

South Anglia Annual Resident Review 2011-2012



This year we have asked residents from our Communication Connectors Panel what questions they would like to ask their Managing Director. Here is what they wanted to know.....

What community improvements have been made over the last year?

In 2010 we invested £1.1 million in our Excellent Estates Project which benefited over 700 residents. To keep up this good work, a new team was set up last year to manage and improve our new estate services contracts and anti-social behaviour (ASB) work. Customers are involved in reviewing these services at monthly estate inspections. Last year our new Resident Scrutiny Panel reviewed our communal cleaning and told us how we could make this better. These improvements are being carried out this year.

How much have you invested in Decent Homes in the last year?

We reached our 100% Decent Homes target in 2010 and we're determined that all our homes remain decent. We continue to go above and beyond the government Decent Homes standard and have spent over £9 million on making sure our homes remain up to these standards.

How has the repairs service improved in the last year?

Our partner maintenance contractor, Anglia Maintenance Services, is now our Direct Labour Organisation (or DLO) called South Anglia Maintenance Services.

Whilst integrating South Anglia Maintenance Services we looked at the way we are carrying out some of our services. One of the things we have updated is how we deal with empty homes and how we make sure they meet Decent Homes Standard before re-letting. Doing this has meant we have improved our "void turn around time" by over five days.

Where will money be spent next year?

Our priorities will be Resident Involvement and Community Development.

£200,000 has been allocated for community based projects and initiatives such as our Residents' Away Day and the Community Spirit Awards. We will also be targeting activity where the need is greatest. Some of the projects we will support are:-

- increasing access to learning opportunities and Health and Wellbeing;

South Anglia has invested £35,000 in the TREE Furniture and bike recycling Project in Vange, Basildon.

- we're working with the National Citizen Service in Luton on a project for 180 16 year olds from different backgrounds to take part in a summer programme to encourage them to be more community minded
- We're working with Welfare Benefit Advisors across Essex, Bedfordshire and East Herts to train resident volunteers to provide basic welfare benefit advice.

How will you be supporting residents facing benefit cuts next year?

As well as our volunteer residents providing advice to other customers, we've been working to prepare and support all customers affected by the changes. Our staff have been fully trained so they can offer the best advice and guidance on money matters, benefit changes and debt management to residents that need it.

Picture top left: Tracy White, Managing Director of South Anglia Housing Association.

Have we done what we promised?

Getting you involved Last year we told you our plans for the year, here is how we performed against those plans and what we are going to be doing over the next year

Highlights from 2011-12. We have:

- set up a new Resident Scrutiny Panel to involve you in how we run our services. The Panel has put together a list of other services to review and they are currently working on our Under Occupation Scheme
- the Panel has completed its first review on communal cleaning services. We are actioning these suggestions.

Plans for the next year in 2012-13. We will:

- review our involvement activities at the Annual Involved Residents Conference to make sure we're meeting customers' needs
- improve how we feedback consultation and survey results i.e. include them on email straplines, put them on Facebook and our website, in Home Matters and other newsletters, notice boards and receptions
- carry out more work with hard to reach community groups
- produce a Customer Commitments publication so all residents can provide feedback on our performance
- set up a resident readers' panel to feedback on policies as part of policy reviews.

Looking after your homes

Highlights from 2011-12. We have:

- increased the number of renewable heating systems installed meaning reduced utility bills for our customers
- developed 18 new homes in Plaw Hatch Close and 12 homes in Firlands, Much Hadham
- improved our lettings procedure and asked customers if their rent statements are clear enough and introduced a new project to look at tenancy fraud
- finalised a "Moving In Guide" with the help of the Neighbourhood Quality Action Group. This is now given to all new customers
- launched a transfer incentive scheme which is being reviewed by our Resident Scrutiny Panel to ensure it is as effective as possible.

Plans for the next year in 2012-13. We will:

- re-shape how we deliver repairs into a regional team and set up new responsive and planned works contracts to get a better service
- improve homes with low energy efficiency ratings to bring all properties up to a rating of 65 or above
- make customers aware of the changes to benefits, provide help and support as needed and offer details of other useful organisations
- draft an Income Management Strategy setting out our aims and objectives, service standards and clear guidelines on how rent and service charges are set
- review the Estate Champion Role and develop it further to help with issues like dealing with illegally parked cars, offensive graffiti and develop a Neighbourhood Strategy.

