

Neighbourhood Matters

Issue 20: **Winter 2024**



Star Awards winners revealed

Blocks get fresh look

New communal hall brings people together

Cover photo: Star of the Year Awards

**Homes in
Sedgemoor**

Celebrating our Garden Competition 2024 winners

Cheddar, Axbridge and North Sedgemoor Villages

Burnham-on-Sea, Highbridge, Brean and Berrow

Hamp, North Petherton, South Bridgwater Villages and La Ciotat

Sydenham and the Levels

Woolavington, Puriton and Polden and Parrett Villages

Bridgwater Central and West Bridgwater Villages

Corporate News

Hello...

and welcome to our winter edition of Neighbourhood Matters.



We've been so busy this past six months that I can barely believe we're into the Christmas season already.

It's been a whirlwind of development openings, celebrating customer achievements and a continued commitment to providing safe and comfortable homes to our customers, striving toward a more sustainable future and being the trusted housing provider that our customers respect.

This latter part of the year presented an exceptionally exciting strengthening of the partnership between Somerset Council and Homes in Sedgemoor (HiS), taking on the management of properties further throughout the county, and supporting them with their developments and management processes in any way we can.

We're lucky to have such involved customers who continue to inspire us, and as such we held a spectacular awards evening in their honour. Our Star Awards recognised all those who make our communities the special places we hold so dear, and it was amazing to be able to celebrate with you all.

We've also had huge successes in our Garden Competition and in the Photography Competition. Well done to everyone who entered, it's wonderful to see the level of involvement continue throughout the work we do.

All that is left to say is that we hope you enjoy reading all of the great things HiS has been getting up to over the past six months, and to wish you a very merry Christmas and happy new year, however you celebrate this festive season.

Ben Lane
Director of Finance and Performance

Every year we hold a district-wide competition for those who are passionate about gardening.

We all know how great being out in the fresh air is for our mental and physical health. But gardening is not only great for our souls, it's also good for our wildlife and our environment. We had the pleasure of judging thirteen gardens in this year's Garden Competition.

Community Enabler Sharon, Director of Communities and

Customer Service Claire, and Tenant Board Member Marie were joined by Somerset Councillor Fran Smith, to judge this year's garden competition entries.

They spent two days visiting the gardens across our communities with entries ranging from Small Garden to Sustainable Foods.

Councillor Smith said: "Thank you for a wonderful two days judging customers' gardens. I really enjoyed everyone's company as we toured the area meeting lovely customers who had put so

much time, effort, and enthusiasm into making their gardens fantastic areas to enjoy.

"I loved meeting everyone and hearing their stories. It is a great competition and a lovely way to engage with customers.

"I hope there are even more entries next year as I am sure there must be many more magnificent gardens within the Homes in Sedgemoor housing stock that have not yet been seen!"

The winners were revealed at this year's Star Awards.

The winning entries were:



The Overall Gardener of the Year for 2024 is Michelle Cadwallander!



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- @HomesSedgemoor
- customer.services@homesinsedgemoor.org
- www.homesinsedgemoor.org
- 0800 585 360 / 01278 552400
- Homes in Sedgemoor, Bridgwater House, King Square, Bridgwater TA6 3AR

Don't forget to follow us on social media and check our website!



Customer reimagines garden area for other residents

Customer Mr S, from Brunel Court, has gone above and beyond by creating a truly magical environment in the communal garden area.

Using his own money and time, he's transformed the area, turned over all the muddy soil, replanted vibrant plants, added a water feature and several large pots.

He said he's encouraged the birds, bees and butterflies back into the garden and all the residents are enjoying the new space.

He's put in hours of his own free time so everyone can enjoy it. As a special thank you, we gifted a new compost bin and some vouchers to help with his project and colleagues are looking forward to spending some time with customers next year in his redesigned garden area, with a cup of tea.



HEALTHY HOMES



Community facility brings people together



A Burnham-on-Sea community can now enjoy new and improved facilities following the official re-opening of Chichester Close Communal Hall.

Residents, Homes in Sedgemoor colleagues and contractors all attended the grand opening and ribbon cutting of the new £230,000 refurbishment.

The Community Hub was completed after an investment from Homes in Sedgemoor and Somerset Council, and the facility now boasts a

large open communal hall with new furniture and kitchen fully fitted out with appliances. A quiet space has been retained and the old garages have been converted into a new multifunctional craft room with a kitchenette.

Housing Development Manager Duncan Harvey said:

"The transformation of the Chichester Close Hall is simply amazing. The old place is completely unrecognisable."

"Externally, the building looks super and internally the place definitely has the wow factor!"

"I hope everyone will enjoy the new facilities which include a refurbished main hall, a new kitchen, a quiet room and of course a brand-new craft room."

"It was fantastic to see so many happy people at the official re-opening event. The positive feedback from everyone tells me we got it right."

The project was overseen by Homes in Sedgemoor's Housing Development Officers, Mark and Elysia, and the works were carried out by MD Group.

100th Birthday celebration

A big congratulations to customer Enid, who celebrated her 100th birthday!

Enid, who served in the Wrens, was pleased to receive a birthday card from the King and Queen to mark the big day.



Blocks get a fresh look



Refurbishment works on a few of our blocks of flats is now complete

Blocks at West Street and Westfield Close now have a fresher look with anthracite painted windows, back railings, a new roof, painted garage and bin store doors, and extra insulation. Tiles were removed to put in external wall insulation.

Works at Southbourne House are also complete, and the block now boasts new railings and a new fibreglass roof, with additional insulation.

We are now pleased to be carrying out improvement works at Brooklands, including installing new roofs.

Independent Living Scheme update

We were pleased to host a coffee afternoon at Dunwear House in October, successfully raising over £60.

At the time of going to print, we had more Macmillan coffee mornings scheduled throughout November, offering further opportunities to support this worthy cause. Our officers are also exploring additional activities for customers, dependant on grant funding.

