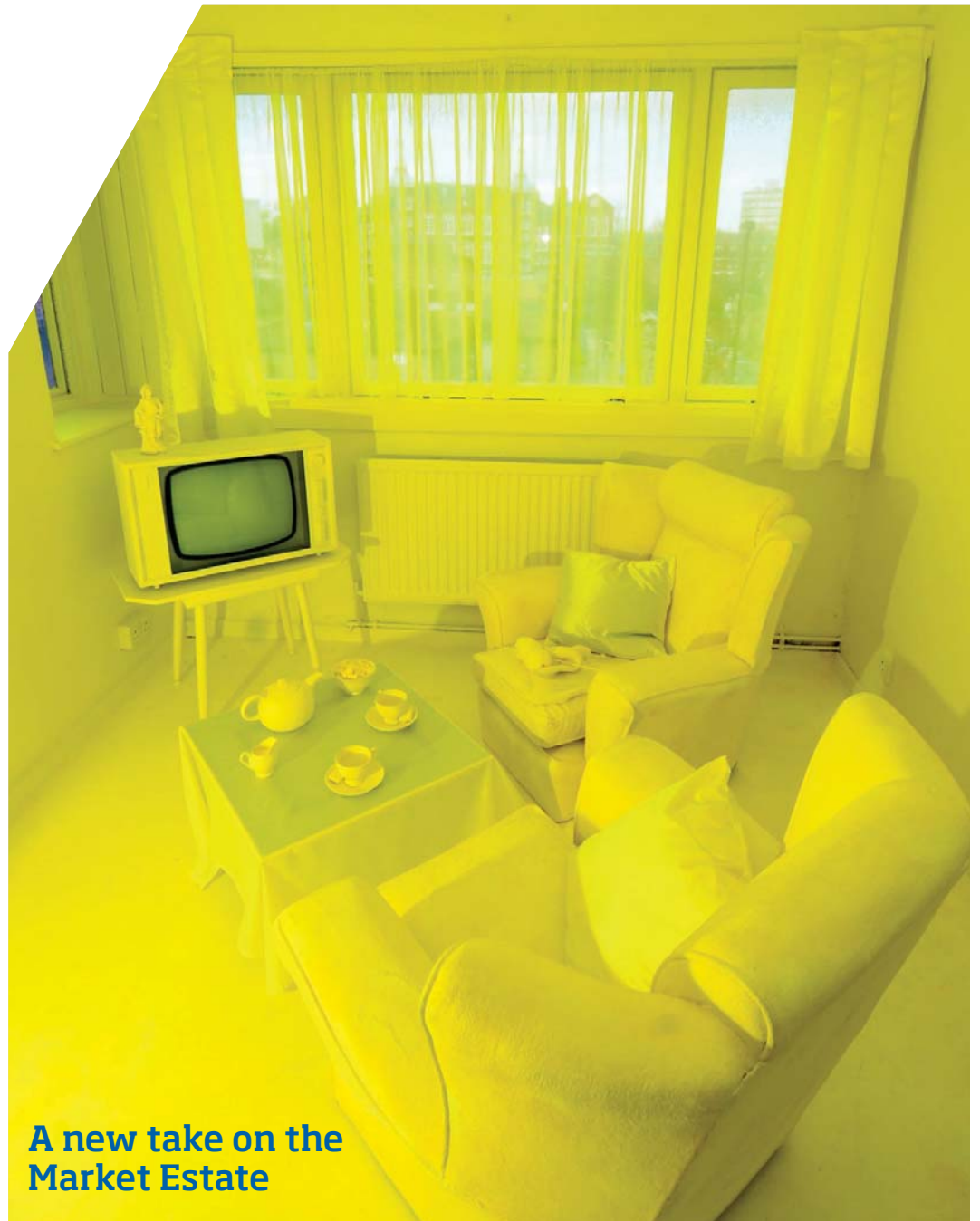




OpenDoor



A new take on the Market Estate

Newsletter for all Southern Housing Group residents

Spring 2010

In this issue:

The old Market Estate in Islington was transformed by 75 artists in March, as the last residents moved in to their new homes in Parkside Place

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- Your Decent Homes
- Getting you Back to Work
- Water-saving Advice

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Our performance



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Translations

For help with translations, or information in Braille, large print or as an audio version, contact the Service Centre on 0300 303 1771.

Arabic

إذا كنت تريد الحصول على ترجمة لإحدى المقالات، اتصل برقم 0300 303 1771.

Bengali

যেসব আর্টিকলে এই চিহ্ন দেয়া আছে আমরা সেগুলির বাংলাতে সারসংক্ষেপ সরবরাহ করি। কপির জন্য 0300 303 1682 নাম্বারে ফোন করুন।

Bengali

French

Si vous souhaitez faire traduire un article, appelez le 0300 303 1771.

Somali

Haddii aad rabtid in maqaalka lagu turjumo wac 0300 303 1771.

Spanish

Si desea que le traduzcamos algún artículo, llame al 0300 303 1771.

Turkish

Üzerinde bu işaret bulunan yazıların Türkçe özetini verebiliriz. Bir kopya edinmek isterseniz 0300 303 1683'ü arayın.

Turkish

Unlocking our Potential

“One landlord focusing on the best services locally – that’s our vision for the new-look Southern Housing Group.”

says Chief Executive Tom Dacey

Bengali Turkish

We recently sent you information about our decision to look again at the structure of Southern Housing Group – as we think the time is right to make a change. We are now gathering your views before deciding what to do and taking our proposal to our regulator, the Tenant Services Authority, for approval.

Southern Housing Group has been made up of three landlords since Southern Housing Group Ltd was joined by South Wight Housing Association in 2002 and by James Butcher Housing Association in 2006.

In practice, the three organisations have always worked closely. We have shared resources, managed each other’s homes, learned from each other and adopted the same policies.

We work well together, but we think it’s too complicated. Because we are legally separate organisations, we

often need agreement from each other before we can make changes or carry out certain types of work. This takes time and costs money. We think it would be better to combine the Group into one landlord – Southern Housing Group Ltd. Legally this is known as ‘amalgamation’.

The change would mean that we could simplify the way we are governed and run. We would have one Board, instead of three, setting our direction. We would need less duplication and our staff would need to hold fewer meetings.

Organising things more simply would cost us less. We could also save by streamlining our purchases for the whole organisation to get better value for money. The savings we make could be spent on improving your services and neighbourhoods, and on building new homes.

