

A photograph of four people standing in a lush garden. From left to right: a man with a beard and a straw hat holding a clipboard, a man with a beard in a dark blue shirt holding a clipboard, a woman in a light blue sleeveless top, and a man with grey hair in a light blue patterned shirt. The background is filled with green plants and flowers. The top of the page has a teal background with white snowflake graphics.

Matters

Neighbourhood

Issue 22: Winter 2025

"It's like a new home" after retrofit works

Garden Competition 2025 winners announced

Roof repairs at Westfield Close complete

Cover photo: Garden Competition 2025

The logo for 'Homes in Somerset' features a small house icon with a tree inside, followed by the text 'Homes in Somerset' in a sans-serif font. A green wavy line is underneath the text.

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

 @homesinsomerset

 customer.services@homesinsomerset.org

 www.homesinsomerset.org

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Bridgwater TA6 3AR

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



Hello...

and welcome to our
winter edition of
Neighbourhood Matters.



As the festive season sparkles into view and we wrap up another eventful year, we're excited to share all the good news, achievements, and community spirit that make our neighbourhoods so special. From celebrating our Garden Competition winners to sharing stories of resilience, kindness, and support, this edition is packed with reasons to feel proud and hopeful.

We know winter can bring its challenges, but it's also a time for coming together—whether that's at a community meal, a

festive bingo, or simply lending a hand to a neighbour. Inside, you'll find helpful updates, ways to get involved, and a sprinkle of seasonal fun (don't miss our wordsearch and Christmas events)!

Thank you for being such an important part of our community. Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful, safe, and cosy holiday season!

Claire Tough
Director of Communities
and Customer Service



Find out when next year's estate walks will be held on page 16!

Celebrating our Garden Competition 2025 winners



We held our annual Garden Competition this summer, inviting customers to show off their gardening skills. The judging took place in July, led by Community Enabler, Sharon, and Ben, Director of Finance and Performance, who also hosted the awards ceremony.

Ben said: "It was a real pleasure to be part of this year's garden competition judging. Meeting our customers and seeing the incredible effort they have put into their gardens, some after only a few months in their new homes, was truly inspiring. It was great to get out and about, connect with the community, and celebrate their creativity and dedication."

The awards event was held at North Petherton Rugby Club, where customers came together to celebrate the winners. A raffle was held on the day, with prizes kindly donated by our two sponsors, A Murphy Gardening Services and Howard SW.

We had five competition categories this year, and we are pleased to share the winners:

Category Winners:

Best Large Garden: **Neil**

Best Small Garden: **Lorna**

Best Community Garden: **Les**

Containers, Pots and Baskets: **Vera**

Vegetable Patch: **Mike**

Community Enabler, Sharon, said: "The 2025 Garden Competition Awards at North Petherton Rugby Club was a lovely afternoon, with great tea, delicious cake, and a warm, friendly atmosphere. It was wonderful to see all our entries together in one place and celebrate everyone's hard work. Thank you to our two main sponsors A Murphy Garden Services and Howard SW for supplying prizes for our raffle."



Supporting customers in vulnerable situations

Thanks to our dedicated and professional staff who are trained in dealing with victims of domestic abuse, we can help customers who need urgent support.

Housing Officer Sian recently supported a customer to secure emergency accommodation in a refuge where she could have the opportunity to start bidding to have a tenancy in her own name.



While our customer hadn't confided in family or friends about the abuse she was the victim of, Sian had kept in contact regularly, over five weeks to help her move out of the flat, move in with her friend, get support from her GP, and bid on new properties for herself.

Sian said: "It was important for me to ensure as a survivor of domestic abuse that she received the service that she should expect. It was vital for me to continue to support her by contacting other professionals on her behalf, as she said, without that support she would have likely returned to the relationship and the abuse. I wanted to ensure that she was fully supported to know that it wasn't her only option to return to that relationship."

The customer shared her gratitude to Sian: "Sian instantly listened, gave me reassurance and support... I wouldn't have been strong enough not to go back without her."

If you need help or information about a domestic abuse situation, you can find out more on our website.



Gold accreditation for a committed team

Homes in Somerset is celebrating a massive win having achieved Gold accreditation with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA).



The accreditation came after a panel decision and many months of hard work.

Homes in Somerset Housing Team Leader Cyan said: "It is like Christmas has come early! Thank you to everyone who has supported and worked tirelessly on this piece of work, we have really made a difference for our customers and it has been recognised."

Head of Housing at DAHA, Nikki Clarke, said: "I am so delighted that you have passed Gold Accreditation and you truly deserve it! As we went through the assessment activities it became so clear that you were delivering a great response for survivors. We were particularly impressed with how strong your commitment to being survivor led and working in partnership with your agencies was, all your staff should be so proud!"

Safe and secure spaces for new families

Customers on the Service Improvement Panel get the chance to visit and scrutinise the condition of some of our empty homes before they are re-let to new customers. The group is able to see the works before and after they are completed, ask about decisions on repairs, and give feedback. At a recent visit, the panel shared their positive feedback about the works completed in an empty home and felt the garden was much safer and tidier.



HEALTHY HOMES

Roof replacement repairs complete

Roof replacement repair works at a block of flats at Westfield Close, Bridgwater, are now complete.

In December 2024, Storm Darragh swept through the South West, bringing heavy rain and strong winds to Somerset, which resulted in severe damage to the roof at one of the blocks of flats at Westfield Close.

Following extensive repairs, the scaffolding has now been removed and internal repair works are now being finalised. Customers who were staying in alternative homes managed by Homes in Somerset, will soon be able to return to Westfield Close.



