

Southway Stories

The magazine for
Southway Housing
customers

Autumn 2022

COMMUNITY EVENTS!

We loved seeing you all at
our Summer Fun Days – take
a look at the back cover
for our upcoming events

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COST OF LIVING SUPPORT

Lower your bills with the
Energy Buddies

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IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE...

Deck the halls with our
recipe for homemade
salt dough decorations!

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COSY COMMUNITY MONDAYS AT SOUTHERN GATE

Join us for a brew,
biscuit and book swap.

HOW WE'VE BEEN *inspired* by our communities

This year at Southway, Inspired by Our Communities (IBC) has become a way of working that runs through all of our services.

Consultation feedback from the STAR and IBC Surveys in 2020 & '21 has been used to shape the way we're working in lots of different areas.

To refresh your memory of the results of the IBC consultation, visit the webpage southwayhousing.co.uk/inspired-by, or call us on **0161 448 4200** and ask to speak to one of our **Customer Involvement team**.

Here are the projects that have progressed since the last newsletter:

CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

THEME: GOOD CUSTOMER ACCESS

YOU SAID:

- You wanted a range of ways to contact Southway – the most popular being phone, email, office visits, and texts.
- You also want to see up-to-date, accurate information on what you can expect from our services, for example, waiting times and response timeframes.

WE ARE:

After investing in new staff for the Hub, and forming a new Repairs Planning team, we set improvement targets for responding to enquiries, which we're pleased to have met. However, some of the improvements we saw were being countered by a higher number of follow-up calls from people chasing updates.

To address this, we have reviewed and updated our Customer Care Policy, which includes new Customer Service Standards, which we will share everywhere from our website to call queues. This will help staff to be helpful and transparent about what to expect and when you'll hear from us next.

We know that phone queues can also be frustrating for busy customers. So, for most types of calls, you will now be offered the option of a call back, so that you get to speak to the right person without having to wait on the phone.

DEALING WITH DAMP, MOULD AND CONDENSATION

THEME: QUALITY OF HOME

YOU SAID:

- This was the primary repair type that you wanted us to look at
- You wanted us to reduce the waiting time for inspections
- Some residents reported that while we do attend to address the issue, there is often no permanent resolution, and it comes back.

WE ARE:

In the UK, we have a problem with damp and mould in homes. The cost-of-living crisis could make it even harder for people to properly heat and ventilate their homes, making the problem worse.

We don't want anyone to have to live with this problem. That is why we have reviewed our approach to make sure that we offer a responsive, customer friendly, health and safety-focussed service.

We have brought together a group of staff and external specialists to look at our process, communication, and training and to learn from good practice. We have taken the time to consider why homes have damp and how we can deal with the root causes.

As a result, we are:

- Issuing simplified advice on how to avoid condensation, damp, and mould.
- Introducing more detailed questions as part of the repair-booking process. This includes requesting photos and videos upfront to make sure we understand the issue and cause sooner. This will help us get the right type of tradesperson out to the job first time, reducing waiting times for inspections and work.

**IF YOU HAVE
UNREPORTED DAMP
AND MOULD IN
YOUR HOME, PLEASE
CONTACT US.**

- Trialling new approaches, and remotely monitoring their effect on property damp levels with smart technology. We'll keep you updated on the results of this and how it will be used to shape our overall approach.
- Reviewing the way we communicate with you when you have a repair; we will do more to keep you updated on where things are up to, as well as contacting you after the repair, to make sure the solution has worked.
- And we've trained staff so that they can recognise damp and mould, understand the impacts, and better diagnose the issue when first reported.

We're ensuring the work we do meets the Housing Ombudsman's recommendations. Our Tenant Scrutiny Panel are reviewing our work so that it has customer input.

We'll soon be asking for your feedback on the new approach – if you'd like to be involved, please make sure your contact details are up to date so we can contact you, or get in touch with us.

COST OF LIVING CRISIS SUPPORT

THEME: QUALITY OF LIFE

YOU SAID:

In 2021, tenants reported growing concerns about managing finances, finding secure work, and accessing the latest information and advice on money in an ever-changing environment. We were also asked to work closely with partners to offer more help.