Most importantly, our plans include

setting up new Resident Service Panels, which would focus on local services and give feedback to the Customer Services Committee – which would report in turn to the main Board. This would give you more influence over the decisions we take.



We now need to know what you think, so I recently wrote to ask for your views. If you would like more information first, you are welcome to speak to a member of staff, phone us on 0300 303 1684, or email us at consultation@shgroup.org.uk

Later in the year, we will report back in Open Door on what you tell us and what we plan to do next.

What would the changes mean for me?

Combining as one landlord would change the look of our organisation, but a lot of things would stay the same.

- Everyone’s landlord would be Southern Housing Group Ltd. But nothing else about your tenancy would change – your tenancy conditions, rights, rent levels and future increases would stay the same. If you are a leaseholder, your lease would not be affected. We would send you a formal notice about the change.
- To our three existing regions – London, Thames Gateway and South – we would add two new

ones: Isle of Wight and West. We might change the boundaries to make things more efficient, but we would work from the same offices as we do now. It is likely that the same staff would provide you with local services and the same contractors would carry out your repairs.

- You would have more opportunities to influence our work, because we would create new Resident Service Panels for every region. Each panel would have up to 12 resident members. The panels would have the job of helping to check our performance and planning improvements.

- You would have access to all the specialist services provided across the Group – for example, the services provided by our community development department (formerly known as ‘the Foundation’), which currently only works with residents of Southern Housing Group Ltd.

We can’t promise that nothing would change over time – there will always be changes, whether or not we join together. But you can be sure that any changes we make will be about providing better services and giving you value for money – and we will always consult you first.

Tenant Services Authority

Putting residents first

Bengali Turkish

6

National standards that social housing landlords now have to meet

57

Residents from around the Group gave us their views on the new standards

In recent weeks, we've been discussing with residents the new national standards for social landlords, drawn up by our regulator, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA).

The TSA held a major consultation last year, before coming up with the six standards shown opposite. They apply to all councils and housing associations, as well as the 'arms-length management organisations' that manage some council-owned homes.

Despite terrible weather, which meant cancelling two events, we successfully consulted 57 residents about the new standards. They attended focus groups or took part as Readers' Panel or epanel members.

In general, residents said they were happy with the TSA's approach, because it wants to see concrete changes and puts resident satisfaction first. But they thought the standards should be written in plain English, so they are easier to understand.

What happens next

The TSA says we should work with residents to draw up local standards in each of the six main areas and produce a full report on this by October. We should then report to you every year on our performance against these standards.

The TSA will use these reports, and the other statistics we produce, to decide if we are doing a good job as your landlord. The TSA will only step in when landlords are performing poorly, but otherwise they want residents to start taking the lead on getting better performance from their landlords.

We are happy with this approach because it fits with the way we already run things. We involve, support and consult you about all the main aspects of our work, and we already produce an annual report to residents. Following the TSA's lead, we will now draw all of this good practice together and work with you on the new local standards.

Six national standards for all social landlords

- 1: Tenant involvement & empowerment** Services should be easy to access and offer residents choices. They should be provided fairly to all groups and meet their needs. Landlords should involve and support their residents, so that they can influence their work and check their performance. Landlords should handle complaints fairly and quickly, and use this feedback to improve services.
- 2: Home** Homes should be warm, weather-proof, have modern facilities, and meet health and safety rules. Landlords should provide a good and cost-effective repairs service.
- 3: Tenancy** Landlords should let their homes fairly and efficiently, make the best use of their homes and help local authorities achieve their wider plans. Landlords should continue to use the government's rent-setting formula. They should give residents the most secure tenancies they can and their tenancy agreements should meet legal and other rules.
- 4: Neighbourhood and community** Landlords should work with residents and other public bodies to keep common areas clean and safe, to improve neighbourhoods and tackle anti-social behaviour.
- 5: Value for money** Landlords should manage their resources to give residents cost-effective, efficient and good quality services and homes.
- 6: Governance and financial viability** Landlords should be well-governed at Board level. They should meet legal and regulatory requirements, and account for their work to residents, the TSA and other bodies. They should safeguard taxpayers' money and stay financially viable.

Feedback

'Your homes, your views' survey Our major resident opinion survey is now complete and we would like to thank everyone who took part. We are analysing the results and will report back next issue.

News

Bengali Turkish

Short notice inspection news



We have now completed all the improvements recommended by the Audit Commission, following their short notice inspection of Southern Housing Group last year.

Among the changes:

- we launched new service standards
- we provide better performance information – including the 15 key areas on page 17, which were identified by residents
- we've gathered more data about residents, to make sure our services meet everyone's needs
- we've set up customer involvement panels, so that residents can help us decide our future direction in areas like repairs
- we've been promoting all the ways you can get involved
- we're handling rent arrears better and providing better information
- we're working harder than ever to provide value for money.

We involved residents in most of these changes – and your feedback made a real difference to our approach. Thank you to everyone who took part.

News

Better rent collection

When people leave our homes owing us rent, it costs us time and money to sort it out.

We looked at this recently and found:

- people forget to give a forwarding address – we now remind you before you leave
- people don't always realise they still owe money – our staff now tell you on their final visit
- we sometimes chased for rent at properties where the resident had died – we now add a rent-free month, to give relatives time to sort things out.

These changes should reduce the amount of money unpaid at the end of a tenancy – which is better for you and better for us.

News

Bengali Turkish

Pay by direct debit – you can't lose

Martin Curtis from Dover is delighted he opted to pay his rent by direct debit, after winning £200 in the first of our prize draws for direct debit payers.

We launched our twice-yearly direct debit prize draw to encourage you to sign up to regular payments direct from your bank account – which helps us to monitor your rent accounts and you to budget better.

Martin told Open Door: "I decided to pay by direct debit because of the ease of the system. I don't have to worry about it every week – it's all done for you."



"It was a big surprise winning the prize draw. It was just before Christmas, which was very nice!"

Keeping your rent up to date could make you a winner too

You could also win £200 in the new twice-yearly prize draw we launched in March for residents with clear rent and charge accounts.

To be included in the draw, all you have to do is make sure that you always pay on time and in full.

If you are struggling to pay your rent, call the Service Centre Income Collection team. They have lots of experience of helping people get back on track.

To find out more about paying by direct debit, call the Service Centre.

News

Bengali Turkish

Give us access and win a £100 voucher

Mrs Maqsood from Islington, Mrs Begum from Tower Hamlets and Ms McEnteggart from Dagenham are among the latest winners of our monthly prize draw for renting residents, after giving our contractors access to their homes for their annual gas safety check.