In other news, the heating in all communal rooms is now on, ensuring comfort for the colder months. Additionally, General Higgins' communal lounge will undergo refurbishment in December, including new furniture.

Residents enjoy pottery demonstration



Residents at Taylor Court wanted some extra activities to spice up their monthly coffee afternoons with Homes in Sedgemoor. So, Bridget, a talented Lead Artist from Seed Sedgemoor, joined them to demonstrate and guide the residents in crafting beautiful clay pots.

Summer Connect success

CUSTOMER DRIVEN



Giving our customers a strong voice is important to the growth of our business and a key factor to our success.

That is why we arranged for colleagues to pair up and head out into our communities to speak to customers face-to-face in your homes as part of this year's Summer Colleague Connect.

This was a great opportunity to engage with you to discuss our services and gain valuable feedback as well as getting to know our areas better and highlight the importance of the one-team approach.

Having collated information from the day, we will now use this to help shape our services to better serve our customers.

252 customer forms were collected by our teams, with most customers reporting satisfaction in the quality of their homes.

Quality of your home



Walkabouts

Walkabouts are a great way for us to interact with our customers, to gain feedback and monitor community areas. We hold regular walkabouts which help to identify concerns and resolve any problems swiftly.



Since April, we've held 12 estate walks, which saw us improve concerns around fly tipping, unmanageable gardens, blocked guttering and bench replacements.

We were also pleased to see less fly tipping in a hot spot in Highbridge.

Customers are welcome to join us on their local Walkabout, or, if you can't make it but have concerns, you can contact us on **0800 585 360**.

We would ask customers to keep your gardens tidy, so the community continues to be a great place to live. If you are struggling with removing waste from your garden, Somerset Waste Partnership may be able to help you. You can call them on **01823625700**. If you need further information on tidying your garden, contact our Housing Team.



Join us for your local walkabouts in 2025!



Jan 8, 10am ReCreation, Rhode Lane, Hamp	Jan 15, 10am Fish and Chip Shop, Bitham Walk, Woolavington	Jan 23, 10am Co-op, Parkway, Sydenham (Fairfax)
Feb 4, 10am Westover Green, Bridgwater	Feb 4, 10.30am Westfield House Bridgwater	Feb 13, 10am Co-op, Parkway Sydenham (Dunwear)
Feb 25, 10am Morland Shops, Morland Road, Highbridge	March 4, 10am St George's Hall, Kendale Road, Bridgwater (Newtown)	March 13, 10am Rosewood Close Hall, Burnham-on-Sea
March 20, 10am Corner of Ringstone, off Withy Road, West Huntspill	April 2, 10am ReCreation, Rhode Lane, Hamp	April 17, 10am Penn Close, Cheddar
April 23, 10am Fish and Chip Shop, Bitham Walk, Woolavington	May 8, 10am Baymead Hall, North Petherton	May 14, 10am Co-op, Parkway Sydenham (Dunwear)
May 22, 10am Westover Green, Bridgwater	May 22, 10.30am Westfield House Bridgwater	June 5, 10am Co-op, Parkway Sydenham (Dunwear)

Celebrating Environment in our 2024 Photography Competition

An impressive 45 entries were sent in for shortlisting in our 2024 Photography Competition on the theme of Environment.

These were whittled down to ten and then opened to a public vote.

Our winners for this year are:

1. Sunrise at Huntworth by Chris
2. Canal Light by Victoria
3. Autumn Trees at Kings Cliff by Jill



Overall Winner



Second Place



Third Place



Young category Winner

This year, following customer feedback, we also launched a 16 and under category.

We are pleased to reveal that our young category winner was Light Through a Leaf by Shania.

The two winners will shortly receive their £75 vouchers, and our runners up will receive their £50 voucher for second place and £25 voucher for third place.

Congratulations to our winners, and a big thank you to everyone who entered!

Topping Out Ceremony for Penlea House



Supporters of the Penlea Housing Development, a joint project with Homes in Sedgemoor and Somerset Council, gathered at a topping out ceremony for the new homes.

The event marked a momentous point in the construction of 33 fit-for-the-future council-owned rented apartments.

The impressive structure is the culmination of many years hard work on the part of Homes in Sedgemoor and its stakeholder, Somerset Council to regenerate a tired uneconomic council asset and bring forward new life in the form of ultra-modern new homes.

Partners in the build, Classic Builders began construction of the new apartments in autumn 2022.

The council has invested £5.5m in building these new homes and the project has benefited from grant funding support from central government.

Housing Development Manager Duncan Harvey said:
"The project will provide 33 high specification, thermally efficient, affordable rented homes and is an example of Homes in Sedgemoor's drive and commitment towards decarbonising the council's housing stock. The scheme also includes ten homes designed to meet specific needs of our customers."

Representatives from the council, our contractor and other interested parties who have supported the project gathered to attend the topping out event which saw all but the highest part of the new building put in place.

Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts, Somerset Council's Lead Member for Communities, said:
"These new apartments will provide much-needed, state-of-the-art homes in Somerset, and include homes adapted for people with physical disabilities. It's fantastic to see this project progressing well and I look forward to seeing its completion next year."

The development will be ready for customers to move in early in the new year.

Once occupied, the homes will be owned by Somerset Council and managed by Homes in Sedgemoor.

Our new customers will be able to enjoy homes which properly meet their needs, are safe, warm and affordable.



CUSTOMER DRIVEN



Bespoke homes supporting our customers

Customers are continuing to enjoy the benefits of the Homes in Sedgemoor Bespoke Homes Project designed to address unique housing needs.

Launched in 2021, the scheme has already created a number of six-bedroom properties for families with specific requirements and it looks to design and remodel current Homes in Sedgemoor stock to meet the specific requirements of households struggling to find appropriate housing.

Working in partnership with Housing Options and Occupational Therapists, households are identified, normally having been assessed by an Occupational Therapist, and presented to the Bespoke Homes panel.

