

Southway Stories

The magazine for
Southway Housing
customers

Winter 2020

P2

*inspired
by our communities*

INSPIRED BY OUR COMMUNITIES

Our renewed
commitment to tenants

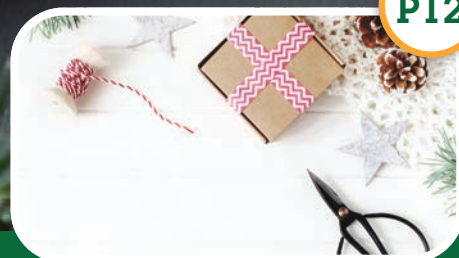
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BECOME A TRUSTEE

Could you be
right for the job?

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CUTTING THE COST OF CHRISTMAS

Keep the cheer without
breaking the bank!

CHIEF EXEC'S BLOG: INSPIRED BY OUR COMMUNITIES



Welcome to December's issue of Southway Stories!

I want to open the newsletter by introducing a new customer involvement project that we are launching this year, and to highlight how you can be involved.

THE POWER OF LISTENING

During this strange and often difficult year, it has become clearer than ever that good communication is vital, listening intently to one another as we deal with the changes to our lives and society.

Southway Housing celebrated its 13th birthday in November and, looking back, it is clear how much we have changed in that time. As the years have passed, our commitment to our communities has grown in strength and ambition, and this is reflected in our work. Recently I have been particularly proud of the way our Community Support Services have expanded to address new and growing support needs due to Covid.

As the year draws to an end now is the time to start thinking about what will come next. When the pandemic starts to ease as the vaccination programme rolls out, we want to think about how should we respond to the impact on the economy, work and personal finances, and health and wellbeing.

I want Southway to shape our next steps around the needs and wants of residents. To understand exactly what these are, we want to hear from as many of you as we can using the principle of our new landlord promise which is that we are:

*inspired
by our communities*

This will be a real opportunity for your views and experiences to influence Southway's future priorities and how we use our resources.

ENGAGING IN THE WAY YOU WANT

We want this consultation to go further than our traditional engagement by actively increasing the number of people we listen to, the range of views we hear, and the commitments we give to take action.

We will listen

- To a range of people and views, making sure responses reflect the diversity of our communities

- To stories from people in their own words, so we hear and understand real life experiences
- In more ways – through the routes that suit you best, whether that's talking to us one on one, or answering a quick text or email survey
- Openly, sharing the results as we go.

Outcomes

By the end of the consultation, we want to have:

- A better understanding of our residents' views and wishes
- Real-life examples to inform staff training in line with our values
- A knowledge base of ideas to adapt to the post-Covid world
- Proposals to change or adapt policies, service standards and delivery
- Information to shape the next version of our Customer Voice Involvement Strategy
- Plans to continue building trust and respect with our residents.

GETTING INVOLVED

Over the next few months, we will be in touch with all residents directly about the project, as well as working closely with our tenant involvement groups, including the Scrutiny Panel and People and Places Committee.

We would also like a group of tenants to be involved in this throughout. If you are interested in playing a regular part in Inspired by Our Communities, please get in touch with me at chiefexecsblog@southwayhousing.co.uk, or through the Customer Hub.

There are a wealth of skills, initiatives and knowledge in our neighbourhoods. We want to work with you to better understand the future you want and how we can help to accomplish it.

THANK YOU Sam!

BOARD CHAIR STEPS DOWN AFTER 9 EXCEPTIONAL YEARS

This year, we said goodbye to the Chair of Southway's Parent Board, tenant Sam MacWilliam. Having joined the Board in 2011, Sam served as Chair for four years and led many excellent initiatives to improve Southway's services and benefit the community.

Before she stepped down, we spoke to Sam about her experience as a Board member and why it's vital for social landlords to involve tenants in decision-making.

How did you get involved in Southway's Board?

I had been interested in the joining the Board for a while - even before Southway acquired the council's properties, as I wanted to ensure they remained social. I held back for a while, as I had some caring responsibilities which took priority. When these eased, I decided to go for it.

What did you hope to get from your time on the Board?

Ultimately, I wanted to ensure that our homes were safe and protected. As I grew into the role, I wanted to better understand the sector

and ensure Southway remained committed to our communities, both tenants and staff.

What was your proudest achievement during your time on the Board?

There's been a few! Getting involved with Tenant Energy Champions and becoming Carbon Literate was great. I was proud to help to train 56 staff in carbon literacy.

I'm also very proud of the inception and development of our Quids in Food Clubs, and Southway's Shared Ownership schemes.

Did your time as the Chair change your perception of the Housing Sector?

My perception of the sector did change. I was part of a UK-wide group called The Board Room, which was pretty enlightening; I found that not all Housing Associations appreciate their tenants' involvement.

I'm really proud that Southway includes tenants in their decision making. It is really important that the sector doesn't pull away from tenants' input when making decisions, as they have so much

insight and experience you won't find elsewhere.

What are your plans for the future, post-Chair?

My plans were to look for paid Board positions - though I must admit, I'm enjoying the break!

I did gain a few qualifications during my time on the Board, including a higher learning qualification in Board and Governance, and a Distinction in Level 7 Strategic Leadership. I'm confident that I have the skills and ability to find a new Board or Governance role.