Building communities

Highlights from 2011-12. We have:

- added new website pages with details of services provided by our environment team. There is also an online form for customers to report below standard service. A similar page has been developed for our ASB team
- carried out an annual survey on estate services with all customers who pay a service charge. We will be making improvements
- established a new ASB team.

Plans for the next year in 2012-13. We will:

- look at additional storage options in blocks of flats for buggies and bikes
- find out what people think about ASB and put together an action plan
- arrange ASB training day for front line staff.

Offering value for money

Highlights from 2011-12. We have:

- formed a plan with residents for improving value for money. Residents will be involved with the impact and progress of the plan
- continued to ask our customers what their priorities are and used this to shape our service
- projects have been assessed for the value they will add to our services, for example the Quality Action Groups work with each department to review their service improvement plans for the year and help us make improvements such as considering the cost of services.

Plans for the next year in 2012-13. We will:

- the new government standard for Value for Money (VFM) requires us to produce a self assessment document to show what we've done to meet the standard. This has recently been produced for the work we did last year and will be published to customers shortly
- the Self Assessment will continue to be reviewed by our Board every year
- a new Board VFM Champion has been appointed who will oversee the VFM work being done
- all managers will be required to achieve VFM through service improvements
- VFM training for staff, Board Members and customers will be offered.

How well did we perform?

Getting you involved

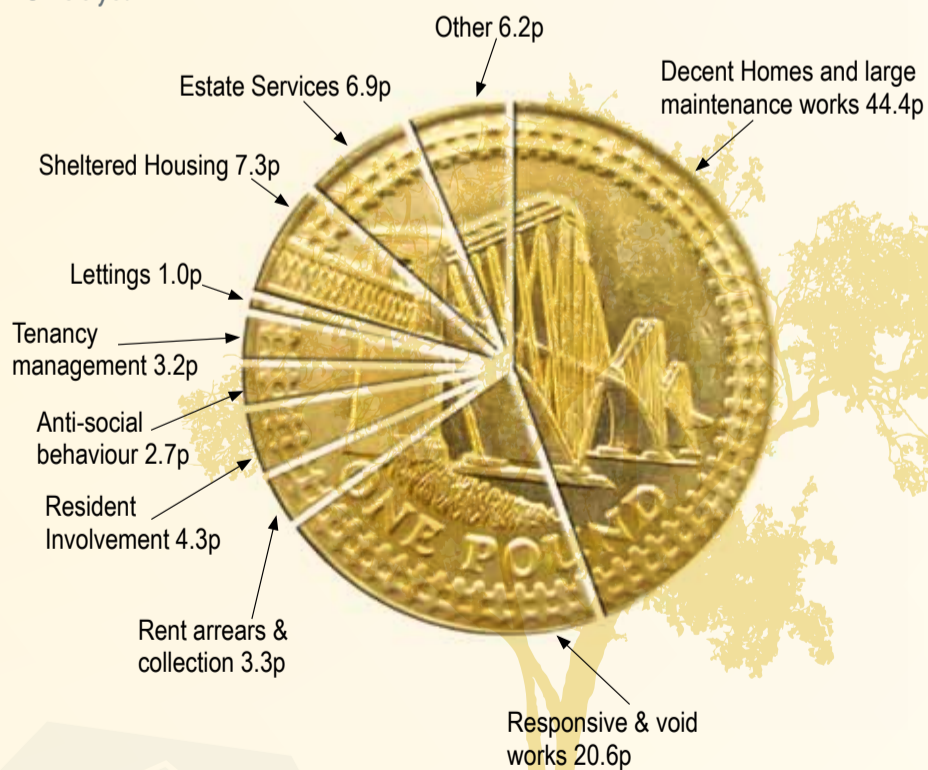
Satisfaction with views taken into account	
2010-11	2011-12
73.2%	78.5%
Satisfaction with landlord services	
2010-11	2011-12
81.4%	84.1%
Complaints resolved at first stage	
2010-11	2011-12
93.1%	90.6%

Giving customers more ways to get involved and tell us what they think has helped us make improvements to services. Customers are happier that their views are being taken into account with satisfaction for this increasing by 5.3%. Residents satisfied with our services has also increased by 2.7%. Our complaints performance has dipped slightly this year by 2.5%. We'll be working hard this year to improve this by reviewing the current process.

