Southway The magazine for

Stories

The magazine for Southway Housing customers

Summer 2023









Are we on target? OUR PERFORMANCE AND YOUR SATISFACTION SCORES

Every year, we set performance and satisfaction targets for all our services to make sure we're providing the best customer experience and value for money that we can.

At the start of the year we were dealing with a backlog of work that built up during the pandemic.

There were also financial challenges - with huge increases in the cost of living, and rising costs of almost every part of running a business.

Despite this, after focusing on improving the most crucial service areas, and the areas that you told us were most important to you, we've made progress and been near or above the targets we set.

Where satisfaction has dropped, we're investing more, and working on improvement plans:

Rent Collection



This year, we

- Met our target, collecting **98.89%** of the rent
- Added our 'Collect with Care' principles into our Income Policy. They recognise the difficulties people are facing during the cost-of-living crisis
- Raised awareness of the link between debt and mental health, and made referrals to help

Next year...

We will be introducing **self-service Direct Debits**, making it easier for you to pay your rent electronically, which we know is important. We will also improve how staff communicate with each other.







YOUR SCORE 4.37

(4.5 stars in 2022)

This year, we

Call Handling

- Decreased the number of follow-up Repair calls, because we now have a different line and dedicated advisors handling existing Repairs calls
- Rolled out a **new telephone system** to help us better manage the queues and help callers speak to the right person
- Improved the way we handle damp and mould reports by using trained Hub specialists, new technology, and closely monitoring all cases until they are fixed

We are sorry that the new telephone system had some initial problems which prevented some customers from being able to get through to us when they reached the front of the queue. We've now resolved these issues.

However, we know many people are still unhappy with how long it can take to get through to our Customer Hub. We're committed to improving our call waiting times this year.

Next year...

We'll be working hard to improve the customer experience. Here's what we have planned:

- Introducing a **Quality Assurance Framework** to raise standards of customer contact
- Encouraging tenants to regularly review the Hub to help us improve
- Analysing why customers contact us to understand common issues and enhance our service
- Introducing a new system to reduce waiting times and call lengths
- Resolving even more issues you have during your first call to us

Repairs

This year, we...

- Completed **27,000 repairs**
- Formed a new **Planning Team** which keeps the service organised
- Launched a **new van fleet,** including zero-carbon electric vans, kitted out so that they work well across all of our trades, making us more efficient
- Learnt more so we can respond better to damp and mould reports. We now have operatives trained to spot the signs in all homes, and take on some of the work

We know that getting this service right is essential to you being satisfied with Southway as a whole. You've told us you want us to continue looking at how we can improve our response times, the time it takes to complete repairs, and how we keep you updated.



Next year...

We've invested in the service and set stretching goals to make it better. This includes:

- Finishing all the repairs and major building works that are overdue. We're working hard to deal with the remaining out-of-time repairs in the first six months of this financial year (from April 2023)
- Reviewing our **Repairs and Maintenance**process in full. We want to remove anything that's
 causing problems and improve how things work
- Creating a new policy for Responsive Repairs with customer feedback at its heart
- Improving how we deal with questions or complaints about repairs. We want to be more helpful and responsive

"Improving call handling and the way we deliver repairs are the top two service priorities this year. We will keep you updated on how we are doing." Karen Mitchell



Anti-social Behaviour

YOUR SCORE 3.33 ★ (2.6 stars in 2022)

This year, we

- Dealt well with **major youth nuisance issues** in Withington and Chorlton
- Tried out **intensive mentoring programmes** for young people involved in serious criminal activity. Early indications show this is working well
- Worked with Withington Baths to start a **new boxing academy**, which is now run by a Southway tenant.

Demand on the ASB service has increased, and we're making our teams stronger to support this.

Next year...

We're reviewing how we deal with all ASB incidents and cases. This includes working in partnership with the Police, City Council, and others better and easier. We'll formalise and improve **how we deal with youth nuisance.** And, to help guide our staff and customers, we're creating a new **Tenants Handbook** – look out for this soon.



Advice Services

This year, we

- Gained £2.8 million for tenants helping people maximise their income
- Held more community events that offered cost-of-living support and advice
- Supported **13 Kickstarters** into work as the Government scheme came to an end

Next year...

We'll keep using our resources to **address inequality** and **reduce poverty** in the Southway area. We'll help people living in our diverse communities to achieve their potential, live well, and work towards financial stability.



