## The magazine for **Southway Housing** customers

Spring 2022



INSPIRED BY OUR COMMUNITIES An update

Help shape our future

With Care schemes now open







#### WHAT IT WAS

Back in 2020, we launched Inspired by our Communities, our biggest ever tenant consultation.

We wanted feedback that went beyond normal satisfaction surveys, in order to get a deeper understanding of your views and aspirations, and to find out what you really wanted and needed from us.

The huge number of responses we received as part of Inspired by our Communities told us that being listened to and getting more involved with Southway was really important to you.

#### WHAT WE DID

We carried out 362 in-depth phone surveys of tenants with the company Viewpoint.

We sent weekly online surveys to our mailing list, receiving over 500 individual responses

We also looked at the amazing 2,200 responses to our STAR Survey and other feedback routes like our complaints, compliments and feedback messages.

#### WHAT WE FOUND

You gave us a real variety of detailed and valuable responses. We were pleased to hear that many of you were happy with our services, in particular, the support and care offered by our staff throughout the pandemic.

Some clear priorities emerged, highlighting the areas you said we needed to invest in, continue to focus on, or improve. These were:

- Effective communication
- Good customer access
- Tackling poverty
- Quality of homes
- Community safety
- Looking after our environment
- Considering vulnerability and individuality

These main priorities are supported by individual pieces of feedback, which we can keep referring back to.

## WHAT WE'RE DOING NEXT

We have already started using these priorities to create detailed action

plans and will be acting on them in 2022.

#### This includes:

- Growing and reorganising our Customer Hub to improve the service and carrying out a detailed review of how we communicate with you
- Looking into improving our mental health and wellbeing support.
- Reviewing the standard of our void homes, and looking at new approaches to tackling damp and mould

There will be a chance for you to be involved in a review focussing on each priority area above. To take part:

- Check out our latest involvement opportunities on Page 3 and get in touch, or come along to one of our events
- Make sure that we have your current email address, that you have signed up to our MySouthway portal, and follow us on social media to take part in consultations from home.



We've always encouraged our tenants to give us your feedback, but 2022 is the year we want YOU to really get involved. Last year we ran an Inspired by our Communities survey and this year we will be responding to what you told us.

We are committed to involving as many tenants as possible in our decisions about how we spend our money and run our services. We're running some sessions and drop-in events in the next few months where you can find out more about how you can help.

Are you interested in helping to shape our future?

Do you have ideas on how we can better serve our tenants and our communities?

Do you have the commitment and can spare some time to help make a real difference?

We want to hear from people of all ages and backgrounds to ensure we properly represent the communities we serve.

There are lots of different opportunities, all with varying levels of time and commitment required. These include vacancies on our main Southway board and our Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

You will be able to meet existing board, committee and scrutiny panel members at these events to find out more about how it all works.

If you are interested in playing an active part in our future, please feel free to get in touch now or attend one of our events. We look forward to hearing from YOU.

No commitment necessary. Come along and find out how you can get involved

**Tuesday 29th of March,** 4pm-8pm at Westcroft Community Centre, 24-26 Westcroft Road, M20 6EF.

**Thursday 31st of March,** 10am-2pm at Southway Housing, Southern Gate, 729 Princess Road, M20 7LT.



## BUDGET TO SAVE ON BILLS

Reduction in incomes and rising prices are making it increasingly difficult for many households to manage, and more expensive fuel bills are due to make the position worse.

Budgeting, or examining all you have coming in and what you are paying out each month, can seem daunting, but it does help to make your financial position clear.

If you have more going out than coming in, then a budget will show where savings need to be made to keep you out of debt or to prevent existing debts from increasing further.

### Here are some top tips to help balance your budget:

- Maximise your income by checking you are claiming all you are entitled to. If working and on a low income you still may be eligible to claim something.
- Save on food bills by planning meals for the week, making a shopping list and sticking to it. Up to a fifth of what we buy gets wasted. Shopping at certain supermarkets can reduce your food bill by around a third.
- A SIM-only mobile phone contract with unlimited calls, texts and data is offered by many companies for about £9 a month or even less.
- Media and internet can be expensive. Broadband is important and this can be purchased separately at affordable rates.
- Check your bank statements. Do you agree with all incoming and outgoing payments? Challenge it if you disagree.