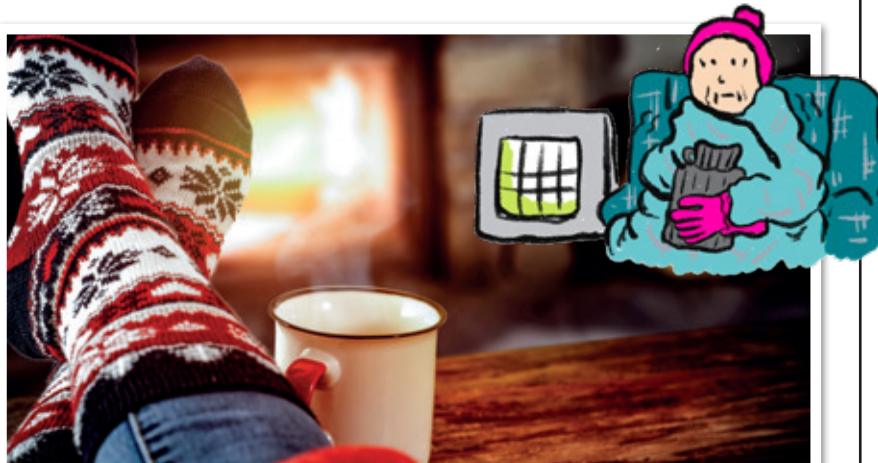
Keeping our customers warm this winter

**Somerset
Community
Foundation**

We have been awarded £15,000 from Somerset Community Foundation to grant our customers who may struggle to keep warm this winter.

If a customer between 50 and 60 has a life limiting or serious illness that is made worse in cold weather, they are entitled to help. A maximum of £500 can be awarded per household which will considerably help during the colder months.

If you need support, or know someone who does, contact our Customer Services Team on 0800 585 360.



New benches at Baymead Close

We're delighted to let you know that new benches have been installed at Baymead Close, and we think they look great! We hope you enjoy making the most of them.





Strivers success

Committed to being customer driven and inspiring customers, we were pleased to support the Strive project, together with Somerset Council to provide advice and funding to help kickstart small businesses through a seven-week online course.

Since completing the course, we've had feedback from some of the participants.

Mark Challenor has thanked the Strive team for giving him the confidence to grow his business. He said: "Paul Funnell, Richard Lanning thank you especially to you guys, without you two, people like me or any of the others wouldn't be here to do what I love."

Samantha Scovell, who runs a cleaning business, said: "I don't like blowing my own trumpet, but things have gone in leaps and bounds! I currently have six staff members plus myself. Who'd have thought that a little idea would have gotten so big. We should all be super proud of ourselves."

We are also pleased to report that Adrian Ionescu opened BBX Fashion Outlet, in Bridgwater.



Skip day successes



Our recent skip days in the Sydenham, Hamp, West Street and Highbridge areas have proved a real success, with many customers sharing their appreciation for the opportunity to clear out unwanted items easily.

One customer told us: "It's been a great help, we are a young family moving soon and it has saved us time and relying on others to get to the recycling centre."

We're pleased to support our community in making these tasks that bit simpler.



Winter Fuel Payments scam texts

Nearly all Winter Fuel Payments are made automatically without the need to claim. Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) have not issued any messages.

DWP never send text messages or emails requesting your bank details for Winter Fuel Payment purposes. If you have any doubt whether a text is genuine, forward it to 7726 (free of charge) and you will receive a reply confirming if it's legitimate.

You should block the telephone number and delete the message without clicking on any links.





“It’s like a new home” praise for HiS retrofit programme



Enhancing the energy performance of our customers’ properties by 2030 is a goal we are working hard towards.

Using retrofit, all the homes we manage need to reach a minimum Energy Performance Certificate rating of C, and one of our customers has shared his experience to show that it can save money and have long-term benefits.

Mr Kear, of Rooksbridge, underwent two weeks of retrofit works, including solar panels, cavity wall insulation, Dimplex quantum heaters, hot water cylinder, and room in roof (RIR) insulation – this is where insulation and plaster board are added to the ceiling to insulate the property.

Although the works were very invasive, Mr Kear said he had nothing but praise for those who carried out the job. “The people who carried out the works have been brilliant and Homes in Somerset have been superb at every step.

“It’s like a new home from the one I moved into in 2020; from drafts from leaky windows and doors to having everything now brand new.”

Retrofit is aimed at improving energy efficiency, but also improving the quality of life for our customers by reducing bills and ensuring homes remain warmer for longer through improved insulation.



New computers for Woolavington Hub

Bell Group donated four laptops to the Woolavington Community Hub, serving Homes in Somerset customers, at a coffee afternoon held in November.

The laptops were given as part of a digital inclusion initiative and customers enjoyed refreshments, cakes and a couple of rounds of bingo!



Collaborative working for positive outcomes

Tenancy Sustainment Officer, Nicola received huge praise for her collaborative and professional approach in the case of an individual, who was referred to Adult Social Care due to concerns around self-neglect, lack of access to food, and financial hardship.

Housing Team Leader Laura said: “Working alongside Nicola has been both a pleasure and a valuable learning experience. Throughout the case, we maintained an open and respectful line of communication, which enabled us to share tasks effectively and respond promptly.”



Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee update



Since our last newsletter, Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee (STAC) has continued to meet every other month for three-hour Thursday afternoon sessions. Each meeting covers a wide range of topics where tenant insight and scrutiny help shape how Homes in Somerset delivers its services – in line with regulatory expectations.