Community Investment

This year, we

- Supported 269 households with **Winter Warmth packs**, providing 1,000 people with hotties, blankets, socks, gloves and hats
- Secured funding which meant we could provide all **Quids In** members with a free slow cooker and Muslim customers with halal food
- Introduced Cosy Community Mondays, a welcoming warm space at the office



We'll create a new **Community Investment Strategy** which will address financial inclusion, food poverty, employment and training, and more. We're also working on making sure the Tenant Voice – your voice – is at the heart of all decision making. Read more on pages 6 & 7.



Neighbourhoods

This year, we

- Let **167 properties**
- Completed two furnished decant homes and there's another one the way – so that we have less need for hotel accommodation
- Completed 96% of all communal fire inspections and introduced a better approach for removing items that could be a hazard



Next year...

We will work with you to identify and resolve issues, delivering a proactive and person-focussed tenancy management service. We're reviewing the service this year and will make improvements using feedback that you gave in the **Inspired by Our Communities** consultation. One of these will be reducing the size of the areas that each of our Neighborhood Officers looks after.

Tenancy Support

This year, we

- Influenced changes that support domestic abuse survivors and speed up rehousing for them
- Gave more safeguarding training, helping staff identify people at risk of abuse or neglect
- Helped find solutions for 274 older people through our HOOP programme (Housing Options for Older People)
- Trained 463 people from other organisations on tackling hoarding. We made £30k from this, which was reinvested in our communities

Next year...

- We'll give family support and parenting interventions this means more families will need low or no social work involvement
- We'll work with others to help older people to live independently, somewhere suited to their immediate and long-term needs
- We will gain the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation. It will improve services so that survivors can stay safely in their own homes.

Don't forget to return your Resident Satisfaction Survey!

Your views are really important to us. We've sent every Southway household an invitation to take the STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) on paper or online.

As a thank you, the unique (and confidential) code from all finished surveys is entered into a free prize draw: 1 lucky person will **win £100** and 4 more will **win £50 in shopping vouchers.**





Have your say!

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 to our website, emailing us or finding us on social media. There are also more structured ways to get involved and influence how we do things, as well as gaining volunteering experience and developing your skills. Read on to find out more!

Tenant Scrutiny Panel (Fortnightly)

Takes an in-depth look at our services (by interviewing staff and talking to other customers) to check if they're being delivered in the best way for our tenants. They produce reports with recommendations for improvement to our Chief Executive and Directors.

Complaints Service Improvement Group (SIG) (Every 3 months)

Looks at a selection of real complaints made to Southway by tenants to check if they were handled effectively and within target.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Service Improvement Group (SIG) (Every 3 months)

Talks to people who have used our ASB service and other tenants who are committed to improving the service. We'll talk to you about performance and the way in which we communicate.

Armchair Group (Communicates over email)

If we have one-off surveys or documents that we'd like comments on, we'd ask this group to do that.

Volunteer with us!

Quids In Food Clubs

Helping at one of our five Quids In food clubs can involve driving to pick up or drop off food, taking a food delivery at a club and storing the food in the fridge and freezers, and serving customers.

Community Champions (Quarterly)

Our Community Champions talk to people about the neighbourhood – things like where the local schools are – and signpost people to local services and support, such as the Southway Advice Team. You can do as much or as little as you like.

Green Inspectors (Monthly)

Receive training to carry out a monthly check on your local green space(s) and complete a form to report what you find.

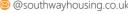
Digital Champions

Our Digi Champs help tenants who want to get online and learn more about being digital.

If you'd like to get involved but aren't sure what will suit you best or if you'd like to observe a meeting to see what it's like, that's fine – just get in touch and we can arrange it.

Please contact Maureen Ward, Customer Involvement Manager, at m.ward@southwayhousing. co.uk or on 0161 448 4200.

Tenant Board & Committee Members We're looking for tenants who share our vision of building thriving communities in Manchester to join our Board and Committees. If you're passionate about our people and places, and believe you could be a force for positive change, we want to hear from you! To register your interest or apply, please visit our website, or contact governance@southwayhousing.co.uk





YOUR SOUTHWAY, **YOUR SAY**

Tenant Voice Roadshow

A chance to have your say on **HOW** you want your voice to be heard in decision-making

SATURDAY 17TH JUNE | 11AM-2PM **SOUTHERN GATE (SOUTHWAY'S OFFICE)** 729 Princess Road, Didsbury M20 2LT

- How do we approach Tenant Voice in a way that works for you, and everyone in the community?
- Help to shape our future involvement structure at the Tenant Voice Roadshow this June.
- Run by an independent facilitator rather than Southway staff.