Nick Draper, Housing Development Team Leader, from Homes in Sedgemoor, said: "The Bespoke Homes Project allows customers to live comfortably in houses that meet their needs. We can really help families and provide solutions to otherwise difficult situations with these homes, where they can be assured of modern properties fit for purpose that will see them into the future."

Carrots Farm complete

A North Petherton scheme of 18 houses constructed by Summerfield, three of which were purchased by Homes in Sedgemoor on behalf of Somerset Council, is now complete.

Nick Draper, Housing Development Team Leader, from Homes in Sedgemoor, said:

"Homes in Sedgemoor has been working alongside Summerfield through the construction of the homes, supported by Randall Simmonds who has helped us manage the purchase and technical aspects of the homes."

"We have been very pleased with Summerfield's approach to joint working and the quality of the homes they have built for us. These homes have excellent energy performance and come with Solar Panels and Electric Vehicle Charging Points. The properties have been let and are occupied."

"We would like to thank Summerfield, also Tony Streeting from Randall Simmonds, along with the Housing Development Team at Homes in Sedgemoor, all of which have brought these great homes to fruition. We would also like to thank Somerset Council for funding the project."



SUSTAINABILITY BY DESIGN



Meeting STAR Housing

Representatives from Homes in Sedgemoor had the pleasure of meeting with Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing (STAR).

As a similar sized arms length management organisation, it was a great opportunity to share ideas and see new developments, in partnership with Cornovii, come to fruition.





Glittering ceremony of recognition for biennial Star Awards



It was another glittering night at the Homes in Sedgemoor Star Awards, as we celebrated the heroes of our community at an event sponsored by MD Group and hosted by ITV's Ben McGrail at Bridgwater's Canalside.



Strive Award winners, Garden Competition winners and our Involved Customers all received certificates and gifts for their contributions throughout the year, and then for the main Star Awards, we celebrated firstly the Community Impact of the Year Award, sponsored by Envirocall.

The runners-up were Lewis and Pauline Hayes of East Bridgwater Pantry, with the winner named as Dan Rogers.

The Unsung Hero of the Year Award, sponsored by Environtec saw Bob Elston as runner-up, and the winning prize went to Jacqueline and Leslie Bennett.

The Star of the Year Award 2024 runner-up was Pauline Hayes, and the Star of the Year went to Steve Manley, for his various good deeds and acts of kindness in the local community.



Community Impact of the Year

Dan Rogers

Dan Rogers, received this award for his outstanding work in delivering free football sessions to children on the Hamp estate and other areas in Bridgwater. He has devoted his time and energy to providing opportunities for children of all abilities, backgrounds, and genders to enjoy sports, socialise, and develop their skills.



Sam Smith collecting the award on behalf of Dan Rogers

The event was well-received by all the attendees, councillors, and customers. On the night, Claire Tough, Director of Communities and Customer Services said:

“These awards were set up specifically to celebrate the everyday heroes of our community and those doing extraordinary things to help others. It never ceases to amaze us all at Homes in Sedgemoor how very lucky we are to have you as our customers. Everyone should feel very proud of what you’ve achieved, and what we continue to achieve together.”

Thank you to all our sponsors!





Unsung Hero of the Year

Jacqueline and Leslie Bennett



Jacqueline and Leslie Bennett are a dedicated couple who take care of the communal garden in their housing scheme. They spend their own money and energy to buy flowers, mow the lawn, weed and prune the plants, and make the garden a beautiful and relaxing place for everyone. They never ask for anything in return or expect any contribution from their neighbours.

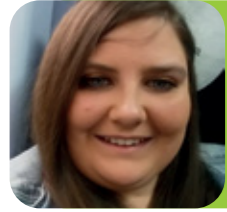


Star of the Year

Steve Manley

Steve Manley, won the Star of the Year category for his various good deeds and acts of kindness in the local community. He works as a caretaker at Hamp Academy, where he goes the extra mile for the pupils and staff. He was due to retire last year but agreed to stay on longer to support the Academy. He also volunteers for several organisations, such as the Hamp Community Association, of which he has been the Chair, and the Bridgwater Museum, where he supports exhibitions and fundraising events. In addition, Steve is a member of the Bridgwater Royal British Legion and a standard bearer, carrying the flag in all official appearances.





Hi, My name is Kim and I am 32. I have been a Homes in Sedgemoor tenant since June 2023, I have recently joined the Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee (STAC).

I have already benefitted from joining STAC. Living with social anxiety, I have always lacked confidence to do new things or join groups, which has always held me back.

However, I took the leap and applied for STAC, which was a very easy and simple process and was made to feel welcomed and valued straight away from all the Homes in Sedgemoor colleagues and the other committee members. My confidence has grown so much in such a short space of time and already have had my views and opinions acted upon in a positive way to improve services provided to tenants.

STAC gives tenants the voice to ensure that Homes in Sedgemoor meets the expectations set by government in the consumer standards as well as meeting Homes in Sedgemoor's own strategy.

In the two meetings I have already done, STAC has decided upon areas of Homes in Sedgemoor services that will be looked closer at with the scrutiny panel next year. We also looked at the types of complaints Homes in Sedgemoor receives and what is learnt from them. We learnt how Homes in Sedgemoor is increasing ways in which it gathers information on who lives in its homes. We also found out about how Homes in Sedgemoor engages with tenants through the community development updates and we reviewed performance data of how satisfied Homes in Sedgemoor tenants are with the service they receive.

If you want to make a difference and want tenants' voices to be heard, then apply for STAC, you will be welcomed and made to feel part of a family.

Did you know?

We will be hosting two events next year inviting customers to meet us, the Service Improvement Group and the Sedgemoor Tenant Assurance Committee to find out more about who is involved and the group meetings. Keep your eyes peeled for more details on our website and social media pages.

Did you know?

We held two successful cricket events for children in the Bridgwater area. We held one in Hamp, for 13 children, and one in Sydenham, for 11 children. The children enjoyed the events, and their parents and guardians said it was great to see their children taking part in free outdoor activities.