This year, STAC's main focus has been the new Consumer Standards introduced by the Regulator in 2024, covering:

1. Safety and quality
2. Transparency, influence and accountability
3. Neighbourhood and community
4. Tenancy



The committee has also been reviewing the impact of Awaab's Law, introduced in October, and providing feedback on the new Customer Engagement and Influence Strategy.

We'd like to thank Christine and Amanda for their valued contributions as they step down from the committee, and welcome three new members who have recently joined.

If you're interested in finding out more about STAC or getting involved, please contact your Community Enabler on 0800 585 360.

New Joint Policy Group

We're pleased to announce the launch of our new Policy Group, made up of six tenant members—three from Homes in Somerset and three from Somerset Council. Meeting monthly, the group reviews policies, suggests improvements, and helps ensure our processes meet customer needs and legal requirements.

The group held its first meeting in October, discussing topics such as repairs, disrepair, mutual exchange, and decants. Their feedback has already led to several policy improvements.



Making a Difference Fund

The Making a Difference panel was pleased to recently approve nine funding applications, awarding a total of £9,500 to support a range of local community organisations and charities. The group was also pleased to welcome Jane as its newest customer member on the panel. Some of the groups which received funding include:

- Nelson Trust
- Bitham Walk Fundraisers
- Sedgemoor Community Connector
- In Charley's Memory
- Puriton Pantry
- Robert Blake School
- Hamp Junior School
- Sydenham Improvement Group
- Parent Support Groups
- Adult Neurodiversity Groups





Board update from Chair Paul

Hi everyone,

Well, summer is over and the dark nights are here again. It's a busy time for Homes in Somerset and the Board as we embrace and positively plan for the future beyond the Options Appraisal currently underway. Since April, we have adopted a positive approach and having contributed to the Options Appraisal process, we await the outcome and hopefully a recommendation to expand Homes in Somerset to a 10,000-home landlord.

As usual we held our Board Away Days in October, at which we looked forward to considering our future aspirations for the business, including for customers, communities and colleagues. There will be change ahead and it needs very careful planning to ensure the transition is as painless as can be achieved.

I would like to thank Chris Fisher for her time as a Customer Board Member which ended for personal reasons in July. I am pleased that the recruitment process to replace Chris has been a productive one, and her successor will be confirmed at our November Board meeting.

We also, in July, saw the departure of Jenny Vernon as an independent member, to be replaced by Sarah O'Neill who had been a co-opted member waiting to replace Jenny.

We will, throughout the winter months, work very closely with Somerset Council to ensure, whatever the final decision from the Options Appraisal, that our contribution to the process is positive and collaborative so that customers do not feel any difference in the service they receive.

Farewell to Board member Jenny



After 15 years of dedicated service, Jenny Vernon has bid farewell to the Homes in Somerset Board.

Jenny played a vital role in supporting customers through significant changes, providing training, and helping shape the organisation's direction as an independent board member and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.

Her passion for championing customers, guiding the organisation through challenges, and fostering a strong, inclusive culture has left a lasting legacy. Colleagues have thanked Jenny for her warmth, humour, and unwavering commitment to making customers' voices heard.

As she moves on, Jenny's influence will be deeply missed, but her impact and encouragement will continue to inspire. Read Jenny's reflections and the full story on our website.

Service Improvement Panel reviews services

Our Service Improvement Panel (SIP) group of 10 customers meet monthly to review a variety of documents and provide customer experience of our services.

In June, our Community Enablers Sharon and Jade, joined forces with our Involved Customers at the Tpas Member Regional Event. This in-person gathering provided a fantastic platform to exchange knowledge, strengthen relationships, and explore new ways to drive meaningful change in our communities.

We also held a tenant engagement day, where SIP and Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee (STAC) members met with potential new members talking about their role and what they got from the meetings.





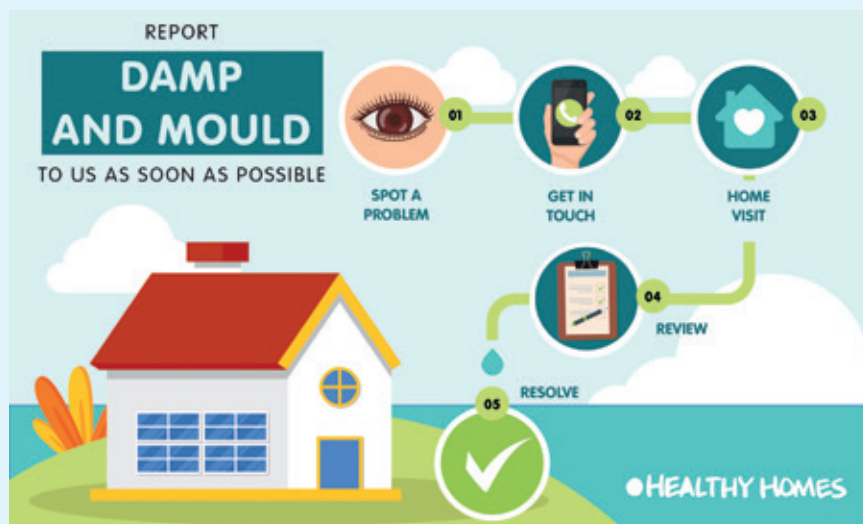
Awaab's Law introduced

Awaab's Law came into force for the social housing sector on October 27, which made it a legal obligation for social landlords to address all emergency hazards and all damp and mould hazards that present a significant risk of harm to tenants to fixed timeframes.

Awaab's Law is in memory of two-year-old Awaab Ishak, who died tragically in 2020 as a result of a severe respiratory condition due to prolonged exposure to mould in his home.