Our Advice Services Team can help to maximise your income by checking your benefit entitlements and helping with debt and budgeting.

For a referral to any of the above services - contact Southway on **0161 448 4200** or through our website **www.southwayhousing.co.uk.** 





## HELP AND ADVICE FROM SOUTHWAY

Whether it's fuel bills, food costs or rent, we understand that the cost of living is going up and some tenants may be struggling to make ends meet. Our Advice Team is ready to offer you help and support with managing your money and a range of other services

### WHAT CAN THE ADVICE TEAM HELP ME WITH?

- Debt
- Getting online
- Bills & other costs
- Work & training
- Support with food
- Welfare benefits & universal credit
- Borrowing
- Paying rent & arrears
- Budgeting

#### **CONFUSED ABOUT BENEFITS?**

Need help with benefits? Not sure what you might be entitled to or struggling with forms or an appeal? Our advice team can:

- Check what you are entitled to, including Housing Benefit, Attendance Allowance and Pension Credit
- Help you complete online forms
- Get decisions changed (including supporting you through appeals)
- Home visits, if necessary

### HOW DO I CONTACT THE ADVICE TEAM?

You can visit www.southwayhousing. co.uk/support-services/rent-money and fill out the online form or call the Advice Team on 0161 448 4200



We are a keen supporter and partner of South Manchester Credit Union. More than 750 Southway tenants are already SMCU members and we hope many more will appreciate the advantages of joining.

As a credit union member, you can open a savings account and borrow money at affordable rates.

It is free to join, but for the next three months we will deposit £10 into all new accounts opened by tenants to start off their savings.

## AFFORDABLE BORROWING FOR OUR TENANTS

In addition to SMCU's existing ethical borrowing options, we can also offer our tenants the Southway Solutions Loan in partnership with the credit union.

You can borrow up to £300. There are no credit checks, you just need to have less than £2,000 in rent arrears.

We and SMCU have also launched the Right Track furniture loan specifically to help tenants on a low income who are struggling to afford appliances, furniture and flooring. You can borrow up to £500. When your loan is repaid, all the interest charged is returned and placed in your credit union savings account. If you continue to save regularly for the following six months, these savings will be topped up with £50.

Further information is available from our Advice Services Team.

Check out **South Manchester Credit Union** and the products and services it offers at

www.smcreditunion.co.uk. Phone 0161 448 0200 or Email: loans@smcreditunion.co.uk

You can also visit the SM Credit Union office at **187 Fog Lane, Burnage M20 6FJ** 

south manchester credit union

# KEEPING WARM WITH OUR buddies

We launched our Energy Buddies service in September 2021, to support you with your energy usage and bills and getting the best deal for your needs.

Since then, 28 UK energy suppliers have gone out of business and switching to a different company for a better deal is currently not possible. The Government has also announced an increase in the Energy Price Cap from April which will inevitably hit people hard.

Despite this nationwide crisis, our Energy Buddies remain on hand to support Southway tenants struggling to pay their fuel bills.

The team have been busy supporting tenants, by telephone and at face-to-face events, and have already helped many individuals and families.

In one case, the team were able to support a family who had seen their household income change dramatically due to ill health. The Energy Buddies were able to offer support by getting them on the Priority Services Register, arranging an appointment with a Benefits Advisor and fitting radiator foils in their property to help make their home more energy efficient.

While we currently aren't able to help with switching energy supplier, we can support you with concerns about fuel debt, financial support and provide tips on how to reduce bills, save energy and retain heat.



If you'd like to speak to one of our Energy Buddies, visit southwaywayhousing.co.uk/energybuddies and complete our contact form, or email energybuddies@southwayhousing.co.uk



## HERE ARE SOME SIMPLE WAYS TO MAKE YOUR HOME MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT:

- Only have the lights on in the room that you are using
- Keep doors closed to retain heat and reduce draughts
- **Switch unused electrical** appliances off at the plug
- **Turn down your thermostat** (even 1 or 2 degrees)
- Close your curtains to keep the heat in and stop draughts
- Only fill the kettle with the amount of water you need
- Make sure radiators are not blocked by furniture or curtains



## SPRING ACTIVITY IDEAS ON A BUDGET

**HAVE A WATER BALLOON FIGHT** – you can purchase balloons from corner shops and toy stores, fill them with water and have fun!

