



Neighbourhood Matters

Issue 21: **Summer 2025**



New name, same great service

Penlea House development nears completion

Pupils thrilled with eggcellent donation

Cover photo: Hamp Walkabout

 **Homes in
Somerset**



**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





 HomesinSomerset

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homesinsomerset.org

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us on social media and
check our website!**



Hello...

and welcome to our
summer edition of
Neighbourhood Matters.



A warm welcome...

Welcome to our summer edition of Neighbourhood Matters, bursting with positive news including our big story – becoming Homes in Somerset. Our name change reflects not just our geographical reach, but better describes our partnership with Somerset Council, and we are delighted to welcome their experienced development team into the fold, joining our own officers here to create an even stronger workforce to execute all the exciting opportunities for providing more new homes across the county. We are also pleased to be working closely with Somerset Council on their review of how housing services are delivered across Somerset. This review starts shortly and we explain it in more detail later in this newsletter.

Included in a raft of development growth, we are delighted to announce our capital investment programme worth £5.2 million that will increase energy efficiency in our homes. We have also committed to spending a further £1.25 million per year to improve our neighbourhoods, make better use of open spaces, and to improve the appearance of communities.

A real feather in our cap that we're hugely proud of is retaining the highly sought after Gold Investors in People award. We pride ourselves on fostering a workplace that supports colleagues to deliver the best for our customers, but to also feel fulfilled in their roles. This accolade bears testament to

not just the brilliant work our colleagues do, but to the work we do in-house to best support and develop a happy and efficient workforce.

Community continues to be the glue that sticks everything together here at Homes in Somerset. From litter picks with our customers, schoolchildren and community groups, to ensuring our customers have access to the allowances they need; from officers championing safe and peaceful communities, to supporting customers through the new Universal Credit changes, we strive to assist in any way we can when it comes to community and we will never take for granted how important our customers are at informing us on changes we need to make and help we need to provide.

We continue to embrace developing technologies to support our customers. Implementing new technology to enable easy repair reporting and encouraging use of the NoiseApp to report antisocial behaviour, we continue to develop a positive relationship with helpful digital solutions. This continues into the home as well, and new build properties now enjoy the benefits of EV charging points, solar panels, and a wide variety of energy efficient technology.

It's a great time to be a part of Homes in Somerset, as we grow not only in size, but also in experience, enthusiasm and vision.

Peter Hatch
Chief Executive

New name, same great service



We are pleased to announce that we have changed our name from Homes in Sedgemoor to Homes in Somerset.

We decided to change our name following the approval of the transfer of Somerset Council's Development Team to our organisation. This team will manage the current and future development programmes for new affordable homes across Somerset.

This change is in line with our Corporate Strategy aim of supporting our sole shareholder, Somerset Council, and better reflects the expanded geographical area across which Somerset Council operates.

Peter Hatch, Homes in Somerset Chief Executive, said:

"We are delighted that Somerset Council has entrusted us with this, and while we have a different name, we want to reassure you that we remain committed to providing you with the same, excellent services you have come to expect from us."

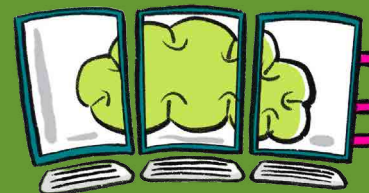
"We are excited to continue to provide safe, affordable, healthy homes to our customers while developing new homes and communities."

What does this mean for you?

You don't need to do anything, but to help you understand this transition, we have prepared some Frequently Asked Questions which you can find on our website at www.homesinsomerset.org.

If you have any further questions, please call our Customer Services Team on 0800 585 360.

● **HEALTHY HOMES**



Customer-focused e-newsletter delivered

We're excited to have recently sent out our first e-newsletter to customers who registered their email with us.

This e-newsletter is six-monthly and alternates with the hard copy newsletters (this one!).

We hope you enjoyed your dedicated e-newsletter, and if you would like to be added to the mailing list, get in touch with us at communications@homesinsomerset.org.



Keeping Bridgwater tidy

Community Enablers, Sharon and Jade, joined forces with Bridgwater Town Council to lead the Victoria Ward litter pick as part of the Keep Britain Tidy project.

They were joined by members of Bridgwater's Sea Cadets, families from Northgate Primary School, Councillors Brian Smedley and Liz Marsh, and Laura Fowler, the Victoria Park community centre manager.

They collected 12 bags of litter and finished with tea and cake at the Victoria Park community centre. Each child received a certificate for attending.



Easter eggs for school children

Community Enabler, Jade, visited Woolavington Primary School to donate 25 Easter eggs for prizes in their Easter colouring competition.



Louise Perkins, Parents and Teachers Association volunteer, said: *"I reached out to Sharon and Jade to ask if they would support our Easter event, the children were thrilled with the prizes, thank you very much."*



Grass at Baymead Meadow

A customer from Baymead Meadow, one of the Independent Living Schemes, sent in a photo saying how lovely the grass is looking at Baymead Meadow following the regular maintenance from Clean Surroundings.



Penn Close gardening project

The residents of Penn Close, Cheddar, wanted to cheer up their garden area so they approached their Housing Officer Gary and Independent Living Advisor Kate.

Residents Roger, Lyn, Brenda and Jeanette were keen to improve the garden area by the communal lounge and the team worked hard together weeding the garden beds and replacing plants in the pots and containers. Here they are pictured with dogs Kira and Eillie!





Bitham Walk Community Hub

Woolavington and Puriton's 'Big Local' – have set up a new Community Hub in Woolavington.

The Hub is a safe, friendly, welcoming space, where local families and residents of all ages can drop-in for a cuppa and a chat, meet-up, socialise, perhaps join a club or group, and also get help, support, and advice.