TO ATTEND, BOOK YOUR PLACE AT

southway-tenant-voice.eventbrite.co.uk or www.southwayhousing.co.uk

Or contact Customer Involvement.



In our last newsletter, we told you how we're improving our response to reports of damp and mould. Your family's health and the condition of your home are our very top priorities and at the heart of all of these improvements.

In February, we made a series of changes to provide a better service.

We now gather more details from you upfront, so that we fully understand the extent, location, and cause of the issue, as well as understanding your family circumstances. This helps us send the best person or contractor to your home on the first visit, making the service faster and more efficient for everyone. We also check again that the issue has been fixed after a period of time has passed.

Our other recent changes are:

- We've hired a new Damp and Mould Coordinator.
- We've provided updated training to all staff involved in delivering the service.
- We've been using video diagnosis when you call, which is very helpful.

We also have more improvements planned soon:

We're setting up a dedicated phone line and inbox for damp and mould repairs. Your report will be given priority, you won't have to queue, and you'll be able to speak to a specialist.

We're also introducing Property Repair Inspectors with advanced knowledge and skills.

We're committed to getting this right and, as always, we value your feedback to help us with this. If you have any comments based on your experience, please contact us.

Where we are now

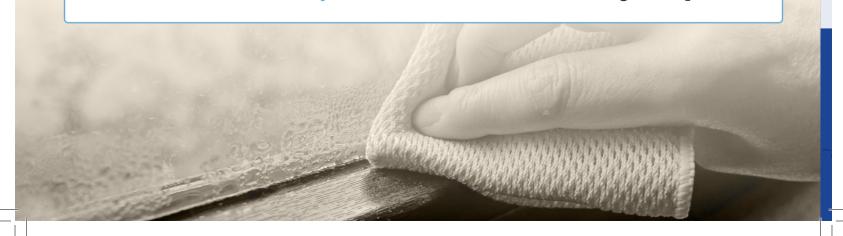
As a result of the changes, we've been able to book inspections for all reported cases of damp and mould. This has been challenging because of the extremely high demand over the winter months.

As it stands, in the first week of June, we have **137 inspections** and **336 total damp and mould jobs** to complete, and we're actively working to reduce this number every day.

Do you have condensation, damp, or mould in your home?

If you notice any signs of these problems, especially if they're beyond your ability to handle, please let us know right away. We'll arrange a visit to your home and provide you with our Condensation, Damp, and Mould guide, which you can access any time on our website at southwayhousing.co.uk/damp-mould.

If you'd like to have a say in our Repairs Policy review, come along to our **Tenant Voice Roadshow on Saturday 17th June** where we'll be discussing this topic.



@ @southwayhousing.co.uk @ www.southwayhousing.co.uk

Celebrate your community with

The Beautiful South Fund!

Would you like to do something to brighten up your local neighbourhood, help people to connect or boost community spirit? A Beautiful South Fund grant could help you to put your plans into action!

One of our sheltered scheme residents who organised a Christmas party told us "It really lifted our spirits! It gave us a sense of community which had been missing for some time."

Grants of up to £2,500 are awarded to individuals, groups and organisations to run activities and events in South Manchester that promote 'neighbourliness' or to support communities to ease the impacts of a rising cost of living. Projects must benefit Southway tenants.

Over the last year, grants have been awarded to street parties, Christmas events, gardening projects, youth activities, arts and crafts groups, and – more recently – parties to celebrate the King's Coronation!

Alston Gardens Coronation party overcame a gloomy start on bank holiday Monday and persuaded about 100 people outdoors to join in the fun. They had a children's entertainer, a bouncy castle, and plenty of food and drink!

Dahlia House café party was also on 8th May, with around 40 people in attendance. Everyone was entertained by Manc Elvis and his Magic Band, and enjoyed a buffet put on by the café staff and volunteers

Minehead Café Craft held a group party on 9th May, which was attended by about 30 people who made light work of the buffet!

You can apply for a grant at any time, and any applications will be considered by our tenant-led The Beautiful South Fund decision-making panel.



Dahlia House Café Party - 8th May



Minehead Café Craft Party - 9th May

Southway tenant, Caz Kerr, recently received Beautiful South funding to set up 'Crafternoon' events at Grove Lane Community Centre.