What would you say to any tenants who would like to get involved but are unsure?

Joining Southway's Board will absolutely broaden your horizons! Any help you need is freely given and Southway's Governance Team are there to support you.

The experience you have as a Southway tenant cannot be offered by anyone else; your time and skills are really valuable, and you can absolutely make a difference.



Would you like to get involved as a Southway Board or Committee member?

To find out more, contact **Matt Maouati**, m.maouati@southwayhousing.co.uk or **Tom Mackrory**, t.mackrory@southwayhousing.co.uk, or call **0161 448 4200**.

JOB CLUB

IS BACK!

FACE TO FACE, BY PHONE
OR ONLINE, IT'S UP TO YOU



Job Club is back, and our Employment Support Officer Leslie (pictured), is here to support you with looking for work or training. You will be amazed at how many skills you really do have after you have sat down and had a chat.

Leslie can help you with:

- CREATING OR UPDATING CVs
- JOB AND APPRENTICESHIP APPLICATIONS
- FINDING TRAINING & VOLUNTARY OPPORTUNITIES
- INTERVIEW SKILLS
- ONLINE SUPPORT

COVID-SAFE



Extra precautions are in place to keep you Covid safe with face to face appointments in a relaxed, safe and clean environment. Available by appointment only. You can make an appointment by contacting Southway or Westcroft.

Job Club runs every Thursday & Friday, 10am-3pm at Westcroft Community Centre, 24-26 Westcroft Road, Burnage M20 6EF Email l.bell@southwayhousing.co.uk or call 0161 448 4200.

SAVE MONEY WITH LEAP

We've partnered with LEAP to offer residents a completely free energy and money saving service. LEAP is helping people to keep warm and reduce their energy bills without costing them any money.

Their friendly Energy Advisors can:

- offer simple energy and money saving advice via phone
- install free and simple energy saving measures, such as LED light bulbs and draught-proofing
- check that you're on the best energy tariff via a dedicated energy switching service
- arrange a free money advice consultation
- help you find funding for further energy-saving home improvements



You can apply by contacting Southway, and we will refer you. This way you'll also get the support of our Advice Team. Or, you can apply for yourself or someone else by contacting LEAP directly, quoting Southway. Apply at applyforleap.org.uk or phone (for free) 0800 060 7567.

Greater Manchester has produced a new Keeping Well this Winter toolkit, including a short film, Talking Tips guide, and booklet. Find it at greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/keeping-well-this-winter

If you'd like to be sent a free hard copy, get in touch with our Age Friendly team.

HOW TO KEEP WARM AND WELL THIS WINTER

This year, it's more important than ever that we all keep warm and well to prevent the spread of cold, flu and COVID-19.

If you need help with your health or wellbeing you are not alone, and advice and support services are available:

STAYING WARM

Keeping warm helps prevent colds, flu and other serious health problems.

Try heating your home's main living room during the day to 18-21°C (64-70°F) and other rooms to 16°C (61°F). Remember, with the national restrictions in place we are staying indoors more, so do allow fresh air into your home by opening a window to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 particles indoors.

For information about how to turn your cold house into a warm home this winter by claiming all the help and support you are entitled to, check Southway's website or contact the Advice Team.



VITAMIN D

Vitamin D helps to maintain a healthy body, including your immune system, teeth and bones.

Winter means shorter days and longer nights, so our bodies don't get all the vitamin D we need from the sun. Taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D during autumn/winter can help this, especially for people who are African, African-Caribbean or south Asian.

GET HELP, WHEN YOU NEED IT

Talk to your pharmacist or GP about any health concerns or changes to your body that you notice. The sooner you access healthcare services the more treatable a condition can be.

Make Time For Facetime

LIFE HUB BURNAGE



Loss can affect the quality of your life in many ways. Come and learn how to cope with negative emotions. Join us at the Life Hub on Wednesday afternoon's in a relaxed and positive safe space.



ZOOM

**WEDNESDAY
2.30PM TILL 4PM**

Make friends and connect locally, open to everyone

MEMORIES

*Let them fill your mind
warm your heart, and
lead you through.*

Email

lifehubbeyahoo.com

For further information

Manchester
Wellbeing Fund

NHS
Greater Manchester
Mental Health
NHS Foundation Trust

Supported by Greater
Manchester Mental Health
NHS Foundation Trust
through the Manchester
Wellbeing Fund

TRAINING (allfm) 96.9

ARE YOU OUT OF WORK? INTERESTED IN FREE RADIO TRAINING AT ALL FM 96.9?

- Radio training improves confidence, employability skills and is a lot of fun.
- No experience needed. Just enthusiasm!!
- The training finishes with a show broadcasting on ALL FM 96.9.

For more info email: ed@allfm.org

www.allfm.org

At the moment our training is via Zoom. We can also help with you with Zoom if you need it.

ALL FM 96.9 has a diverse range of languages, shows and presenters!!!



WEA
Adult Learning Welfare Fund

Education & Skills
Funding Agency

The Tudor Trust

MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

GROWING BIODIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY IN CHORLTON

We're increasing local biodiversity by leaving an area in our neighbourhood to grow into a wildflower meadow, providing a place for plants to grow, creatures to live and to attract more wildlife.

WHY A MEADOW?