The Hub is based in Bitham Walk Hall (the hall near to the shops off Windmill Crescent), and there's lots of things going on, such as a games afternoon, where you can play cards and board games – or, you might like to join a craft group, like the Woolly Quilters, where beginners and more experienced sewers

share ideas and learn new skills together.

If you are looking for some help or advice, there is a weekly Talking Café on Wednesday mornings, where you can chat with a Village Agent. There's lots of help available, and everyone is welcome to drop-in.

If you'd like to find out more about the Community Hub and what's on – or if you're interested in setting up a group or club yourself – please drop Jon Cousins a line at jon@shal.org or call **07740 410 232**. The Hub is a centre for everyone.



Did you know...

Colleagues from Homes in Somerset will be attending some of the community drop in sessions at Bitham Walk Hall, in Woolavington. The sessions are an opportunity for anyone to chat to us about your home and community.

We will be there from 11.30am until 1pm on May 21, June 18, July 16, August 20 and September 17.



Trowbridge Close Monday bingo

Following on from the Winter Warmer Coffee Mornings at Trowbridge Close, Homes in Somerset and LiveWest customers have joined forces to continue meeting on Mondays with a fun bingo and coffee afternoon.



Building stronger communities together



@homesinsomerset

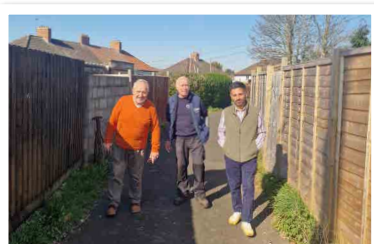
Follow us on
Instagram

Looking for the latest updates on housing, community events, and local news? We've got you covered! Follow @homesinsomerset on Instagram for updates on how we're working to create safe, welcoming homes and strengthen communities across Somerset.

Join us in making a difference – follow @homesinsomerset today and stay connected with what's happening in your community!

Estate Walkabouts

We have held 12 estate walks so far this year. During the walkabouts, we have spotted a number of untidy gardens, and have worked with customers to remove rubbish and improve their outdoor spaces.



The estate walks are attended by our colleagues, representatives from other agencies and residents, all working together to improve the communities, ensuring you love where you live.

Joining an Estate Walkabout is a great way to inform us of any issues and point out specific areas which need our attention.



HEALTHY HOMES



Join us for your local walkabout:

May 22, 10am

Westover Green,
West Street,
Bridgwater

June 5, 10am

Co-op, Parkway,
Sydenham
(Dunwear)

June 11, 10am

Morland Shops,
Morland Road,
Highbridge

June 25, 10am

School Fields,
Cannington

June 26, 10am

St Mary's
Church Hall,
Nether Stowey

July 3, 10am

ReCreation,
Rhode Lane,
Hamp

July 9, 10am

St George's Hall,
Kendale Road,
Bridgwater

July 17, 10am

Westover Green,
West Street,
Bridgwater

August 7, 10am

Fish and chip shop,
Bitham Walk,
Woolavington

August 19, 10am

Morland Shops,
Morland Road,
Highbridge

September 4, 10am

Crossways Inn,
Withy Road,
West Huntspill

September 10, 10am

Co-op, Parkway,
Sydenham
(Dunwear)

September 16, 10am

Penn Close,
Cheddar

October 2, 10am

Co-op, Parkway,
Sydenham
(Fairfax)

October 14, 10am

Rosewood Hall,
Rosewood Close,
Burnham

October 23, 10am

ReCreation,
Rhode Lane,
Hamp

November 5, 10am

Westover Green,
West Street
Bridgwater

November 13, 10am

Fish and chip shop,
Bitham Walk,
Woolavington

November 18, 10am

St George's Hall,
Kendale Road,
Bridgwater

December 2, 10am

Morland Road,
Highbridge

December 4, 10am

Baymead Hall,
North Petherton

CUSTOMER
DRIVEN

Aligning our services

Somerset Council will be carrying out a Housing Options Appraisal to align its housing management services across the county.

Since April 2023, Somerset Council, which owns around 10,000 homes, has managed its housing stock via two different models of housing management, after absorbing the services of the former Sedgemoor and Somerset West and Taunton District Councils, the only two district councils which owned housing stock in Somerset.

The current housing management services are split, with around 6,000 homes managed directly through an in-house team of staff at Somerset Council and around 4,000 homes managed by Homes in Somerset. Homes in Somerset is an arms-length management organisation (ALMO) which is owned by Somerset Council and works on behalf of the council to provide housing management services to customers.

To ensure that services are better aligned, provide a consistently good service and deliver best value for money for customers and leaseholders, Somerset Council will be conducting an independent review to identify how the housing service should be delivered in future and what model best works for our customers. An external consultant will be appointed to undertake this piece of work, which will begin in July 2025, leading to a recommendation for a future delivery model.

Your rights as a customer will not be affected by this change. Somerset Council will continue to own your properties, and your homes will continue to be repaired, maintained and invested in as they are currently during the Options Appraisal process. You will also continue to be supported by housing officers. There will be no change to your rent or service charges beyond the normal annual review and increase.

This project is simply to move us to a place where housing management services are delivered through one, rather than two different management models and your rights as a customer will remain unchanged. Somerset Council is not looking to sell any homes as part of this process, and will therefore remain your landlord regardless of how the service will be delivered in the future.

Throughout, we will be engaging with you as part of this process, keeping you fully informed and giving you the opportunity to get involved and feed back on your thoughts so that we understand what is important to you and to make sure your voice is heard.

We will also be sharing regular updates with you through our customer newsletter, e-newsletter, on our website, through our social media platforms and through other bespoke engagement as this important work progresses.