WE ARE:

We're that the concerns expressed will have only deepened over recent months. We have launched a new Cost of Living group who have been working on a campaign to bring you up-to-date advice on making your money go further. This includes:

- A new Cost of Living Support Hub on our website at southwayhousing.co.uk/Cost-of-Living
- A Cost of Living Support Pack, which is included in this issue of Southway Stories, or, you can access via the webpage above.
- Our **Living Well Fund** is now up and running
- A regular programme of free employment courses and jobs fairs



- Winter Warmth Packs
- Upcoming Winter Warmth events (see back cover for details)
- Cosy Community Mondays – weekly warm space community events at Southern Gate (find out more on the back cover)

This is all in addition to the free and impartial support Southway tenants can get from our Advice Team. To access this, contact us in any of the usual ways. To receive the latest information and advice about money, follow us on social media and make sure we have your current contact details.

GREEN AND PUBLIC SPACE CONCERNS

THEME: ENVIRONMENT

YOU SAID:

Dog fouling was reported to be getting worse on some Southway estates. People also commented that grass-cutting on estates happens inconsistently, which can lead to them becoming an eyesore.


WE ARE:

We're providing extra dog bins at several sites, and have displayed posters reminding owners to clean up after their dogs. It was found that a small number of dog owners were not cleaning up, so the Environment Team worked with the ASB Team, Tidy Britain Group, and Manchester City Council's Compliance Team to deal with these individuals. In some cases, on sites within our estates, the grass being cut is not under our maintenance. In some cases, on our estates, the grass is not under our maintenance but we are monitoring grass cutting, with most of our sites being cut fortnightly.

If you're passionate about your environment and want to get involved with green initiatives, we'd love to hear from you!

For other Inspired by our Communities updates, see pages 8,9,10 & 12

LOWER YOUR BILLS WITH THE



energy buddies

Until April 2023, energy bills are expected to be in the region of £2,500 a year for the average British household. Unfortunately, this is not a cap – despite it being reported as such in the media. Although switching to a cheaper tariff is not an option right now, all is not lost. There are other ways to lower your bills, like reducing the amount of energy you use.

Energy Buddies is a free and impartial service for all Southway tenants. If you're struggling to afford your energy bills, our Energy Buddies are here to help. For this edition of Southway Stories, they've put their heads together to provide you with a no-nonsense list of energy-saving tips to help you reduce your bills. Best of all, most of these tips won't cost you a penny!

Turn off lights and radiators in rooms you're not using

Lighting makes up 11% of the average UK household's electricity use, so turning off lights in rooms you aren't using is a good idea. Similarly, you'll save money by turning off the radiators in unused rooms and by closing all your internal doors. This will keep the heat in the rooms you are using.

Turn off electrical appliances at the plug

Appliances that use energy even when they're turned off can account for up to 20% of your monthly electricity bill. Some devices have an obvious standby mode, like a games console or TV, but there are less obvious devices that drain electricity without you knowing, like microwaves and coffee machines. The solution? Turn things off at the plug when you're not using them. Just be sure not to turn off your fridge freezer!



Turn down your thermostat

Turning down your thermostat by just 1°C can cut your energy bills straight away and you might not even feel the difference. In fact, the average UK household sets its thermostat to 20°C, a degree higher than the Committee on Climate Change recommends. If you turn down your thermostat, you could save money while doing your bit for the planet... win-win!

Turn down your hot water temperature

If you find yourself adding cold water when you're washing your hands, your hot water temperature is probably set too high. We recommend turning down your hot water temperature to 60°C, which should be hot enough for all home uses and hot enough to prevent bacteria from multiplying.

Wash your clothes at a lower temperature

Washing clothes on a colder wash saves energy and can reduce your energy bills. You could save an average of 57% on running costs when you wash at 30°C. Modern washing powder is designed to work well at low temperatures, so it can also protect your clothes from the stress of hot water, making them last longer.

Draught-proof your home

Draught-proofing your doors and windows is a quick way to reduce your energy bills. All sorts of shops sell draught excluders, or you could even make your own from old clothes.