Caz describes herself as a "lifelong crafter" and says crafting is "part of my personality, it gives me another way to express how I feel".

'Crafternoon' takes place every other Monday. Previous sessions have covered painting, pottery, and paper crafting, with photography and stone painting pencilled in for future events.

Find out more about The Beautiful South Fund and download an application form at www.southwayhousing.co.uk/beautiful-south

If you'd like to talk to us about your project or idea or need help making an application, please contact **Roz Hampson** on **r.hampson@southwayhousing.co.uk** or Maureen Ward at m.ward@southwayhousing.co.uk, or call 0161 448 4200.



LIVING ON A SQUEEZED INCOME

The ever-rising cost of living is affecting us all. It feels harder than ever to manage and can leave us feeling alone and often isolated. As prices in general creep up, there may be things you could do to make life feel a bit easier, like looking at what you're spending and where. Could there be places that offer better deals, without affecting your quality of life?

Everyone's circumstances are different, and we recognise that times are particularly hard at the moment, especially when it comes to managing the same money as prices only ever seem to go up!

Having a handle on where your money is going can help your general wellbeing and make the challenges of everyday life easier to cope with. You're not alone; many people are feeling the pinch. In fact, two thirds of people report that they feel anxious about bills and whether they can afford to stay afloat (BACP.co.uk).

Southway offers support with money management, offering courses, in-person support, hints and tips, ideas about where to find the best deals, and advice on how to adapt during these difficult times. We can also offer you assistance in other areas that could help you feel like you're more in control of your money, including setting up bank accounts, information on local schemes, and checking whether there are benefits you could be entitled to.

Did you know?

- All tenants who are struggling can apply for a one-off Supermarket voucher worth up to £100 to help ease the effects of the cost-of-living crisis. All you need to do is email **LivingWell@southwayhousing.co.uk**
- We have a money course that you can access on our website. The course guides you through a range of articles, tips and tools for saving money, maximising your income and getting to grips with your finances. It's updated regularly to keep up with the latest on the cost-of-living crisis. Find it online at www.southwayhousing. co.uk/support-services/rent-money/money-course/
- We can help you with opening a bank account, connecting you with your money to help you manage it.

If you'd like to speak to a member of our **Advice Team**, please contact our **Customer Hub**.



Tackling the backlog of PIP claims

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has shared how it's tackling the backlog of new claims for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and taking steps to reduce the waiting time for people making claims.

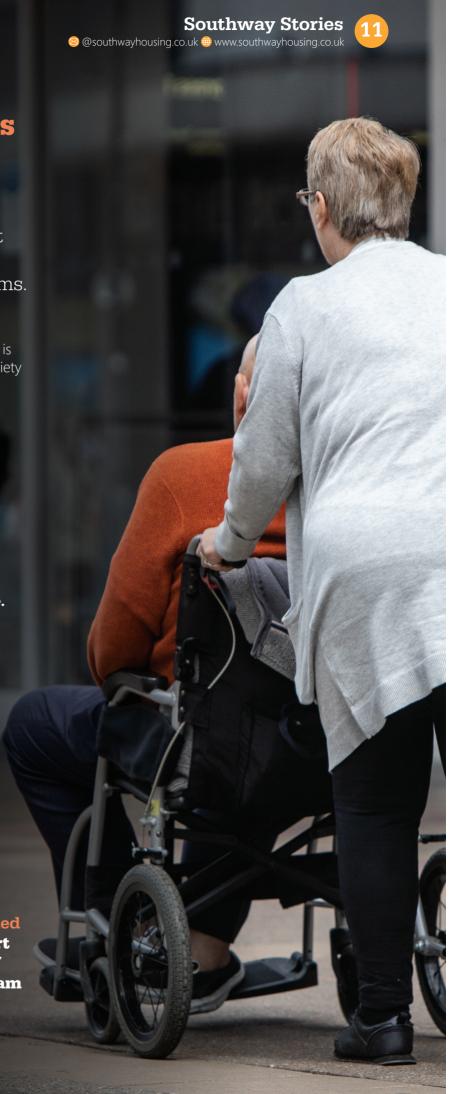
The average processing time for a new claim is **now 16 weeks**, a significant reduction from 26 weeks in
August 2021. The reality we're seeing for our tenants is
still nearer the **6-month mark**, which is causing anxiety
and worry for those claimants waiting for a decision.