We have also published some Frequently Asked Questions which are available on our website at www.homesinsomerset.org.

In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact our Customer Services Team on 0800 585 360 or at customer.services@homesinsomerset.org.





Housing growth and regeneration across Somerset



We are delighted to appoint Duncan Harvey as Head of Housing Growth and Regeneration, leading the new development team which includes colleagues from Somerset Council.

Duncan said: *"It is a privilege to take on this role and to lead the recently enlarged housing development service, following the successful merger of two dynamic development teams."*

"We are embarking on an exciting journey to deliver the largest council development programme to date. With an investment of £102 million, this ambitious initiative aims to provide approximately 341 new council homes across the county, addressing critical housing needs and enhancing local communities."

Some of the key projects for Homes in Somerset include:

- Penlea House in Bridgwater – completion of 33 new homes, representing a £5.9 million investment in quality housing
- Seaward Way in Minehead – delivery of 54 homes with a total investment of £10.6 million

Looking to the future, we will be progressing the next phase of the North Taunton regeneration project. With a remarkable potential to deliver 260 modern homes, this £75 million initiative is a shining example of our commitment to revitalising communities and improving living standards.

We are also expanding our development efforts into areas of the county currently without council housing. Plans are underway to invest £4 million in building 15 high-specification homes in Langport and Charlton Adam, extending the reach and impact of our housing services.

Duncan adds: *"These are challenging but truly exciting times, and I look forward to working with our talented teams, partners, and stakeholders to make these ambitious goals a reality. Together, we can create vibrant, thriving communities and provide high-quality homes for the people of Somerset."*

Affordable homes in Charlton Adam

Work will soon get underway to build nine affordable homes in Charlton Adam.

The new homes will integrate into 26 open market homes. Somerset Council is investing £2.5m to provide a range of rented homes, including four-bed homes.

Charlton Adam is a sought-after place to live, and these new homes will give local people who find themselves priced out of the market access to a genuinely affordable home.



Penlea House nearing completion

Snagging has now commenced at Penlea House in Bridgwater, to ensure the homes are ready for handover before summer.

The interior of the block of flats is nearing completion and progress is being made on the exterior with the balconies being installed, which will be a great addition to the new homes providing outside space.



New Development Committee

We've formed a new Development Committee established to oversee and guide development activities undertaken by Homes in Somerset on behalf of Somerset Council and in accordance with the obligations set out in the Service Level Agreement. The committee will work with the council to create the Development Strategy.

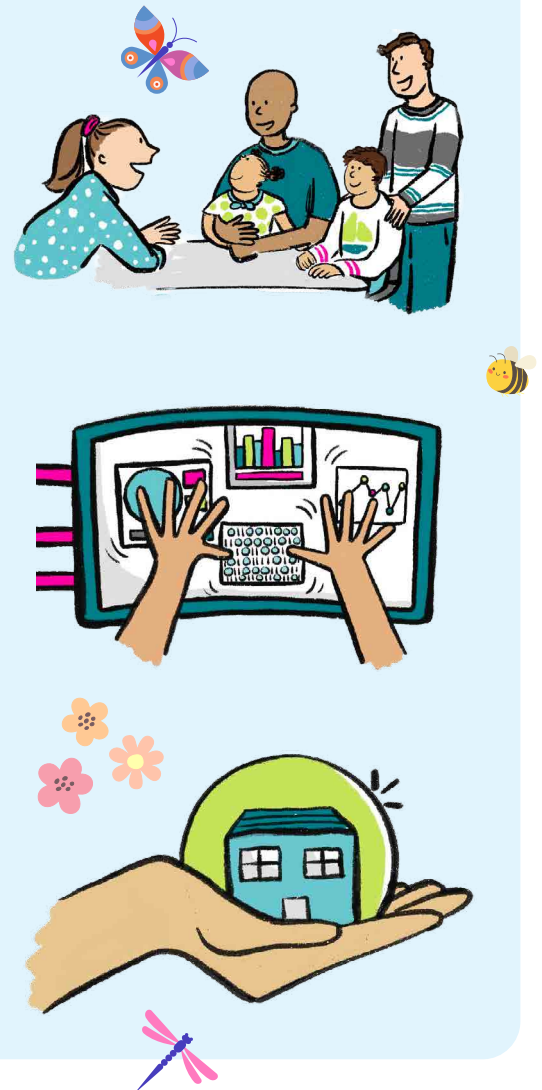
The scope of the Committee responsibilities includes, but is not limited to, new housing developments, regeneration projects, property acquisitions and disposals.

Development Committee objectives:

1. To ensure that all development activities align with the strategic goals and objectives of Homes in Somerset and Somerset Council.
2. To monitor and review the progress of development projects, ensuring they are delivered on time, within budget, and to the required quality standards.
3. To assess the risks associated with development projects and ensure appropriate mitigation strategies are in place.
4. To ensure compliance with relevant legislation, regulations, and best practices in development and construction.
5. To promote sustainability and the effective use of resources in all development activities.

We hope the new Development Committee helps us to continue to provide safe, fit-for-the-future, healthy homes for you and our future customers.

For more information about the Development Committee, please visit our website at www.homesinsomerset.org.



Garage redevelopment project

We are about to embark on the next wave of garage redevelopments to provide around 40 new rented homes across 11 sites where council-owned garages have been assessed as being redundant.

Not only will the £9.8m investment have beneficial uses, such as increasing the supply of council-owned affordable housing, but it will also improve the local environment and enhance community spaces.



Spotlight on: Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee



Ever wondered how your voice as a customer helps shape the services you receive? That's where the Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee (STAC) comes in!