Board Update



I feel compelled to start this article by referencing the Star Awards evening held on October 16. The event was dedicated to the incredible individuals and groups of customers who were recognised for their acts of selfishness on behalf of others. Another inspirational evening to celebrate how so many people dedicate their time, energy, experience and humanity to help others and provide hope. Congratulations to all nominees and winners.

Board has recently held our October Away Days where we meet in a less formal scenario to normal Board meetings and receive presentations or updates from external experts or internal colleagues. This time we were delighted to receive presentations from the Deputy Chief Executive at the Regulator for Social Housing and an update from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. In addition, Mel Lock, Executive Director of Adult Social Care at Somerset Council, gave us an update and a representative from Housing Diversity Network explained progress on the development of our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

We are in the process of recruiting a new Board member to eventually replace our current Vice Chair, Jenny Vernon when she has to step down in July 2025.

At our AGM in September, we appointed Marie Hide to be our new Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. Marie is a tenant Board member and has been a great representative for many years. We look forward to completing another successful year and hopefully winter will not provide too many challenges.

I wish you all a healthy winter, hopefully not with too much cold and/or rain.

Regards

Paul, Chair

Positive response to new repair reporting system

Our new online system for reporting repairs has been receiving positive feedback from customers.

The VerseOne reporting system allows customers to book a repair at a time and date that suits you, and track its progress, all through the Tenant Portal. The portal also lets customers advise us of other issues, such as damp and mould problems.

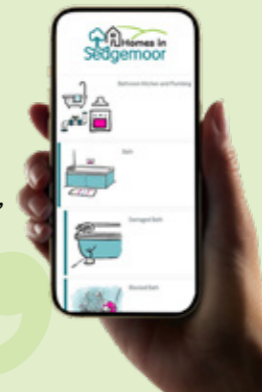


Here are just a few of the positive reactions we've received so far:

"I found it really easy to use and from now on that's the way I will report repairs, it only took a few minutes to complete the booking."

"Easy to use and much quicker – I will be reporting repairs this way moving forward."

"I saw it on the website, found it really easy to use and booked the appointment at the same time, will use this moving forward."



Making a Difference Fund winners

The Making a Difference (MaD) Fund was created to help develop estates and the environment with projects that benefit the community.

Customers, leaseholders, resident groups, voluntary groups, community groups and registered charities can all apply to for MaD funding, with a value of up to £500.

This year, the Making a Difference Panel have awarded funding to six community groups:

- **North Petherton Knit and Knatter** North Petherton Knit and Knatter group provides friendship and social opportunities, while creating knitted and crochet items for charity, such as the neonatal unit at Musgrove Park Hospital.

- **Morland Hub** Morland Hub is using the funds to buy supplies to set up tea dances to enhance socialising, provide chances to exercise, enjoy local entertainers and enjoy tea and cake.
- **Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge Men's Shed** Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge Men's Shed provides a meeting place for men and women. The group is available for all to socialise, let off steam and have a laugh while being able to do woodworking. You can bring your own project, and members have done community projects.
- **Forget Me Not** Forget Me Not group helps those who attend to socialise and keep their minds active. The funding is being used to provide activities for their members.

Digital plans for the customer newsletter

In response to customer feedback, we are pleased to be exploring opportunities around a digital opt-in/opt-out feature for the customer newsletter.

Committed to reducing our carbon footprint, we are in the process of understanding our options to provide a digital newsletter for customers who prefer receiving news via email.

Once we have finalised these options, we will conduct a survey to gather your preferences on how you wish to receive the customer newsletters.

Additionally, we are excited to announce the launch of the new customer e-bulletin in the new year.

Did you know?

The engagement team has been working with the Fixy project, which provides a pink bin in blocks of flats where residents can recycle small electrical items, mobile phones and laptops. This is currently being trialled at Elmside House, Middlestream Close and Coronation House.

- **Hamp Tots (Recreation Hub Hamp)** The group is newly established for local parents and children to come and play as well as offering support, baby weighing and checks.
- **Sydenham Community Centre** Sydenham Community Centre runs a wide range of community groups that many Homes in Sedgemoor customers attend and benefit from.

New consumer standards

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act received Royal Assent in July 2023 and forms a new era of regulation for the social housing sector, aiming to give tenants greater powers and improve access to quick and fair solutions to problems.

The Act has three core objectives which are:

- To facilitate a new, proactive consumer regulation regime
- To refine the existing economic regulatory regime
- To strengthen the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) powers to enforce the consumer and economic regimes

In doing so, the Act sets out to deliver against each of these commitments:

- Residents to be safe in their home
- Residents to know how their landlord is performing
- Residents to have their complaints dealt with promptly
- Residents to be treated with respect
- Residents to have their voice heard by their landlord
- Residents to have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in

From 1 April 2024, the revised consumer standards and Code of Practice will apply to all registered providers. The consumer standards include:

- The Safety and Quality Standard
- The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
- The Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- The Tenancy Standard

A proactive approach to regulating consumer issues supports registered providers to be compliant with the consumer standards and the regulator to use its new powers to tackle landlords who aren't meeting their commitments to residents. It also brings back regulation for stock owning Local Authority landlords. This means that Somerset Council will continue to have the regulatory relationship with the RSH and Homes in Sedgemoor (HiS) will be required to provide returns to the council. Where an inspection is undertaken, Somerset Council, not HiS, will be directly inspected.

On February 29, the Regulator released guidance on how it will approach inspection from April 1, 2024. For local authorities this will be a co-regulatory approach.

This means:

- Boards and Councillors must ensure service delivery meets the Consumer Standards and are open and accountable in how the organisation meets the objectives.
- Providers support tenants in the shaping and scrutinising of service delivery and in holding Boards and Councillors to account.