Don't seal your kitchen and bathroom windows though, as this will increase the risk of damp. Instead, use a draught excluder on the inner doors of these rooms, so the warm air from the rest of the house can't escape.

Don't forget, if you have trickle vents at the top of your windows, you will still need to keep these open to prevent condensation and damp.



Close your curtains or blinds

Drawing your curtains in the early evening can reduce heat loss by up to 17%, or 15% if you have blinds. We can't recommend this one enough, simply because of how easy it is to do, especially in winter when it gets dark earlier.

Never overfill your kettle

If you love a good brew, don't overfill your kettle. Only use as much water as you need for each mug. More water means more energy and time to boil. Even if you drink a lot, it's still more efficient to boil just what you need for each brew.

Replace old lightbulbs with LEDs

LED lights consume 80-90% less energy than older-style incandescent or halogen bulbs. They also last up to 100,000 hours, compared with 3,000 hours for an incandescent and 2,000 hours for a halogen. LEDs are typically much brighter than older-style bulbs, meaning your house will feel lighter and more spacious too.

Don't block your radiators

If there is anything in front of a radiator, including furniture or curtains, it simply won't be able to distribute heat appropriately throughout the room. Try reorganising the layout of each room to stop this from happening.

Don't forget, the Energy Buddies understand that every household has its own particular needs, and they can work with you to make yours more energy efficient.

If you want to speak to someone directly, you can email energybuddies@southwayhousing.co.uk or call us on **0161 448 4200** and ask to speak to an Energy Buddy.

BLEED YOUR RADIATORS



Radiators that need bleeding have air bubbles trapped inside them which prevents warm water from circulating.

Bleeding your radiators could help you save money by making them more efficient. There are a few ways to tell if your radiators need bleeding – they may take longer than usual to heat, have cold patches at the top but be warm at the bottom, or they may make a gurgling noise.

If you're feeling confident, try our step-by-step guide to bleeding your radiators:

Tools you'll need

- ✓ A radiator valve key or a flathead screwdriver
- ✓ An old rag to soak up any escaping water

Steps you'll need to take

- 1 Turn off your central heating system and ensure your radiators have cooled
- 2 Start with the radiator furthest away from your boiler if you're bleeding more than one
- 3 Insert the radiator key into the bleed valve and place a rag underneath to soak up any water
- 4 Turn the key anti-clockwise until you hear hissing and close it when water starts leaking
- 5 Tighten the valve by turning the key clockwise and repeat these steps on other radiators which may need bleeding





FIRE SAFETY IN YOUR HOME

WE TAKE FIRE SAFETY IN OUR PROPERTIES VERY SERIOUSLY. FIRE CAN CAUSE SERIOUS INJURY AND EVEN DEATH, AS WELL AS DAMAGE TO YOUR HOME AND POSSESSIONS.

We've recently updated our tenant safety information and collated it all into a tenant safety booklet: **Staying safe and secure in your Southway home**, which we've included with this edition of Southway Stories, and you can download it on our website.



We'll be highlighting key areas of building safety online over the coming months, starting with fire safety.

Our responsibility for fire safety in tenants' homes

- We regularly check the operation of all gas and electrical systems
- We carry out annual checks on your fire and smoke alarms
- We offer special services for vulnerable tenants
- We can help to arrange a home fire safety visit from Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service
- We can provide support for addressing hoarding issues.

Our responsibility for fire safety in homes with communal areas

- We will carry out fire risk assessments in blocks with communal areas
- We will regularly check the safety of all gas, electrical and fire safety systems
- We will regularly check flat entrance doors
- We will carry out annual checks of fire alarms and replace them when necessary

- We will carry out regular inspections of communal areas.

How you can keep your home safe from fire

- Check your smoke alarm every week. Press the button on the cover and it should make a sound. If it isn't working, please give us a call
- Check your home before you go to bed. Make sure you've turned off your oven and cooker, and extinguished cigarettes, candles etc. if you use them
- Keep your home tidy and dispose of flammable items such as newspapers
- Keep your internal doors closed, especially at night, to stop the spread of smoke and fire
- Make sure you know what to do and where to go if a smoke alarm does go off during the night
- Plan your escape route and make sure routes are clear and free from obstacles.