STAC is made up of dedicated residents working alongside Homes in Somerset colleagues to make sure customers are truly at the heart of decision-making.

They help review and challenge how well the organisation is performing, especially on key issues like repairs, customer service, safety, and value for money.

Their job is to hold us to account—asking the right questions, checking that promises are being kept, and making sure customers' needs are always front and centre.

The committee has space for up to 14 members. We've recently

welcomed some fantastic new faces, bringing fresh ideas and energy to the team—but we're not stopping there! We'll be recruiting again this summer, so if you're passionate about your community and want to make a difference, this could be your chance to get involved.

As a STAC member, you'll also have the chance to attend training and events, both online and in person, to help you build your skills and confidence. Members are also invited to observe Board meetings and away days, giving you an insider's view of how key decisions are made.

STAC plays a big role in shaping policies, improving communication between customers and colleagues, and ensuring your feedback is acted on.

By working together, we're building not just better homes, but stronger communities.

Want to know more or express your interest early?

Contact our Engagement Team at community.engagement@homesinsomerset.org.



Scrutiny Panel meeting

The antisocial behaviour and hate crime scrutiny meeting was held in January, with 11 customers joining us for the day to review our current policies, procedures, and case studies.

Customers shared their experiences with antisocial behaviour in their neighbourhoods, providing valuable feedback and recommendations.

Attendees expressed that the day opened their eyes to the complexities of resolving antisocial behaviour incidents, while acknowledging that Homes in Somerset is continually learning and improving our services.



Did you know...

You could get involved in our next scrutiny, which is focusing on lettings and voids? If you are interested, contact the Community Enabler Team to find out more by emailing community.engagement@homesinsomerset.org.





Paul Stephenson's Board update

Hi everyone,

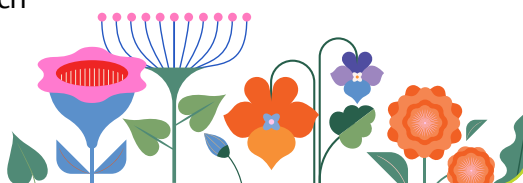
It is a great pleasure to write to you for the first time as Homes in Somerset (HiS) customers. While there has been no change for you as customers, the name change does represent a business change due to the previous Somerset Council Development and Regeneration Team having joined us to provide a whole Somerset service. We are delighted to welcome the team, some of whom Board members met in a recent visit to sites around Taunton. This new financial year will hold its own challenges and opportunities with the global economic situation being very volatile and subject to continuous change. HiS will continue to provide support and advice to any customers who are struggling with the cost-of-living challenges which themselves are ongoing.

Working in partnership with Somerset Council, we will

be able to perform the best we can, as evidenced by our achievements in the last financial year. Housing has been given a very high profile by the Government, and we are eager to continue demonstrating our authority in this sector.

While we await the spring statement in June to see what changes come about, we have recently held two Board Away Days to spend time away from formal meetings and consider the opportunities that lie ahead and how we best approach them.

Our priorities continue to be ensuring our customers, their homes, and communities are supported and safe. I wish everyone well as we head towards summer in our robust new partnership.



Welcome to Sarah



We are pleased to have welcomed Sarah O'Neill to the Board.

Sarah is a portfolio non-executive director (NED) and chair.

With considerable commercial experience and a strong consumer focus, Sarah has a strong personal interest in the housing sector and is currently a Board Member at Housing Diversity Network and North Devon Homes, as well as being a former Chair of Willow Tree Housing Partnership.

Sarah is also the current Independent Chair of the Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee (STAC).

Sarah is passionate about equality, diversity and inclusion and her previous experience includes being a NED for a diversity and inclusion advocacy organisation. She is also deeply committed to carbon neutrality and sustainability, completing Climate Reality training with Al Gore.

Additionally, Sarah is the South West ambassador for the Institute of Board Members.

Outside of work, Sarah's interests include travel, theatre and spending time with her cat and husband.

Service Improvement Panel



This customer panel discusses various aspects of customer services, property services, neighbourhood services, as well as reviewing policies and strategies.

It's a welcoming, informal group that engages in conversations about the services offered by Homes in Somerset.

You can get involved by contacting us on community.engagement@homesinsomerset.org.





Customer satisfaction targets smashed by Independent Living Service Team

Our Independent Living Service Team (ILS) continues to smash its target for customer satisfaction.

We set benchmark targets each year, and the ILS team had a target of 85% for customer satisfaction.

Customers who said they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” came in at 87.9% with comments including how much they appreciate the peace of mind colleagues give them.

Denise Reeves, ILS Housing Manager said of the team: *“You are delivering vital, life-enhancing and sometimes*

life-saving help and support to many of our most vulnerable customers, and you are doing it to a very, very high standard.”

● CUSTOMER DRIVEN

A day in the life of the Independent Living Service Team



We have around 900 sheltered housing properties for customers able to live independently, supported by our team of four Independent Living Officers – plus some clever tech (our residents also have an automated welfare call service and an emergency alarm system).



For our little team of officers, there is no such thing as a typical day. We carry out planned visits – we aim to see each customer at least once a year, to review how they’re doing. Customers request help with everything from personal finances, rent issues and benefits applications, health and wellbeing issues, antisocial behaviour, neighbourhood and family problems, parking (for cars or mobility scooters), and many other things. We help with mobility aids, shopping, hoarding, bereavement and loneliness – sometimes we’re the only person a customer sees. We also try to encourage people to engage with neighbours and communities.

Some examples from the past few weeks include more than one mental health crisis, working with social services and health professionals. We’ve helped a group of customers get together to watch films on DVD.