The Regulator has stated it will take a risk-based approach using the sector risk analysis and assessments of registered providers with more than 1,000 homes. The sector risk profile is published annually and was provided to Board in January.

The inspection plan outlines the process and sets out the scope of a programmed inspection.

In anticipation of the introduction of the collection of Tenant Satisfaction Measures, we revised our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to incorporate the revised measures specified by the Regulator. These measures are reported to Somerset Council, Board and customers and are available via our website and this newsletter. Somerset Council will be required to formally report TSM performance to the Regulator by June 30 each year as part of the new regulatory framework.

Since April 2024, registered providers with housing stock of over 1,000 homes are being called forward for inspection on a four-yearly cyclical basis. It is unclear when Somerset Council will be inspected. However, the Regulator has recommended providers self-assess against the new consumer standards to ensure compliance in readiness of future inspection.



Complaints and lessons learned

We are committed to capturing all instances of customer dissatisfaction to ensure that our process is transparent and accessible, and that we are listening to our customers.

For the first six months of this year, we have logged a total of 56 initial complaints, with 18 (32%), being upheld as there was a service failure by Homes in Sedgemoor.

The most common theme for upheld complaints is poor communication from us or our contractors, so we are continuing with training and regular meetings to try and improve in this area.

We also receive complaints when customers are experiencing antisocial behaviour within their neighbourhoods, as we have a stringent process we have to adhere to in order to progress any tenancy action, but we understand this can be extremely frustrating and upsetting for the residents who are the victims.

To help with this, we now have a dedicated ASB Lead Officer, who is responsible for overseeing the most

impactful cases in order to ensure we can follow-up and progress legal action in a timely manner, whilst ensuring the customers affected by the antisocial behaviour are being supported and kept updated.

We have also received some complaints with regards to our process when re-letting our homes with issues relating to property condition and poor communication. We are therefore working across all teams to review what we are currently doing and to identify opportunities for improvement such as in person sign-ups at the property, to enable the identification of issues or additional support needs for the incoming customer.

From our walkabouts, we have picked up on several instances where residents have been unhappy with their neighbourhoods, and have successfully completed works as a result of this including tidying of communal gardens, removal of fly-tipping and blocking up of obsolete areas so that they cannot be used

to support antisocial behaviour.

From a recent Housing Ombudsman determination, we now have two new policies in place – a Vulnerable Persons and Reasonable Adjustments Policy and a Pest Management Policy – these will be available on our website shortly.

For the coming months, a key priority for us is working on our customer insight information, following on from our successful Summer Connect day, where all colleagues were out and about in our neighbourhoods meeting our customers.

It is important that we know who lives in our homes so that we can ensure we are supporting and signposting to additional agencies and help where required.

Please continue to contact us if you have any repairs or property issues and do let us know if you need additional support to sustain your tenancy. We are here to help.



TSM	YTD Sept 2024	Target	TSM	YTD Sept 2024	Target
Satisfied with the service provided by Homes in Sedgemoor as a landlord	85%	84%	Satisfied with how we keep communal areas clean and well-maintained	73%	75%
Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	76%	73%	Satisfaction with repairs	86%	81%
Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	79%	74%	Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	88%	76%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	86%	80%	Repairs that are completed within the target timescale	85.2%	95%
Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	88%	85%	Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	0.3%	0%
Complaints relative to the size of the landlord (per 1,000 properties)	15.0	16.5	Satisfaction that the home is safe	86%	88%
Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	97%	96%	Gas safety checks	99.7%	100%
Satisfied with our approach on how we handle complaints	35%	65%	Fire safety checks	100%	100%
Antisocial behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord (per 1,000 properties)	15.0	12.5	Asbestos safety checks	100%	100%
Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling antisocial behaviour	62%	64%	Water safety checks	100%	100%
Satisfaction that the home is well-maintained	85%	80%	Lift safety checks	100%	100%

To see the latest TSMs, visit our website



Christmas safety tips



During the Christmas season here are some top tips to help keep you and your home safe.

- Check your smoke detectors are working. It's vital that you regularly check detectors to make sure you are properly alerted in the event of a fire.
- Check Christmas tree lights haven't deteriorated over time and make sure they are British Safety Standard. Always turn them off if you are going out, or when you go to sleep.
- If you have a real Christmas tree, keep it watered.
- Don't leave parcels on doorsteps as thefts increase at this time of year.
- Keep curtains, drapes and blinds closed at night when lights are on and make sure valuables are always kept out of sight.
- Never leave your (Christmas) dinner cooking unattended.
- Make sure you switch off the oven and hob if you're leaving the house.
- Take care around alcohol and don't cook if you've had a few too many. Alcohol can cause you to take risks, be distracted, and sometimes even fall asleep. This can be a very dangerous combination with cooking.
- Dishwashers, tumble dryers and washing machines are all high powered appliances and can catch fire. Reduce the risk of this causing serious damage to your home by never leaving them on when you go out, or when you're asleep. If the appliance starts to smoke, or a small fire breaks out, you have more chance of noticing if you are home and will be able to quickly call 999.
- Extension leads generate heat so should be used carefully. Never make a chain of extension leads, and always fully extend wind-up extension leads.
- Laptops, games consoles, phones and tablets can heat up when in use or being charged. Place on a hard surface and always use the official charger.

Rent Free Weeks 2024

Do you know we don't charge rent for two weeks over the Christmas period?

These are our 'rent free weeks'. This year these take place on the weeks commencing December 16 and December 23.

Monthly or Direct Debit payer?

If you pay your rent monthly or claim Universal Credit the payments must continue in full in December. The two rent free weeks are accounted for in your monthly rent calculation so if you don't pay a full month, arrears will start to accrue.

Rent paid direct?

If your rent is paid direct to us by Housing Benefit or Universal credit, you don't need to do anything – the rent free period is calculated in your payment already.

In arrears?

If you are in arrears we expect you to still pay rent to reduce the balance owing.

If you need help or advice, contact your Income Officer on 0800 585360.