Offering value for money

Rent collected as a % of rent due	
2010-11	2011-12
100.6%	99.8%
Current resident arrears as % of rent due	
2010-11	2011-12
3%	3%

The ASB Team has continued to work with the Police and PCSOs on our estates to support victims of ASB. This is supported by joint working with our Community Development Team on projects such as play schemes for children during the summer holidays.



Looking after your homes

Percentage of urgent repairs completed within target time	
2010-11	2011-12
97.5%	98.9%
Percentage of routine repairs completed within target time	
2010-11	2011-12
99.9%	99.2%
Satisfaction with last repair	
2010-11	2011-12
92.9%	93.9%

With big changes last year to our repairs and maintenance service, plans we made to review appointment slots and more training to improve customer satisfaction weren't possible. With new contracts being set up we should be able to do both of these projects next year.

For the third year in a row, all appointment categories for repairs (emergency, urgent, and routine) were within target. This was despite the many changes to the service. Residents are 1.3% more satisfied with the way we dealt with their last repair. Combined with a performance improvement of 3.6% in 10/11 means this KPI has improved by nearly 5% over the past two years.

Average re-let turnaround times (days)	
2010-11	2011-12
24.4 days	19.2 days
Percentage of dwellings that are vacant and available to let	
2010-11	2011-12
0.6%	0.4%
Percentage of dwellings that are vacant but unavailable to let	
2010-11	2011-12
0%	0%

Our target for re-letting has improved by 5.2 days. Combined with the 8.6 day improvement seen the year before means we have knocked 13.8 days off how long it takes to re-let homes - the shortest time for six years.

Our Circle Income Strategy is ongoing and it's hoped that we'll be able to finalise a local South Anglia Strategy this year. We recognise that because of benefit changes debt advice and support will now form a crucial part of the strategy.

In September 2012, our Board made its first self-assessment against the Homes and Communities Agency's new 'Value for Money Standard'. This self-assessment covered our activities, services and approach to Value for Money in the period up to 31st March 2012 – including examples of our achievements. This will be published on our website and subject to further resident scrutiny in the latter part of 2012-13.

Hundreds flock to wildlife park

In August over 500 residents enjoyed the exotic surroundings of Paradise Wildlife Park in Broxbourne as part of our annual away day.

As well as meeting some of the 400 different animals at the park, residents enjoyed a BBQ, games, healthy eating activities and a raffle.

The away day not only brought the community together, but also gave our residents an opportunity to find out more about the services we offer. Managing Director Tracy White went along to talk to residents about their views

on the current services South Anglia provides.

Given the upcoming changes to the welfare system, the theme of this year's away day was money matters. Members of our team were on hand with advice alongside other local organisations such as Herts and Essex Savers credit unions, Hertfordshire Councils' Money Advice Unit and Citizens Advice Bureau.



South Anglia resident Kerry Fitzgerald, from Harlow, said: *"I enjoyed the whole experience, both the park and finding out more about South Anglia and other agencies."*

Caroline Kaldani, Assistant Director at South Anglia said: *"We're delighted to have hosted another successful residents' away day and that so many people had a good time. Most importantly though, we were able to make residents more aware of the help they can access around welfare reform and money management."*



Improving our repairs and maintenance service



As part of our work to deliver an even better repairs and maintenance service to you, we have been selecting new contractors. We are committed to putting customers at the heart of everything we do and have involved you throughout the procurement process so that we can hear your views and take them into account.

As well as a consultation exercise involving over 400 customers, across our nine housing associations, as well as Circle Living and Circle Support, 18 customers were also involved in:

- Designing the bid brief
- Taking part in the Bidders Day held in August 2011

- Interviewing bidders during the competitive dialogue process
- Commenting on proposals about how customers access our business, and how we create sustainable communities from 18 bidders
- Working with Circle staff to judge the final bid proposals

In May this year we announced our preferred bidders for our repairs and maintenance services and wrote to all our customers who pay us a variable service charge asking if they wished to comment on the preferred bidders and ask any questions about them.

We received 50 responses from the 30,300 customers we contacted, with 52% of these coming from Mole Valley customers and 20% from Merton Priory Homes' customers. You can read a summary of the feedback we received, along with our responses to key themes, on our website.