Pollinating insects are in decline in Britain and globally due to widespread disruption of their natural habitats. Our new meadow will help to reverse this decline in our area. It will also allow us to carry out experiments in managing meadows and hold activities and educational workshops for schools and local people.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

WILDFLOWER MEADOW

Our new wildflower meadow will be a fantastic habitat for pollinators such as butterflies, bees and hoverflies. In Summer, our maintenance of the longer grass will encourage wildflowers.

MINIBEAST HABITATS

We've added a Bug Hotel (a shelter for invertebrates to breed, feed and hibernate during the winter) and a leaf pile, which is a great home for worms, beetles, woodlice, centipedes and millipedes.

GRASS WALL

A grass wall is a great way to use grass which is raked up after cutting.

It provides shelter for mini-beasts (invertebrates) which need damp areas to live.

Some of this grass will rot down and some will provide food for worms, slugs, snails and woodlice. These animals are nature's recyclers!

COMMUNITY ART SPACE

We created a place for people to add a piece of their own artwork. Get creative with natural materials, and try to recycle, upcycle or repurpose items to make your art!

WHAT'S NEXT?

In October, our Urban Rangers were joined by volunteers in the community to plant wildflowers, which should bloom early next year.

Our Environment Team will continue to tend to the green space across the winter, preparing the ground for fruit hedge planting in February.

Everyone is welcome to join in and enjoy the benefits working in nature can bring, both to our physical and mental health.



We are proud that Barlow Moor Green Space has been awarded the Green Flag Award 2020, for the third year in a row!



So, if lockdown has left you with keener interest in nature and your local environment, why not get involved?

Email connect@southwayhousing.co.uk to find out more!



SOUTHWAY NEEDS YOU!

We're looking for residents who want to preserve and protect our local green spaces by becoming GREEN INSPECTORS

WHAT IS A GREEN INSPECTOR?

Green Inspectors are volunteers who carry out inspections on Southway-owned green spaces in their local area. These inspections help us to preserve and protect green spaces. Green Inspectors can also represent the views, needs and interests of residents in relation to your local green space.

TASKS OF A GREEN INSPECTOR

A Green Inspector chooses a green space and checks it every month. They report back to one of Southway's Urban Rangers to let us know if everything is as it should be or if any problems have been spotted.

As a local resident, they can give valuable insight into both positive and negative aspects of their local green space. We highly value and respect Green Inspectors.

Inspections take around 10 - 15 minutes and are carried out once a month. Training and inspection sheets will be provided for you.



To find out more, please contact our Urban Rangers
(Luke Stuttard or Debbie Wallace) and ask about becoming a Green Inspector:

0161 448 4200 l.stuttard@southwayhousing.co.uk d.wallace@southwayhousing.co.uk

AGE FRIENDLY MINEHEAD WINS AT FIRST TIME BUYERS AWARDS

We are delighted that our Age Friendly Development, Minehead, has won Best Age Exclusive Housing at the 2020 First Time Buyer Readers' Awards.

M
Minehead
STYLISH LIVING | WITHINGTON

Located in the heart of Withington, Minehead consists of a total 64 homes, twenty-one of which were designed to suit the needs of older people in our communities and marketed specifically through Older Persons Shared Ownership.

The aspiration for Minehead was to create a vibrant, supportive community, where older residents can feel connected to their neighbourhood. Located close to a number of age friendly initiatives unique to Withington, Minehead is right in the centre of a fast-growing inclusive, accessible, and age-positive community.

The development benefits from an on-site community café, providing somewhere to relax, eat, meet friends and socialise. Added to this is an

on-site treatment room, a unique resource that will offer a range of health services and pop-up treatments at residents' doorstep. These bespoke additions to Minehead are intended to encourage a tangible sense of neighbourliness amongst residents and across the wider community.

Minehead has already received some fantastic feedback from new residents and we are extremely proud that the development was recognised at this year's First Time Buyers Readers' Awards.

"I am so proud of this new scheme in Withington, Manchester. The results speak for themselves, and Minehead's recent win for Best Age Exclusive Housing Development at the 2020 First Time Buyers Reader's Awards is a fantastic achievement."

Wendy Perkins, Head of Development at Southway



BENEFITS NEWS FLASH

SELF-EMPLOYED AND CLAIMING UC?

If you are self-employed and currently claiming Universal Credit, there are some temporary changes that may benefit you:

The Minimum Income Floor has been suspended until April 2021. This means that you will continue to receive payments based on your actual earnings, instead of your expected earnings.

Self-Employment Income Support Scheme Grants have been extended in 2021. Grants were made available on 30th November 2020 and grants will be paid in two lump sums over a three-month period.

You can get free help with your application in your own language from Manchester charity Europa – their flyer is included with this issue of Southway Stories. Contact our Advice Team for a referral.



UC Universal Credit

ARE YOU AN EU, EEA OR EFTA NATIONAL? You must apply for the EU Settlement Scheme

As a result of Brexit, all EU, EEA and EFTA citizens and their families living in the UK will need to confirm their immigration status by applying to the EU Settlement Scheme. If you don't, there is a very real risk that you will no longer be able to live and work in the UK, receive NHS treatments or claim benefits after Brexit.

The deadline to apply is **30th June 2021** but we strongly encourage you to apply as soon as possible. It's free.