We have always dealt with customers' concerns with damp, mould and condensation, so while the law changes little in the way we operate, it does give us another opportunity to remind our customers to report any issues they have.

Living in hazardous conditions can have a substantial impact on people's health, safety and wellbeing. We at Homes in Somerset take pride in always acting where issues arise, we encourage our customers to continue reporting issues as soon as they are noticed.



There are some measures you can take to prevent damp and mould, which include:

- **Opening windows at night**
- **Wiping windows, walls and mirrors to remove condensation after a bath or shower**

- **Ensure rooms are adequately ventilated and heated**
- **Avoid drying clothes on radiators**

For a more comprehensive list of measures you can take to reduce condensation, mould and damp, visit our dedicated webpage.

Would you like to get involved with Procurement Decisions?

At Homes in Somerset, we spend a considerable sum of money with contractors and suppliers each year. Many of these contractors will come into your homes and provide services which are important to you. We are looking for volunteers to assist in the evaluation of tenders. Would you like to understand how suppliers are chosen and have input into how the decisions are made?

How does it work?

You will be required to read some of the tender responses that are received and give your opinion on what you have read. Sometimes these documents are lengthy and there may be many documents from each tender. You do not need to be an expert in the services being procured

but you need to have experience of work being carried out by contractors in your home, so you know what really matters. You will need to have an opinion based only on what you have read as to whether the contractor will be suitable.

You will be supported by the team and by the procurement specialist. You can read the documents at home and either discuss the result over Teams with the procurement specialist or in person if you prefer to come to the office. Full training and support will be provided.

If you are interested please email procurement@homesinsomerset.org or phone Jo Hutchins on 0800 585 360 for an informal discussion.

Options Appraisal update

In the last newsletter, we announced that Somerset Council was undertaking an independent options appraisal to determine how our housing management services should be delivered in the future.



This review, which is being completed by Savills, is being undertaken to ensure that our services are better aligned and deliver best value for money for all Homes in Somerset and Somerset Council customers and leaseholders.

As part of this process, Savills held a number of engagement opportunities, and we'd like to thank everyone who has taken the time to share their feedback – whether that was in person, at a face-to-face meeting, during a virtual session, or by completing the survey. Your input is invaluable and is helping to shape the future of housing services in Somerset.

We will continue to share regular updates with you through our newsletter, our website, social media platforms and other bespoke engagement, as this important work progresses. It is anticipated that a recommendation for a future housing management delivery model will be made in early 2026. Thank you once again for your continued engagement and support.



Local opportunities with Agratas

More than 160 attendees gathered at a “Business Breakfast with Agratas” event in November, including representatives from Homes in Somerset, and hosted by Somerset Chamber of Commerce.

Agratas, the UK flagship battery manufacturing site in Puriton, near Bridgwater, will support more than 2,200 jobs and 7,500 supply chain jobs, with opportunities linked to Bridgwater and Taunton College (BTC), as the designated lead institution for education and skills delivery at the Gravity Smart Campus, prioritising local opportunities and employment.

We're delighted to be able to promote these opportunities and to signpost customers.

For upcoming news and jobs with Agratas, you can see their website – www.agratas.com/careers.

Repairs and maintenance service

We're pleased to share that we've recently taken the opportunity to review and improve our Repairs and Maintenance Policy.

We are committed to improving services whilst ensuring that homes remain safe, comfortable, and well-maintained.

We know lives can be busy and we will continue to do our best to book appointments that fit in with your preference and availability. However, to ensure the most critical issues are addressed promptly, priority will be given to emergencies and urgent repairs.

Booking Options

You can arrange appointments by:

- Calling us on **0800 585 360**
- Using our customer portal to book online at **www.homesinsomerset.org**



Development shortlisted for two accolades

A development project managed by Homes in Somerset which brings the first new council houses to Minehead in 40 years was shortlisted for two top accolades this year.



The first was the Michelmores Property Awards in July, with a nomination for Residential Project of the Year, and off the back of that the development was then nominated for the Inside Housing Development Awards 2025 in the category of 'Best affordable housing development – £5m – £10m'.

Despite not taking the title for the Michelmores award – which went instead to The Orchards in Sampford Peverell, Devon, the team were up against some incredible competition and Emma Honey, Head of Real Estate at Michelmores, said:

"The 2025 Awards have once again showcased the incredible talent and ambition within the South West's property sector. From pioneering sustainable housing to ambitious regeneration projects, this year's winners are truly inspiring examples of how the built environment can enrich communities and drive positive change. It is exciting



to see innovation and quality at the heart of so many projects."

Project Officer Alex, who attended the ceremony on behalf of Homes in Somerset with Project Manager Ian, said: "Being a finalist is a testament to our team's dedication and hard work. We're proud of what we've achieved and excited for what's next."

The completion of the Seaward Way/Rainbow Way development project is being managed by us on behalf of Somerset Council and is funded from the Housing Revenue Account. Thirty-two homes have already been completed with the remaining 22 to be handed over by Christmas.

On being nominated for the Inside Housing Awards, Katie, Project Manager at Homes in Somerset, said: "We are delighted that Rainbow Way was shortlisted. This exemplary development, built by Classic Homes, is delivering 54 zero-carbon homes for the residents of Minehead and includes solar panels, triple glazing, air source heat pumps and many other efficient technologies."

Oxford Inn site development

We worked with Classic Builders to manage the Oxford Inn development site in Taunton, on the corner of Roman Road where the former Oxford Inn Public House was situated.