We are now in the process of finalising our contractual arrangements with our five Service Providers – our in-house Direct Labour Organisation Circle DLO; Apollo Property Services; Kier Services; Morrison Facilities and United House. We will update you again once we have our new systems, processes and procedures in place.

Time for a change?



house exchange

Maybe news of the welfare reform changes has got you thinking it might be time to downsize; maybe your garden is proving too much to cope with or perhaps you fancy living closer to your family. Whatever your reasons for wishing to move it's easier than ever to find a new home which better suits your needs.

We know moving is a big step, that's why we work hard to make it as smooth and pain free as possible. Once you've taken the plunge and decided to move contact us and we can talk you through the process step by step.

Circle's House Exchange programme www.houseexchange.org.uk has mutual exchange homes across the country and is an ideal way to find a home of a more suitable size or location, so why not log in today and see if your new home is just round the corner!

www.houseexchange.org.uk

We need you!

Listening to our residents' views is key to shaping our business, and we would like to get more residents than ever involved!

Two ways you can get involved are through our Mystery Shopping scheme and our Quality Action Groups. Our fully trained Mystery Shoppers assess the service we provide in a variety of ways and feed back how we did. They are asked to make phone calls, write e-mails/letters, visit offices or use our website then complete forms on their experience. All the feedback

is then analysed so we can make improvements to the service. All complimentary feedback is also fed back to the relevant staff members. Our mystery shoppers are rewarded with Love2Shop vouchers for fully completed forms.

Our Quality Action Groups meet about every two months to discuss policies, procedures and other issues related to one or more departments of South Anglia. They provide an opportunity to discuss issues affecting all residents and hopefully put them right.



There are currently 4 Quality Action Groups:

- Neighbourhood, Income & Antisocial Behaviour
- Property & Maintenance
- Access & Customer Care (Customer Services)
- Resident Involvement

If you would like to get involved in any of our activities or would like more information on how you could help us, contact the resident involvement team by e-mail at communitiesandinvolvement@circle.org.uk or call customer services on 0800 694 0159.



Make sure you don't get charged!

Often when people move out of our homes, they don't realise that they may have to pay rechargeable repairs.



These are repairs that have been caused by damage or neglect to fixtures, fittings or the structure of the property internally and externally by you, a member of your household or any visitor to your home. Repairs of this kind will be charged back to you. We will always try to advise you beforehand of the likely costs involved in carrying out the repair.

When you leave your home

your neighbourhood officer will tell you how the property must be left. If you do not leave the property in this condition then any damage or clearance will be charged to you.

Some examples of these charges are:

Removal of:

- Fridge = £50 – £100
- Shed = £100 – £250
- Settee = £75 – £250

Replacement of:

- Internal door = £110 – £180
- Internal door handle = £15 – £50

The most likely reasons for there being a recharge to you for repairs are:

- **Damage** – e.g. replace smashed door, DIY which has damaged the fabric/structure of the property

- **Neglect** – e.g. clear blocked sink, drain, bath or toilet
- **Misuse** – e.g. repair damage to walls
- **Abuse** – e.g. customers who contact the repairs service claiming they fall into the vulnerable tenants' repairs policy category, which is found to be untrue when the repair is done



Leaseholders and Shared Owners



Circle Living Performance Quarter 1 – 1st April to 30th June 2012

% Complaints resolved before reaching Stage 3 – Target 100%, Tolerance 95%, Actual 100%

During Quarter 1 the Circle Living Team successfully resolved all complaints before needing to reach Stage 3 of the internal complaints procedure.

% Customers Profiled – Target 95%, Actual 96.9%

To ensure the services we provide meet the needs of our customers the Circle Living Team have undertaken a large scale data collection exercise of resident Equality and Diversity data, allowing us to understand the profile of our customers. At the end of last year we held 39.8% of our residents Equality and Diversity data, compared to the 96.9% that we now have on record.