Cost of living and candle safety

House fires sparked by candles are at their highest level in more than a decade, likely due to the

rising cost of gas and electric. If you're using candles, please be mindful of their risks and:

- Never leave lit candles unattended and always put them out when you leave the room - even for a moment.
- Place candles carefully on a stable surface, out of the reach of pets and children.
- Keep candles away from flammable objects like curtains, furniture, bedding and books.
- Don't move candles once they are lit and don't leave them near open windows.
- Do not burn several candles close together as this might cause the flame to flare.
- Put candles out with a spoon to avoid any sparks flying.

More information on building safety, including what to do if you discover a fire in your home, can be found in your enclosed tenant safety booklet: **Staying safe and secure in your Southway home or at www.southwayhousing.co.uk/safety**



WANT TO MOVE? TRY RIGHTSIZING

The HOOP (Housing Options for Older People) service in South Manchester supports those over 50 with their rehousing options.

Referrals are made based on financial needs, medical requirements, and risk of social isolation; and the service helps those who are looking for information about adaptive aids for their home or those who want to **right-size** from larger family homes into a smaller property or an age-friendly scheme.

Whether you just want to know what your options are for the future, or you know for sure that you want to move soon, we can provide free expert advice and a choice of housing options ranging from age-restricted flats to Retirement Housing Schemes and Extra Care Schemes.

Whatever the reason – whether you're looking for a home that's closer to friends or family, has cheaper bills, is easier to clean or is all on one level – HOOP is here to help people make a move that's right for them.

To speak to somebody about rightsizing, you can contact our **Housing & Care Options Advisor, Jackey Duncan**, on **0161 448 4200**; or, if you'd like more information, please visit **homes.manchestermove.co.uk** or email **right.sizing@northwardshousing.co.uk** to speak to **Hayley**.



EAT WELL FOR LESS WITH Quids In FOOD CLUBS

Are you struggling with food costs?

'Quids In' Food Clubs offer members a variety of fresh and chilled food **worth around £15 for just £3 a week**. To join a Quids In Food Club, please **email quidsin@southwayhousing.co.uk** or call Maureen Ward on **0161 448 4200**. You will need to prove that you receive Housing Benefit, Universal Credit or Pension Credit. Please be aware that the clubs may have waiting lists.



Support Quids In as you shop

Merseybank Quids In Food Club has been chosen to be part of the Co-op Local Community Fund until October 2023. This means that if you shop at the Co-op, you can help raise money for them as you shop. All money raised will be used to provide extra support for local families during school holidays.

If you are a Co-op member, you can choose Merseybank Quids In as your local cause at **membership.coop.co.uk/causes/75146** or search for cause number **75146**.

You can become a Co-op member online at **www.coop.co.uk/membership** or ask in your local store.

Don't forget to swipe your membership card when you shop!



Thyme for Everyone COOKING PROJECT

If you'd like to cook up a storm at our next run of our **FREE Thyme for Everyone** Cooking Project, please contact our Community Development Officer, Diane Roege. The course is free and a brilliant opportunity to build on your cooking skills with helpful hints and tips, as well as potted herbs and recipes for you to take away and use at home!



IMPROVING OUR COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Here at Southway, we know that how we handle complaints and communicate solutions to any problems is very important to you, and this is an area where we're working hard to make sure that we do better.

We have a **Complaints Improvement Plan** in place that includes the following actions:

- Delivering complaints training to our staff so that they listen, show empathy, and focus on solutions
- Introducing a Southway Standard for written communication so that our responses are timely, accurate and fair
- Learning lessons when things go wrong and telling you how we will put things right.

You can find out how to make a complaint and how we're performing in dealing with complaints by visiting www.southwayhousing.co.uk/complaints. Tenants are also involved in our Complaints Improvement Plan and we have a Service Improvement Group that meets twice a year to review our performance and make recommendations on how we can do better.

If you'd like to get involved, please contact our **Customer Involvement & Community Investment Manager, Maureen Ward** on **0161 448 4200**.