Community Christmas Lunch



Christmas opening hours

With the festive season upon us, we wanted to take this opportunity to remind you that we are still here.

We will be on hand throughout December to help when you need us, and our out of hours emergency repairs service will continue to run 24/7. Our general weekday opening hours are 9am-5pm, except Wednesdays when our lines open at 10am-5pm.

Our Christmas opening hours are:

Monday, December 23	–	9am – 5pm
Tuesday, December 24	–	9am – 5pm
Wednesday, December 25	–	CLOSED
Thursday, December 26	–	CLOSED
Friday, December 27*	–	9am – 5pm
Monday, December 30*	–	9am – 5pm
Tuesday, December 31*	–	9am – 5pm
Wednesday, January 1*	–	CLOSED
Thursday, January 2	–	9am – 5pm
Friday, January 3	–	9am – 5pm

At all other times we will continue to provide our out of hours emergency repairs service on our usual contact number – **0800 585 360**.

*Please note, our reception at Bridgwater House will close at 3pm on Christmas Eve, and will remain closed for the Christmas period. The reception will reopen on January 2, 2025.



Over the past year, the Community Enabler Team has built a strong partnership with Anne Marie, the Community Development Officer from Bridgwater Town Council, who manages the Recreation Hub in Hamp.

We're excited to join forces with Anne Marie this year to provide a festive hot Christmas lunch for adults in the Hamp area on Friday, December 13th. If you'd like more details or want to get involved, feel free to reach out to the Community Enabler Team on **0800 585 360**. We can't wait to celebrate together!

Spreading Christmas joy at Gibb House

The Community Enabler Team and staff at Gibb House hosted an evening to celebrate the lighting of the Christmas tree, generously donated by MD Group.

Robert Elston, an Involved Customer from Homes in Sedgemoor, had the honour of turning on the lights.

Residents of Gibb House, along with members of the local community, enjoyed a delightful performance of Christmas carols sung by the children from Hamp Academy Choir. The evening also featured festive hot drinks and treats for everyone to enjoy.

Staff said the event was lovely and great to see so many residents joining in the festive fun.

Christmas hampers

We're excited to deliver Christmas treat hampers to the Coffee Mornings and Afternoons hosted by residents in our Independent Living Service schemes!

These hampers are a special gift for everyone to enjoy together.

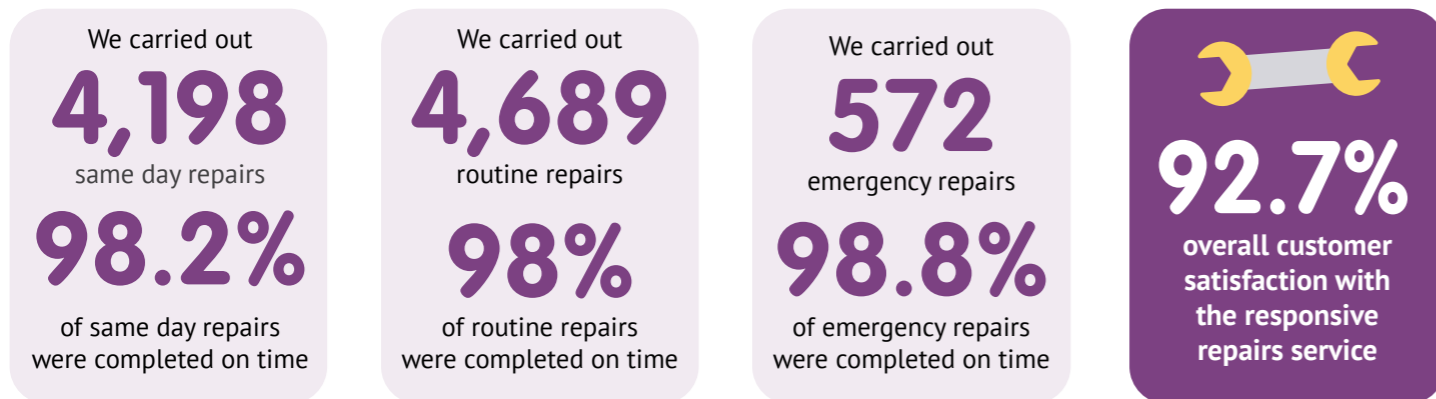
Every year we produce an Annual Report to showcase what we have been up to, how we have been doing and how you, as customers, have helped to shape our services.

We have included a summary of our latest Annual Report in your newsletter. When reading it, we hope you feel we are doing the very best job we can for you. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our customers for working with us and trusting us over the past year.

To view the full Annual Report, please visit our website at www.homesinsedgemoor.org or call us on 0800 585 360 to request your own paper copy.