% Customers satisfied that their views are being taken in to account – Target 60%, Tolerance 55%, Actual 49.4%

Circle Living offers a variety of opportunities for you to get involved. Getting involved can be as simple as completing a short survey. It can also be something more involved, like the Circle Living Service Improvement Panel. Getting involved means getting your voice heard. Changes to our services are driven by resident views, complaints and suggestions. To find out more about what is available to you please contact the Customer Liaison Team on the details below:

T: 01603 595125
E: customerliaisonteam@circle.org.uk

facebook

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[facebook.com/circleliving.circleanglia](https://www.facebook.com/circleliving.circleanglia) or search 'Circle Living'

Your Money Matters – Christmas Spending

Christmas can be an expensive time of the year but with the festive season just round the corner don't despair; there are lots of ways to be money smart this year.



Being careful with your money doesn't mean you have to become a Christmas Scrooge, it is still possible to create a fabulous festive time and make everyone feel special without breaking the bank. Try following some of these simple tips to save money at Christmas.

- **Plan your Christmas meals ahead.** By creating menus and shopping lists, impulse shopping and excess

spending is less of a hazard. Shopping well in advance also means you can grab bargains, special offers and BOGOFs (Buy One Get One Free) when they appear.

- **Be hard on yourself.** Set a budget and stick to it. No matter how appealing the new 'must have' gadget is, if it's not in the budget – just say **NO**. Instead of buying something way above your budget, agree with your loved ones to limit your

spending to a particular amount – say, £15. You may be surprised at the fun you can have and what you can get when you've got to stick to a limit.

- **Set time aside to surf.** No don't worry we don't mean getting your surf board out this winter, but rather surf the internet for online stores that will deliver. This will not only save you money on bus fares but also shopping online helps limit impulse buying, and if you buy from

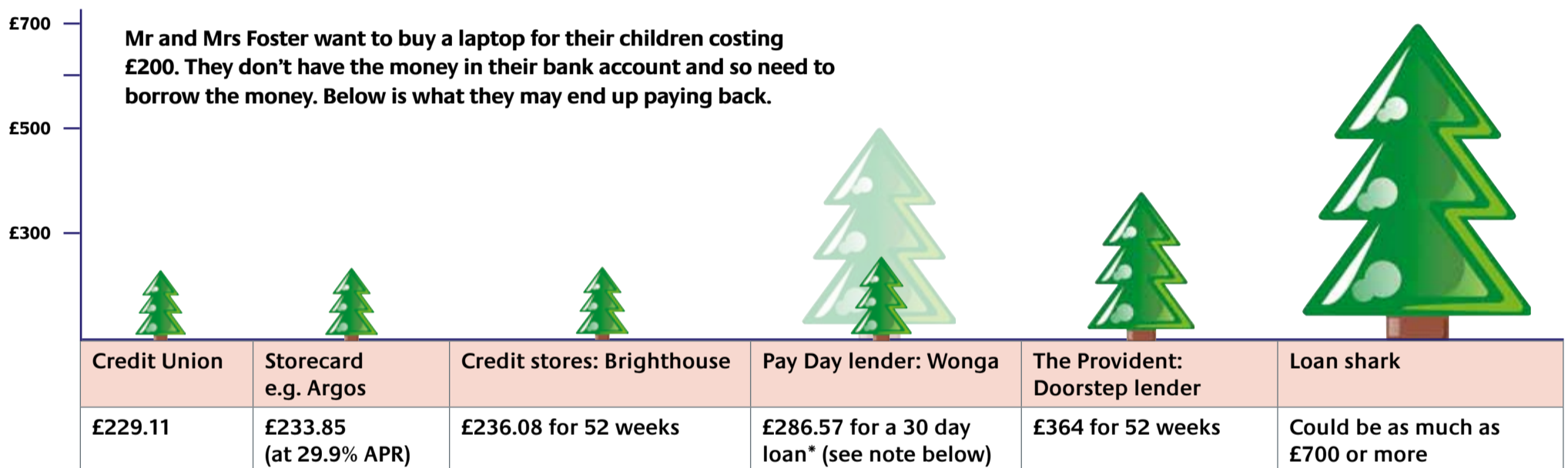
one supplier you will be able to save on postage costs.

In an ideal world we would all have saved up enough throughout the year to be able to splurge at Christmas, but for lots of people this just isn't the case. If saving hasn't been your strong point this year and you find that you do need to borrow money over the festive season, there are ways to be money smart with this too.

Borrowing can be anything from using store cards, using your overdraft or taking out

a loan. Make sure you choose whichever method of borrowing is going to be best for you and most importantly, make sure you are able to afford the repayments!