This included the construction of two two-bedroomed dwellings plus a block of flats containing one one- and two-bedroom properties.

These works commenced in September 2024 on behalf of Somerset Council providing new build accommodation for the local community which is programmed to be completed by the end of the year.

During the demolition stage we were able to salvage some of the existing materials which were made available for residents.



Councillors welcomed to Penlea development

● SUSTAINABILITY
BY DESIGN



We were delighted to be able to welcome councillors to visit our Penlea development recently, who had some fabulous feedback on the site, and we look forward to the completion of works which is likely very soon.

Councillor Leigh Redman, who has followed the project since its inception, said: "I have made no secret of my concerns but having seen the new building and had a chance to look around, I was taken aback by the quality of each of the flats. The finish really is great. Add to this the environmental benefits – reduced carbon footprint and significantly improved energy efficiency – I know residents will see reduced energy bills while enjoying high-quality social housing."



Queen Square development

A community information event held for residents of Queen Square, Highbridge, was hailed a positive experience by customers, who had the opportunity to share feedback for options on the future of the area.

The event was an opportunity to present potential redevelopment and remodelling plans for Queen Square and visitors to the event were able to see four potential ideas.

Residents were encouraged to review these plans and share their feedback and suggestions on shaping any potential development. Out of the 12 attendees, ten said the event was useful and felt the information was clearly presented and explained by our Housing Development Team.

The event marks the beginning of ongoing engagement with Queen Square residents, ensuring they can actively participate in the project as it progresses.



Did you know!

We have launched a new e-newsletter. If you don't yet receive it, and would like to, email communications@homesinsomerset.org to be added to the mailing list.





Gold standard for Health and Safety

Homes in Somerset is celebrating a Gold RoSPA Award for health and safety performance between January-December 2024.

The internationally renowned accolade recognises organisations, teams and projects across all sectors for their unwavering commitment to protecting lives – setting the benchmark for prestige and inspiring sector-wide admiration.

Laura, People Business Partner at Homes in Somerset and member of the Health and Safety Forum, said: “We are incredibly proud to once again uphold the highest standards in health and safety performance. This award is testament to the diligence and professionalism of the whole team at Homes in Somerset.”

Julia Small, RoSPA’s Growth Director, said: “Homes in Somerset should be proud of the hard work and commitment to keeping people safe that has resulted in a RoSPA Award, which honours those organisations who have achieved the highest standards in health and safety in the workplace. RoSPA regards Homes in Somerset as a strong example of the importance of making accident prevention central to any successful organisation, not just for the benefit of employees, customers and clients, but also society as a whole.”



Fire door safety advice



Over the last few years, we’ve upgraded most of our flats with new FD60 fire doors to help keep everyone safe. These doors can hold back fire and smoke for up to 60 minutes, giving extra time for you and the fire service in an emergency. If your flat opens onto an outside walkway, your door might be an FD30, which gives 30 minutes of protection.

Our Building Safety Team checks every fire door once a year to make sure it’s working properly. Here are some top tips to help with maintaining your door and keeping you safe:

- Please don’t wedge your fire door open or remove the closer.
- If your fire door is damaged or doesn’t close properly, please let us know right away so we can arrange for it to be fixed quickly.
- If you feel that changes need to be made to the door, please contact us first and do not attempt to make any alterations yourself.

Gas safety checks

As we head into the colder months, it’s more important than ever to make sure your home is safe, warm, and compliant.



Your annual gas safety check is a legal requirement and helps protect you and your household from serious risks such as gas leaks or carbon monoxide. It also ensures your heating and hot water systems are working efficiently for the winter ahead.

If we contact you about a safety check, whether it’s for gas, electrics, or alarms, please make sure you keep your appointment or let us know as soon as possible if you need to rearrange. Missed appointments delay important checks and can put your safety at risk.

Our Compliance Team is here to help and will always work with you to find a suitable time for access. Together, we can make sure every home stays safe, compliant, and ready for winter.

Partnership will benefit more than 450 homes

We are pleased to have partnered with the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE), which will enable the installation of energy efficiency upgrades to more than 450 homes, and procurement of funding to help reduce the cost of those upgrades.

CSE is a charity that has delivered energy advice for over 45 years, providing support for households, and facilitating hundreds of energy efficiency schemes for housing providers.

Installations for customers may include renewable technology such as solar panels and heat pumps, updating old or faulty heating systems, loft and wall insulation, and smart energy monitoring systems.

To meet government targets, all social housing must reach an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of at least C by 2030.

This partnership will be for the duration of ECO4, a Government energy efficiency scheme, running until March 31, 2026.

The scheme aims to help improve energy efficiency to homes, and to reduce fuel poverty by providing funding for measures like insulation, heating upgrades, and renewable energy systems.

This scheme is fully funded by energy providers and managed by CSE and we are looking to

deliver energy saving measures to 150-200 of our properties.

The savings to us are huge, with average costs around £15k per property.

Alongside these measures, CSE will support residents once the installations are complete. We'll provide Smart Energy Action Plans to ensure the occupants understand the upgrades to their home and how to use the new installs effectively.

This gives people the knowledge for long-term energy savings.

Retrofit Coordinator James said: "We are very happy to be working with the Centre for Sustainable Energy, which will be a real benefit to our customers in ensuring better efficiency, lower bills and healthier homes. This partnership will also help us to reduce fuel poverty for customers."



centre for
sustainable
energy



Fuel poverty workshop

Members of Homes in Somerset attended a Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency Forum, held in Taunton in November.