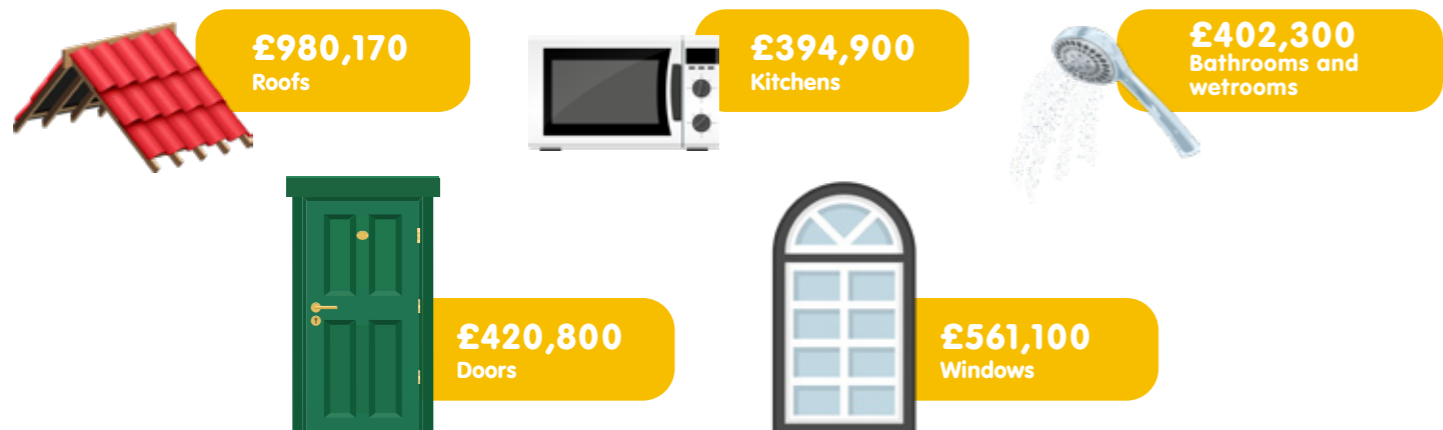
Repairs and Maintenance

We always work hard to maintain customers' properties to a great standard to ensure they have good quality, safe homes. We're proud to work closely with customers and partner contractors to carry out responsive repairs safely and efficiently, which is evident in customers' positive feedback of our service.



Upgrading Your Home

We carry out a large number of home upgrades every year to ensure we provide customers with good quality, safe homes. Last year, some of our capital expenditure included:



Customer Involvement

Involved customers

At Homes in Sedgemoor, we are truly customer driven, and passionate about inspiring customers and listening and acting on their feedback.

We have engaged with customers in a variety of ways to ensure their voices are heard, and we are always looking for new people to become involved to help us shape our services.



Service Improvement Panel

The Service Improvement Panel, made up of 10 customers, meets monthly to constructively evaluate the services we provide. Panel members also gather feedback from other customers to identify areas for improvement, ensuring the tenants' voices are being heard.

During the last year this group has shared their feedback on our voids standard, new tenant welcome pack, various policies, and communications and marketing materials.

You said ...

- Find new ways to increase engagement with customers
- We should make use of noticeboards and use leaflets
- Members would like to increase their knowledge and understanding of roles and departments within Homes in Sedgemoor



We have ...

- Started holding monthly community drop-in sessions within communities at local pantries
- Created more leaflets which we deliver during estate walks and we update customer noticeboards more frequently
- Ensured different colleagues now meet the panel every month to talk about their role

Income and Expenditure

Income

Management Fee	£10,613,374
Property Improvement	£10,416,172
Other Income	£570,697
Interest	£153,146
Total	£21,753,390

The table shows what income we collected and what expenditure we incurred during 2023/24.

Income and Expenditure The majority of the funding we receive comes from the rent and service charge income customerspay to Somerset Council.

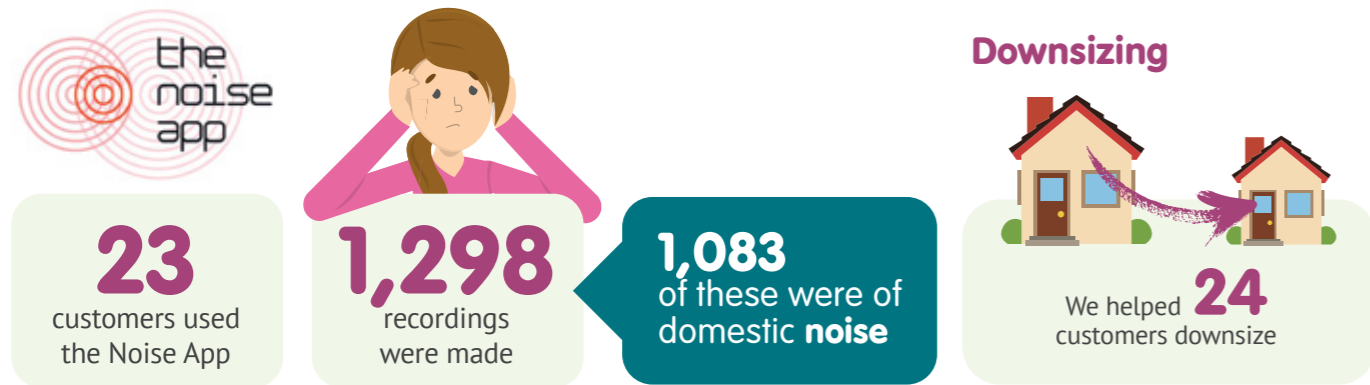
Expenditure

Property Repairs and Maintenance	£3,839,680
Property Improvement	£10,416,172
Staff Costs	£4,039,413
Service Level Agreements with Council	£1,197,391
Housing Management Costs	£1,702,654
Total	£21,195,311

During the year we spent less money than the funding we were given. This has been necessary to enable us to replenish depleted reserves impacted by very high utility costs during the previous two years, whilst also providing resource to invest in future initiatives and help improve the services delivered to our customers.

Supporting Customers

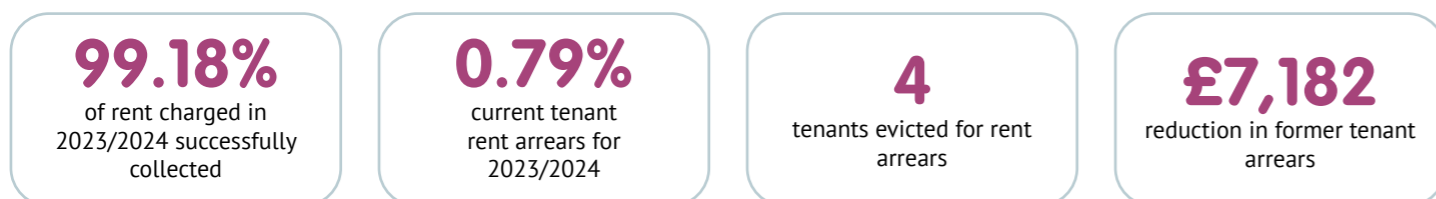
Our Housing Team works closely with a range of different agencies and charities across the district to make sure customers receive the correct support and continue to love where they live. Through strong partnership working, we are able to better engage, listen and support our customers, ensuring everything we do has the customers' best interests at heart.