By February, 19 residents had won £100 vouchers in our monthly draws – rewarding people who had given access to their homes.

By law, we have to inspect your gas boiler regularly to keep it running safely, efficiently and economically. We provide this compulsory check free of charge, but you must let our contractor in.

If you keep denying access, we are forced to take further action, which could include taking you to court.

Your decent homes



Project Officer Lisa Burness inspects Decent Homes work at homes in Islington, with resident John Daly.

93.8%

South Wight HA homes met the Decent Homes standard by December 2009

95.5%

James Butcher HA homes met the Decent Homes standard by December 2009

96.2%

Southern Housing Group Ltd homes met the Decent Homes standard by December 2009

With eight months to go, we're working on the final homes that need to be upgraded to meet the government's Decent Homes standard by 31 December 2010.

The vast majority of our 20,000+ homes already meet the standard and we're on track to complete the rest on time. By 1 April 2010, just 885 homes Group-wide still needed upgrading.

Since the scheme began in 2001, we've carried out a staggering amount of work. Between 2005 (2007 for JBHA) and the end of this year, we will have invested £79.6 million on Decent Homes, including going beyond minimum standards wherever we could.

Highlights include:

- Upgrading some of our largest and oldest estates, such as Ixworth Place, Dawson Heights, Amhurst Park, Stepney Green, Beckton, Durrington and Fieldgate Mansions – as well as working on one-off houses.
- Co-ordinating our existing work programme with Decent Homes, for example at Vanston Place, Rotary House, Amhurst Road and Fulneck.
- Making homes more efficient – for example, by changing layouts at Ixworth Place, converting bedsits at Janson and Gurney Roads into one bed homes, bringing gas central heating to homes at Vanston

The Decent Homes standard means your home has to meet a set of rules designed to make sure it is warm, in a reasonable state of repair and has modern facilities.

Place and in Leytonstone, and better electrical heating to Arun and Adur.

- Giving you choices – for example, meeting resident requests for wet-rooms and walk-in showers at Worsley Court, rather than new baths, and offering JBHA sheltered scheme residents the option of a low-level shower cubicle.
- Making homes better for the environment by fitting low-energy lighting, dual flush toilets and showers over baths. At Elizabeth Court, we replaced the communal boilers with a combined heat and power system. We have now started fitting cavity wall and loft insulation in homes across the Group, to improve their energy efficiency and help reduce your bills.

Completed since 2005 (2007 for JBHA)	No. of items
Bathrooms	2,218
Boilers / heating	3,518 / 1,776
Insulation / cavity insulat'n	2,969 / 2,525
Kitchens	3,941
Windows / doors	2,311 / 665
Roofs	432
Wiring	2461

News

Bengali Turkish



Better information for better services

Over the next few months we will be calling some of you to complete gaps and check the data we hold on you.

This information can be split into two areas:

- who you are (your age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and whether you have a disability)
- what differences you would like in our services (for example, translations and other communication preferences)

This data is crucial, as it helps us to identify areas of our services where we can improve. It also helps us to make sure we continue to provide services that are fair and don't discriminate against anyone.

The information we collect is stored according to our data protection responsibilities. You have a right to see any of the information that we hold on you. See your Residents' Handbook for more details.

As with all surveys, whilst we would encourage you to answer all our questions, we fully understand if you would prefer not to answer a question.

We are already using the data we hold to decide what information we need to provide in other languages and formats. This now includes Easiread, as some residents have difficulty reading.

Feedback

Bengali Turkish

Your complaint really matters

You can help us to improve our service by telling us if there is a problem, or if you feel we did a good job.

Between March 2008 and April 2009, we handled 2,402 new cases including:

- 1,703 about repairs
- 257 about poor customer service
- 243 about your tenancy
- 40 about services at your estates
- 37 about our lettings service
- 31 about your rent
- 23 about people's unacceptable behaviour.

We're working hard to learn from your feedback, because we know we can do better.

For example, the carer of one of our residents complained when she saw that, after a repairs visit, our resi-

dent's shower had been left running. This had added to his electricity bill. We agreed this was poor service, so we gave the resident a sum to cover the extra energy used.

Many complaints are about poor communication with our repairs contractors, poor quality repairs and repairs that aren't completed at a convenient time. We are now planning changes to our repairs service that will tackle all these issues.

Compliments

Telling us when we get things right also helps us to improve our service. Between April and September last year, we received 56 compliments – half of them for good customer service and half about our services.

You can give us your complaint or compliment by telling a staff member, contacting the Service Centre or via our website at www.shgroup.org.uk

Feedback

Service charges: have we got it right?



After working with a group of residents to improve the way we handle service charges, we're now ready to test our ideas through wider consultation.

Your feedback has been telling us we can do better in this area, so staff and a workshop of residents have been working on improvements since last summer.

We have particularly looked at:

- how we manage service charges
- how we handle reserves for redecorating and replacing worn-

out items (also known as 'sinking funds')

- how we take depreciation into account (the way items lose value the older they get)
- how we fund major works
- your service charges if you have a managing agent.

From April, we will be asking groups of residents what they think. To be included, call the Service Centre and ask to speak to Evelyn John, or email evelyn.john@shgroup.org.uk

Feedback

Finance that's just up your street

£525

What it costs to borrow £300, over 50 weeks, from Morses Club Ltd, Shopacheck Financial Services or Provident Personal Credit - an APR of 254.5%

£338

What it costs to borrow £300, over 52 weeks, from Kent Savers - an APR of 26.8%

If you're fed up with high street banks, struggling to get credit, or keen for your money to follow your principles, joining a credit union could be just the thing for you.

Credit unions are financial co-operatives owned and controlled by their members. Most are for people living or working in the same area.

Credit unions offer similar services to high street banks, such as saving schemes, loans, direct debits and even mortgages. Some of the bigger unions even offer current accounts.

What makes them different is that they work by getting everyone to save into a common pool, which is then used to lend out to members. All the profits are used to make interest rates as cheap as possible for borrowers and as attractive as possible for savers.

Credit unions can often lend you money over periods your bank would not consider. For example, you can borrow £300 over three months from a credit union. Your loan is automatically covered by free life insurance.

Joining a credit union is simple. Once you've signed up, you start saving regularly, as much or as little as you like, at intervals you choose. You can usually pay at convenient local shops

or collection points, or direct from your wages.

Credit unions are regulated and authorised by the Financial Services Authority in the same way as banks. This means that savings up to £50,000 are covered by their compensation scheme.