We’ve sorted mobility scooter storage, stopped a lady getting overwhelmed by letters from Universal Credit and helped a concerned mum whose daughter struggles to read and write (we often liaise with relatives). We help people needing to move and those struggling to settle in – we meet them at the beginning of their tenancies. We work with the people who monitor our emergency callout system, with the police, with social services, with community groups and of course with our colleagues in many other parts of the business.

It is surely one of the most rewarding roles in housing.

**Denise Reeves,
Independent Living Manager**



Extra Care Housing

Alongside our name change, which reflects our growth in supporting the wider community in Somerset, we have also undertaken an increased role in supporting customers looking to move to, or already living in, Extra Care Housing. A new team will be visiting our Extra Care customers soon to introduce themselves and talk about how we can support you.

Amy and Holleigh, our new Housing Related Support Officers, and Debbie, our Extra Care Support Team Leader, will work alongside Agincare, which provides assessed personal care.



The new team will:

Support with communication and wellbeing

Help with correspondence, reading and writing of letters and support with making telephone calls that are necessary for your wellbeing.

Support meaningful connections

Help you maintain strong social and family relationships to reduce isolation and improve your wellbeing.

Promote independent living

Provide guidance on reporting property issues and encourage the use of assistive technologies to enhance your independence and quality of life.

Help get the support needed

Advocate for you and help you access essential services like social care, health support, and community groups. We also ensure you can take part in decisions about your wellbeing.

Encourage and support customers

Listen to you, provide emotional support, and help you achieve your goals. We also regularly review your needs to ensure you get the right support.

**CUSTOMER
DRIVEN**



Celebrate your garden in our annual competition

Ready to get involved?
Enter today!

We believe that gardens, whether grand or modest, bring life, colour, and joy to our communities. That is why we are excited to launch this year's customer Garden Competition, designed to recognise and reward our customers who dedicate time and effort to their outdoor spaces.

Whether you have a sprawling garden, a small but green haven, or vibrant baskets and containers, we want to celebrate your passion for gardening!

Competition Categories

This year, we invite you to enter your garden into one of five exciting categories:

- **Best Large Garden**

A showcase of beauty and creativity in spacious outdoor areas.

- **Best Small Garden**

Proof that wonderful things come in small packages!

- **Best Containers, Pots, and Baskets**

Stunning displays of flowers, plants, and greenery in creative arrangements.

- **Best Community or Communal Garden**

Bringing neighbours together through shared spaces.

- **Best Vegetable Patch**

A tribute to homegrown produce and sustainability.

Additionally, we are introducing the Nominated Garden category, where our colleagues will select and honour a garden that stands out for its dedication and creativity.

How to enter

Participating is easy! Simply reach out to our Community Enabler Team on 0800 585 360, by emailing community.engagement@homesinsomerset.org or visit our website.

Judging and prizes

Judging will take place on Wednesday, July 16, and Thursday, July 17, where we will assess each entry for its charm, effort, and impact.

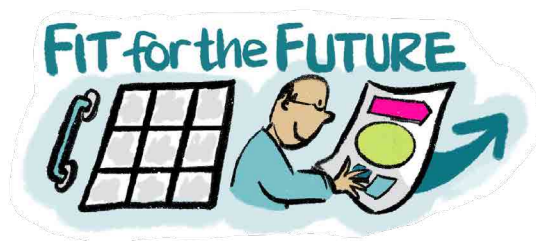
Winners in each category will receive a £50 Love2Shop voucher. Runners-up will receive a £25 Love2Shop voucher.

All entrants will receive a special invitation to an Afternoon Tea in August, where we will celebrate your gardening achievements and announce the winners!

Gardens do more than brighten individual homes—they strengthen our neighbourhoods and bring people together. No matter the size of your outdoor space, this competition is for you. So, grab your gardening gloves and show us what you have nurtured this year!

We cannot wait to see your entries and celebrate the gardens that make our communities thrive.





Investors in People

We are proud to announce that we have retained the prestigious Investors in People (IIP) Gold accreditation. This recognition highlights our commitment to excellence in people management and employee wellbeing.

Julia, Head of People and Communications said:

"We are thrilled to retain our IIP Gold accreditation. This achievement reflects our unwavering commitment to our employees and our belief that investing in our people is key to our success. We will continue to strive for excellence and create a workplace where everyone can thrive."

Investors in People is an internationally recognised standard for people management, and achieving the gold accreditation demonstrates our dedication to fostering a positive workplace culture.

This accolade is a testament to our efforts in creating an environment where our employees can thrive, feel valued, and contribute to the success of our organisation.

Embrace automation to reach vulnerable customers

In addition to completing campaigns via Voicescape Collections, we also reach out to customers with essential messages and ensure meaningful conversations with those who need us most. Don't hesitate to get in touch with a member of our Income Team to learn more.

We remain committed to supporting our customers through every step of the Universal Credit migration process, ensuring they have the resources and guidance needed to maintain their tenancies and live in a safe, secure community.



Embracing technology to make lives easier

We are proud to highlight the exceptional work of our Income Team in supporting customers through the Universal Credit (UC) migration process. Leveraging the innovative Voicescape Collections solution, our team has achieved remarkable success in ensuring customers are well-informed and supported during this transition.

Our Income Team adopted Voicescape Collections in 2018 as part of a broader initiative. Since then, they have further leveraged it to automate contact with customers who have been migrated to UC, initiating the important conversations needed to ensure they're equipped and supported to keep paying their rent.

Income Team Leader, Ian said: *"Voicescape has been an invaluable tool to generate outbound contact to our customers starting on their Universal Credit journey to ensure rent payments are prioritised and to ensure their tenancies are sustained long term."*

Have your say!