GREAT PHONE DEAL IF YOU ARE ON UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Tenants claiming Universal Credit are eligible for a sim only phone deal with 'Voxi' for only £10 a month. This includes unlimited data, free texts and calls and lasts 6 months; you have until January 31st to apply at **vox.co.uk**.

PROVIDING DIGITAL SUPPORT TO LOCAL SCHOOLS

Southway has partnered up with Barlow Hall Primary School to deliver 15 laptops during lockdown, so that children without access to equipment can do their homework, and access the internet at their leisure. Once the lockdown is over, we will be joining Barlow Hall Primary School to deliver training for children and their parents, advising how to use computers effectively and safely over a number of sessions.

Do you know of any schools that may benefit from a similar scheme? Let us know on **connect@southwayhousing.co.uk**



DIGITAL LOCKDOWN STATS

Using computers has never been more important for keeping in touch with the outside world. We've been supporting tenants as much as we can to access equipment, training and assistance.

Since the lockdown began in March, we have;

- **Loaned out 55 laptops to tenants;**
- **Given away 10 free tablets, thanks to a Manchester City council scheme; and**
- **Assisted dozens of tenants with digital issues over the phone, thanks to our Digital Champion volunteers**

If you, your family, or other tenants you know could benefit from digital support, please get in touch.

GET INVOLVED

TRUSTEES NEEDED

Volunteering to become a Trustee can be a truly rewarding thing to do, no matter what your background is or stage of life you are in.

Trustees join charities as volunteers and have overall control of how they're run. They are responsible for making sure the organisation is doing what it set out to do and that it has the funds it needs to run effectively. One of the most important things charities need from a

Trustee is someone who is committed to the organisation and enthusiastic about what they stand for. Trustees should embrace and promote the aims, values and mission of the Charity. **These two local organisations below are looking for Trustees now:**



Westcroft Community Centre is a vibrant community space in the heart of Burnage, South Manchester. It provides a wide range of adult learning and community engagement activities that, over the last three years, have seen a considerable rise in attendances and status as a vital service to residents. This was acknowledged

when we were awarded Spirit of Manchester's 'Community Space of the Year' for 2018!

Westcroft would like to hear from trustee applicants from all backgrounds, so please get in touch if you are interested! The Board is particularly in need of experience in the following areas: Finance, Treasury, Community Development, Fundraising, Grants applications or any other charity work or Trustee experience.

To apply visit www.westcroftcommunitycentre.co.uk/news or request an application form from **Matthew Barker: 0161 448 8232 or m.barker@southwayhousing.co.uk**.

MEN IN SHEDS

Men in Sheds is a nationwide initiative, where older men and women in the community can meet, chat and do hands on work, either for themselves or the wider community. They are currently looking for Trustees and other volunteers, to help them run smoothly.

Men in Sheds can have 3 to 12 Trustees to remain registered as a

charity. A Board of Trustees takes formal responsibility for a number of vital tasks, to ensure Men in Sheds can continue running as a community organisation.

Currently, Men in Sheds are looking for Trustees to join in the following positions:

- **Chairperson;**
- **Secretary;**
- **Treasurer;**
- **Deputy Chairperson;**

- **Deputy Treasurer;**
- **Membership Secretary;**
- **Minutes secretary;**
- **Health and Safety Officer;**
- **Communications; and**
- **Other officers**

They are particularly looking for volunteers with strong leadership qualities and general IT skills. Experience in Finance, Fundraising, the Legal Sector, and in a previous Trustee role would also be beneficial.

Interested? Contact rogerbysouth@gmail.com for more information. You can also learn more at:

- The Charity Commission on being a Trustee: gov.uk/guidance/charity-commission-guidance
- UK Men's Sheds Association on running Sheds: menssheds.org.uk
- Manchester Community Central on running voluntary organisations: manchestercommunitycentral.org/support-groups





CUSTOMER VOICE!!!

GETTING INVOLVED

We're always looking for tenants to get involved and tell us what you think about our services. You can give us feedback anytime by going on our website, emailing us or finding us on social media.

Due to Covid-19 we haven't held many tenant meetings this year, but we want to re-introduce some of them via video.

This means you can get involved and meet other tenants and Southway staff for a discussion about Southway services, all from the comfort of your own home.

Some of the topics we will be discussing are anti-social behaviour, food poverty and advice services. We're also looking for tenants to join our Scrutiny Panel. The panel is made entirely of tenants, who take a look at our services to assess if they are delivered in the best way for our tenants. If this interests you, please get in touch for more information.

If you'd like to get involved in a video or telephone meeting, please contact **Maureen Ward** at m.ward@southwayhousing.co.uk or **0161 448 4200**.

TOLERANCE LEVELS BEING TESTED UNDER LOCKDOWN

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we've heard many heart-warming stories of communities coming together to support each other. However, our Neighbourhoods and ASB team have also been responding to an unprecedented amount of neighbour disagreements.

As we continue to spend more time at home and have fewer opportunities to leave the house, reports of minor neighbour disputes have made a dramatic increase.