For more information, go to the website of the Association of British Credit Unions at www.abcul.org, phone them on 0161 832 3694, or write to ABCUL, Holyoake House, Hanover Street, Manchester M60 0AS.

A new credit union for Kent

Kent Savers Credit Union, which opened in early March, is the latest credit union to open with support from Southern Housing Group. We support credit unions because they have so much to offer our residents.



Contact Kent Savers

To join or find out more, go to www.kentsavers.co.uk, email info@kentsavers.co.uk, phone them via the council on 0300 456 9990 (weekdays 8am to 8pm, Saturdays 9am to 5pm), or call in person at The Old Town Hall, High Street, Gravesend DA11 0AJ.

Information

How LEASE helps leaseholders

Whether you own all or just part of the equity in your home, you can get free and confidential advice from LEASE, the Leasehold Advisory Service.

LEASE provides answers to frequently asked questions on its website at www.lease-advice.org, as well as easy-to-read guides on complex issues including lease extensions, collective enfranchisement and your right to manage your home.

You can also:

- phone 020 7374 5380 for free

legal advice, from 9:30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

- write to them at 31 Worship Street, London, EC2A 2DX, or email info@lease-advice.org (include a day-time phone number so they can call you back)
- call or email for an appointment in person – you will need to take all relevant documents.

If a large number of leaseholders want to discuss a joint issue, LEASE can also arrange for a seminar or group meeting.



John Carmichael became a shared owner in Hove last year.

Advice

Save water save energy save carbon emissions

In a country that has high rainfall, it's easy to take water for granted. But the earth's water is a precious, constantly recycled resource – and people in the UK are using more and more of it.

Heating water for showers, washing machines and dishwashers also uses a lot of electricity. So if you save water, you can also reduce your energy bills and carbon emissions.

Here are Thames Water's top 10 tips for water saving.

- 1 Clean your teeth with the tap off, to save six litres a minute.
- 2 Have a shower not a bath. A five-minute shower uses only a third of the water of a bath (although a power shower could use more). Fit a free eaga showersmart (see below) for even bigger savings.
- 3 Fit a 'hippo' or 'save-a-flush' in your toilet cistern (unless you have a dual-flush loo), to save a litre of water per flush. They are usually free – call your water company.
- 4 Only run full loads of washing – a full load uses less water and energy than two half loads.
- 5 Keep a jug of water in the fridge, instead of running the tap to cold each time.
- 6 Don't leave the tap running to wash dishes or vegetables.
- 7 Fix your leaking tap, to save up to 140 litres a week.
- 8 Get a water butt, to collect water for your plants.
- 9 Use a bucket when you wash your car, to save 125 litres compared to a hosepipe.
- 10 Water your plants in the early morning or late evening, to minimise evaporation.

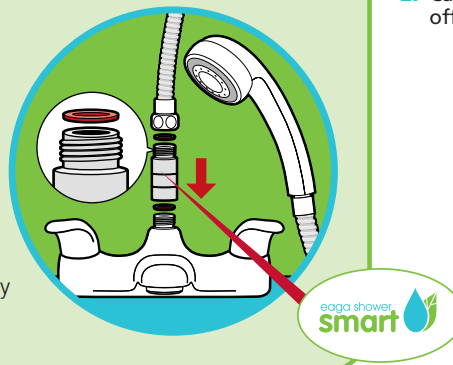
You will find a water usage calculator at www.thameswater.co.uk (follow the water-saving links).

Do you have any tips you want to share? Send your ideas in to Open Door (see back page).

save up to £600 with a free eaga ShowerSmart...



- The eaga ShowerSmart saves up to £20 per year* on both gas and metered water bills, which equates to £600 over the product's lifetime.
- 1 eaga ShowerSmart will typically save more than 21,000 litres of water/year for the average family of 4 and cut carbon emissions by more than 1 tonne of CO₂ over its lifetime.
- 15-year manufacturer's guarantee.
- Easy-self installation.
- Suitable for use with non-electric mixer showers or bath/shower mixer taps.
- It regulates the flow rate of the shower, saving both water and the associated energy with heating hot water.



APPLY NOW for your FREE eaga ShowerSmart.

There are two ways to claim your free eaga ShowerSmart:

1. Go to www.eaga.com/free and complete the form quoting offer code H97
2. Call freephone 0800 953 0033 quoting offer code H97



Maximum 1 eaga ShowerSmart per household during the period 1 January 2008 to 31 March 2011. We are unable to supply an eaga ShowerSmart if you have already received one within this period. Allow 42 days for delivery. Offer available to Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) residents only and is subject to availability. *based on a 2-person household. Source: The Building Research Establishment.

News

Study and sports grants

Residents have been making great use of our grants since the summer.

Sir Ashley Bramall Fund

Tanyarazdwa Marundo from Bow is using her grant to help with the costs of childcare and travelling while she attends a one-year Access to Higher Education Health Science diploma course at Newham College. Tanyarazdwa plans to go on to study nursing at university.

Chris Grant from Beckton is using his grant to help fund a BA (Hons) in Music Culture: Theory and Production, which he is taking at the University of East London. Chris told us: "The grant was very, very useful. It's been difficult to fund the whole process."

Chris says the course has been a good way to develop skills he already has, teaching him about everything from managing artists to designing sets, and giving him good business skills. He hopes to go on to promote events.

Beth Worrall from Fulham is studying for an MA in Legal Translation – Spanish to English, at City University. When we asked about her grant, she told us: "I'm so snowed under, I haven't done anything with it yet! But books cost so much, I'll probably buy two dictionaries."

Beth has been a professional translator in Spanish, French, Italian and Portuguese, for more than 15 years. She specialises in reinsurance.

Delwar Hussain from the Isle of Dogs is starting a BA (Hons) in Youth Work, with the Open University. His grant will pay for the first module.

"I've already got a City University degree in Accountancy and Business, but I really didn't

find it interesting. I'd been doing youth work since I was 16 and decided that was what I wanted. I now work for Youth Services and I'm currently a team leader, but to take any bigger management roles I need a degree," Delwar told us.

Charlie and **Jimmy Holland** from Cuckfield in West Sussex have Mum Alexandra to thank for their grants, after she pointed out they could apply.

Charlie has used his grant to buy tools, as he is studying for a City & Guilds Diploma in Electrical Installation at Central Sussex College, while Jimmy successfully applied for a Foundation Sports Fund award and is buying a bike. Jimmy is currently studying for As levels in Business Studies and Economics.

South Wight Training and Education Fund

Kirsty Gardner from Newport on the Isle of Wight made an impressive bid to our fund when she asked not just for a grant towards her Level 2 Kayak Coaching course, but also for a grant to buy a kayak!