We want you to get involved and have a say in what happens in your community. During the year, we will hold local consultation events and we want you to come along and tell us what you think about our ideas and share yours. Whether it is proposals to improve your outside spaces or the colour of new flooring in the communal area of your flats – let us know your views.

You can get in touch by visiting the Contact Us page on our website at www.homesinsomerset.org.



SUSTAINABILITY
BY DESIGN



Capital investment programme to drive energy efficiency

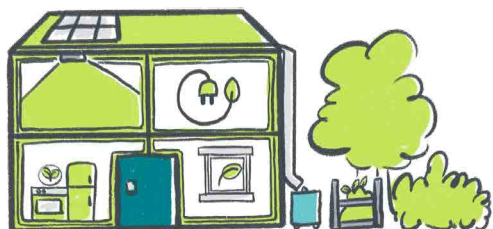
A planned investment programme worth **£5.2 million** has been put into place to help keep properties up to date and energy efficient.

We will be working closely with our contract partners to renew areas such as kitchens and bathrooms, to replace roofs, windows and doors, while upgrading heating systems and rewiring the homes of our customers.

Property Services, Investment and Sustainability Manager, Rik Saunders said:

"Our £5.2m planned investment programmes are in place to replace the parts of your home that are at the end of their life and in poor condition."

"The type of works in the Decent Homes programme include renewal of kitchens, bathrooms, roofs, rewires, windows and doors. The Great Estates programme includes works to internal and external communal areas, as well as neighbourhood improvements."



Retrofit improvements implemented

As we progress in our journey to have all our homes at a minimum of an EPC C by 2030, we are continuously looking to improve the customer experience whilst we deliver our retrofit programmes.

Although we have targets in place we need to achieve, it is vital that we don't lose sight of the customers whose homes we are improving. Retrofit is not just about improving the energy performance of our properties, it's also to improve how you live in your homes by aiming to reduce bills and making your homes stay warmer for longer by improving the insulation.

With this in mind, we have been reviewing the retrofit process to understand how we can improve the experience for our customers.

We are looking for customers to feed back about their experiences throughout our retrofit programme. If you are waiting for your home to be retrofitted, or you're going through the process now, we'd love to hear your thoughts and feedback. If you would like to put your name forward, please get in touch at customer.services@homesinsomerset.org.

Window restrictor service

We are offering our customers a service to install window restrictors, as an additional safety feature that can be added to your windows.

Restrictors prevent the window from opening past a certain point, meaning you can achieve adequate ventilation, with less risk than a fully open window.

Under health and safety legislation, window restrictors are required where occupants are vulnerable to the risk of falling, have access to windows, and the windows are at a height that falling out of them risks injury.

Your safety and wellbeing are our top priorities. By installing window restrictors, we aim to:

- Reduce the risk of accidents: Prevent falls from windows, especially in upper-floor properties.
- Enhance security: Make it more difficult for unauthorised individuals to enter your home.
- Provide peace of mind: Knowing that your family is safer.

If you want to book an installation, please contact us by emailing customer.services@homesinsomerset.org.

Reduction in noise complaints

We are pleased to have seen a significant reduction in noise complaints, thanks to the efforts of our Housing Officers.

A customer recently reported loud shouting and talking from a flat within one of our blocks, along with household noise from the flat above, that was disrupting their sleep and daily life. The customer used the Noise App to record these disturbances and reported them to us.

Our Housing Officer promptly contacted the reported household to discuss the noise complaints. Despite initial conversations,

complaints and recordings of shouting continued. Consequently, we issued an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) to the household. This voluntary agreement requires the individual to adhere to specified terms and collaborate with support agencies.

Following the issuance of the ABC, there was a significant reduction in complaints about shouting and noise nuisance. However, complaints about general household noise persisted.

Upon visiting the property, the Housing Officer discovered the flat lacked carpeting, which likely contributed to the noise transmission. After some discussions between the officer and the customer, we decided to carpet the main living area to mitigate this issue.

Since carpeting the property and serving the ABC, the Housing Officer for the area has not received any further complaints of antisocial behaviour or noise nuisance.



FOCUSED

INNOVATIVE

TRUSTED

Creating healthy homes for our customers



We are committed to creating healthy and comfortable living environments for our customers. We listen to complaints and take prompt action to address them.

We understand the impact that antisocial behaviour can have on our customers and encourage anyone experiencing issues to report them to us by talking to their Housing Officer on **0800 585 360**. We remain dedicated to ensuring a peaceful and healthy living environment for all our customers.

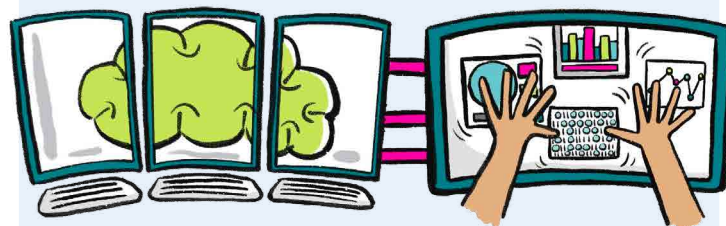
Switching over to digital systems



We are proud that our Compliance Team is ahead of the game when it comes to switching from analogue to digital systems.

Between now and 2027 most telephone providers will be moving their customers from old analogue landlines to new upgraded landline services using fibre technology.

This upgrade will affect our current lift alarms, fire alarms, and door entry systems in our blocks. The Compliance Team has moved quickly and has completed the relevant upgrades to ensure by 2027 the systems will be compliant. Customers have been reassured the process will be smooth, with minimal disruptions to their day-to-day life.