TENANTS HAVE THEIR SAY ON OUR BOARD

This summer, we ran a campaign to recruit two tenants to our Board, as two longstanding members were stepping down.

Not all Housing Associations have tenants on their Board but, at Southway, we value the insight and knowledge that the people who live in our homes and communities bring to decision making.

We received 14 applications for the vacancies and were really encouraged to see that so many people are keen to devote their time to help Southway provide the best possible service for our tenants, residents and communities.

We have now appointed two new members who will bring valuable skills and experience to what is an already strong Board, but that isn't the end of it. We want as many tenants as possible to get involved and will be working with the unsuccessful applicants to make sure they're ready for the next opportunity.

If this sounds like something you'd be interested in, we want to hear from you! To find out more, please contact our **Customer Hub** on **0161 448 4200** or email governance@southwayhousing.co.uk



THE REPAIRS PORTAL IS BACK ONLINE!

Look after your home,
from your home



*inspired
by our communities*

Do you fancy the freedom and simplicity of managing your account online, whenever and wherever you want?

Our online repairs portal is back! This means that booking a repair online is quick, simple and available 24 hrs a day.

How do I access online repairs?

Online repairs can be accessed through your **MySouthway** account, at **my.southwayhousing.co.uk**, or by clicking '**Login**' at the top of any page of our website. The service allows you to book routine repairs, which is part of our ongoing commitment to making it easier for our tenants to access services.

How do I book a repair online?

The tenant portal allows you to log non-emergency, standard day-to-day repairs around your home in five easy steps.

Step 1: Log into your MySouthway account and Click on the '**Report a Repair**' button.

Step 2: Simply search for the type of repair you require or click on the relevant repair area. Each further selection you make will narrow your options, helping you pick the right repair.

Step 3: You will then be given a summary of the repair you are about to order. Here you can add some more information about the repair or choose to add a photo.

Step 4: Choose the time and date that suits you and click '**Reserve Slot**'.

Step 5: To confirm the time and date selected, click on the '**Confirm this time slot**' button.

What else can I do?

As well as booking repair appointments, MySouthway can be used 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for a range of purposes including making rent payments, updating tenancy details, checking your rent balance and accessing tenancy documents.

To find out more and to view our step-by-step guide, visit **southwayhousing.co.uk/tenant-portal**

ASB

HOW LONG IS A PIECE OF STRING?

One of the most common questions we get asked when we're dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is 'when will it stop?' or 'how long will it take before it's resolved?'. Unfortunately, no two ASB cases are ever the same and each case will impact individuals in different ways.

In February, a group of 10–16-year-olds were reported for trespassing, stealing, causing property damage, carrying offensive weapons, and threatening members of the public and local businesses. The first challenge was to identify the youths and work with our partners, Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and **Manchester City Council (MCC)** and any other support agencies to meet with the children and their families and discuss the effect their behaviour had on their community, friends, families and schools. **Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs)** and **tenancy warnings** were then issued.

We received a lot of public pressure to escalate proceedings to court, but we worked tirelessly with the community to organise an 'apology party' where the children, family members, residents, local social enterprises and business owners, along with our partners, could meet to discuss the cost and damage the ASB had on their everyday lives, and reconcile the issues. The children apologised for and understood the negative effect their behaviour had on the people around them.

As part of this resolution process, Southway has committed to creating opportunities for the young people to get involved in the community. We've invested in a number of diversionary activities for the families involved, like after school activities and provision of IT equipment. We've also used **The Beautiful South Fund** (see page 11) to pay for projects in the community such as a boxing club and self-defence classes. Several partners have also offered individual mentoring services to the youths involved.

We have not had any ASB complaints since, and one community member said, *'the initial place where the significant ASB emulated from has now ceased and recent reports from traders in the Village is that they are not experiencing any ASB.'*

If you're concerned about ASB in your neighbourhood, please don't hesitate to contact us. We are committed to challenging anti-social behaviour and work closely with Greater Manchester Police, Manchester City Council and Mediation services to resolve ASB in our communities.



WE'RE UPDATING OUR TELEPHONE SYSTEM!

If you call us over the next few weeks, our phone system might sound a little bit different.