Being quite short and enjoying a sport dominated by men, Kirsty told us: "It was difficult to find a kayak my size."

Kirsty first came across kayaking while completing a year's apprenticeship at Iywac, the Island Youth Water Activity Centre, where she still works part-time.

Gemma Bignell, from Atkinson House in Newport got a grant to help her study for A levels in Biology, Environmental Studies and English Literature.

Gemma enthused: "They got me revision guides, novels for my English



Grant winners Kirsty Gardner (left) and Gemma Bignell (right).

Literature, pens, highlighters and a desk. For the first time in my life, I've got a desk! I also got Wellington boots because I'm doing environmental studies and I go to farms and do biodiversity studies on the Downs."

Gemma hopes to go on to university in the autumn.

Foundation Sports Fund

Jimmy Holland is not the only resident to get a Foundation Sports Fund award.

Muna Omar from Islington has been given a grant for swimming lessons. She told us: "I recently went to my doctor with back pain and a pain in my knee. He said I was obese and the best thing is swimming, but I don't know how to swim."

Muna found a gym that gives lessons and is now waiting for the next course to start. "It's going to be half an hour every Wednesday for 12 weeks," she told us.

Also awarded grants, a resident from the Isle of Wight got a grant for water sports equipment, a resident in Hove got a grant for yoga lessons and a young resident from Margate in Kent got a grant towards his karate lessons.



News

Bengali Turkish

DIY gardening at an estate near you



Emily Shepherd sent this photo of her Cyprus Street balcony last summer.

Wish you could do some gardening, but your home is a flat? If you live on one of the Southern Housing Group Ltd estates, read on!

During the past year, residents in lots of areas have got together to start gardening on their estates – even on estates that have little green space.

With support from their housing managers and caretakers, residents have taken over parts of their grounds. Some have ambitious plans to improve the look of their estates, while others just want to grow a few flowers or add a splash of colour outside their front doors.

Some residents are even keen to grow food.

So, if you fancy a spot of gardening, even if you live in a flat, there are ways to make it happen. Talk to your

resident services team or caretaker about what might be possible at your estate. Ideally, you should talk to your neighbours too.

Providing the land is ours and there are no obvious problems, we will be happy to let you get started.

If you need funding, you are also welcome to apply for a small grant (see 'Apply now for a grant' below). Residents at several estates have already been funded to help them buy tools and seeds.



Contact us

To find out more about gardening on our estates, phone Dirk Lampe on 020 7324 1258 or email him at dirk.lampe@shgroup.org.uk

News

Bengali Turkish

Getting you back to work

It's no secret that times are hard and jobs are scarce – but we are here to help.

Our new Working Opportunities Fund can offer you a grant of up to £500 to help you get back into work. You can apply for help towards the costs of items such as:

- clothing for interviews
- work tools
- signing up with registered bodies
- travel costs
- childcare.

Our Employment and Training Project



Manager Tim Lovett says that it can often be quite simple things that stop people getting back to work – which is why we have set up this fund.

We will look at each application individually and we will expect you to pay some of the costs, but we hope this scheme will make it easier for you to find and keep the job you want.

To apply, phone 020 7324 1292, email grants@shgroup.org.uk, or go to www.shgroup.org.uk for more details.



Apply now for a grant

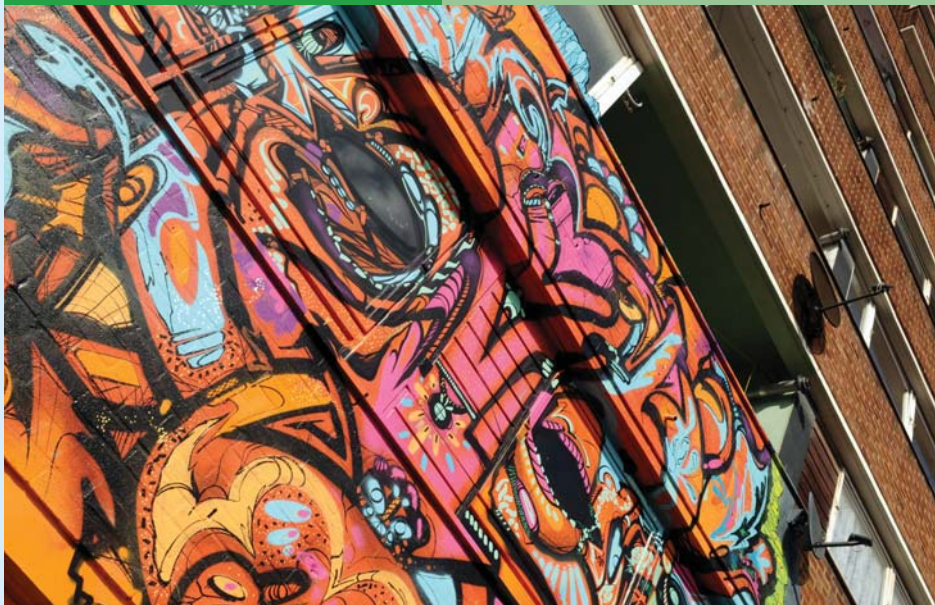
If you rent a home from Southern Housing Group Ltd, you can apply for:

- a Sir Ashley Bramall grant of up to £500 towards your study costs
- a Foundation Sports Fund grant of up to £500 towards the costs of getting actively involved in sport
- a Foundation small grant of up to £2,000 towards resident events or outings, community activities or school holiday programmes.

If you rent your home from South Wight HA, you can apply for:

- a study or sports grant of up to £500.

Email grants@shgroup.org.uk, phone 020 7324 1292, or go to www.shgroup.org.uk for more details.



Left, Boyd Hill's 'Where will I spend my happy days?'. Right, Mauricio Carneiro's We-Waste Room (in collaboration with Beo De Silva).

"We were delighted to share our space and our heritage with these talented young artists"

David Kelly, resident and Group Board member

Transforming Market Estate

Seventy-five artists spent February transforming empty blocks at the old Market Estate in Islington – ending with an art event in March that attracted 2,500 visitors.

The artists, selected from 300 who applied, used the soon-to-be demolished flats, stairwells and corridors to make art that reflected the history and architecture of the estate.

As well as the pieces pictured above, their work included the Fluorescent Yellow Room on the cover of this issue (Jess Blandford and Joe Morris), an audio tour guiding visitors through 40 years of residents' memories (Giulia Sala) and a piece dedicated to the late Jim Veal, a resident fondly remembered

for his work as Chair of the Residents' Association (Mark Calderwald).