As a social landlord, we offer mediation to reach positive and balanced resolutions to a whole range of situations. Our professional, independent mediators help people to talk constructively with one another, work out their issues and find options to reach an agreement by;

- **Ensuring everyone has an equal chance to make their point**
- **Ensuring everyone takes part in reaching a fair agreement which will work**
- **Stopping any behaviour that prevents people from negotiating fairly**



In the first 7 months of 2020, we referred 10 cases to mediators, a number which has already surpassed our total referrals for last year. Below is just some of the feedback we received:

"Both parties agreed that things had improved; follow ups reported that the neighbours continued to speak and even helped with shopping."

"Not only was an agreement reached, they assisted me to access grief counselling, as I had lost a close family member and was struggling with this and isolation. Not only have the issues lessened, my mental health has improved and I've felt more hopeful about life."

If you could use some help with any issues within your neighbourhood, please contact us at connect@southwayhousing.co.uk.

CUTTING THE COST OF CHRISTMAS

Many of our tenants have been hit hard financially due to Covid-19, so budgeting for Christmas will need some smart thinking. Check out our tips below on how you can cut costs and keep the cheer of Christmas!

- 1 A small, well considered gift is better than splashing out. Agree to do a **Secret Santa** with friends and family, and keep to a budget of £5 or £10.
- 2 **Making your own Christmas cards** can be really rewarding and you can get children involved. Young children's drawings make great cards, plus you can frame them to give to grandparents as a unique present.
- 3 As well as a necessity, face masks are also becoming a fashion statement. **A unique, homemade face mask** can be made in no time using elastic and bits of fabric you have around the house, and can make a useful and creative gift.
- 4 You can even look at flogging **unwanted gifts from last year**. Selling on Facebook is free, so all the profit is yours. See Martin Lewis' guide to boosting your income and how to sell on Facebook at moneysavingexpert.com
- 5 Have fun with your children **tracking Santa** as he delivers presents at **NoradSanta.org**, which launched on 1st December.
- 6 Many of us will be unable to meet face to face this year, but that doesn't mean we can't celebrate. **Hosting a party online** for free through ZOOM or WhatsApp is an easy way to have lots of festive fun from home. You can have a quiz, and make party hats with card and any spare Christmas decorations. If you feel like keeping things simple, charades are always an option!

Remember, if you have any money worries or need advice with budgeting, rent or debt, Southway's Advice Services Team is here for you. Contact us to find out how we can help.

MORE THRIFTY GIFT IDEAS

FREE

- Favourite book exchange
- Bulbs or cuttings from the garden
- Record stories read by grandma/granddad/mum/dad
- Design a board game, scavenger hunt or escape room

DIY (SMALL COST)

- Handwritten cookbook of family recipes
- Recipe in a jar – cookie, cake, hot chocolate
- Beauty sugar scrub or flavoured seasoning or salt
- Memory book or box of photos, tickets and mementos



BOOST YOUR RETIREMENT INCOME WITH A TOP-UP FROM PENSION CREDIT

About 4 million older people are entitled to Pension Credit to top up their retirement income, but only 2.5 million people are claiming it.

AM I ELIGIBLE?

To be eligible for Pension Credit, you must be of pension age. This means you were born before:

- **6 April 1951 if you're a man**
- **6 April 1953 if you're a woman**

If you are in a couple, you cannot apply unless **both** of you have reached state pension age.

HOW MUCH COULD I GET?

The standard amount of income for a single person is £173.75 a week. For a couple (married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting), it's £265.20 a week.

You might be entitled to more than this if you're disabled or a carer. If

you have less than this as income, you could get Pension Credit to top your income to these amounts. There are also lots of non-monetary benefits available; **if you are entitled to anything above £1 a week of Pension Credit, you also qualify for:**

- **Free TV license. For over 75s worth £157.50 year.**
- **Council Tax reduction. Worth over £1000 per year.**
- **Warm Homes discount worth £140 per year**
- **Housing Benefit. You could have your rent paid in full.**
- **Cold weather payment. Worth £25 p/w in winter.**
- **Free dental treatment**
- **Voucher for glasses**



HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE?

Finding out if you're eligible is simple – you don't have to fill in a form, all you have to do is call the Pension Credit claim line on 0800 99 1234 (textphone: 0800 169 0133).

Around 9 out of 10 claims are successful, so it's well worth checking out!

If you need any advice or help in claiming, call 0161 448 4200 and ask to be referred to the Advice Team.

VIRTUAL AGE-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES



age friendly
Southway Housing Trust

Lots of our Age Friendly activities have successfully moved online. These include:

- **Online cooking**
- **Online crafts**
- **Online Men's Group**
- **Online singing/song writing sessions exploring the ongoing effects of lockdown**

We're also providing access to digital devices and training, as lockdown has highlighted the issue of digital exclusion.

If you want to get involved in any of these activities or want support getting online, contact the Age Friendly Team.



HOW LOCKDOWN STRENGTHENED A LOCAL COMMUNITY AND ITS BUSINESSES

This year has been tough on a lot of us, but particularly for those with small businesses who have faced restrictions and challenges throughout the year.

When the first lockdown was first announced in March 2020, **Debbie Leonard, Southway's Quids In Coordinator**, wanted to do something to keep her neighbourhood connected and make sure that anyone who needed it could get help. She set up a Community WhatsApp group, which grew into a lifeline for her Merseybank neighbourhood.