The repayments will vary depending on what form of lending you have chosen. To help you decide which may be the best for you we have provided an example of typical lending rates and terms below:



As you can see from the above borrowing from a loan shark will cost you **far** more in the long run. These are illegal lenders and if you are unable to make a payment to them you might find yourself with nowhere to turn, loan sharks may use threats or violence to force people into repaying, and the amount may be unlimited.

*NB: If you default on your 30 day loan, you will receive a fixed £20 charge plus accumulated interest, meaning your loan will continue to grow and grow.

For tips on managing your finances, request our FREE money advice DVD by emailing yourmoneymatters@circle.org.uk



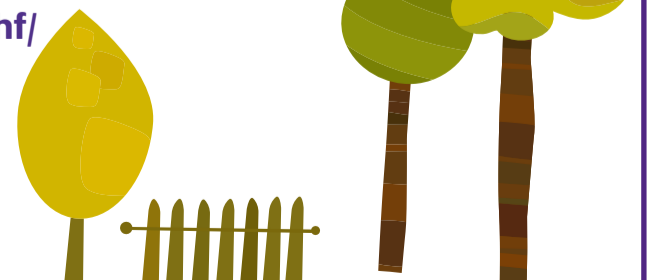
Reducing your energy bills will save you pounds

As winter approaches make sure you are getting the best energy deals to save your pennies.

With fuel prices likely to increase even further now is the time to check whether you are getting the best possible prices, and to lock down the fixed rate deals. In order to make sure our residents are getting the best deals possible we recommend you try this energy switching service by using the following website:

www.energylinx.co.uk/energy/nhf/

This site is quick and easy to use and could save you £££ off your energy bill.



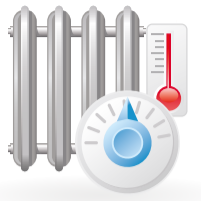


Heating Switch On

Every year at the first sign of a cold snap we receive a huge jump in the number of calls coming in to customer services requesting visits from our gas contractors. As residents 'switch on' many residents experience problems because the systems have been left turned off for a long time

By testing your heating now, you can make sure it is working correctly, and if it's not, you can let us know before the cold weather really sets in. This helps our contractors to balance the workload, helps lessen the

impact of spells of severe weather and most importantly keeps you warm when you most need it!



To test your heating turn your boiler onto 'hot water and heating' and run it for at least 1-2 hours, making sure turn your thermostat up so that the heating switches on.

Check the hot water taps are running and radiators are warm at both the top and bottom.

If you do encounter any problems give our Customer Services Team a call on 0845 600 1543 or 01279 714 714 to arrange a repair. Households with oil and electric heating systems should check their systems as well, just to make sure everything is ok.

Housing Benefit –

Will you be affected by the changes?

Next April some people will have their housing benefit cut if they have 'spare' bedrooms in their home. This is being called the 'bedroom tax'.

Who will not be affected by these cuts?

If one of the following applies to you, you will not be affected and your housing benefit will not be cut as part of these changes:

- either you or your partner are over the pension credit age of 61 and six months on 1st April
- you're in a home with only one bedroom
- you're are not 'under-occupying' your home (see below)

Who will be affected by these cuts?

If you are deemed to have 'spare' bedrooms in your house and 'under-occupying', your housing benefit will be cut after 1 April 2013. The new rules mean that one bedroom (regardless of size) is allowed for each of the following:

- each adult couple
- any additional person living with you over the age of 16
- two children of the same sex under 16

- two children under ten years old regardless of their sex
- a carer (who doesn't usually live with you) if you or your partner need overnight care

The amount you will have cut from your housing benefit will be 14% if you have one spare bedroom and 25% if you have two or more spare bedrooms. These rates are based on your total rent and the deduction will be applied whether you receive full or part housing benefit at present.

Here's an example of a family that will face cuts as part of the 'bedroom tax':

The Wilson family

Mr and Mrs Wilson have three children, Marie 19, Martin 13 and John 9. Marie has recently moved out to share a flat with her boyfriend. They live in a three bedroom house and claim £130.00 a week Housing Benefit.

Under the new rules, they will lose £18.20 a week or £946.40 a year in Housing Benefit because they now have a bedroom 'spare'. Martin and John will be expected to share because they are under 16. Mr and Mrs Wilson will have to find the £18.20 a week out of their other income or benefits, to cover the weekly rent.