The event was a fitting celebration to mark the end of the transformation we have been carrying out at the estate since we took it over in 2005.

By March, all the original Islington Council residents had moved in to their brand-new Southern Housing Group homes in Parkside Place. The first shared owners were also moving in, bringing new life to the community.

The art event was managed by Talltales, and funded by the Group, Higgins Construction and Arts Council England, with sponsorship from Philip Pank Partnership and HTA Architects.

News



Eco boost for Chale Green residents

At a meeting in January, around 50 people, including our residents, heard how they could take part in an ambitious green project in Chale Green on the Isle of Wight.

The area has won £500,000 in a competition run by the Department of Energy and Climate Change. Amongst other things, the funding will pay for green technology to be installed in 70 of our homes at Spanners Close.

Supported by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, which was set up by the

record-breaking yachtswoman, the project aims to reduce carbon use and make sure none of the area's 10,000 households spends more than 10 per cent of their income on energy.

All 10 areas chosen for the awards are expected to share new ways to save carbon with the rest of the country.

Meanwhile, residents at Rope Walk sheltered scheme in Cowes will see their shared electricity bill fall by 75 per cent, thanks to a grant towards LED lighting from the Energy Saving Trust.

Events

Change led by you

Earlier this year, South Wight HA consulted 74 users of our supported housing services about their priorities for this year.

At eight meetings, we discussed the ideas drawn up at our Supported Housing Involvement Day in October – where your priorities were health and well-being, money and finance, and the support we provide.

We have now agreed to:

- encourage service users to get a One Card – which reduces the cost of using local leisure centres
- help people grow vegetables and plants, and improve their gardens
- share people's recipes and promote their cooking nights
- provide more information about budgeting and debt advice
- set up a picture-based shopping list for those who find lists difficult
- help people to track down grants from outside organisations
- draw up a new leaflet about how we offer support.

Supported housing residents take part.



News



Kirsty Gardner and friends work on the willow dome at Atkinson House.

Growing organic on the Isle of Wight

Four of our hostels for young people on the Isle of Wight are growing their own organic veg, thanks to £500 from the Cultural Olympiad Fund and £400 from our environmental fund.

At St John's Road in Ryde, resident Darrell worked with Kev, Danny and John from the Growing Ideas community enterprise in January to install a water butt and vegetable beds in a disused fenced-in area behind the house. Darrell told us: "I was the only one who helped, because it was so early in the morning! It took two to three hours and it was quite hard work shovelling the dirt in. But it was really great. I enjoyed myself."

Residents now plan to paint a mural on a wall and shed.

Young mums at the Oakleigh hostel for teenage parents in Ryde will soon

be able to share their home-grown organic veg with their babies, after Growing Ideas got them started by installing raised growing beds and a butt in their garden.

Growing Ideas also put in two raised beds at Atkinson House and one at Fairlee Road – both in Newport.

Residents from several hostels later got together to create a willow dome in the garden at Atkinson House. With a little help, this will root and grow into a restful shelter.

Kirsty Gardner, who has since moved from Atkinson House into independent accommodation, said: "Creating the willow dome was a very good experience, and it was fun interacting with everyone. Taking part in the project helped me to realise how far I've come living at Atkinson House, and now I feel ready to move on."

News

Grateful Mrs Gurung takes to the airwaves

Mrs Gurung from Taylor Court sheltered scheme in Reading took part in a broadcast on the Reading4U community radio station in January.

She was interviewed about the support James Butcher HA gave Gurkhas during their campaign for UK residency.

Mrs Gurung's husband belongs to the Reading Gurkhas, who worked with actor Joanna Lumley to lobby the government.

Mrs Gurung said: "My husband and I were housed by JBHA during a very uncertain and worrying time, and I

was pleased to be able to share my experience on the radio. We're very grateful to JBHA staff for all the support they've given us."

The interview was part of a week where local landlords, including JBHA, offered housing advice.



Strong and flying

Young residents from Hackney and Islington taking part in the Strong and Flying acrobatics project.

“This has been a great experience for my daughter. It has helped her and me work better together and understand each other”

Marcia Muhammad

In February, 20 young girls from our Hackney and Islington estates gave a stunning display of acrobatics, after four months of training with the internationally acclaimed mimbre performance arts company.

The youngsters took part in a project that used acrobatics and acrobalance (human pyramids) to show what the body is capable of, while finding their strengths as individuals and as a group.

Mimbre, whose Joint Artistic Director Lina Johansson is one of our residents,

also held discussion sessions with the girls’ mums, and acrobatics sessions that brought the mums and daughters together. Participants also got the chance to see mimbre perform at the South Bank Centre, as part of the London International Mime Festival.

The project was funded by ROSA – the UK Fund for Women and Girls, and also by the Big Lottery, thanks to our partnership in the Activate London project, which is led by Peabody Trust. This is the third year of projects run by mimbre for our residents.

Events

“It was an ideal opportunity to give feedback on anti-social behaviour in the area and to chat about what we and our community really need”

Resident feedback

Roadshows put residents in the know

James Butcher HA has been taking a residents’ road show from scheme to scheme in recent months.

By February, events had been held at Marsh Court and the West Village in Reading, and at Elizabeth and Leonard Courts in Theale, Brain Court in Swindon and David Smith Court in Calcot.

The events gave residents the chance to meet members of their resident services team, as well as Anti-social Behaviour Caseworker Colin Waters and Community Involvement Officer Kim Jakubiszyn.

At each event, we provided plenty of useful information. Representatives from Thames Valley Police Force, the Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service and, for the schemes with families, the local children’s centre and information service, were also on hand.

Pictured: Reading residents discussing security devices with staff.



News

Worsley Court gardens get a lift

Residents at Worsley Court sheltered scheme in Wroxall on the Isle of Wight, were treated to an unusual sight when 10 members of the housing team dropped by to spend the day sorting out their garden.

Under the guidance of the Growing Ideas company, keen staff members dug out an overgrown area and built three raised beds separated by chipped bark, so that residents can do a spot of gardening.

Resident Jim Jarvis says the staff did a great job. "They were wonderful. Really terrific. There were so many of them and they knew exactly what they were doing. We just made them tea!

"We've got something out of this that will last for years and years. I've already been out and bought potatoes, rhubarb and onions to put in."

News



Jon Bell (front) is pictured with computer technician Ben Locke, a fellow resident, and Gay Edwards, High Sheriff of the Isle of Wight, in the new IT suite.