It was a great workshop hosted by Thrive (formerly Community Council for Somerset) who have just launched their strategy to support sustainability and eradicate fuel poverty.

Information on retrofitting was shared and our Retrofit Coordinator James offered a different perspective to the group which helped to support the initiatives we are carrying out as a landlord.





Improving your community

We're delighted to share some of the ways we're helping make our neighbourhoods cleaner and more welcoming for everyone through our estate walks. From adding helpful new street signage to prevent missed parcels, to clearing away fly tipping and sprucing up communal areas, we're committed to keeping things tidy. We love working together with customers to improve gardens and outdoor spaces, and our regular estate walks give us a chance to spot new ways to make a positive difference.

Thank you for helping us keep our community safe, attractive, and a great place to call home!

Join us for your local estate walk:

January 7, 10am

ReCreation,
Rhode Lane,
Hamp

January 15, 10am

Co-op, Parkway,
Sydenham
(Fairfax)

January 21, 10am

Fish and chip shop,
Bitham Walk,
Woolavington

February 3, 10am

Westover Green,
West Street,
Bridgwater

February 10, 10am

Co-op, Parkway,
Sydenham
(Dunwear)

February 12, 10am

Morland Road,
Highbridge

March 3, 10am

St George's Hall,
Kendale Road,
Bridgwater

March 12, 10am

Rosewood Hall,
Rosewood Close,
Burnham

March 12, 11.30am

Corner of Ringstone,
Withy Road
West Huntspill

April 7, 10am

ReCreation, Rhode
Lane, Hamp
Bridgwater

April 14, 10am

Penn Close,
Cheddar

April 14, 11.15am

Houlgate way,
Axbridge

April 15, 10am

Fish and chip shop,
Bitham Walk,
Woolavington

May 5, 10am

Baymead Hall,
North Petherton

May 12, 10am

Co-op, Parkway,
Sydenham
(Fairfax)

May 14, 10am

Westover Green,
West Street,
Bridgwater

June 2, 10am

Co-op, Parkway,
Sydenham
(Dunwear)

June 4, 10am

Morland Shops,
Morland Road,
Highbridge

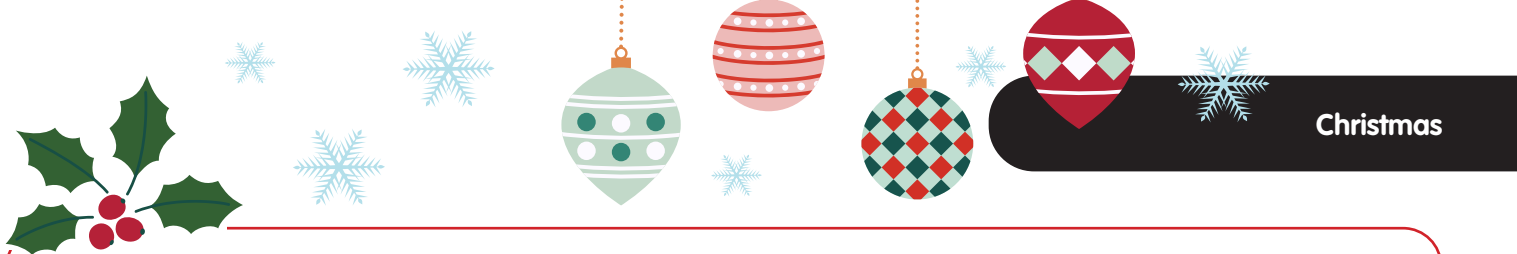
June 17, 10am

School Fields,
Cannington

June 23, 10am

St Mary's
Church Hall,
Nether Stowey





Christmas opening times

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.

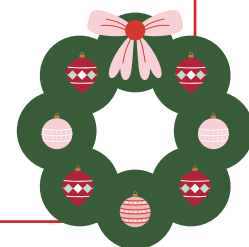
Our general weekday opening hours are 9am–5pm, except Wednesdays when our phone lines open at 10am–5pm. **Our Christmas opening hours are:**

Date	Time
Monday, December 22	9am – 5pm
Tuesday, December 23	9am – 5pm
Wednesday, December 24	10am – 5pm
Thursday, December 25	Closed
Friday, December 26	Closed

Date	Time
Monday, December 29*	9am – 5pm
Tuesday, December 30*	9am – 5pm
Wednesday, January 31*	10am – 5pm
Thursday, January 1	Closed
Friday, January 2	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.



Hilda Coles Christmas nibbles

Customers at Hilda Coles, Bridgwater are warmly invited to enjoy light lunch nibbles on Monday, 8 December, from 11am to 2pm. Come along for delicious snacks and good company as we kick off the Christmas festivities!



Eyes down for a full house of fun!

Penn Close customers in Cheddar are invited to knock at the door of the communal hall for a festive Christmas bingo event on Tuesday, 16 December. Our Enabler Team will be providing fantastic raffle prizes, so be sure to come along for your chance to win and enjoy an afternoon full of seasonal fun and community spirit!



Woolavington community meal

We're excited to invite Bitham Walk customers to a community meal at the communal hall on Tuesday, 16 December, hosted by Villages Together with support from our Making a Difference Fund. This is a perfect chance to enjoy a hot meal in the company of your neighbours, fostering a real sense of togetherness and festive spirit.

In pictures: Love where you live

We were thrilled to announce the winners of our Love Where You Live photography competition this year, after a great array of entries.

A huge thank you to everyone who entered and shared their stunning snapshots of what they love about where they live. We thoroughly enjoyed looking through all the fantastic entries – we have so much talent within our community!