If you want to check what the changes mean for your household, or get advice about what options are available to you, please call us on 0800 694 0159.

Crime and Nuisance

focus on... Disability Hate Crime

There were 1,942 recorded incidents of Disability Hate crime in England and Wales in 2011, up 25% on 2010 and the highest since this data was first recorded in April 2010.

169 crimes were reported in Hertfordshire, more than in any other police force area, and marked a seven-fold increase on the previous year, when 24 disability hate crimes were reported. Essex recorded 28 offences in 2011 and Bedfordshire 13.

We treat all Hate Crime seriously and work in partnership with police and other agencies to try to resolve it.

If you feel that you are a victim of Hate Crime because of your disability or wish to report anti-social behaviour please contact us on 0845 6001543 or contact your Neighbourhood Officer.



Olympic torch held high by big-hearted South Anglia resident

Our inspirational resident Stacey Johnson was cheered through the streets of Haverhill as she carried the Olympic torch through the town on Saturday.



Stacey, from Much Hadham, was nominated to carry the torch by South Anglia Housing in recognition of her tireless charity work. Despite suffering from an inoperable brain tumour, Stacey set up her own charity Kisses4kids which raises money for treats, presents and family days out for seriously ill children.

Kisses4Kids has also contributed to a games and DVD room and garden area at Dolphin Ward, in Harlow's Princess Alexandra Hospital, which provides acute care services to children.

After carrying the torch, Stacey said: "It was an amazing day and one I will remember forever. It was a once in a lifetime experience



and I still can't believe I did it. It was awesome – thank you to Ami and South Anglia."

Ami Spring, equality and diversity officer at South Anglia Housing, who nominated Stacey, said: "It was fantastic to see Stacey carrying the torch. She is a real inspiration to us all and the torch relay is a great way to celebrate the incredible work she does."

Tenant Incentive Awards



Some of you may be aware that we run a quarterly cash prize draw for residents who pay their rent in advance in line with their tenancy agreement. This prize draw also applies to those residents on housing benefit who bring their account into advance, each winner receives a cash prize of £125 for their efforts.

Our lucky winners for the July were:

- Mrs Peddar from High Wych
- Mr and Mrs Webb from Luton

We are now offering a new incentive for customers who pay their rent by Direct Debit. All customers who pay

their rent by direct debit will all be entered into an annual prize draw for a chance to win £250. There will be a total of 20 winners selected at random.

If you would like a chance to be included and would like to set up a Direct Debit please call the Income Team on **01279 714799**.

Luton Summer School a scorching success!

This summer saw us supporting a hugely successful summer school project in Luton, jointly organised by Mitalee Youth Association (a youth charity) and Diverse FM (Community media & training Project).

It was supported by a range of other agencies including The Army, Bedfordshire Police, Fire & Rescue Service, National Career Service and Luton Borough Council.

Young people were able to participate and benefit from over 50 activities including accredited training programmes and educational workshops such as mentoring, first aid, child protection, health and safety in the workplace, radio broadcasting & presenting, bicycle proficiency, food & hygiene and many more.

This summer school has had a massive impact on the

wider community. Typically ASB and crime rates rise during the summer holiday but Bedfordshire Police confirmed a huge drop in ASB reporting in August, during the period of the summer school.

Mehbub Koyes, coordinator of the Summer school said "Mitalee Summer School is unique because it is entirely run by young people for young people. We were able to successfully recruit nearly 80 young volunteers and provided them with relevant training so that they can run the project and work with their peers more effectively.

He also added "This year's summer school was one of

the best in terms of proving a wide range of educational and recreational activities, including many new activities such as horse riding."

In addition to this project we have two new projects running! A 5 A-Side football league for young people aged 9-11 years, at Marlow Ave in Luton started on Saturday 8th September. It takes place every Saturday between 11am to 12.00 noon. All equipment including training bibs are provided.

From early October a mobile Youth Bus equipped with computers, radio broadcast, music production, DJ-ing and other indoor and outdoor equipment will be



located on Addington Way/ Angel Close every Thursday afternoon. The bus will also have a qualified and trained Youth and Community and

Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG) worker, ready to offer advice, information on any related matters.

For further info please contact Ashuk Ahmed on 015820 808562 or Mobile 07771831091

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