**GET FIT FOR FREE** – many of our parks and playing fields have free fitness trails and outdoor gyms. There are also football pitches, basketball courts, bowling greens and other sports facilities. Or simply go for a walk in our beautiful open spaces and local nature reserves.

Read more at manchester.gov.uk/info/200073/parks\_playgrounds\_and\_open\_spaces

**PAINT ROCKS** – all you need for this art activity is paint, rocks from the garden and your imagination!

DRAW WITH CHALK ON PAVED AREAS -

coloured chalk can be bought cheaply from corner shops and washes away in the rain. Damage-free street art!

**PLANT FLOWERS AND VEGETABLES** – seeds to brighten your garden can be bought cheaply from many shops and garden centres.



# FURNISHING YOUR HOME ON A BUDGET

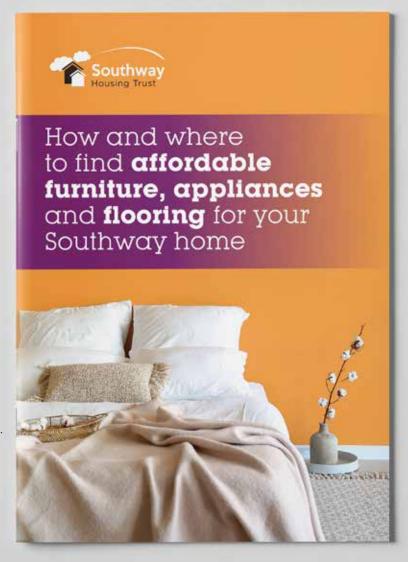
As we head from winter towards spring, you may be thinking how much you would love to give your home a fresh new look but don't know how you could afford it.

We can help. Whether you have just moved into a new home or need to replace existing items, there are plenty of affordable and sustainable solutions available locally.

Our new booklet - How and where to find affordable furniture, appliances and flooring for your Southway home - contains helpful information, advice, tips and details of suppliers, outlets and organisations where you can access good quality furniture, flooring, appliances and electrical goods at a low even no cost.

It also includes information on how and where to find financial advice and support with covering the costs within your budget.

You can read the booklet online at southwayhousing.co.uk/support-services/rent-money/furnishing-your-home/





## A BEAUTIFUL YEAR IN SOUTH MANCHESTER

Our 'Beautiful South Fund' awards grants of up to £2,500 to individuals, groups and organisations to run projects that promote 'neighbourliness' and benefit Southway tenants in south Manchester.

Over the last 12 months, we have awarded 16 grants, ranging from £250 to £2,500, to support some amazing projects and events in our neighbourhoods, including ...

- New garden furniture for a community garden in Didsbury
- A week of social action and community events in Merseybank
- The installation of a defibrillator at Old Moat Primary School
- Distribution of donated school uniforms to families in Merseybank
- Weekly craft sessions in Merseybank and activities for older people in Withington and Ladybarn
- Youth work in Old Moat and Withington
- Street parties and community events in Merseybank, Chorlton and Withington

As Covid restriction have been lifted, it's been great to hear all the ideas and plans being made within our neighbourhoods to get people together again. We've been inspired by the energy and enthusiasm behind the projects we've funded and have loved seeing the difference they make to our communities.

Alison, the coordinator of School Uniform Donation Day, said "We had a brilliant day, we've had so much support and it's great to be able to help so many people – it shows the good things happening in Merseybank...the support from the Beautiful South Fund was amazing".

We're looking forward to awarding a new round of grants in 2022-23 so if you have an idea to brighten up your local neighbourhood, help people to connect or boost community spirit, this could be the year to make it happen!

You can apply for a grant any time. Applications are considered by our tenant-led Beautiful South Fund decision-making panel.

You can find out more about the Beautiful South Fund and download our short application form at www.southwayhousing.co.uk/beautiful-south.

If you'd like to talk to us about your project or idea, need help to make an application, or you're interested in joining the decision-making panel contact **Roz Hampson or Maureen Ward on 0161 448 4200.** 

Images for illustrative purposes only

This recipe from BBC Good Food is veggie, full of healthy vegetables and easy to make. Great for family nights in! You can also make extra and freeze the leftovers.