IT upgrade for Atkinson House

Young residents from our Isle of Wight hostels are enjoying their new IT suite, after it was officially opened at Atkinson House in Newport by the Isle of Wight's High Sheriff, Gay Edwards, in December.

Thanks to a grant of £4,500 from Isle of Wight Council's Youth Opportunities Fund, we have been able to buy three

computers and software for the scheme. Residents helped staff to put forward their bid.

"It's a pleasure to have new computers to help us with our work," 17-year-old Jon Bell told Open Door. Jon, who is a resident at our Fairlee Road hostel, is currently doing a course at The Isle of Wight College and hopes to become a car mechanic.

News

Wale takes a trip to No. 10

Wale Yusuff from Parkside Place in Islington had an unforgettable day on 19 November, when he met the Prime Minister at No. 10 Downing Street.

Wale was invited to a celebration for Social Enterprise Day, because he has set up Drivers Edge UK, a business that is educating young people about driving safely. He is currently being sponsored by our social and economic regeneration department, on a part-time one-year course at the School for Social Entrepreneurs.

At the Downing Street reception, Wale met Gordon Brown, Tessa Jowell and well-known business people.

He said: "Visiting 10 Downing Street was the experience of a lifetime. The Prime Minister said, 'You should be proud of what you're doing; you're changing lives, which means you're changing the world'.

"It was an honour to be involved, and I'll remember that message for a long time to come."



News

Try boxing in Ventnor

Residents in Ventnor on the Isle of Wight are being encouraged to try something new – by getting involved in Ventnor Boxing Club.

The club, which meets in the old Methodist Church on Ventnor High Street, is run by Darren Green, who is proud of the club's history of producing good fighters. But he is also keen to encourage people to come to his boxercise classes.

South Wight Housing Association helped the club secure £10,000 in funding from Sport England, and added a further £2,000. We see the club as a great community resource, with lots to offer our residents.

News



Northbourne Action Group

Northbourne Action Group (NAG), which was set up by residents in Farncombe, Surrey, is going from strength to strength after recruiting a new committee and youth panel.

With an eye to future projects, the committee now includes two co-chair/secretaries, a web designer/administrator, an eco-co-ordinator and a risk assessment director.

The new youth panel, to be known as the Young NAGs, brings together young people aged from five to 19 years. Their role will be to share their ideas, help organise and fundraise for events, and work with other young people in the area.

NAG raised £58,000 last year to provide a play park and won several awards for their community work. The group is now working on phase two of the park, which will add a community garden, fitness trail and football pitch.

News

Bengali



Truncated trunk

A broken stretch of fencing from Grove Hall Park in Bow, east London, won a televised art competition in December – much to the surprise of residents.

Eugenie Scrase, who is a student at Slade School of Fine Art, bought the fence from us after spotting it while out walking. She found it interesting because it had a tree trunk impaled on it. The trunk was sitting there because it had been left by our tree surgeons after they removed the rest of the tree, which had fallen down in a storm.

When Eugenie took part in the School of Saatchi series on BBC2, her artwork 'Truncated trunk' impressed arts patron Charles Saatchi so much, he selected her as series winner. He is now exhibiting her work in Russia.

Grove Hall Park leaseholder Katie Milton told Inside Housing: "I couldn't imagine it as art when it was at the back of our building, but I'm open to the thought that it could be art. Art is something that gets you thinking, and it's very personal."

Grove Hall Park now has a new fence, paid for by Eugenie.

Event

Drop-in at Portsea

Residents living in the Portsea area in Portsmouth were invited to drop in and meet us when we held an event there in November.

We also invited the local police, community wardens, councillors and Housing Benefit staff, and our own Financial Inclusion team, so that we could offer residents advice on



subjects from coping with debt to anti-social behaviour.

The event was a great success, with a steady stream of residents who rent or own their homes. We were also able to introduce councillors to some of the agencies active in their areas.

If you would be interested in attending a similar event, contact your local housing staff.

Pictured above are some of the staff, residents and representatives from other agencies who attended our Portsea drop-in.

Our performance

This page tells you about our performance in recent months. The 12 key service standards were chosen by residents, and we also report on three other important measures.

Our performance

Our key standards

Our 12 key standards have been chosen by residents to reflect your priorities. We have added three others (written in blue) because our regulator expects us to report on them.

Reporting on these standards means that we are collecting new information in new ways, so we aren't able to provide all the figures just yet. Our mystery shoppers now report on a number of these standards.

Our phone response times (key service standard 3) have improved because our Service Centre teams have been training in each other's work, so that they can cover other areas during busy times.

Our completed gas services fell (key service standard 15) because the volume of work on gas appliances increased during the extreme cold weather.

We are currently changing the structure of the teams that provide our repairs service. The changes will take a while to bed down, but are aimed at improving the service we provide you with (key service standards 12-14).

We are closely investigating why our performance on anti-social behaviour (key service standard 7) decreased, so that we can improve this service.

Over the past three months, the level of rent owed has increased. However, we are still doing much better than this time last year.

Notes

1. There was no mystery shopping carried out during this period.
2. We don't yet have this figure, so we have stated the number of inspections carried out instead.
3. We will report on this in future.

Customer care 1 October to 31 December 2009

	Jul-Sept	Oct-Dec
1 If you write to us, we will respond within 10 working days	37.5	67%
2 If you email us, we will respond within five working days	92.8%	92.3%
3 We will answer 80% of phone calls to the Service Centre within 20 seconds	71.9%	77.4%
4 If you visit our main offices, you will be met by a polite and professional member of staff wearing an identification badge with a photograph	75%	- ¹

Managing where you live 1 October to 31 December 2009

	Jul-Sept	Oct-Dec
5 We will inspect where you live as often as we agree with you (monthly, or every three or six months)	697 ²	91%
6 We will get rid of offensive graffiti within one working day of being told about it ³	-	-
7 If you report an incident of anti-social behaviour that we think is high risk, we will contact you within 24 hours	69.4%	50%

Paying rent & service charges 1 October to 31 December 2009

	Jul-Sept	Oct-Dec
8 We will make sure your payment is on your rent or service charge account within two working days (if you send a cheque we must receive it first)	80%	100%
9 We will keep the amount of overdue rent as low as possible (total on 30 September and 31 December)	4.75%	5.05%

Letting homes 1 October to 31 December 2009

	Jul-Sept	Oct-Dec
10 Within six weeks of you moving in, we will visit you, to see how you are settling in	62.2%	73%
11 We will keep as low as possible the average number of days it takes us to tidy up and relet empty homes (total on 30 September and 31 December)	45 days	40 days

Repairs and maintenance 1 October to 31 December 2009

	Jul-Sept	Oct-Dec
12 We will visit you to carry out quality checks (at least 10% of all repairs each month)	9%	10%
13 We will offer you an appointment to carry out your repair	78%	74%
14 We will try to get repairs completed in one visit	75%	72%
15 We will get a valid gas safety certificate for all our homes every year (totals on 30 September and 31 December)	99.5%	98.7%

Your pages

We want to hear from you! Send us a letter, a photo or an email to tell us what's going on in your area or your views on anything you read in Open Door. Write to the Editor via the Service Centre or email opendoor@shgroup.org.uk

Older residents around Southern Housing Group



Many of our residents in retirement rented schemes have been raising money for charity over the past few months.