The winners are:

1st
Place



Dreaming in Green by Sarah

2nd
Place



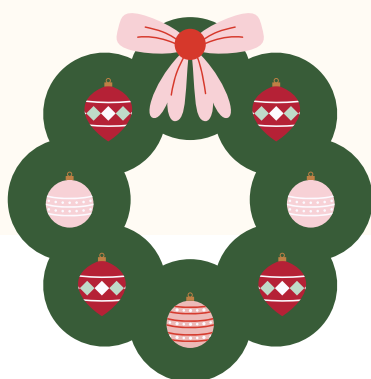
Admiring Nature at Apex Park by Ian

3rd
Place



Where Time Took a Break by Darren

Congratulations to our winners, your amazing photos are featured in our calendar poster, included in this newsletter.



Lessons learned

We're committed to making your experience with our homes and lettings as smooth as possible. This year, we've strengthened our team by appointing a dedicated Surveyor and adding a resource within our contractor MD Group to oversee all voids works. Following positive feedback from our Customer-Led Scrutiny event in July, we're taking further steps to improve, including actions based on your suggestions.



Our retrofit team has now taken on a second contractor and has a Customer Liaison Officer to provide support throughout any works. We're also gathering feedback through satisfaction surveys after each project, helping us to continuously improve.

We are also progressing how we can further improve our repairs service, which includes taking before and

after photos and enhance communication from both our team and contractors.

After a recent complaint, our Leadership Team will review our key and fob replacement process to ensure high service standards. Our Complaints Learning Panel also meets every six weeks to identify areas for further improvement.

Our Tenant Satisfaction Measures results	September (YTD) 2025	Target
Satisfied with the service provided by Homes in Somerset as a landlord	83%	84%
Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	71%	73%
Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	72%	74%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	80%	80%
Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	87%	85%
Complaints relative to the size of the landlord	20.33	16.50
Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	94%	96%
Satisfied with our approach on how we handle complaints	33%	41%
Antisocial behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord	13.55	12.50
Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling antisocial behaviour	57%	65%
Satisfaction that the home is well-maintained	83%	80%
Satisfied with how we keep communal areas clean and well-maintained	76%	75%
Satisfaction with repairs	83%	81%
Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	87%	80%
% of repairs that are completed within the target timescale	94.6%	95%
% of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	0.5%	0%
Satisfaction that the home is safe	85%	85%
Gas safety checks	99.66%	100%
Fire safety checks	100%	100%
Asbestos safety checks	100%	100%
Water safety checks	100%	100%
Of lift safety checks completed	85%	100%

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.

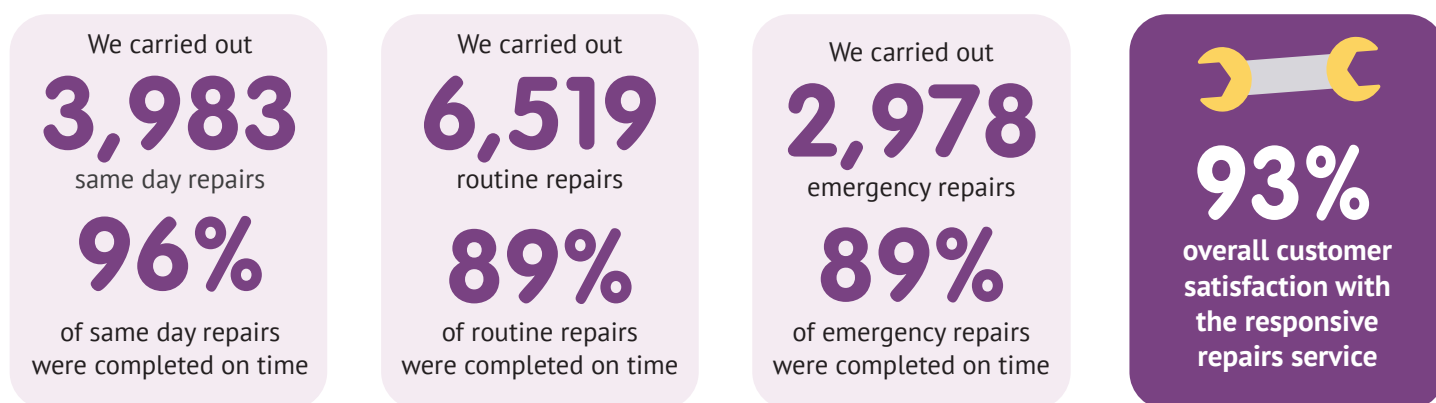
We have included a summary of our latest Annual Report in your newsletter. As you read through it, we are proud to share that our Tenant Satisfaction Measure score for overall satisfaction with the service provided by us as your landlord was 83% for April 2024 – March 2025. We hope this demonstrates our commitment to delivering the very best for you. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our customers for working with us and placing their trust in us over the past year.

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

Repairs and Maintenance

We consistently strive to provide our customers with safe, affordable, and healthy homes.

We take pride in our collaboration with customers and partner contractors to execute responsive repairs in a timely and efficient manner, as reflected in our overall customer satisfaction with responsive repairs results.



Upgrading Your Home

We actively listen to our customers' suggestions and feedback to ensure the homes we provide meet their needs for the future. Last year, this commitment was reflected in our investment, as we spent:

Last year, our capital expenditure was **£7,349,000**



£1,175,309
on roofs



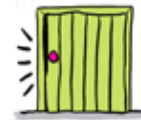
£485,104
on new bathrooms
and wet rooms



£710,610
on new windows



£583,995
on new kitchens



£105,233
on new doors

Homes in Somerset is a customer focused organisation which listens and acts on our customers' feedback.