Prep: 10 mins Cook: 40 mins

#### **INGREDIENTS**

- 4 medium baking potatoes, unpeeled, each cut into 8 wedges
- 4 tsp olive oil
- 1 red onion, roughly chopped
- 1 yellow pepper
- 1 tbsp Cajun spice mix

- 2 x 410g/14oz cans mixed pulses in water, rinsed and drained
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- 150ml vegetable stock
- 1 tbsp dark chocolate, chopped
- 4 tbsp reduced-fat soured cream

#### **METHOD**

#### STEP 1

Heat oven to 220C/200C fan/gas 7. Toss the potato wedges in 2 tsp oil and spread out in a single layer on a large baking tray. Cook for 30-35 mins, turning halfway, until tender and golden brown.

STEP 2

Southway Stories

🛿 @southwayhousing.co.uk 🌐 www.southwayhousing.co.uk

Meanwhile, for the chilli, put the remaining oil into a casserole dish and fry the onion and pepper for 5 mins. Add Cajun spice, pulses, tomatoes and stock. Cover and simmer for 15-20 mins. Remove chilli from the heat and stir in the chocolate until melted. Ladle the chilli into bowls, top each with 1 tbsp soured cream and serve with the wedges.

### HELP OUR 'QUIDS IN' FOOD CLUBS AS YOU SHOP

We are delighted that two of our 'Quids In' food clubs have been selected as Co-op local causes.

This means that if you shop in Co-op stores, you can help the clubs out as you shop!

Food supplies to the clubs have been unpredictable over the last year and they can struggle to get enough food each week for all their members, so this support will make a huge difference. The money raised will be used to stock up the clubs' supplies of breakfast foods, giving 'Quids In' members the best start to their day.

You can register as a Coop member online at **membership.coop.co.uk/register** or by calling 0800 0686 727. There is a one-off fee of £1 but as a member, you can collect points to help pay for your shopping and also choose weekly offers, saving you more money.

Once you are a member, you can select a cause on the Co-op App, through your online membership account online at coop.co.uk or by calling the number above.

To support Burnage East Quids In Food Club search for cause 60131: **membership.coop.co.uk/causes/60131** 

To support Merseybank Quids In Food Club search for cause 60138: **membership.coop.co.uk/causes/60138** 

Don't forget to scan your membership card every time you shop!











We are delighted to tell you that our two fantastic new 'With Care' developments for the over-55s have been completed and begun welcoming new tenants.

Gorton Mill House on Abbey Hey Lane and Dahlia House on Burnage Lane offer modern, purposebuilt Age Friendly apartments for rent, along with activities, events, community facilities and a range of flexible on-site care and support depending on your current and future needs.

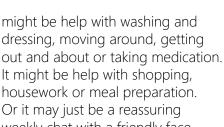
#### WHAT IS 'WITH **CARE' HOUSING?**

Anybody over the age of 55 can apply but priority will be given to people who may need some level of assistance with personal care. That

might be help with washing and dressing, moving around, getting It might be help with shopping, housework or meal preparation. Or it may just be a reassuring weekly chat with a friendly face.

#### WHY MIGHT IT BE **RIGHT FOR ME?**

You may be thinking of moving or having to leave your current home because of life changes or health problems. Perhaps you want to downsize or simply want to move to













a modern, Age Friendly apartment in a happy and supportive setting.

If you value your independence and privacy and want control and choices in your life, our With Care housing could be exactly what you are looking for.

#### **HOW TO APPLY**

If you think Gorton Mill House and Dahlia House sound like what you are looking for then email **AFApplications@** southwayhousing. **co.uk** to find out more









### SLIPPER EXCHANGE AND HOME SAFETY EVENT

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Did you know that worn, badly fitting slippers are a major cause of falls, slips and trips in the home?

We are running a Slipper Exchange event in partnership with buzz Manchester Health & Wellbeing Service at Gorton Mill House.

Come along to pick up a free pair of strong, reliable replacement slippers and find out what else you can do to stay on a safe footing in your home.

There will be a falls prevention workshop, a demonstration of simple exercises to improve your strength and balance, and health and safety advice from the Manchester Falls Team.

The Southway Advice Team will also be present to help you with financial support and benefits. The Gorton Mill House community café will be serving a light lunch and refreshments to all who attend.