In September, **Swan Court** in Gosport raised an amazing £816.16, when they took part in The World's Biggest Coffee Morning, in aid of Macmillan, the cancer support charity. Residents sold refreshments, ran stalls and held a raffle.

A Christmas raffle at **Elizabeth Court** in Theale raised £256 for the Alzheimer's Society.

A coffee morning and Christmas fair at **The Farriers** in Binstead on the Isle of Wight raised an impressive £560 for the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance Trust.

Residents at **Jubilee Court** in Bracknell raised £100 for Thames Valley and Chiltern Air Ambulance Trust by holding a Christmas and New Year raffle.

Pictured above: residents at The Farriers hand over their cheque to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance Trust. Photo by courtesy of the IW County Press.

Renée and David Green Chingford



Renée and David Green from Lewis House in Chingford celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary in March.

The couple, now in their 80s, married at the Jewish Synagogue in Edgerton Road, Stamford Hill, in March 1949.

Renée and David have been Southern Housing Group tenants for more than 40 years and residents of Lewis House for the past 21 years.

Reading House Hayling Island



Malcolm Garbutt from Reading House sheltered scheme in Hayling Island, Hampshire, sent us this picture of his neighbours surveying their handiwork, after a session making Christmas decorations in December for their communal lounge.

Nightingale Estate Hackney



On Sunday 6 December, older residents from the Nightingale Estate in Hackney were taken to the Camden Centre, so that they could take part in an afternoon Christmas Tea Dance. They were also treated to tea and cakes.

The event was organised and funded as part of our 'In Your Prime' project, which aims to encourage older people to keep fit, take exercise and look after their health and well-being.

'In Your Prime' is funded by the Big Lottery via Activate London - a multi-landlord project that is led by the Peabody Trust.

Ray Francis North London



Ray Francis, who lives at Myddleton Grange in north London, asked us to include an article on the caring professional service he got from Customer Service Advisor Emma Tilley recently.

Ray has been having a trying time over the past few months with a shower unit that twice developed the same fault.

Calling the Service Centre on three separate occasions, Ray spoke to Emma, who did all she could to sort things out. Ray told us: "In all my dealings as a disabled person with your call centre, I have found that Emma has been not only proficient at her job, but also understanding of the needs the problem has caused for a disabled person and, in short, Emma Tilley must be the type of staff all customer care call centres aspire to."

We're working hard with our contractors to get your repairs right first time wherever possible, but we're pleased to hear from Ray that our staff pull out all the stops when things don't go as planned.

Sandham House Isle of Wight



Residents at Sandham House in Sandown on the Isle of Wight stepped in to stop a flooding drama from becoming a crisis recently.

The flooding was caused by hot water leaking from the radiators of the upstairs communal corridors. By the time the problem was spotted, the water was already seeping down to the ground floor - passing through the electrical light sockets and the fire alarm system.

Thinking quickly, three residents immediately joined staff to help contain the water, catching it in anything they could lay their hands on and passing their filled containers down the line to be emptied.

Darren Dollery, who is a Support Worker at Sandham House told Open Door: "The flooding is almost certainly going to cost a lot of money. But thanks to the residents, the damage is not thought to be as extensive as it could have been. We're very grateful for their willingness to help.

"John Rooney, one of the residents who helped out, said: 'Some good has come from all this, as we're all pulling together. It must be like it was during the war!'"

Pictured tackling the flood are residents John Cavanagh (left) and David Doye (right).

Diary dates

21 May	Deadline for consultation feedback on the Group's future plans	
22 May	Conference for Southern Housing Group residents (London, Thames Gateway and South regions)	Hotel Russell in central London See the flyer in this issue for more details
28 May	European Neighbours Day	Want to organise an event near you? Contact your local housing staff
31 May	The next direct debit prize draw Make sure you are set up to pay your rent or charges by direct debit and you could win £200	



Competition

Find the answers to the questions below, in this issue of Open Door, for the chance to win one of three vouchers.

- 1 Name one of the actions we took in response to our short notice inspection last year.
- 2 Name one of the benefits of credit unions.
- 3 Which famous sportswoman is working with us on an environmental project on the Isle of Wight?

Email opendoor@shgroup.org.uk or write your answers on the back of an envelope or postcard with your name, and address and post to:

Open Door Competition, Southern Housing Group, Fleet House, 59-61 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1M 5LA. The closing date is **Friday 30 June 2010**.

Winners from last issue: Sarah Richards from Portsmouth, Vernon Young from the Isle of Wight and Mrs P Wysiecki from Sussex.

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COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS: Instructions on how to enter form part of the Terms & Conditions, and entry into the competition is deemed to be an acceptance of the Terms & Conditions. Entry is open to all Group residents. Employees of Southern Housing Group, promoters, their families and associated companies are ineligible to enter. The winners will be the first eligible entry drawn and will be notified by phone or mail. All draws will take place at the Group's head office. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. The Promoter accepts no responsibility for any variation in the prize value. Prizes are not exchangeable. Entries will close 5pm on Friday 30 June 2010.

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You can write to the editor via the Service Centre or send an email to opendoor@shgroup.org.uk
The deadline for contributions to the next issue is Friday 30 June 2010.

Southern Housing Group



James Butcher Housing Association



South Wight Housing Association



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If you live on the Isle of Wight, phone 0300 303 1772 (also out-of-hours emergencies)

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Write to Service Centre
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PO Box 643, Horsham RH12 1XJ

Out-of-hours emergencies
If you rent a home on the UK mainland, phone Homeserve on 08457 573 764 (Southern Housing Group Ltd) or 08456 013 225 (James Butcher HA)

If you own a home on the UK mainland, phone Homeserve on 08456 000 453