There's also the added stress of renewal invitations being delayed for long periods, leading to tenants being unsure when they will be reassessed. We've been lobbying local MPs and the DWP to try and resolve this issue. The DWP have assured us they'll reduce the waiting times to 16 weeks, but how they plan on achieving this in this timeframe has been a little bit vague. In the meantime, we'll continue to press the issue with them.

There are also ongoing issues around delays in processing **Pension Credit** and **Carer's Allowance**. At one point, we'd have expected these benefits to be processed within 4-6 weeks. However, we're getting feedback from the DWP that they're taking up to 6 months and beyond. This is inevitably causing even more financial hardship for our tenants during this unprecedented cost-of-living crisis.

Whilst this is frustrating for all involved, particularly you – our tenants – we'd like to reassure you that local MPs, the DWP and the Pension Service will continue to be lobbied to speed up claims to ease the financial hardship for communities and the challenges they face whilst they endure unreasonable delays in getting their legal benefit entitlements.

Knowing your benefits rights and how to claim will help you to maximize your income and get all the help you're entitled to. Check out the Cost of Living Support Hub at www.southwayhousing.co.uk/cost-of-living or contact our Advice Team for free, friendly and impartial support



If we know, #WeCanHelp

During the pandemic in 2020, we changed our approach to collecting rent. We tried even harder to find ways to support people and build relationships with tenants who were worried about being able to pay their rent. It's important to know that there's nearly always something we can do to help!

For three years, we've been successful in doing this without evicting a single person. Unfortunately, this February, this changed and we had to carry out our first eviction.

One of the most upsetting things about it is that it didn't need to happen; if the tenant involved had worked with us, it could have all been very different.

If you're in a situation where you're worried about how you're going to pay your rent, tell us so we can help.

Every member of our **Income Team** is trained to provide help and support, to listen and work with you to find solutions.

In addition, we have a team of staff in our **Advice Services** who are experts at providing help and advice with debt, welfare benefits, budgeting and financial exclusion and employment and training.

We know that the pressures that people are under due to the cost-of-living crisis have never been tougher, but trying to deal with them on your own can make it even harder.



You can email or phone your **Income Officer** (you'll find their details on any recent letter sent) or come into Reception between 10am-3pm on Monday, Tuesday & Thursday, or from 10am-12.15pm on Wednesday.

Do you receive a disability benefit?

More than 6m disabled people in the UK will receive their one-off £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment automatically during a two-week payment window from 20th June-4th July.



Southway StoriesSouthwayhousing.co.uk www.southwayhousing.co.uk

13

EXTRA PRECAUTIONS ARE IN PLACE, TO KEEP YOU COVID SAFE. SO, MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TODAY TO GET FREE SUPPORT IN A RELAXED. SAFE AND CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

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



Sessions are face to face and available by appointment only.

WESTCROFT COMMUNITY CENTRE

Every Weds, Thurs & Fri, 9am-4pm 24-26 Westcroft Road, Burnage M20 6EF Email I.bell@southwayhousing.co.uk, or call 07516 798 549 or 0161 448 8232 Online and telephone appointments still available.

BARLOW MOOR COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Merseybank Avenue, Chorlton, M21 7NT.

The centre is currently open and continues to offer one-toone employment support. This support is by appointment only on a Wednesday between 1pm and 4pm.

Book your appointment by contacting Jeanette on 0161 446 4805.

OPEN TO ANYONE WHO IS JOB SEARCHING!

OLD MOAT SURE START CENTRE

Old Moat Lane, Withington, M20 1DE.

Support is available every Thursday between 10am and 3pm, please call 0161 434 1555 to book an appointment.

Based in Didsbury, this is a not-for profit community enterprise. Part of the Old Moat Sure Start centre, it has been created to help raise residents' aspirations by providing a number of courses, workshops, and learning opportunities.











Jane is struggling with her finances

Are you?

#WeCanHelp



Visit southwayhousing.co.uk/cost-of-living

DO YOU KNOW ABOUT OUR DIGITAL OFFER?

We understand that the online world can be daunting, but we provide lots of support to make it easier.

Laptop Loans - Free for six months with short-term internet access provided

Discount at Computer Recyclers

Vodafone SIM card project – 20MG of free mobile data, plus free calls and texts, for six months

Digital Champions – 1:1 help with using your devices (find out more about becoming a Digi Champ on page 6!)

Internet Savvy Course – Learn basic digital skills. At the end of the course, Southway will pay half the cost of a laptop and help you find the cheapest way to get online.