We have engaged with our community 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.



*The Making a Difference (MaD) fund awards grants of up to £500 to local community groups through a customer panel.

Customer involvement within the Antisocial Behaviour, Hate Crime and Good Neighbour Management Process

This workshop reviewed current practices using case studies to assess Homes in Somerset's service for antisocial behaviour, hate crime, and good neighbour management. Customers attended and collaborated with colleagues to recommend service improvements.

The main themes noted through the sessions were:

- Communication is key to customers facing antisocial behaviour, and customers felt that communication throughout a case, even when there were no real updates, was important.
- Policies outline the clear response times and responsibilities when customers are reporting antisocial behaviour and hate crime.
- Customers felt there were appropriate ways in which antisocial behaviour and tenancy breaches could be reported, including via the website, calling us or reporting it online.

Income and Expenditure

The table shows what income we collected and what expenditure we incurred during 2024/25.

The majority of the funding we receive comes from the rent and service charge income customers pay to Somerset Council.

Income

Management Fee	£10,745,000
Capital Funding for Improvements	£7,349,000
Other Income	£1,088,000
Interest	£160,000
Total	£19,342,000

Expenditure

Property Repairs and Maintenance	£4,629,000
Capital Funding for Improvements	£7,349,000
Staff Costs	£4,167,000
Service Level Agreements	£1,283,000
Housing Management Costs	£1,743,000
Total	£19,171,000

Income in excess of expenditure £171,000



Supporting Customers

Our Housing Team works hand-in-hand with a variety of agencies and charities throughout Somerset to make sure our customers get the right support and continue to love where they live. By focusing on a customer-driven and person-centred approach, we are able to better engage, listen to, and support our customers, making sure everything we do is in their best interests.



We responded to
96
antisocial behaviour cases
from **1,054** reported incidents

The highest number of
antisocial behaviour
complaints was about
noise with...

39
cases
logged

We closed
101
antisocial behaviour cases



33
customers used
the Noise App



2,001
recordings were made
on the Noise App

The majority
of these were
of domestic
noise and
dog barking

Did you know? We supported **37** 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 our customers' homes, carry out repairs and do work in our communities. Last year, rent was charged over 51 weeks.

● HEALTHY HOMES



101.03%
of rent charged in
2024/2025
successfully collected

0.63%
current tenant rent
arrears for 2024/2025

3
tenants evicted
for rent arrears

£2,000
reduction in former
tenant arrears

£34,852 of rechargeable repairs was recovered (which is
almost double what we collected in 2023/24)



Lettings

349 homes

let between
2024/25

94.6%

of customers were
satisfied with the
letting process

74

new homes into
our management

48 days

on average, to
re-let homes

80.2%

of customers were satisfied
with the condition
of their home

41

mutual exchange
requests completed

Customer Services and Feedback

Dedicated to answering at least 80% of enquiries at the first point of contact, our hard-working Customer Services Team answers queries using a whole-systems approach, in a way that suits customers.

Last year...



We received a total of

37,300

calls between April
2024 – March 2025

Dealt with

84%

of calls at first
point of contact

On average, we
answered your call in



What you called us about

Repairs **23%**

Income **23%**

General enquiries **19%**

Neighbourhood/ASB **16%**

Independent Living Service **5%**

Compliance **3%**

Planned works **2%**

Other **9%**

77% of calls were answered within two minutes

We received and actioned **24,489** emails

Tenant Satisfaction Measures April 2024 - March 2025

TP01: Overall satisfaction with the service provided by the landlord	83%
TP02: Satisfaction with repairs	84%
TP03: Satisfaction with the time taken to complete repair	86%
TP04: Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	82%
TP05: Satisfaction that the home is safe	84%
TP06: Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	74%
TP07: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed	84%
TP08: Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	86%
TP09: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints	38%
TP10: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	73%
TP11: Landlord makes a positive contribution to the neighbourhood	75%
TP12: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling ASB	61%

Puzzle Time!

Enter our Winter wordsearch.

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

A	T	C	O	A	L	O	H	E	N	K	E	T	F
N	T	F	L	T	S	C	A	R	F	S	F	E	R
W	E	A	W	O	H	A	L	S	O	Y	L	L	E
O	S	N	O	O	A	S	E	G	W	I	N	F	E
G	T	U	C	C	N	C	R	N	R	M	S	A	D
T	O	T	R	C	I	S	E	E	E	R	T	O	N
T	C	C	E	O	S	E	N	R	A	E	F	N	I
E	K	R	R	L	G	A	R	I	T	R	I	E	E
T	I	A	T	A	H	Y	N	E	H	A	G	E	R
C	N	C	T	G	M	I	S	T	L	E	T	O	E
C	G	K	I	S	I	T	F	Y	A	R	T	I	H
E	G	E	E	E	O	E	T	I	N	S	E	L	G
T	L	R	C	T	E	R	H	O	L	L	Y	E	F
S	W	S	I	T	R	C	F	E	L	M	E	S	A

Win a
£25
Voucher!

TREE
GIFTS
MERRY
MISTLETOE
NUTCRACKER
REINDEER
SANTA
SLEIGH

SNOW
STOCKING
TINSEL
WREATH
FROST
COAT
SCARF
HOLLY

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,
January 30, 2026**


Congratulations

To Karen, of Bridgwater, Diana, of Woolavington, and Patricia of Burnham-on-Sea, who all won our summer newsletter competition. We hope you enjoy your £25 vouchers.

Congratulations

To Miss D and Miss S, both of Bridgwater, who 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!**