You don't need to do anything, it's just part of our work to make contacting us easier for you.

*inspired
by our communities*

JUNIOR BOXING CLUB PROVES A HIT WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS

In September, dozens of young residents and their families joined us for the launch of Withington Baths Junior Boxing Club, a free weekly event for local youngsters, funded by The Beautiful South Fund.

The club aims to help youngsters build their fitness, discipline, strength, and confidence with help from experienced local boxing coaches.

Boxing coach Phil O'Hare is a Southway tenant and one of the coaches involved in the new club. Phil used to train at the Baths himself as a youngster, alongside Withington Baths Director, Dave Payne. Dave grew up living in a Southway property and, as a local resident, is passionate about creating opportunities for young people in and around Withington. Dave recalls the positive impact that local boxing had on the community back then, and the importance of reviving that now.

"In the 1980s there was a boxing camp in Withington, here at the Baths. I grew up around here and I know it kept a lot of kids on the straight and narrow. Loads of kids came, it was really popular. Sometimes boxing can have a bit of a bad name, but this is not boxing for fighting, this is boxing for training's sake so it's all about wellbeing of the mind, discipline, being able to take instruction, and having positive male role models. It did a lot of good in the '80s - keeping kids out of trouble around here - and we're hoping we can recreate that."

The event was also attended by local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO), Ben Scott and Southway's own Leala Yewdall. Reports of 'youth nuisance' aren't uncommon in the area around Withington Baths, so the club is a great referral path to steer families towards.

The Withington Baths Junior Boxing club takes place **every Monday from 4-5pm** and is **free** of charge to attend. For more information, please contact **Withington Baths & Leisure Centre on 0161 478 1181.**



THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTH FUND



Do you have an idea that could help people in Southway communities who are struggling with the rising cost of living? Do you want to organise an event to lift people's spirits? Would you like to bring people together to socialise or learn new skills? A Beautiful South Fund grant could help you put your plans into action!

"Since the party, neighbours stop in the street to talk to each other more and it feels like more of a community." **Attendee at a Burnage street party**

Grants of up to **£2,500** are awarded to individuals, groups and organisations to run activities and events in South Manchester that promote 'neighbourliness' and benefit Southway tenants. This could be anything from on-off events like street parties, Halloween and Christmas events, and gardening projects, as well as regular groups including dance classes or arts and crafts groups.

"We're just so thankful that you helped us, the items we purchased with The Beautiful South fund can be used over and over again. It was so easy from beginning to end, the form was simple to fill out, support was on hand all the time, communication was quick, clear and kind... thanks so much"

Organiser of a Merseybank community event.

You can find out more about the **Beautiful South Fund** and download an application form at southwayhousing.co.uk/beautiful-south. If you'd like to talk to us about your idea or need help applying, please contact **Roz Hampson** or **Maureen Ward** on **0161 448 4200.**



FLYING THE FLAG FOR LOCAL GREEN SPACES

South Manchester is a beautiful area, and we're lucky to have a lot of green spaces, parks and gardens right on our doorsteps.

We know that over the last couple of years in particular, people have realised how important nature is to our health and wellbeing, and this came through strongly in the ***Inspired by Our Communities*** conversations we had last year. Southway is committed to working closely with our tenants and residents to make sure these spaces are prioritised, so we wanted to update you on a few things we're doing to ensure that they remain places people can feel proud of.

TREE SURVEYS

In March, our contractor, Urban Green, started a tree survey across all our estates and developments. Once it's complete, we'll know how many trees we have, and what condition they're in, so can plan in any work that needs doing, from maintenance to planting. We'll also be able to find out how much carbon is retained by our trees as part of our Zero-Carbon strategy!

GREEN SPACES

We have 157 green spaces, ranging from grass verges to our Green Flag site at Barlow Hall which,

in August won a prestigious Green Flag Award for the sixth year running. We're always looking for new ways to use and improve them so, if you have any ideas, we'd love to hear from you.

We've carried out several community activities recently where tenants and residents have been invited to get involved, from nature trails, guided fungi walks and habitat enhancements to local clean-ups, environmental education in local schools and a new partnership with Groundwork to raise community awareness of our open spaces.