IT support for over 65s – Group sessions to learn essential digital skills. We also have a few tablets to loan, so you can try using a digital device before making the financial commitment to buy.

Helpful Guides – you'll find a range of guides covering essential digital skills at **www.southwayhousing.co.uk/digital**, where you'll also find more about the services above.

If you'd like to talk to us about our digital offer or sign up for any of the services, please visit 'Computers & Digital Services' under 'Support & Services' on our website or call the Customer Hub on 0161 448 4200.







Celebrating the diversity of our communities

At Southway, we believe that our differences should not only be accepted but also celebrated. We believe that everyone has the right to be treated equally and with respect and dignity, and that everyone should feel safe and secure in their own home, neighbourhood or workplace.

For our customers, this means that we provide opportunities and services that meet the needs of every single individual; and for our communities, this means we value diversity and encourage equality, equity and community spirit.

Earlier this year, we formed an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Core Group – a group of staff whose job it is to drive forward our Single Equality Scheme (SES). The scheme outlines our commitments and priorities around EDI and will

help us create a culture of acceptance, inclusion and belonging for our communities and our staff.

We'll be talking more about our work on EDI in upcoming issues of Southway Stories, as well as on our website and social media channels, so keep your eyes peeled for more updates about what this means for you and how Southway is run soon.

GAINING GROUND FOR OUR SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN

We're proud to have signed the Armed Forces Covenant as a pledge to support servicemen and women, and their families, in accessing affordable housing and employment opportunities.

Our commitment is that no member of the Armed Forces Community should face any disadvantages compared to anyone else. We believe that everyone deserves the same opportunities, no matter what their background is.

Are you, or have you ever served as a member of the Armed Forces? This also applies if you're a member of the family of someone who has served (or is still serving).

What's on offer to you?

Whether you're currently serving in the armed forces or Merchant Navy, a veteran or reservist, or the partner (or ex-partner) or child of someone who's either serving or who has served... we're here to support you.

Working with local and national partners, we're committed to ensuring that our support, services, and recruitment processes match the needs of the community.

We strive to...

- Promote our forces-friendly status, so people know we care
- Promote the job opportunities and careers available at Southway
- Re-house members of the Armed Forces community and give them priority on our shared ownership developments

If this is you, and you're happy to share this information with us, please contact us on social media, via our website, or through the Customer Hub.



SOUTHWAY SUMMER FUN DAYS

Join us throughout August for 3 Fun Days. This is a great opportunity to join your neighbours in your local community.



BURNAGE PLAY DAY

Friday 4th August • 11-2pm
Westcroft Road Green Space,
Westcroft Road,
Burnage, M20 6EF

CHORLTON FUN DAY

Friday 11th August • 11-2pm Mottram Avenue Green Space, Barlow Moor, Chorlton M21 7LP

OLD MOAT FUN DAY

Friday 18th August • 11-2pm
Old Moat Lane Green
Space (opposite Old Moat
School), Old Moat Lane,
Withington, M20 3FN

Free bouncy castle, face painting, and other family activities!

Slow cooking at 'Quids In'

Over the last six months, we've heard a lot from our Ouids In Food Club members about the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, especially energy bills.

One member told us that "Without Quids In, I'd be hungry for half of the week", but the cost of food is only half the story: "It always has been a worry, but I worry a lot more now about the energy bills".

As well as making sure that we can keep providing the food our 250 members and their families need, we're always looking for other ways to help, so we were delighted to be asked to be part of a Fareshare project to distribute slow cookers.

In January, we held three sessions in Burnage, where members were shown how to make low-cost but delicious meals with a slow cooker. All attendees took a slow cooker, recipe book and ingredients home to put to good use straight away, and feedback about the project has been positive.

"I've seen slow cookers in the shops and just walked past because I don't know what to do with them. I've learned so much about how you can preset and go, then come back. The electricity savings are the best bit."

"It's good that I can cook in batches and then freeze for whenever. This will be a big help."

We're incredibly grateful for funding from the Zuto Community Fund and Forever Manchester Awards, which has enabled us to give slow cookers to Old Moat and Westcroft Quids In members too. In total, we've given out 120 free slow cookers so far and are hoping to secure funding to do more!

To join a Quids In waiting list or explore other options for support with food, visit our website, or contact us.

Keep up to date with all things Quids In on Facebook: www.facebook.com/QuidsInFoodClubs/