"I've been amazed at how many people said they were grateful for the group and creating a more community feel around our neighbourhood; the only effort required really was the leaflet drop in the first place."

As Christmas approached, Debbie and other members of the group started to think about how they could support the small businesses in their communities through Manchester's local lockdowns. So **Esther Jackson**, a Community Support Officer, came up with the South Manchester Virtual Christmas Market.

"Deb and I were trying to organise a market for our street. I started thinking bigger and the South Manchester Virtual Christmas Market 2020 was born. My aim was to give local businesses a platform to sell their goods and products, and for buyers to shop 'local' from the safety of their own homes."

I asked stallholders for donations to help two incredible charities: End Youth Homeless and Didsbury, Withington and Burnage COVID-19 Community Help (more info below). Knowing we've been able to help small, local businesses and raise money and awareness for the two charities is amazing."



Many of the stallholders have had to drastically change their business, products, or the way they operate this year. Four business owners told us how they had adapted around the pandemic and the surprising things the time has taught them.

"The wedding industry has been devastated by the Coronavirus. I am normally extremely busy all year round and have been making bespoke wedding gowns and special occasion wear since 2010. But seeing as I had a wonderful workshop with sewing machines in, I invented some fleece neck warmers, infinity scarves and snoods which come with two detachable masks. Now my business is helping people stay warm and always have a mask handy!"

Erica Stacey - Bridalwear

"I'm trying to conquer Instagram and Facebook which friends and colleagues at Manchester Craft and Design Centre have been helping me with. I certainly know so much more about social media than I did at the beginning of lockdown! I have also set up a selling page with Etsy, something I had been meaning to do for several years but never got round to it, but because I now had the time to get photographs, it was possible."

Tracey Birchwood - Jewellery

"We are doing more innovative ways of offering products and business opportunities to people. For

example, online events to bring people together, create a sense of community and friendship and provide people with fun ways of experiencing products such as online facial events. The great thing is people are more aware to shop locally and the widespread idea of gift cards is a great help to small businesses. People are even supporting small businesses on social media by leaving reviews and spread the words. At the end 'we are in this together'!"

Ghazaleh Banani -
Forever Living ambassador

"We are a gin distillery and most of our trade comes from events and the hospitality sector. In order to survive, we have had to change our gin production into hand sanitiser to support frontline staff. Whilst it is easy to feel defeated as a small business, go with your survival instincts and seize opportunities that you might not have thought of. People have certainly dug deep and helped us get through this crisis together."

Sherwin Acebuche -
Co-Founder Tarsier Spirit Ltd

HOW YOU CAN... **SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS**

- Find small businesses online and using Facebook groups
- See if they are offering online or streaming services
- Treat yourself to local takeaways and deliveries
- Buy or gift vouchers you can use later
- Spread the word to friends and family
- Like, Follow and Share on Social Media
- Leave a positive review on Google or Tripadvisor

If you're still looking for gifts or even something for yourself, search for the 'South Manchester Virtual Christmas Market' on Facebook to find these businesses and others. Remember when you shop local, you are helping small businesses provide jobs and to support the local community.

WANT TO LIVE AND FEEL BETTER?

"The Be Well service helped me **restore confidence** in my ability to find another job after having a lot of difficulty. I felt extremely lost, and **the service helped me mentally**, as well as helping me to **find a role that I am excited to start**. I would highly recommend the service to anyone who is struggling." **Jade, 23**

Southway works with **The Big Life Group** to deliver 'Be Well', a social prescribing project aimed at improving the wellbeing of Manchester residents. If you are experiencing any of the following, Be Well is here to help you:

- Work worries
- Money worries
- Housing and difficult living situations
- Family issues
- Long term health conditions
- Smoking too much
- Stress, loneliness or feeling a bit low



To get the help of Be Well, simply get in touch with Southway, or ask for a referral from your GP.

NEW YEAR, NEW CAREER? THE TIME IS NOW

As we approach a new year, it may feel like the perfect time to think about embarking on a new journey, or taking a new direction in life.

That could be turning a hobby into a career, retraining to achieve your dream job, or getting back into work after a prolonged period of time. We are reaching out to anyone who feels ready to take the next step in their own journey. Our career course 'The Time is Now' launched in April 2020, offering a 5-week online programme designed to boost your confidence, and help you focus on where to go next.

Over the 5 weeks, guest experts cover the following topics:

- **Confidence:** discover ways to boost your self-confidence and self-esteem, ready for the next chapter in your life.
- **Goals:** how to set achievable goals.
- **Self-employment:** how to make that hobby or interest into your own business.
- **Training:** find out what training and upskilling you need to reach your next stage.
- **Bonus session:** plan out the next steps to achieving your goal

We will continue to run the course once a month in 2021, with the next one starting in January. For more information, or to book your place, contact Fiona Froude at f.froude@southwayhousing.co.uk

A number of Southway residents have already taken part in the sessions since its launch, and have given with some fantastic feedback.

Paula completed the programme in October and said:

*"I love the course, you cannot imagine how much this has helped me, it gave me the initial push and courage I needed to get out of my comfort zone and do something for myself. **I finally have hope about my future and career,** I felt supported all the time, I'm so grateful."*



SUPPORTING OUR OPERATIVES

Our Repairs Team have been working very hard to maintain the repairs service while meeting Covid safety measures.