PARKS

We're lucky enough to have several lovely parks in our area, all owned and managed by Manchester City Council (MCC). We often work with MCC and local community groups to host joint events in local parks – for example, this summer, we supported the annual Merseyfest event at Parkway Playing Fields, organised and funded by Barlow Moor Community Association. We've also been asked to contribute to future development plans for the park.



ARROWFIELD LOW CARBON LIVING PROJECT

As part of our plans to reduce the carbon footprint of our community, we've recently made some real progress on our Arrowfield Air Source Heat Pump project. We've appointed two main contractors to install new, energy-efficient heat pump technology into our properties: one to do the houses, and another to retrofit the flats. Since it opened, the Project Hub has seen a steady flow of tenants looking for more information as well as myth-busting.

SOUTHWAY STAFF GET STUCK IN

As part of Southway's 15th birthday celebration events, our Age Friendly and Development teams recently ditched their desks for the day and got their gardening gloves on with Urban Ranger, Debbie Wallace.

The Age Friendly Team spent the day at the Darley Avenue Green Flag site where they created a Big Blue Bee Bed. Meanwhile, the Development Team spent a day at Wintermans Road on the Arrowfield Estate to create phase two of the woodland there, preparing the ground for this year's leaf fall and planting 1,000 bluebells ready for spring.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

If you'd like to volunteer with projects on these green spaces, please contact our Urban Rangers, **Debbie Wallace** and **Luke Stuttard**, via the **Customer Hub**.

NEW STEPS TO FOLLOW FOR BOUNDARY REQUESTS

We're launching a new process for tenants to request boundary repairs and replacements.

As a general rule, Southway does not take responsibility for providing new replacement boundaries, including fencing, at our properties. However, we also recognise that there are exceptional circumstances that may require some type of boundary to be fitted. Please be aware that the demand for boundary treatments always greatly exceeds our available budgets, and our new process has been put in place to make sure we can prioritise those cases based on individual needs.

Find out more about our new boundary request process and, if you believe that your circumstances are exceptional, apply for fencing at www.southwayhousing.co.uk/fencing-request. The more information you can give us, the easier it is for us to understand your situation, and this will help us to make a decision. If you need support filling in the form, one of our **Customer Hub** advisors can fill it in on your behalf – you can contact them via our website or over the phone on **0161 448 4200**.

CELEBRATING ON A BUDGET

It's the most wonderful time of the year and this year, we're looking forward to spending time with our loved ones. But with the increase in the cost of living and energy bills, the festivities can add an extra layer of pressure to spend money you might not have, turning a merry Christmas into a tricky New Year, weighed down by debts that can take a long time to repay.

With that in mind, we've put together some tips to help you celebrate without spending more than you can afford.

- Work out what you can afford to spend and stick to it. Remember to budget for the bills you pay every month, including rent, Council Tax, and energy.
- Think about new ways to celebrate that keep things fun and affordable, from making your own cards and gifts to decorations - we've shared our recipe for homemade salt dough decorations on the opposite page to get things started! You'll remember the time you spend together as a family forever, whilst expensive toys are often forgotten once the novelty has worn off.
- Make sure you don't go overdrawn without talking to your bank first. Unauthorized overdrafts are incredibly expensive, even if you only go into the red by a few pounds.
- If you do have to borrow money, make sure you know the full costs involved and can afford the repayments. Consider whether your income is likely to drop and if you'd still be able to make the payments if it did. Late payment fees applied by banks and other lenders considerably increase the debt and can quickly make it unmanageable.

BETTER OFF WITH THE CREDIT UNION

South Manchester Credit Union has a range of user-friendly saving and loan schemes which can be useful tools to help you make your money go further, including a Christmas saving scheme and special saver accounts for children.



Southway has worked in partnership with the Credit Union since 2014 and offers its own Southway Solutions loan scheme through it. A Southway Solutions loan allows you to borrow up to £300 quickly and easily, so can be useful if you have a household emergency, for example, if the car you use for work needs urgent repairs.