Complaints and lessons learned



For the last financial year, we have logged a total of 130 initial complaints, which is a slight decrease from the previous year. Of these, 41 have been upheld (32%) as a service failure by Homes in Somerset or their contractor, which is the same percentage as the year before.

We have continued to embed a culture of positive learning from customer complaints, and with this in mind, we are now carrying out transactional satisfaction surveys when a complaint is resolved and closed, and we also contact all customers who have expressed dissatisfaction via a Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) survey or other customer survey, to enable us to follow up and resolve customer issues.

We are in the process of reviewing and updating our Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy, with the aim to ensure that the process continues to be easily accessible for customers who wish to log a complaint, and that Service Leads are more involved with driving improvements and minimising repetitive service failures. We will continue to commit to ensuring that all instances of customer dissatisfaction are being captured and want to ensure that our process is transparent and accessible, and that we are listening to our customers.

Themes for upheld complaints continue to be poor communication, delays with works, or quality of repairs completed.

From previous complaints and customer feedback received, we now have an internal Voids/ Empty Homes Service Lead, who is responsible for overseeing all works completed before a property is re-let.

We are also trialling in-person sign-ups, following feedback from a recent scrutiny event, so that we can ensure we are providing a personalised service wherever possible, and identifying vulnerable customers who may need additional help and support to sustain their tenancy.

From customer feedback, our next scrutiny event will be on our voids and lettings process, so if you are a new customer and would like to share your feedback and experience then do contact us to take part.

Increasingly customers who have declared they have a neurodiverse condition are getting in touch with us seeking additional assistance. We are currently developing additional information to support our colleagues' awareness and understanding of neurodiversity and adapting how we communicate to support everyone.

Our Vulnerable Persons and Reasonable Adjustments Policy also provides support and guidance for colleagues and customers, and additional training is being provided in line with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

For 2025, a key priority for us continues to be improving our customer insight information so we can support our customers to sustain their tenancies and access any additional support they may need.

In line with Housing Ombudsman best practice, we are introducing a Customer Remedies and Redress Policy to ensure a consistent and fair approach to resolving customer dissatisfaction and complaints and aim for this to be in place from June 2025.

This year, we have introduced a complaint learning panel, made up of executive team members, senior managers, and involved customers, to review overarching complaint themes and case studies of high-level complaints to consider and ensure we are embedding a lessons learned approach. This also includes all customer feedback received.

If you would like to be involved with this process, then please do contact us by emailing customer.services@homesinsomerset.org or by calling 0800 585 360.





Our 2024/25 Tenant Satisfaction Measures results	YTD March 2025	Target	YTD March 2024
Satisfied with the service provided by Homes in Somerset as a landlord	83%	84%	82%
Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	74%	73%	74%
Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	75%	74%	79%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	84%	80%	85%
Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	86%	85%	87%
Complaints relative to the size of the landlord	35.0	33.0	35.8
Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	96%	96%	96%
Satisfied with our approach on how we handle complaints	38%	65%	40%
Antisocial behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord	23.5	25.0	28.2
Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling antisocial behaviour	61%	64%	71%
Satisfaction that the home is well-maintained	82%	80%	84%
Satisfied with how we keep communal areas clean and well-maintained	73%	75%	74%
Satisfaction with repairs	84%	81%	83%
Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	86%	76%	84%
Of repairs that are completed within the target timescale	85.9%	95%	92%
Of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	0.4%	0%	0.2%
Satisfaction that the home is safe	84%	88%	87%
Gas safety checks	99.9%	100%	100%
Fire safety checks	100%	100%	100%
Asbestos safety checks	100%	100%	100%
Water safety checks	100%	100%	100%
Of lift safety checks completed	100%	100%	100%

To see the latest TSMs,
visit our website



Your Right to Buy

When you can buy your home under the Right to Buy Scheme.

You can apply for the Right to Buy scheme if you are a secure tenant of Somerset Council and you:

- Live in a house, bungalow, flat or maisonette which the council owns or on which it holds an appropriate lease.
- Are purchasing either in your sole name; or jointly with other people named on the secure tenancy. On a joint tenancy, the Right to Buy belongs to all tenants so you can either buy jointly; or individually where the other tenants agree to this.
- Occupy the property as your only or principal home.
- Have the minimum qualifying tenancy period of 3 years public sector tenancy. The 3-year period does not have to be consecutive and can include your current tenancy and any previous public sector tenancy.

Reasons why you might not be able to buy the property

In some circumstances, you might not be able to buy the property. Some of the reasons include:

- If you or someone you hold the tenancy with is subject to an order of the court for possession of the property (Notice Seeking Possession)
- If you or someone who is joining in the Right to Buy with you:
 - Is subject to a bankruptcy order
 - Has a bankruptcy petition pending
 - Has an undischarged bankruptcy
 - Has arranged with a creditor the terms of which remain unfulfilled
 - Benefits from a moratorium period under a debt relief order
 - Is subject to a suspension period under an order made under section 121A of the Housing Act 1985 due to antisocial behaviour

Other reasons why you might not be able to take up the Right to Buy

The Right to Buy does not arise in certain circumstances, including:

- Where the landlord is a trust or certain type of housing association
- Where the landlord does not own the freehold and the remaining lease is:
 - a) 21 years or less if your home is a house/bungalow; or
 - b) 50 years or less if it is a flat/maisonette
 - c) In both cases, this relates to the date when the tenant serves the RTB1 (application form)
- Where the property is within the boundaries of a building held by the landlord for purposes other than housing and was let to the tenant (or a predecessor) for the purposes of employment
- Where the property is let for the purpose of housing disabled persons or elderly persons or persons with a mental disorder; and has substantially different features to ordinary dwellings
- Where the property is held by the landlord on a tenancy from the Crown
- Where a final demolition notice is in place

You can find a full list of the exceptions to the Right to Buy in Schedule 5 of the Housing Act 1985:

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/68/schedule/5



How to take up your Right to Buy

In order to exercise your claim to buy your property under the Right to Buy, you will need to complete the application form (RTB1) and send it to:

Right to Buy Team
Homes in Somerset
Bridgwater House
King Square
Bridgwater
TA6 3AR

The application form and more information about applying can be found at www.gov.uk/right-to-buy-buying-your-council-home. You can also get more details by calling **0300 123 0913** or emailing enquiry@righttobuyagent.org.uk.