We also want to say a big thank you to tenants who have responded to the changes with patience and understanding. To protect yourself and our staff, it is essential that you follow our health and safety guidelines when we visit your home and answer our questions before we visit.

- **If we are doing a repair, please leave the room we will be working in vacant, and make sure we have easy access.**
- **Where possible, clean and sterilise areas we will be working in. We will do the same when we are done.**
- **Where possible, leave windows open for good ventilation.**
- **Avoid other visitors coming to your home during the visit.**
- **If someone is shielding or vulnerable, arrange for them to be in a different room.**
- **Follow social distancing, keeping 2m away. You may wish to wear a face mask, though this is optional.**
- **If, on the day of your visit, you have symptoms (like a fever, a continuous cough, or a loss/change in sense of smell or taste) call us and we can rearrange for a later date.**



The most challenging thing has been missing the social side of work, and not being able to accept brews off tenants, which is a real shame! But it's been fantastic still being able to get out there, helping people and chatting at a distance too. That's one of the best parts of the job."

Greg - Heating Engineer and Gas Fitter

If you don't follow these guidelines, our staff members have been instructed to leave the property immediately.



WHAT WE DO WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

As an organisation, we aim to provide the best service possible for our tenants and residents, but we know that sometimes things go wrong. If our service falls below your expectations, we want to hear from you, to learn from our mistakes and put things right.

We have been working really hard on how we deal with complaints this year, to make sure we provide a better customer experience. We have taken the following actions:

- **Appointed a Complaints Super User, with the responsibility for resolving problems quickly.**
- **Held customer service training for officers.**
- **Revised our Complaints Policy, making it shorter and more Customer Friendly (see our website for more on this).**

The Housing Ombudsman is the independent body that deals with Housing complaints. They have recently been given new powers to get involved if there are serious problems at an organisation, but they also provide a mediation service and advise Housing Associations and Residents on how to resolve problems.

You can find out more about their work by visiting their website. www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk.

Southway carried out a self-assessment around complaints, which you can find on our website. We have committed to improving our response times and following up on actions that we promise to do after dealing with a complaint. We will report how we are doing with this in the 2021 Summer edition of Southway Stories.

WANT TO HAVE A SAY?

Our **Complaints Service Improvement Group** is made up of Southway staff and tenant representatives. We look at complaints we receive and how we handle them to help us improve our services. We also consult with the group on Policy and Procedure to ensure we are doing what our tenants want us to be doing. At the moment meetings are taking place online, and we would love to hear from anyone who has time to spare to help us improve our service.

If you are interested, please contact Tom Wilde
t.wilde@southwayhousing.co.uk.

SELF CARE ADVENT CALENDAR

Christmas can be stressful! Take some time over the festive period to try these twelve days of activities, which are good for your mind, health and wellbeing.

1 Make a video call

Video calling might seem daunting but it's simple, secure and can be a lot of fun. A great way to see a friendly face for a catch up when you can't be together.

- If you're not sure how, let us know. We have a guide online and our Digital Champions can get you set up



2 Join an online community

If you enjoy meeting new people, you could try going on to forums. If you're interested in a particular subject or issue, there is often an online community for you.

- Mind mental health charity runs the supportive community 'Side by Side'
- Try the LifeHub Friendship group based in Burnage (see page 6)



3 Send a letter or card

Though it's something of a lost art, many of us love to write and receive letters. This can be a particularly nice way to stay in touch with grandchildren.

- Ask neighbours to post if you're staying indoors
- Send an E-card for an environmentally friendly option. Macmillan's website has animated ecards you can send for free



4 Get gardening

Timely tips include pruning, covering potted plants and looking after birds through Winter. If you don't have a garden, try planting something in a pot on your windowsill.

- Why not try growing your own vegetables from leftovers?
- You can help Southway with our growing activities - see page X



5 Move your body

Exercise is great for our bodies and minds, and a little movement can go a long way. Best of all, there are lots of ways we can raise our hearbeats from the comfort of our own homes!

- Chair-based exercises are great for mobility - try Age UK's
- Visit Manchester Active's new page 'Everyone Active' to find 1000s of free online session, from Yoga to HIIT.



6 Visit a green space

It's recommended that we spend at least 2 hours a week in nature, and fortunately we don't need to travel far. We recommend these local green spaces:

- Didsbury: Fletcher Moss Park
- Burnage: Fog Lane Park
- Chorlton: Chorlton Water Park, Barlow Moor Green Space
- Withington: Ladybarn Park, Platt Fields Park



7 Get creative

You don't have to be an expert to get arty. There are plenty of TV programmes and YouTube tutorials that can help you get started.

- Photography is something you can get into with just a mobile phone
- Make a scrapbook of pictures, tickets and memories
- On TV, try Kirsty's Homemade Christmas and Grayson's Art Club



8 Cook or bake

Learn something new. Learn how to make your favourite takeaway at home. Ask a relative to give you the recipe for the signature dish you've always admired.

- Quids In members have set up the 'On A Budget' Facebook page, filled with budget recipes and money and time-saving tips.



9 Learn a new skill

You could take this opportunity to explore an interest or learn a new skill.