#### WHEN IS IT?

Thursday 31st March, 10am until noon

#### WHERE IS IT?

Gorton Mill House, Abbey Hey Lane, Gorton

#### WHO CAN ATTEND?

People over 50. Please book your place in advance by emailing Vanessa at **v.lam@ southwayhousing.co.uk** or by calling **07826 946115.** 



### **GREEN FLAG SITE SUCCESS**

Our Barlow Hall open space in Chorlton has once again been awarded the Green Flag Award, the international quality mark for parks and green spaces.

It is one of only a handful of Green Flag sites in the country on an urban housing estate.

The project has transformed grass verges into a 'virtual urban park' with much loved and well used areas celebrating and promoting wildlife and biodiversity, community events and involvement, the area's heritage and sustainable play.

It is the fifth consecutive year we've been given the award, and this year we received our highest ever score from the judges!

Thanks to all our residents, volunteers and supporters who have helped make the site such a success. Here's looking at six in a row next year!



### **WE ARE CREATING A WOODLAND!**

We are creating our first ever new woodland on Wintermans Road on the Arrowfield Estate and we are very excited about the project!



We have big plans to make Arrowfield our first Low Carbon neighbourhood and the new woodland will contribute to our wider plans for the area.

#### WHY TREES?

- Green spaces with trees improve resilience to climate change and help to reduce global warming. Trees store carbon by removing some of the CO2 from the air.
- Trees help to reduce air pollution and reduce the risk of flooding.
- Trees are a valuable resource for wildlife and help connect us to nature, which is beneficial to our mental health.

#### WHY A WOODLAND?

A woodland is much more than a group of trees - it is made up of layers of different types of plants that provide a diverse variety of wildlife habitats.

## HOW TO TURN A GRASSY SPACE INTO A WOODLAND

You can't rush a woodland.

Trees and shrubs take time to grow. But we knew a few ways to help to speed things along.

We chose a site which already had some large, mature trees and added young specimens to that area.

We planted native species because these are most beneficial to wildlife.

Before planting woodland shrubs and flowers, you need to change the ground because they will not grow well in grass, so we removed the grass with a lot of weed control fabric and wood chip.

Once the grass had gone, we planted young trees and shrubs in the newly bare earth and also started to get the ground ready for woodland plants.

Bluebells and wild garlic will be going in soon. Preparation for a path has also started.

The view into the adjacent cemetery was screened using natural materials, including a new hedgerow.

Where it was too shady for plants to grow, we used branches and twigs to create a 'dead hedge' for invertebrates to live in.

The birds and bugs are loving our new woodland and we are looking forward to welcoming more wildlife this year.

#### There is a lot going on.

### Would you like to get involved in this project?

We would like to invite adults and families with children to help us create this woodland. You will be able to build homes for wildlife and help us with removing weeds and planting.

CHANGING LIVES

If you would like to would like to get involved or find out more, please contact **Debbie Wallace, Urban Ranger** in our Environmental Team **d.wallace@southwayhousing.co.uk** 

## COMING VERY SOON A NEW PROJECT AT... BULLFINCH WALK GREEN SPACE

Community and environmental charity Groundwork Greater Manchester is working with volunteers and residents to enhance one of our green spaces at Bullfinch Walk on the Arrowfield estate.

The project is funded by the Green Recovery Challenge fund and aims to create a community space for both people and wildlife to enjoy. The Groundwork team have listened to the ideas put forward by residents and will be working on the project in March. It will include the creation of two wildflower areas, a hedge, new wildlife habitat and some small-scale tree planting.

Residents of all ages are invited to get involved with creating this new community space. If you're interested, then contact Francesca Sullivan at Francesca.Sullivan@groundwork.org.uk or Debbie Wallace at d.wallace@southwayhousing.co.uk

### **HELP WITH YOUR GARDEN**

To support residents who are older or disabled, we offer Concessionary Gardening, a basic service to help tenants maintain an attractive and healthy garden.

Many of our tenants have lovely, well-maintained gardens that help our communities look great. As we head into spring, now is the perfect time to get out and start working on your garden to prepare for the growing season, when lawns and hedges begin to flourish again.

The concessionary gardening service will be provided throughout the growing season and will consist of one visit every month. Tenants will need to demonstrate that they meet the criteria to receive this service for eligibility through an application.