We also offer another loan scheme to help tenants purchase furniture, appliances and flooring. To apply, please make an appointment with a member of the Advice Team, who will chat to you about what you need.

REWARDS FOR JOINING THE CREDIT UNION

During these difficult times, there are lots of advantages to joining an ethical financial organisation like the South Manchester Credit Union. If you're interested in joining, we'll pay £10 into your account to start off your savings, and another £5 for each friend or family member that you recommend.

To find out more about a **Southway Solutions** loan, get in touch with us on **0161 448 4200**.

For more information about the South Manchester Credit Union, please phone **0161 448 0200**, download their **NIVO app** or visit their office at 187 Fog Lane, Burnage, M20 6FJ.

YOUR COST OF LIVING SUPPORT PACK

For more tools and tips on budgeting, benefits, food support and so much more, please see your enclosed Cost of Living Support Pack. Whether you're in crisis, need to earn, claim or just want to get the most from your money... we're here to help!

MAKE YOUR OWN SALT-DOUGH ORNAMENTS AND GIFT TAGS

TOP TIP

SEAL YOUR SALT DOUGH ORNAMENTS WITH PVC GLUE OR FIXING SPRAY TO MAKE THEM LAST FOR YEARS TO COME

WHAT YOU NEED.

- 1 cup or 180g of soda bicarbonate/baking soda (doesn't need to be food grade – you can usually find cheap boxes in the cleaning aisle)
- ½ cup or 50g of cornflour
- ¾ cup or 250ml of water

WHAT TO DO:

1. Put a saucepan on a medium heat
2. Add all of your ingredients to the pan and stir to combine
3. Continue to stir until the mixture starts to bubble and thicken
4. When it looks like mashed potato, take your pan off the heat
5. Let your mixture cool a little bit before gathering it into a ball and popping it in a bowl with a damp cloth over it
6. When it's completely cool, roll it out on a clean surface
7. Cut out your shapes – you can use cookie cutters, templates cut out of paper or freehand with a knife (be careful! Children should be supervised by an adult)
8. Use a straw to make a hole in the top for your string to go through



9. Place on a baking tray lined with greaseproof paper
10. Bake in an oven at 80 degrees for about one hour
11. Take them out of the oven when they feel hard
12. Once their cool, decorate them how you like
13. Add string to hang your ornaments wherever you like

MORE IDEAS FOR YOUR SALT DOUGH

- Write the date on your ornament and make more each year to build up a collection of keepsakes
- Stamp your ornament with names, dates or children's fingerprints, babies' hand or footprints, or even the family pet's pawprint
- Use your ornaments as a gift tag and thoughtful gift in one!
- Paint your ornaments once they've been baked or cover with a thin layer of PVA glue followed by a sprinkling of glitter
- Use glass objects, interesting fabrics like lace or knitwear, or sprigs of winter foliage to make imprints in your ornaments
- Line up lots of ornaments onto one piece of string to make a garland to hang over your mantelpiece or a window

COSY COMMUNITY MONDAYS

10AM-1PM, EVERY MONDAY

Southern Gate is open as a warm & cosy space for the whole community.

Join us for a catch-up – brews, biscuits and board games are available, as is Wi-Fi and charging points for your phone, tablet or laptop

PLUS...

COMMUNITY SWAP SHOP

Bring any books you'd like to pass on and help yourself to a 'new-to-you' book. Lots of spare books are available. We want this space to work for you, so there'll be an opportunity to give feedback on what kinds of events the cosy community space should host in the future



UPCOMING EVENTS

EVENTS IN YOUR AREA ALL IN ONE PLACE

Did you know we have an online events calendar with all of the events going on in your local area?

You'll find everything from support sessions and exercise classes to craft activities and cooking projects. You can also submit your own community events!

See what's on by visiting
www.southwayhousing.co.uk/events-calendar



WINTER WARMTH EVENTS

**27TH JANUARY
AT DIDSBURY MOSQUE**

**1ST FEBRUARY
WESTCROFT COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Come along to our walk-in events for more advice on keeping warm this winter, access to support agencies and services, plus fun activities and freebies!

Keep an eye on our website or social media channels for more information nearer the time