- Over 60? University of the Third Age has lots of ideas
- Southway's website and social media is kept updated with free courses and classes



10 Visit somewhere new

... from your sofa! Lots of attractions and landmarks are offering virtual tours and experiences so that you can continue exploring from the comfort of your home.

- Have a look on Google Arts & Culture
- See Manchester City Council's #AllSortsToDo weekly listings



11 Tidy your home (for a Tidy Mind)

There are so many benefits for your health and mind of a clean and tidy home.

- Join our 'Tidy Homes Tidy Minds' Facebook page and community 'The Clutter Club' to learn and share tips and get motivated.
- If your clutter is unmanageable, our hoarding support service can help



12 Relax with a book

Reading is an opportunity for mindfulness - the ability to be in the present moment, focussed, both inside and outside of yourself.

- Download the free Kindle reader app to get free books on your mobile
- For young people, local player Marcus Rashford is launching a book club





MAKE YOUR OWN CHRISTMAS WREATH

Another way you can get into the Christmas spirit and cut down on waste is to make your own Christmas wreath!

A homemade wreath is easy to make, plus they're much better for the environment than plastic shop-bought wreaths. Better still, they're a great excuse for a cosy day Christmas crafting.

Follow the simple steps below and you'll have a festive wreath in no time!

You will need:

- 1 metal coat hanger
- Leaves, twigs, berries and any other foliage
- Twine or string
- Dried orange slices (optional)
- Ribbon (optional)

Step 1: Collect as many leaves, twigs or berries you can find. You don't have to leave your street to do this, but you can always wrap up warm and go for a long, wintery walk in your local park if you like!

Try to gather as many different coloured leaves, twigs and branches as you can. Once you're happy with your stash, take it home and put it aside.

Step 2: Take your wire coat hanger and shape it into a circle as best you can. Then, bend the hook down into a loop and twist it into a stem at the top for hanging.

Don't worry if you can't shape your hanger perfectly – any quirks will help to make it unique!

Step 3: Wrap your twine or string onto the stem at the top of the wreath. This will help it to look a little softer and give some extra grip when you hang the wreath.

Step 4: It's now time to build your wreath! Grab your collection of leaves, twigs, branches and berries and begin wrapping them around your metal circle. We recommend adding one piece at a time, and starting with the sturdiest items you have (such as twigs). Secure each piece to the hanger with twine if necessary.

Step 5: Repeat step 4 until you are happy with your wreath. If you want to add a little something extra, you can add dried orange slices as a finishing touch. The slices will add a little pop of colour to your wreath, as well as a fresh citrus scent! You can add the slices by piercing a hole into the middle of the slice and tying it to the wreath with twine or ribbon.

Step 6: Finally, hang your wreath on your door with pride. Be sure to share your creations with us by posting your photos to Facebook or Twitter and tagging **@SouthwayHousing**.

CHRISTMAS TREATS FOR ALL THE FAMILY

Gingerbread is a classic Christmas treat, and nothing beats homemade! Get into the Christmas spirit by baking these simple, but tasty, gingerbread biscuits – they're easy enough for the little ones to make, and can be a great gift for someone special.

EQUIPMENT

- Sieve
- Mixing bowl
- Wooden spoon
- Small bowl
- Fork
- Cling film
- Rolling pin
- Cookie cutters (optional)
- Baking tray
- Baking paper or tin foil
- Cooling rack
- Piping bag and nozzle (optional)

INGREDIENTS

- 350g of plain flour
- 1 teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda
- 2 teaspoon of ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon
- 125g butter
- 175g light soft brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 4 tablespoons of golden syrup
- Extra flour for rolling out your dough – you'll only need about a handful!
- Icing sugar (optional)
- Sweets or chocolate to decorate (optional)

METHOD

Step 1: Sift the flour, bicarbonate of soda, ginger and cinnamon into your mixing bowl, and then add the butter,

Step 2: Using the wooden spoon, mix these ingredients together until they look like breadcrumbs. Add the sugar and stir it in well.

Step 3: In the small bowl, use a fork to lightly beat the egg and golden syrup together. Once they are well blended, add them to your mixing bowl and stir until the mixture clumps together into a sticky dough.

Step 4: Sprinkle some flour onto your worktop or table. Then, tip the dough out of the bowl and knead it a little until it feels smooth.

Step 5: Wrap the dough in cling film and leave to chill in the fridge for 15 minutes. As it chills, preheat the oven to 180C/160C Fan/Gas 4 and line your baking tray with baking paper or tin foil.

Step 6: Take the dough out of the fridge and remove the cling film. Sprinkle some more flour onto your worktop. Then, use your rolling pin to roll the dough out to about 0.5cm thick.

Step 7: Use your cookie cutters to cut out the biscuit shapes you want. If you don't have any cutters, you can use the rim of a glass or mug instead.

Step 8: Place your biscuits onto your baking tray and put them in the oven for 12–15 minutes, or until they are a lightly golden-brown. Depending on the size of your tray, you may need to cook the dough in a few batches.

Step 9: Once out of the oven, leave your biscuits on the baking tray for 10 minutes and then move to the cooling rack.

Step 10: When they're cooled, use icing, sweets, chocolate, or anything other goodies you have to decorate them and make them your own! You could make gingerbread people, snowflakes, holly wreaths or anything else you like.

Be sure to share your creations on Facebook or Twitter and tag @SouthwayHousing