If you'd like to find out more about our concessionary gardening service, please visit the Garden & Fencing page on our website.



## WITHINGTON COMMUNITY EVENT CLEANS UP

Southway and environmental contractor Greenfingers teamed up with Withington residents for a successful community clean-up event in the Strathblane Close and Easthope Close area.

The event was organised after conversations with residents about how to improve their local environment.

We called in Greenfingers for additional support as they have successfully worked with us on previous community projects.

#### WHAT A TURNOUT

The day was a success, with many residents turning up to lend a hand with litter picking, weeding, and creating new growth in the area's flower beds.

Neighbours helped with landscaping, clearing footpaths and tidying up overgrown trees and bushes, filling two entire skips!



## DOES YOUR LOCAL AREA NEED A TIDY UP?

Do you think your neighbours will get involved? If so contact **d.wallace@southwayhousing.co.uk.** 





## STAFF LEARN BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE

A group of our staff have been learning British Sign Language (BSL) as part of our commitment to inclusivity and equality.

Their new skills will help us to communicate better with tenants, colleagues and members of the community who are deaf or have hearing disabilities.

It is planned that more staff will learn the basics of BSL in the next 12 months, while members of the existing team will also be looking to improve their skills.



The volunteers showed what they had learned with a special Christmas message. View the video at www.southwayhousing.co.uk/news-events/miscellaneous/a-special-christmas-message-from-our-british-sign-language-team/

## A CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR A HOMELESS FAMILY

Southway staff went the extra mile to ensure a homeless family were housed in time for Christmas.

We recently entered a partnership with Manchester City Council to offer temporary accommodation for families in crisis, giving them a short-term home suitable for their needs instead of having to rely on often crowded B&B's and hotels.

But we were put to the test when we found ourselves racing against the clock to get a property ready in time for a family to move in before Christmas.

Southway and council staff managed to arrange an emergency furniture delivery on 23rd December and to ensure the property was warm, safe and secure – even after it emerged that external gas mains work meant supply to the property had been disconnected.

We are glad that the efforts and hard work of all involved meant a happy ending for the family. Well done everyone!



## SUPPORT GROUP FOR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY HOARDING

Are you or someone you know affected by hoarding behaviours?

Our Tidy Homes Tidy Minds team can help address both the symptoms and causes of hoarding disorder.

Join our online peer support group for confidential and supportive discussions and advice. There's no need to use your camera or talk, it can just be a real help to hear from others who share your struggles.

The group is free to attend and open to friends, family and advocates.

The sessions take place on Microsoft Teams at 7pm on the first and last Thursday of the month. The joining link is on our Facebook page @Tidyhomestidyminds.

More on how the Tidy Homes
Tidy Minds project can help
you is available at www.
southwayhousing.co.uk/
support-services/tenancysupport-hoarding/hoarding/ or
by calling Lynsey on 07766 504
707





## MENTAL HEALTH PATHWAYS CONTACT NUMBERS

The Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (GMMH) 24/7 Helpline Number is **0800 953 0285** 

You can call for free at any time, day or night, if you feel your mental health is beginning to suffer.

In an emergency where you are concerned about an immediate risk of harm – either to yourself or someone else – call 999 or visit your nearest **Accident & Emergency Department.** 

If it is not an emergency but you require urgent advice, call 111 or if it is less urgent, contact your GP.

If you are under the care of one of **GMMH's Community Mental Health Teams** and need to speak to someone, please call the relevant team number below. If your allocated worker is not available, you should be able to speak to another worker on the duty desk.

North East and North West Manchester, Macartney House 0161 271 0599

Central East Manchester, Rawnsley Building 0161 271 0631

Central West Manchester Kath Locke Centre 0161 271 0180

South Manchester North Mersey, Kingsley House **0161 271 0291** 

South Manchester South Mersey, Brian Hore Unit 0161 271 0289

The Samaritans - 24 hour confidential emotional support 116 123

**Shout** – a free 24/7 text service for anyone in crisis anytime anywhere. If you are struggling to cope and need immediate help, **text Shout to 85258** 

**Crisis Point** - helping people with diverse needs to resolve their current crisis and develop strategies to prevent or better manage future issues **0161 238 5149** 