Did you know? we supported **17** domestic abuse survivors, offering support where necessary

Income

We collect rent and pay it to Somerset Council. The council then gives us some of the rent back as a Management Fee so we can look after customers' homes, carry out repairs and do work in the neighbourhood. Last year, rent was charged over 50 weeks.



Lettings

All empty homes let in **79.3 days** on average

99.2% of customers were satisfied with the letting process

74% of customers were satisfied with the condition of their home

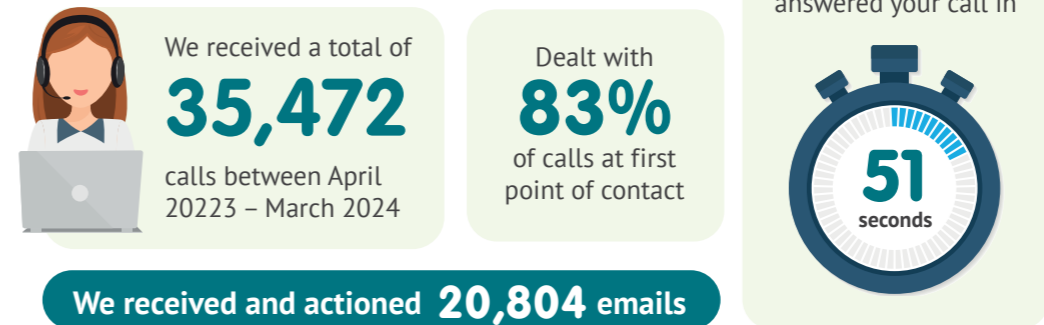
272 homes let between 2023/24

34 new homes into our management

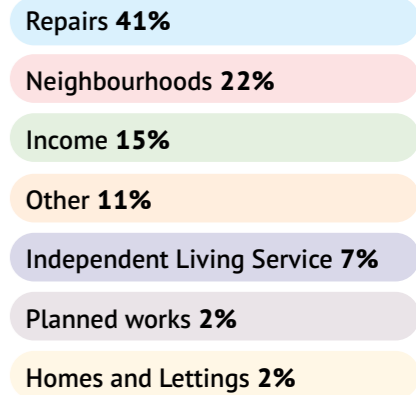
Customer Services and Feedback

Our dedicated Customer Services Team is committed to providing an excellent service to our customers, via our contact centre, email, social media or our reception service.

Last year...



What you called us about



TP01: Overall satisfaction - Year end 2023/2024 results	82%
TP02: Satisfaction with repairs	83%
TP03: Satisfaction with the time taken to complete repair	84%
TP04: Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	84%
TP05: Satisfaction that the home is safe	87%
TP06: Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	74%
TP07: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed	85%
TP08: Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	87%
TP09: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints	40%
TP10: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	74%
TP11: Landlord makes a positive contribution to the neighbourhood	79%
TP12: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling ASB	71%

Complaints



Puzzle Time!

Enter our Christmas wordsearch.

Find all 16 words from the list, then return it along with the completed entry form.



J	V	H	G	X	L	Y	K	M	C	W	U	G	N	X	P	X
S	S	T	O	J	L	J	K	O	Y	V	E	O	W	E	A	S
C	Z	Z	B	I	E	G	B	W	R	E	A	T	H	T	T	B
L	J	Y	M	N	Z	V	J	Z	O	A	T	O	N	M	R	H
K	R	A	O	Y	U	L	E	T	I	D	E	A	L	J	E	H
P	F	B	R	C	W	N	L	I	Y	H	S	O	W	M	E	G
P	F	O	N	E	H	C	A	N	D	Y	C	A	N	E	I	I
R	P	T	A	I	D	R	B	M	S	B	J	J	W	N	Y	N
E	E	B	M	V	Y	T	I	S	O	M	S	S	Q	U	V	G
S	O	M	E	I	D	G	T	S	I	F	A	N	D	T	G	E
E	N	C	N	C	C	R	H	O	T	N	P	O	O	C	X	R
N	N	G	T	W	E	A	A	L	B	M	N	W	G	R	U	B
T	P	P	D	N	E	Y	R	R	L	U	A	Q	S	A	P	R
S	Y	D	X	K	O	M	N	O	U	I	V	S	S	C	J	E
M	H	H	S	J	V	A	D	I	L	C	N	L	Z	K	B	A
E	W	G	R	E	E	T	I	N	G	S	M	R	F	E	D	D
D	E	C	E	M	B	E	R	I	N	U	A	Q	H	R	K	R

- JOY
 - GREETINGS
 - FAMILY
 - WREATH
 - CHRISTMAS
 - TREE
 - NUTCRACKER
 - CAROLS
- PRESENTS
 - DECEMBER
 - CANDY CANE
 - YULETIDE
 - SANTA
 - GINGERBREAD
 - SNOW
 - ORNAMENT

Please complete your details for a chance of winning a £25 voucher.

Send your completed entry form to: Homes in Sedgemoor, Bridgwater House, King Square, Bridgwater TA6 3AR, email customer.services@homesinsedgemoor.org or message us on Facebook.

Closing date:
Friday, January 31, 2025

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

Telephone:.....

Congratulations

To Michelle, of Burnham-on-Sea, Vera, of Pawlett, and David, of Bridgwater, who won the Spring Newsletter competition. We hope you each enjoy your £25 voucher.

Congratulations

To Miss Bailey, from Bridgwater, and Mr Wilkins, from Over Stowey, who won a £50 voucher for taking part in one of our surveys.

HomesinSedgemoor @HomesSedgemoor

customer.services@homesinsedgemoor.org

www.homesinsedgemoor.org 0800 585 360 / 01278 552400

Homes in Sedgemoor, Bridgwater House, King Square, Bridgwater TA6 3AR

Don't forget to follow us on social media and check our website!