The date on which we receive your application is called the relevant date. This is the date the council will use to work out the value of your home and your discount entitlement. If the value of your property changes while your application is being processed, for

the purposes of the Right to Buy the value will remain the same as it was on the relevant date. Your discount entitlement will also be set at the relevant date and does not change during the application process.

You can cancel your application at any time. The council will not charge you for this, but your solicitor and your mortgage provider may charge you for any services they have provided up to the date that you let them know that you are not going ahead with the Right to Buy.



How the sale price is calculated

The price you will pay for your home is based on:

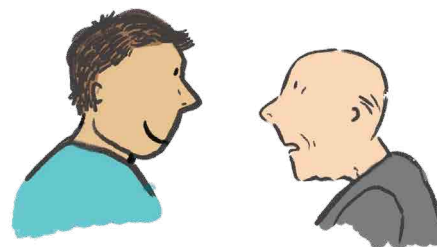
- The market valuation of your property which we will arrange to be carried out free of charge.
- How long you have been a tenant in your current home and any previous public sector tenancies you have claimed that can be confirmed.
- The cost to the council of buying or building your property – if any work was done in the last 15 years, the cost of this work may reduce your discount.
- Previous Right to Buy purchases – you are only entitled to one Right to Buy discount in total so previous discounts given will be deducted from any discount you may currently be entitled to receive.

If you delay the Right to Buy application process, the council can serve a formal notice where:

- You have not responded to the formal offer letter within the 12-week notice period; or
- You have not taken steps to complete the purchase within a reasonable period of time – the reasonable period cannot be less than 3 months after the formal offer letter is sent to you. If you do not meet the timescales set out in the formal notice, the council can end your Right to Buy application.

If the council delays your Right to Buy application, you can:

- Send an Initial Notice of Delay (RTB6) which requires the council to rectify the delay within a given response period – you cannot give the landlord less than a calendar month to respond.



- Send an Operative Notice of Delay (RTB8) – you can only do this if the council does not rectify the delay within the response period allowed by the RTB6 or serve a counter-notice. You may be entitled to a reduced purchase price if a valid RTB8 is received by the council.

You can ask the council to provide you with the delay forms. You can also download the forms at www.gov.uk/right-to-buy-buying-your-council-home/delays.

You may want to send the delay notice by recorded delivery; or hand deliver it and obtain a receipt from the council as the notice is only effective once the council has received it.

You can only use the delay procedure while a delay is occurring. Once the delay has ended you cannot serve delay notices.



Costs of owning your home

There will be initial costs for taking up your Right to Buy. These costs vary but may include:

- **Stamp Duty** – you can find out more about this at www.gov.uk/stamp-duty-land-tax (Stamp Duty is calculated on the actual purchase price of the home, so market value minus Right to Buy discount).
- **Legal fees** – a fee will be payable if you use a solicitor or other legal representative to help you with buying your home.
- **Land registry fees** – you can find more information about this at www.gov.uk/guidance/hm-land-registry-registration-services-fees
- **Mortgage fees** – these can include:
 - A fee if you use a broker to help you find a mortgage.
 - An arrangement fee to fix a mortgage rate with your mortgage lender.
 - A fee for your lender's assessment of the market value of your property.
 - A survey fee for a professional inspection of your property (this is different from the assessment of market value undertaken by your mortgage lender). There are different types of survey with different costs depending on how detailed the survey is.

As a homeowner you will also have regular ongoing costs. These can include payments for:

- A mortgage or loan on your property
- Building insurance
- Contents insurance
- Life insurance
- Mortgage payment protection insurance
- Council tax
- Water, gas, electricity, broadband and other services
- Repairing and maintaining your property
- Service charges – you can find more information at www.lease-advice.org/

It is important to remember:

- You will not be eligible for housing benefit if you become a homeowner.

- The value of your home can go down as well as up.
- If you do not keep up with your mortgage payments, your lender may take possession of your home.

If you want further information about the Right to Buy, you can contact a Right to Buy Agent on **0300 123 0913** or by emailing enquiry@righttobuyagent.org.uk. You can also contact Homes in Somerset's Right to Buy team via Customer Services at customer.services@homesinsomerset.org or on **0800 585 360**.



Puzzle Time!

Enter our Summer wordsearch.

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

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



TRAVEL

POOL

HAT

BEACH

SUN

PICNIC

BALL

VACATION

CAMPING

SANDALS

PARK

CAMPFIRE

HOT

SUNGLASSES

ICE CREAM

SHELL

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

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

Name:.....

Address:.....

Telephone:.....

**Deadline: Friday,
August 1, 2025**

Congratulations

To Rosemary, of Ashcott, Ian, of Highbridge and Marika, of West Huntspill, who all won the winter Newsletter competition. We hope you each enjoy your £25 voucher.

Congratulations

To Emelia, of Puriton, and Chantelle, of Bridgwater, who both won a £50 voucher for taking part in one of our surveys.

HomesinSomerset @homesinsomerset

customer.services@homesinsomerset.org

www.homesinsomerset.org 0800 585 360 / 01278 552400

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

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



Homes in Somerset